

CHAPTER 4

The Collective Responses to the Trauma of 1984

Melancholia is often seen as the prevailing feature of a traumatic experience. Literary works which deal with traumatic suffering that resulted from an unfortunate catastrophe tend to deal with the theme of melancholia as if it is the main substance of trauma literature. This is evident in the portrayal of protagonists and other characters grappling with the lingering impact of past horrors on their ability to flourish in the present, as well as in the melancholic tone of the literary language, shaping the overall mood of the narrative. The heightened focus on melancholia while analysing literary texts, as a major feature of trauma, can be traced back to Cathy Caruth's theories on trauma. Irene Visser makes this observation in the article "Trauma in Non-Western Contexts" (2018). Visser has pointed out that, melancholy as the outcome of trauma was the upshot of the classical trauma theory, Caruth being the major influence (2018, 131). Veena Das, on a similar line, shares her findings about violence and the manner in which the lives of ordinary people become enmeshed in it in her essay 'The Event and the Everyday' (2007). Her take on this offers an important way to explain the way traumatic experiences vary according to the different socio-cultural landscapes. She points out that a traumatic event can "attach itself with its tentacles into everyday life and fold into the recesses of the ordinary" (2007, 01).

Non-Western scholars of trauma studies have started problematizing adherence to mourning as the major characteristic of a traumatic state (Visser, 2018, 132). According to Visser, the traumatic experience should not be always seen as limited within the definitions of melancholia, because "non-western literature offers a far broader array of responses, often including resilience and healing instead of apathy and enduring stasis" (132). It was mainly the post-colonial scholars who dealt with the traumatic after-effects of colonisation and identified the weakening capacity of trauma when it is defined through the theories of the early scholars.

I would like to point out that focusing only on melancholia and the unspeakable quality of trauma limits the potential of a literary text. Understanding and analyzing trauma in a literary text need to incorporate definitions that look for other factors like history,

testimony, socio-economic, and political as already established in the previous chapter. The pages that follow attempt to understand traumatization in the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots, through such unrestrictive channels of traumatic expression which represent collective suffering. The intention here is not to nullify the representational significance of trauma in literary works which appear through the literary language of aporias, deferrals, repetitions, absences, and different stylistic techniques and the like, which were prioritized by the early scholars. The representation of trauma in the fictional works analysed here does not question or oppose those theories. On the other hand, I observe that alongside the traditionally emphasized way of literary representation of trauma, there are a variety of approaches in communicating trauma resulting from the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. These fictional works demand to be analyzed and read through a non-limiting lens of trauma analysis that looks beyond the language of aporia and melancholia. As pointed out by Barry Stampfl in “Parsing the Unspeakable in the Context of Trauma” (2014), “traumatization need not necessarily conclude in a state of involuntary, deeply conflicted silence” (16). Rather, the representational possibilities of trauma are much more pluralistic.

4.1 Oral Histories, Personal Experiences and Testimonies

History, fiction, and trauma have formed a unique blend in the fictional writings of the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. The general understanding regarding the articulation of traumatic memories within the literary world of fiction seems to have become questionable in these writings. Literary writers’ use of different techniques to represent and communicate trauma as the only way of traumatic expression, as how it has been claimed by Caruth and others, does not seem to be completely accurate in other cultural contexts. Trauma’s representation and language in these works demand different approaches. Moreover, expression of trauma is no longer considered to be a mere artistic or literary “problem” that can be technically addressed. In the context of the majority of the writers that we are dealing with here, writing is not a professional activity. Writing about the 1984 riots was for them an attempt to personally come to terms with the horrors of the times. In this regard, writing itself is a healing activity. Secondly, most of the writers being discussed here write with a sense of passion and emotion, not generally associated with canonical Western writers. These writers had witnessed the horrors of the riots from close quarters

and therefore they have taken to writing about this with the intention to address the injustice that they felt and experienced.

There was silence for decades on the issue of the Anti-Sikh Riots and it was outside the public discussions. Later, the incidents of violence slowly entered the public imagination through survivor affidavits, interviews of the victims, investigation reports of different NGOs and other organizations, and a few official documents. Circulation of tales of victimization and witnessing among traumatized members of the affected community has also played a significant role in keeping the truths of the incidents from being erased.

