

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Introducing the Study

Oppari is a traditional mourning ritual performed after a person's death in Tamil culture, in both India and Sri Lanka. This ritual of lamentation is often performed by women along with other funeral rites to convey pain and to pay homage to the deceased. The performance includes a eulogy for the deceased person in the form of a song which accompanies mourning and wailing. The song is never written or performed beforehand and involves a commentary on the life of the dead person and the pain his or her loss has caused. The lamentation is mostly verbal and is expected to articulate the pain in words to help in healing. Oppari presents an alternative understanding of the manifestation of pain compared to the dominant academic view linking pain and language. While pain is mostly associated with fragmentation, gaps, and silences, this ritual points to the fact that the expression of pain can differ based on the cultural context.

Veena Das's observation connecting pain and its communication in the essay entitled 'Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain' (2007) offers the possibility to explain this context further. While analysing Ludwig Wittgenstein's *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958), Das points out that pain is "not that inexpressible something that destroys communication or marks an exit from one's existence in language. Instead, it makes a claim on the other- asking for acknowledgement that may be given or denied" (2007, 40). Here, Das points out that pain does not necessarily end in the inability to communicate in language or through silence. One's suffering may be expressed to the world in a variety of other ways. There exists the possibility of being able to communicate and understand the trauma of the affected. Das expressed this by taking Wittgenstein's example of "feeling pain in the body of another" (2007, 41). Trauma in this perspective does not have to be confined to the body of the traumatized individual. Trauma can be transferred and the importance of language in this transfer is important. Healing from the pain is not possible through silences and gaps (Das, 2007, 48). There exists the possibility of healing trauma only by talking about it (Das, 51). The word or speech here performs an important function. There is a need to convert silence into speech and this can serve the process of healing.

This instance of narrating pain during the Oppari ritual serves the function of explaining how diverse societies engage with the experience of pain and its communication. However, the significance attributed to narration in the healing process appears to deviate from the perspectives upheld by the most popular theories in Literary Trauma Studies. Exploring the associations shared between language and pain has been seen as the central focus of Literary Trauma Studies since the discipline's emergence in the early '90s. The theoretical discourse within this field is primarily post-structuralist, aiming to challenge the values associated with the Enlightenment. Hence, Literary Trauma Studies, by following the post-structuralist assumptions, advocated a departure from concepts such as unity and centrality and emphasised the importance of focusing on fragments, rupture, gaps and silences. In this context, the role of literary language gained significance as the ultimate medium for conveying the experiences of pain and suffering. As a result, literary language was seen as the preferred medium to express and even enact the experiences of the traumatised.

In the book that continues to be hailed as the foundational work of trauma theory, Cathy Caruth defined trauma as a “response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event” which is not assimilated fully at the time of its occurrence, “but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it.” The traumatic experience, while remaining “unclaimed” by cognitive knowledge and literal language, attempts “to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available” (Caruth, 1995, 04). The main understanding of trauma is as an unassimilated event that shatters identity and remains outside normal memory and narrative representation. According to Michelle Balaev, “Fragmentation or dissociation is viewed as the direct cause of trauma, a view that helps formulate the notion of transhistorical trauma, which suggests that trauma's essential or universal effects on consciousness and narrative recall afford the opportunity to connect individual and collective traumatic experiences” (Balaev, 2018, 363). Literary language has emerged as the most effective means of conveying trauma due to the inherent difficulty in articulating the profound and complex connections between language and traumatic experiences.

The role literature has been playing in giving voice to the heard and unheard incidents of crisis in human history is singular. Such literary approaches serve various purposes ranging from reflections on the suffering and vulnerability of the affected and also work

as a strong statement to reveal the truth of past atrocities along with a demand for justice and change. Literature that flourished in the years following the partition of 1947, for instance, was a response that articulated the repercussions of the incident and its traumatic impacts. Some of the greatest literature of the last century in India come under this genre of partition literature. Literature indeed has played a tremendous role in representing the traumatic impacts on millions and thereafter establishing historical truths. After the Partition, the next largest event that spiked a literary flourish was the 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots. But these literary responses were not a sudden and immediate response to the largest communal riot that post-independent India witnessed. It was after a prolonged silence of approximately two decades that different literary voices started to appear. These different literary worlds, in their own ways, try to recapture and recreate the heinous nature of the past events and scars it has left on the affected section of people. These fictional writings are deeply rooted in the history of the 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots and seem to act as collective voices that respond to the severity of the social wound the incident inflicted.