Though it has accelerated in the last ten years or so, the process of integrating muted voices, photographs, and brief personal narratives with oral history has been ongoing for decades. Among a wide variety of writings that have started addressing the realities of the 1984 riots, the role played by fictional works in stitching together the truths of the incident is significant. Similar stories of victimization and survival, patterns of violence, and references about the perpetrators are seen across different literary pieces and other documents like affidavits, interviews of victims, and historical writings. The possibility of any dominant narrative influencing these written or non-written forms, as a reference of these narratives, is almost non-existent. However, the fictional narratives of the incident are a careful blend of testimonial voices, oral histories, and personal experiences. What makes the traumatic narration of these literary works different, when studied from a non-Western trauma paradigm, is the capacity of the traumatic form to bring in and emphasize the shattered voices to create a coherent narrative.

For example, Jaspreet Singh's short story titled 'The Perished and the Saved' (2016) and his novel *Helium* (2013) are heavily influenced by autobiographical details. The writer emphasizes not only the unassimilated nature of the traumatic experience but brings in a lot of other relevant factors. The narration begins with the introduction of two characters, Professor Singh and his wife Nelly, in an ordinary and casual language detailing the nature and specialities of both characters. Later, it follows with an almost unanticipated shift in the tone and language when the narration starts to portray the events of 1984, which irreparably changed their lives. After mentioning the nationalist spirit of Professor Singh, which according to him was the only reason for him to return to India, leaving behind his career and opportunities for a better life abroad, the narrator continues, " All these years I have reflected, and tried hard to pay attention to the crime from a pacified

state. But each attempt has been a failure. Perhaps this is the most complicated and painful part of the story. My only hope is that I am able to narrate the facts with the precision they demand. The task, I am sadly aware, is nearly impossible. Do, let me just focus on the only truth I know... "(2013, 129). Other than emphasizing the traumatic intensity of the experience, the narrator seems to state his intention clearly- to narrate the facts with maximum precision. It is important here to notice that even while acknowledging the difficulty in representing the reality of what happened, which led to his trauma, the narrator attempts to show the possibility and significance of bringing in the truth of the incident.

In the story, a detailed description is given regarding the group of perpetrators and the pattern of violence that followed. The narrator says, "Suddenly an angry mob, armed with the most elementary weapons (metallic rods and rubber tyres) crossed the railway line and climbed onto the platform. 'Khoon ka badla khoon se'... 'Give us that traitor Sardar.' 'Blood for blood'" (131). There is an active effort from the side of the writer to include the scenes of violence that happened across Delhi during the three days of violence. The metallic rods and rubber tyres were the most commonly used weapons of the perpetrators during the violence. The slogans "Khoon ka badla khoon" and "traitor sardar" were not, in the same manner, just part of the imagination of the writer. Slogans like "blood for blood" and "kill the Sardar" were actively used by the perpetrator groups. (Jarnail, 43). Such mention can be found in other writings dealing with the issue.

It is important to note that the details of the scenes of perpetration, which took the life of Professor Singh, are limited mainly to the nature and size of the crowd, and other background details (the presence of political party leaders at the scene of violence, negligence of the police, the narrator's continuous attempt to stop the attack against Professor Singh, and the attitude of the bystanders who were supporting the act of perpetration) showing the intensity of the scene of perpetration and the inability to represent it in words. The narration moves from the attackers putting a tyre around Professor Singh's neck to other details and comes back later to the screams of the victims. He says... "we keep hearing the screams. I still hear the screams. I can't hear enough" (133). The trauma inflicted by the incident becomes evident when the narrator explains how he keeps on hearing the screams of the victim repeatedly even after

decades following the incident. The guilt of not being able to do anything to save the life of his teacher also torments his life later along with the trauma.