There have been efforts to compare and contrast the literary responses that appeared after the Partition and the Riots of 1984. The most noticeable and accepted observations were made regarding the literary qualities of these texts. When the literature of the Partition was seen as contributions of great Indian English authors who displayed the most wonderful literary qualities, the literature related to the 1984 riot are not generally considered as belonging to the canonical works of Indian English Literature. Mukhopadhyay has made an observation about this in his book *Sikhs: The Untold Agony of 1984* (2015). He writes that "the riots of 1984 somehow failed in stimulating a body of astounding work either in literature or the arts. This is not to deny the artists and their contributions- but it happened in spurts and therefore failed to be a robust part of contemporary literary history" (147).

Mukhopadhyay compares the literature of both incidents and the failure of the 1984 Riots in producing literature of good literary merit. A similar observation has been made by Amandeep Sandhu in 'The Carnage that Shook Society' (2014). Such observations point to the indifference of the greatest literary figures of the time to respond to the incident. Several reasons have been cited behind this lack of an expected burst of literary writings on the Anti-Sikh riots immediately after the incident. Mukhopadhyay writes," A

significant reason for artists to have fallen into the allegorical blackhole is that while there was a semblance of an ‘intellectual closure’ during Partition, the Anti-Sikh episode remained unresolved and therefore failed to coalesce as a cultural movement. Moreover, the unrest in Punjab lacked empathy even amongst victims who were separated both geographically and culturally across different parts of the country" (147).

Similar observations by known scholars attempt to highlight an intellectual closure of collective literary endeavours that possibly were visible in the years following the Partition. What is evident from such statements is the almost complete avoidance of the literary works that have appeared in recent years. Other than a sidelining of collective literary works that deal with other issues like the Anti- Sikh Riots, such literary comments might in fact lead to the forgetting of existing literary enactments that work as active statements about the truths of the incident.

These literary works written mostly by lesser-known writers attempt to communicate the realities of what happened during the three-day-long violence and the traumatic impacts it caused on the affected sections of people. The significance of these literary efforts in representing an otherwise suppressed incident and the suffering it resulted in need to be acknowledged. Not considering these literary efforts and leaving them as an insignificant body of literature that belongs to an era of intellectual closure, in fact, seems like neglecting interesting new perspectives on the incident. It is at this juncture that the scope of cultural studies as a discipline becomes significant.

While trying to look at the way transactions between language and pain happen, Veena Das writes about the interference of the political system in creating the language of a particular event to prescribe truths about it. She writes that a state tries in the “substitution of authoritarian forms of speaking in the absence of any standing language through which the pain could be addressed” (2007, 38). Das’s observation is appropriate to explain the reality of the incident, as the pain of the incident was suppressed and a language of truth was formed based on the interests of the political system.

Exposing the intervention of political interests and the influence of dominant power groups in a long-suppressed event has been carried out by these literary works. These writings that began appearing in the early years of this century, after a prolonged silence, seem to follow a common agenda - to give a voice to the suffering of the affected and

break the strategic silencing surrounding the issue. These literary works belonging to different genres can be observed as part of a collective cultural process directed at the formation of a discourse against the existing dominant narrative. The different literary responses attempt to recapture and recreate the heinous nature of the past events, which scarred the collective consciousness of the affected community. The writings which are deeply rooted in the history of the 1984 riots, looked at it from a different angle against the dominant one, act collectively and point at the severity of the social wound. The attempt here is to examine such literary works which document the suffering that the Anti-Sikh Riots resulted in. I choose literary works that are either written in English or translated into English in fictional form including both novels and short stories. Only fictional writings that are entirely focused on the events surrounding the incident are considered for the study, excluding other similar works where the riot is not the primary focus of the writers like Khushwant Singh (*Delhi*) and Amitav Ghosh (*The Shadow Lines*).