The enormity of the horror that happened, which later triggered the victim's trauma, can be seen as the encounter with the 'Real'. The scene of the violence, says the narrator, "was sickening, you need to see the horror to believe the horror, and it was so unreal I almost didn't believe my own sense organs" (2013, 133). The narrator attempts to establish the complete strangeness that he experienced while encountering the Real and the inability to represent the same. He claims that the encounter with the horror was an exposure to the real itself. What happened was unlike how generally horror was imagined, portrayed and represented; "the fire and the smoke were so absolutely real, different from the way it is done in the movies" (133). What the narrator witnessed and experienced was surreal and did not match with the scenes of violence as how it is generally portrayed. The traumatic event here escaped the imaginative potential and comprehensive capacity of the human mind.

Trauma escapes representation according to the most followed definitions and theories of the discipline. The narrator restricts himself from explaining the horrific nature of the violent events that happened. The severity of the violence and thus the inability to explain and understand it is conveyed by claiming that the attack and the killing were unlike how violence is usually portrayed. Any description of the way Professor Singh was attacked and killed is absent apart from the repeated mention of the hideousness of the scene. Even while admitting the inability to remember and explain the horror, the narration simultaneously focuses on the description of the mob, the presence of political party leaders and the police that he witnessed. The horridness of the whole situation is conveyed here, after expressing the inability to comprehend and explain it in the words of an onlooker. However, the narration of the violence incorporates details that help in establishing the organized form of it.

The story attempts to talk about the persistence of the traumatic memories resulting from the incident. What is important to note is that the text's value lies in its role as a document of the riot's traumatising effects. It shows the intensity of traumatic wounds that can be inflicted upon the witnesses of the incident, even when they are not directly attacked by the perpetrators. The scenes of violence and the details of violence reflect the

crimes that happened all over the city during those days and resemble the similar literary documentation of other writers.

‘The Perished and the Saved’ like other fictional retellings of the incident, works as a record of the details of the real incidents that happened, and the traumatizing effects the incidents have resulted in. The narrative sheds light on the various ways that painful memories can arise and the profound effects they can have on a great number of people. With that said, a deliberate narrative attempt has been made to incorporate additional incident facts and background information in order to provide the greatest level of accuracy and authenticity. The same scene of violence repeats in Jaspreet Singh’s novel *Helium* as well. The scene of violence in both works reflects the reality of events and resembles other literary and non-literary narratives.

The attack of the perpetrators, the pattern they followed, and the way the murders were executed are repeated in these writings. In a similar scene of violence in the story ‘The Survivor’ Sarbpreet Singh writes, “Khoon ka badla khoon: maro, maro! (...) They brought a tyre and put it around the head of the one who had tried to fight. They poured petrol on the tyre and set it on fire. Even now I have not been able to rid my nose of the horrible smell of rubber, hair and flesh” (2020, 200). Each recollection of the traumatic event is filled with details that are carefully placed to attach the memories in the story to reality.

‘Survivor’ is also about the attack of the perpetrators in a railway station. Singh’s story shows that railway stations and trains during the three days of violence, became active sites of attack and killing. Similar to the tragic occurrences during the Partition, railway stations emerged as frequent settings for traumatic events in fictional representations of the 1984 Delhi Riots. The truth that violence was not restricted just to the capital city, and where Sikhs constituted a larger population seems to appear also in these fictional worlds. As Pav Singh pointed out in *1984: India’s Guilty Secret* (2019), “India’s sprawling railway network became an easy hunting ground for murderers- just as it had during the Partition” (32). Trains were stopped in different parts of India and Sikhs were identified, dragged out and executed following the common procedures followed everywhere else (Pav Singh, 2017, 32).

Harish Narang's story 'The Sweets of Mathura' (2019) centres on the episodes of violence that unfolded in railway stations and trains across the country following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The author aims to illustrate how railway networks once again became theatres of murder and mayhem, reminiscent of the violence during the Partition. The story portrays the group of perpetrators as acting without mercy and reason and sheds light on their political involvement and the passive responses of the police forces. According to Narang, the rioters were equipped with "sticks, lathis, ballam, etc., and some carried old tyres. In the hands of some were plastic cans, while others were empty-handed" (2019, 150). The narrative vividly depicts the brutal killing of an innocent man, set ablaze by the rioters who forcibly placed a rubber tyre around his neck—a scene echoing similar fictional portrayals by other authors.