It is a known truth that post-independent India has witnessed several horrific events of communal violence. The events which wounded and stained the progressive secular goals of the largest democracy continue to occur in different magnitudes and forms. The Anti-Sikh Riots of 1984 happened in New Delhi, the capital of India, after the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. The killing was found to be instigated by a chain of events which had been in the making for decades since independence, most importantly among these was the government's implementation of Operation Blue Star a few months prior to the incident (Singh, 2009, 18). Delhi witnessed a series of violent incidents which were directed at the Sikh population, in which thousands lost their lives. The incident resulted in scathing criticism against the then-ruling government which was accused of organising the incident and then displaying criminal indifference to the incidents of violence.

The well-known writer Khushwant Singh condemned the violence and accused many known political figures for their involvement in the incident (2009, ix). While the official reports of the number of people who were killed in the incident, which was later called an organized killing of people, was estimated at 3350, the unofficial independent estimates reported the number of deaths to be a lot more than that. The fact that the truth and the transparent data of the horrific incidents were not either reported impartially or

there were unscrupulous political influences to hide the real data added to the severity of the violence.

The truth seems to be lost somewhere. The exact reporting of clear details and number of deaths and other losses that resulted did not happen. The police were criticised for either hiding the facts or being held responsible for not collecting the real information and not giving a transparent picture of the whole incident. Even the media was prevented from reporting the truth. Sanjay Suri has pointed out the fact that the relevant copies of *The Indian Express* daily, under which he had been working as a journalist during the time of the riot went missing. Neither the print media nor any television channels of the time could report even a vague picture that revealed the severity of the pogrom. (2015, viii). The lack of information about the incident was part of the hegemonic silencing of the incident. The most heinous violence that India witnessed remained undiscussed until recently. The writers of non-fictional works who wrote finally about the incident looked into this issue of a long gap of two decades.

What is now projected as history will always be revisited, reinterpreted and rewritten. There will always be attempts at tangential deviations from dominant narratives to give way to new observations. Any dominant discourse which is part of a nation's history can be challenged and resisted through literary writings. The history of the 1984 violence has been subjected to planned omissions and misinterpretations. Till very recent times, the narratives that were circulating about the incident took up a more or less “official” stand. Some writings, by reacting against the dominant narratives, including both fictional as well as non-fictional have even attempted to reveal the hidden agendas of the then ruling government which was accused of encouraging the heinous violence. These literary writings have even attempted to reveal the hidden agendas of the then ruling government which was accused of encouraging the heinous violence. This includes texts that are analysed here along with non-fictional works like Pav Singh’s *India’s Guilty Secret* (2019), *When a Tree Shook Delhi* (2007), and *1984: The Anti-Sikh Violence and After* (2015) by Sanjay Suri.

In the article discussing the repressive measures carried out by the government during and after the occurrence of the 1984 violence, the writer Parvinder Mehta proposes that, "there is the need to further unveil the repressive practices and initiate paradigm shifts

around the hegemonic discourse of 1984, that projects only a single dangerous story, perpetuated mostly as a rehashed narrative based on the official history” (2015, 4). Mehta points out that this story only propagates a limited and politicised narrative. It is at this specific point, the creative works that talk about the incident become relevant. Though the creative responses started appearing on the scene after a long period of silence, they have played a significant role in unveiling the repressive practices and in bringing forth an entirely new understanding of the incident.

The creative works that have attempted to portray the other side of history against the dominant discourse belong to diverse genres ranging from films like *Jogi* (2022), *Amu* (2005), *Punjab 1984* (2014), *31st October* (2016), *Hawayein* (2003), *Kaya Taran* (2004), to novels like *The Assassinations: A novel of 1984* (2017), *Stillborn Season* (2018), *Helium* (2013) etc. There have also appeared a number of short stories and poems reflecting on the suffering and trauma caused by the incident. *The Night of the Restless Spirits* (2020) authored by Sarbpreet Singh for example, is an anthology of short stories through which Singh has tried to bring to light the atrocities committed against the victims. Books including *Black November; Writings on the Sikh Massacres of 1984 and the Aftermath* edited by Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry (2018), and *1984 in Memory and Imagination* edited by Vikram Kapur (2016) bring together different short stories, poems and plays by different writers along with affidavits and personal interviews of the victims. *Kultar's Mime* (2014) is similarly acclaimed for adapting the violence into the form of a play written by Sarpreet Singh. Amidst the surge of the creative efforts in diverse genres to re-narrate the reality of the violence of 1984, the claims that try to establish the non-existence of a stimulating body of outstanding work in literature and arts raised by scholars like Mukhopadhyay need to be reexamined (147). It is important to note that all these creative works appeared in the beginning of the 21st century. As noted earlier, these works appeared decades later after a long silence that lasted for decades, which resulted from the inconceivable nature of the catastrophe, along with the state's intent to suppress the voices that were raised. These works were part of the occasional voices of resistance that emerged afterwards which ended up in the formation of a discourse against the dominant one. Though these creative efforts documented diverse experiences and truths from different perspectives, what appeared unanimous in all these efforts was the search for a language of trauma.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This research attempts to discuss the fictional works that are centred on the Anti-Sikh Riots/Delhi Riots that happened in the year 1984, based on the theories in Literary Trauma Studies. All the available fictional writings including novels and short stories, which are either written in English or translated into English are considered in the study as subjects for analysis. The researcher attempts to critically examine the concepts and theories in the area of Trauma Studies, focusing on the concept of unspeakability. Through the analysis of the selected fictional works, the researcher aims to problematize the unspeakability paradigm in the field as eurocentric and limited, which excludes the traumatic experiences of the non-western world. The different aspects of traumatic experiences represented in the fictional narratives are studied. The study also attempts to examine how these trauma narratives try to unearth the repressed memories of the victim community.

The objectives of the study include:

- To examine how fictional works have represented the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots
- To critically examine the representation of trauma of those affected by violence
- To establish how literary writers have countered the unspeakability of trauma
- To make a case for a non-western paradigm in the field of trauma studies which could help to understand trauma in the Indian context

1.3 Methodologies Followed

The research method pursued in the study is a textual analysis of the literary works that are based on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. The selected fictional works are analysed based on the theoretical formulations in the area of trauma studies. Each fictional work considered for analysis has been subjected to close reading to analyse the various ways in which trauma is articulated. The study is guided by the theories and concepts surrounding the unspeakability / unrepresentability of traumatic experiences. A deeper understanding of the background of the 1984 riots and the historical setting of the fictional works are gained through a detailed analysis of non-fictional literature documenting the incident. The historical approach to representing the traumatic experiences inflicted by the riots is studied by examining the major literature in the

discipline of trauma studies and the historical texts that have documented the details of the riots. The historical texts that I have focused on have mainly been written by witnesses of the incident. Some of these may not strictly qualify to be a part of mainstream history.

Fact and fiction are inseparably tied together in the fictional works of the incident. The representation of the trauma in fictional form is then an active response to the realities of the incidents of violence. The history of the incident is exposed in the narration of pain. To demarcate between fact and fiction, a deep understanding of the riots was necessary. A detailed study of the available literature focused on the riots have been carried out for the historical analysis of the primary texts. The historical writings have been helpful in establishing the role of fictional works in the rewriting of the dominant narrative.

For a detailed understanding of the unspeakability paradigm, which has been the basis of literary trauma studies, the writings of early scholars like Cathy Caruth, Anne Whitehead, Kali Tal, Shoshana Felman, Geoffrey Hartman etc. are carefully studied (Balaev, 2018, 363). Similarly, in order to understand the recent trends in the field, studies that comment on traumatic experiences outside the Western context are studied. These writings have helped to understand the diverse facets of trauma and its relevance in the context of the 1984 Riots.

1.4 A Brief Note on the Fictional Works Selected for the Study

Irene Visser writes (2014), "Trauma can be debilitating and disruptive to individuals and communities. It can also create a stronger social cohesion and a renewed sense of identity"(109-110). The role literature plays in this process is important.

The present study focuses on fictional works that have been written about the after-effects of the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots, either in English or translated into English. The works selected here include literary works relating to the Anti-Sikh Riots that have been published in the past two decades. The novels that are considered for the analysis include *Helium* (2013) by Jaspreet Singh, *Amu* (2004) by Shonali Bose, *Pages Stained with Blood* (2002) by Indira Goswami, *The Assassination* (2017) by Vikram Kapur, *Stillborn Season* (2018) by Radhika Oberoi, and *Saffron Salvation* (1999) by Simarjit Kaur. The short stories that are included in the study are part of the compiled books titled *1984 In*

Memory and Imagination: Personal Essays and Short Stories on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots (2016) compiled and edited by Vikram Kapur, the collection of short stories titled *Night of the Restless Spirits* (2020) written by Sarbpreet Singh and finally *Black November: Writings of the Sikh Massacres of 1984 and the Aftermath* (2019) edited by Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry.

All these fictional works revolve around the events that happened during the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. These writings collectively challenge the narrative about the incident popularised by the state and the repression of its history. Reviewing Jaspreet Singh's *Helium*, Harveen Sachdeva Mann writes that, the writer in the book "concomitantly seeks to articulate the deep and lingering trauma and to unearth the fearful repressed memories of a terrorised minority Sikh community on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to challenge the idealized but patently false public image of a unified, multiculturalist, secular-humanist postcolonial Indian state" (2018). What Mann has pointed out about Singh's novel is in fact, most relevant to the other fictional works as well. These works offer the rewriting of history through the representation of the repressed memories of the affected section of people. Parvinder Mehta has written about the necessity to challenge the dominant narrative on the issue. According to him, "there is the need to further unveil the repressive practices and initiate paradigm shifts around the hegemonic discourse of 1984, that projects a single dangerous story" (2015). These writers represent the necessary side of altering the discourse which was forcefully disseminated.

The common characteristic of all the chosen texts for analysis is their status as non-canonical. These literary voices outside the traditional canon have aimed to address the omissions in the established narrative of Independent India's most violent instance of communal violence. The emphasis on non-canonical works is in any case a mandate of the discipline of Cultural Studies. The focus of the study on the varied literary perspectives that have been marginalised or excluded from official historical accounts aligns closely with the disciplinary mandate for Cultural Studies.

It is the urgency of telling the truth that marks these fictional works. These works are therefore documentative in their approach to history and attempt to recollect and record the traumatic events with precision. So, as can be observed in these fictional writings, being expressive about the unrepresentability or unspeakability of what they

encountered, witnessed or heard, is not the primary focus here. It is not, therefore, in the voids or gaps, but on the contrary, in the collective response to the urgency to tell, that the trauma becomes communicated and new truths and narratives on the riots come to the fore.

***Helium* (2013) - Jaspreet Singh**

Helium is written by the Indian- Canadian author Jaspreet Singh. The novel revolves around the lives of two characters named Raj and Nelly who are traumatized by the experiences they went through during the three-day long violence in Delhi. The novel which examines the incident side by side with the Holocaust gives great significance to the severity of mental wounds and pain such incidents can inflict. The writer of *Helium* had experienced firsthand the Anti- Sikh Riots. Even after his migration to Canada, a few years following the incident, he constantly came across people who lived with the trauma caused by the incident. As Harveen Sachdeva Mann remarks, Singh is “familiar with the burdens of post-memory among Sikhs in the West, many of whom sought asylum abroad in the wake of 1984” (2018). Singh follows a multi-generic approach in the novel by incorporating various photographs, newspaper clippings, interviews, drawings, and oral histories which in effect makes his writing closer to an authentic narrative of history. Singh notes about the creative approach he used, “Most known models were inadequate to narrate November 1984. I had to figure out a new way to write. Hence, *Helium* was a resolution of such a creative crisis” (Mann, 2018). Singh shifts to a writing style, which is mainly postmodern, in his attempt to document the truths and the trauma inflicted by the Anti-Sikh violence. He employs various postmodern techniques to represent the unnarratable nature of trauma. The novel is narrated in the first-person voice of Raj who is in the process of writing a novel to make sense of his traumatic past.

Through his novel, Singh challenges the dominant narrative about the riots. He tries to establish that the history of 1984 violence has been subjected to serious omissions and misrepresentations. He attempts to establish the involvement of the then ruling political party and the heinous violence that was unleashed by comparing it to the Holocaust. Raj witnessed his professor being burnt alive by a group of perpetrators which later becomes the main cause of his trauma. The novel is presented as the result of Raj’s attempt to write about the Riots which led to his and Nelly’s trauma. He collects information and raw materials for writing the book, through which the story of what happened is

revealed. Raj says, “These notes are not about tragic industrial disasters [...] I am assembling material connected to an unspeakable event that took place in Delhi” (9).

The Assassinations: A Novel of 1984 (2017) - Vikram Kapur

Kapur attempts to unravel the harrowing experiences of the Riots through the story of two families caught between religion and violence. The transformations Prem undergoes following the traumatising experiences of being attacked by the mob of perpetrators is the main focus of the novel. The focus is on the troubles and doubts an interreligious affair between a Sikh and Hindu caused during the disturbed socio-political scenario of 1984. Kapur tries to show how the lives of normal people in the city were first affected by Operation Bluestar and then by the riots of 1984. Another significant focus in the novel is on the traumatized refugees of Partition who had to again face similar incidents of life-threatening violence. Kapur discusses the sense of distrust and doubt among communities that followed the horrors of the Partition, and how its reverberations persisted even after decades. Kapur tries to unveil the political involvement in the incident which had led to a targeted attack against the Sikhs. The novel also sheds light on the militant groups active at that time. Kapur writes with sensitivity about the transformation that happens to Raj following the way he was treated by the rioters when he was trapped in a vortex of violence. Amidst the suspicions and hatred that were common between religious communities of the time, Kapur also mentions the cooperation and sense of brotherhood that saved the lives of thousands in the riots. The novel addresses the trauma of the Partition through the parents of Prem and Deepa. This way, the writer is also able to establish the linkages between the horrors of Partition and the Anti-Sikh Riots.

Stillborn Season: A Novel (2018) - Radhika Oberoi

Oberoi's novel is centred on characters whose lives were severely affected by the riots of 1984. She chooses an experimentative narrative style which simultaneously looks at the incident from different angles through parallel plots. Each plot tells the story of a character who is either a victim of acts of violence, witness to horrific incidents, or the trauma of perpetrators. Her multi-directional style in fact effectively reflects diverse experiences of suffering and different types of trauma. The novel is divided into two sections. When the first section focuses on the different violent events during the time of

their occurrence, the second section focuses on the after-effects of those incidents. What is most peculiar about the novel is the way she brings in a sense of collectivity and collective trauma in the work. Mallika Khanna writes that Oberoi's novel is redeemed by the sense of community which is woven by the writer into the narrative structure. She adds, "Although the characters themselves are often unrelated by blood or neighbourhood, their stories are so intimately connected that there is never a sense of discontinuity" (2018).

***Saffron Salvation* (1999) - Simarjit Kaur**

This was probably the first novel in the genre of 1984 Riots fiction. The novel is written from the perspective of the members of the affected community. The plot is centred on the life of Sharn, whose life was turned upside down by the violent incidents that happened in Punjab starting from Operation Bluestar. Kaur unravels the role of the state and political forces have played in the riot and the events that led to it. The troubles that became common in Punjab and Delhi in the year 1984 is explained by putting Sharn and her relatives at the centre of the story. Their lives are irrevocably transformed by the violence of the incidents. The reality of the different incidents that happened including the Riots is explored through the traumatised Sharn. It is different from other writings on the grounds that it is written entirely from a religious and cultural angle from the perspective of the community and highlights the Sikh religious ethos and culture.

***Amu* (2004) - Shonali Bose**

Amu by Shonali Bose investigates the truth about the incident that led to the trauma of Amu/Kaju, its protagonist. The novel is about a young Indian settled in America, coming back to find her roots. Kaju, in the beginning of the novel, expresses an inexplicable need to connect with her past. Kaju loses her entire family in the Riots, and she is later adopted by Keya, who then takes her to America. Her visits to Delhi, which was once her home, start to bring back her memories which till then were hidden from her by Keya. The past begins to return to her in the form of hallucinations and nightmares, despite the continuous attempts from her foster family to hide the reality. The novel is about Kaju's journey to unravel her past and to find the answers to her trauma.

Bose attempts to bring in various other characters who were involved in the incidents or who were traumatised by it. The protagonist's efforts to unravel the truths of what happened to her family are narrated by highlighting the injustice of suppressing realities from the affected community. The novel leaves commentaries about the government's attempt to cover the truths and then to force hegemonic silencing by preventing real information of the incident from being exposed. The novel holds a significant position in the genre, and in communicating the traumatic impacts it caused.

Pages Stained with Blood (2002)-Indira Goswami

The novel was written first in Assamese under the title *Tej Aru Dhulire Dhushorito Prishtha*, and then translated into English by Pradip Acharya. It was written based on the real-life experiences of the author during her stay in the capital city. The incidents of violence and killing that reflect the reality of the riots become the subject of focus only in the last chapters of the novel. But the first-person voice, beginning from the introductory pages, attempts to articulate the traumatic impacts of the incident. The novel is written in epistolary form and deals with the experiences the narrator encountered. She witnesses death and bloodshed which leaves indelible marks of fear and trauma in her mind. Her stay in Delhi becomes unbearable in the aftermath of violence and she leaves for her home state. The title stands for a journal in which she writes down about Delhi and the place's historical significance which is later stained with the blood of the victims who take shelter in her house. The title is also a metaphor for the wounded psyche of the protagonist, haunted by her memories in the city. The novel is a documentation of her friendships with three Sikh men in Delhi. The narrator's plan to write a book about Delhi and its history ends up in writing about the traumatic memories of the carnage from a subjective angle. Goswami shows that during the three-day long violence, even the most innocent people were attacked through the story of the characters called Santokh Singh, Balbir, and Sikh Baba. The novel is a first-person account of the incidents heavily marked by autographical references.

1984 In Memory and Imagination: Personal Essay and Short Fiction on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots (2016)- Edited by Vikram Kapur

Kapur offers different fictional and real accounts of the 1984 violence in his book. What has been considered for analysis here is all the short stories that are included in the

section 'In Imagination'. The short stories that are part of the book include 'When a Big Tree Falls'- N S Madhavan, 'The Perished and the Saved' by Jaspreet Singh, 'The Morning After' by Mridula Garg, 'Trilokpuri' by Vikram Kapur, 'Dried Apricots Smell Like Dead Fish' by Pratyaksha, 'Among One's Own' by Harish Narang, and 'Karma' by Aditya Sharma. These works of short fiction address the incident from various angles and have tried to represent its traumatic impacts. The writers focus on various facets of suffering and other aspects of the incident.

N S Madhavan's story title refers to the statement Rajiv Gandhi made after the Riot took place. He writes about a Sikh woman and her son who takes shelter in a Christian convent run by nuns who offer them help by risking their lives. Garg writes about the struggles of a woman to save the life of a Sikh boy when the perpetrators attacked her house. Garg mentions the trauma of Partition and shows how 1984 resembled the horrors of Partition. 'Trilokpuri' deals with the trauma of witnessing and the guilt of not testifying against the rioters out of fear. Pratyaksha focuses on the victimization of women and the trauma through her protagonist Phulo. 'Among One's Own' focuses on the feeling of fear and insecurity that the affected community faced in the years following the violence. Aditya Sharma focuses on the trauma and financial aspects of victimization.

Night of the Restless Spirits: Stories from 1984 (2020)- Sarbpreet Singh

Sarbpreet Singh's short story collection retells the facets of the suffering of the victim community through seven different short stories. The book also includes Singh's drama titled *Kultar's Mime* which is not a part of the study. Singh's short stories critically address the dreadfulness and repressive silencing of the issue over the years through his stories. The stories are rooted in the history of the incident and look at the different ways in which people were affected and traumatized. Singh's fictional worlds challenge the dominant narrative and then provide a genealogy of violence as a political act of resistance. The traumatic impacts of violence are the main focus of the writer. The short stories included in the collection are 'Phaji', 'The General', 'The Curfew', 'Night of the Restless Spirits', 'The Court Martial', 'The Martyr' and 'The Survivor'. Each story addresses different topics that are relevant to the history of the 1984 violence. 'Phaji' recounts the life of a teenager whose life was taken away by the perpetrators during the violence. 'The General' portrays the incident's impact on the Indian diaspora in America.

‘The Curfew’ attempts to reveal the role of the state in the organization of the incident, which is then followed by inaction. ‘Night of the Restless Spirits’ offers a religio-cultural response to the incident focusing on one of the known religious figures in Sikh history. ‘The Martyr’ is focused on Sikh militancy when ‘The Survivor’ focuses entirely on the trauma of victimization.

Black November: Writings on the Sikh Massacres of 1984 and the Aftermath (2019)-
Edited by Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry

Chaudhry has compiled interviews, affidavits, plays, poems, and short stories as an attempt to document and authentically record the incident. The experiences and memories of various contributors reveal the lingering trauma resulting from the incidents of violence. Short stories part of the book includes ‘The Fiery Embrace’ by Parvinder Mehta, ‘It Doesn’t Matter Either’ by Rachel Bari, ‘Sweets of Mathura’ by Harish Narang, ‘Eyes Don’t Lie’ by Jyoti Verma, ‘When a Big Tree Falls’ by N S Madhavan, and ‘Dear Friend, the World Is an Enemy’ by Satya Vyas.

1.5 Brief Summary of the Chapters

The thesis is divided into five chapters and the conclusion. The first chapter is the ‘Introduction’, which attempts to give an outline of the study. This chapter attempts to explain the objectives of the research, methodological approaches used in the research, theoretical background, and the details of the primary texts. This chapter gives a brief idea of the existing research in the area and tries to establish the significance of the study.

The second chapter titled ‘The Historical Backdrop of the Anti-Sikh Riots: Perspectives from the Victim Community’ tries to map the history of the 1984 Delhi Riots based on the literature available and observes how the incident has found reflection in the fictional works considered for the study. This chapter concentrates on the aspects of history that have been given prominence in fictional works. The representation of the traumatic memory of the 1984 violence through the literary works is marked by historical details which expose the reality of the atrocities committed during the incident and this is one of the primary objectives of these writings. It is thus imperative for us to appreciate the validity of multiple narratives in history. The chapter aims to contextualize the incident by examining various related incidents such as Operation Bluestar, controversies

surrounding the organization of riots, its impact on the Sikh religious community, its significance within India's extensive history of communal violence, and other related topics. It is then followed by an examination of these aspects in the fictional works and explain how they play a role in the traumatic memory of the victims. This chapter examines the magnitude of the 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots as a catastrophic incident that resulted in cultural trauma of the victim community. It attempts to cross-examine different intricacies and complexities that exist surrounding the issue and addresses the complexities that exist in the historicization and narration of the incident.

The third chapter is titled 'Moving Beyond the Unspeakability Trope in Trauma Literature.' This chapter provides a genealogy of the concept of trauma, with more focus on its relevance in the area of humanities, from the beginning of the concept and the recent studies focused on trauma. This chapter gives a detailed understanding of the concept of unspeakability which is very often considered to be the result of traumatic experience. The main intention of this chapter is to emphasize and theoretically argue the necessity of moving beyond the universalising tendencies that are dominant in the area of trauma studies that consider it as a homogeneous experience. I attempt to establish the need for an alternative approach to study the trauma inflicted by the Anti-Sikh Riots of 1984, on the grounds that the representation of traumatic experiences varies based on the social, historical, cultural, and political points of views that are adapted to look into the event.

The fourth chapter titled 'The Collective Responses to the Trauma of 1984' critically analyses the fictional texts that are selected for the study to understand the different channels of traumatisation. The intention here is to emphasise the multiplicity of traumatic experiences and to point out the need to shift the focus from the unspeakability paradigm that is concentrated on the silences, repetitions, and aporias in a literary text. The different modes of traumatic expression are identified by the careful analysis of primary texts. This chapter attempts to study how alongside the traditionally emphasised way of literary representation of trauma, there are other approaches in communicating the trauma resulting from the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. The chapter includes an analysis of the trauma of characters from fictional writings based on emerging theoretical insights in the field of Trauma Studies that are focused on non-western contexts. I agree that analysing trauma in a literary text needs to incorporate other factors that influence

traumatic experiences like history, socio-economic aspects, politics and religion. The analysis has also incorporated concepts related to the unspeakable quality of trauma without rejecting it as irrelevant.

The fifth chapter titled ‘Diverse Experiences of Trauma in the Anti-Sikh Riot Fiction’ undertakes an analysis of selected fictional works to focus on the diverse experiences of trauma that have found expression in these works. Fictional characters are analysed by dividing them into three different categories based on the nature of trauma. I have tried to study the multiplicity of traumatic experiences in these works. Literature here is considered an effective medium which can reflect, and at the same time, construct, traumatic experiences. I focus on examining how literature is involved in the trauma process by an assertion of different traumatic experiences and the situations that led to it. Different factors that have led to the traumatic conditions of each category is separately studied. Just like the different external factors that channelise and shape traumatic experiences, there can be spotted diverse forms of traumatic representation in these works. In the attempts to analyse the traumatic experiences visible in the writings of the 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots, as both constructive and reflective, what has come to light is the fact that traumatic experiences appear in diverse ways and do not fit into the pre-defined conceptual categories. Based on the role of the traumatised, the representation of trauma also varies. The conclusion of the thesis summarises the key findings of the study.