Looting by the rioters was common during the days of violence. The businesses owned by Sikh men were attacked, looted, and then burned to ashes. The purpose was to destroy the victim community and stop every possibility of recovery and survival. For example, in the story 'Another Kharku,' Harish Narang highlights incidents of looting and deliberate attacks on businesses owned by Sikhs during the days of violence. Narang emphasizes that the rioters had a specific focus, aiming to "finish off the male members of families and burn to ashes shops and business premises ... with a slogan to 'loot the stuff from the anti-nationals' households" (158). Narang further illustrates that the rioters thoroughly emptied Mahendar Singh's house, leaving nothing behind, not even old, worn-out cycle tyres (158). The author has tried to depict the violence as organized with the intention of financially crippling the members of the Sikh.

The mention of political leaders' involvement and the negligence of the police force can also be found in these works. These literary efforts seemingly are also trying to expose the involvement of government bodies and political parties in the incident alongside the tragic experiences in a fictional language. The language and narratives of trauma, in these contexts, do not exactly deal with the silence or gaps of unrepresentability. On the contrary, the writings become an active space for revealing the truth of what happened.

Vikram Kapur's novel *The Assassinations* (2017) and his short story 'Trilokpuri' (2016) are two different fictional works that are centred on a similar scene of violence. The short story is a more developed and altered version of one chapter in the novel, both centred around the theme of the traumatic impacts of the incident. The scene of violence in both

works is shown as happening at Trilokpuri. Trilokpuri, in the discourses of the 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots holds a very tragic signification. The place stands today as the epitome of the trauma and suffering of the community of victims. Kapur's silence about the importance of the place in the story seems intentional and adds more impact to the tragic stillness surrounding the incident in a literary sense. Whereas in the novel, much importance is being given in explaining the tragedy that fell over the place. In both works, this is the place where Prem is attacked by a group of perpetrators while he is visiting his friend.

The violent incidents that happened at Trilokpuri during the three days of communal violence can be documented in all writings that have dealt with the incident. Trilokpuri was one of the poorest sections in the city where the population was constituted mainly of the Sikhs (Pav, 23), and faced the most horrific violence and attacks. "In the Anti-Sikh pogrom's official tally of 2733 casualties, 440 were from this area alone", writes Mukhopadhyay (2015, 53). The story deals with the heinous crimes that happened at Trilokpuri and the trauma that resulted from the incidents.

The value of the story lies in the way Kapur has problematized the role a particular place can play in the traumatic memory of a victim. Mohammad, Kapur's protagonist, is portrayed from the beginning paragraphs of the story as a traumatized individual through the mention of the 'prodding knot' he feels in his stomach. The symptoms that resemble higher anxiety or fear are soon revealed to be the after-effects of the traumatizing experiences Mohammad had to encounter at Trilokpuri in 1984. Reading a letter from the father of his friend Jeet, who was beaten up and murdered, suddenly leads to the coming back of memories of the incident. The heightened feeling of anxiety, fear along with other symptoms and physical gestures, and repeated memories of various incidents that happened in the past add to the writer's depiction of the protagonist as a traumatized victim in the opening pages of the story.

Kapur has attempted to bring in a variety of themes along with the traumatic implications caused by the incident. He deals with the involvement of the political leaders in the incident, the attack of the perpetrators based on the physical marks of religion, the fear and pressure the witnesses of the riots faced even after many years, the humanitarian concern of people from the community of the perpetrators to help the victims, and the helplessness of the affected community along with several other themes.

When the focus in the story is Irfan's (Mohammad in the novel) trauma after witnessing his friend succumbing to death, *The Assassinations* revolves around a lot more characters and attempts to see the impact of this incident in their later lives. In the novel, the attack on Prem is shown as led by a police constable emphasizing the horror of the situation. Here, the narration of the traumatic incident seems intentional to communicate the reality and the sense of atrocity. Trauma here cannot be defined based only on the silences or gaps that reappear in the narration. Rather, trauma in these writings is represented in a vividly descriptive language filled with details of violence. The focus here seems to be on the social, political, and situational aspects of trauma than the silences.

4. 2 Religious Trauma in the Context of the 1984 Riots

One recurring aspect of trauma visible across these different fictional worlds is the trauma caused by the attack against religious symbols and religious identity. Trauma takes a religious dimension in these writings. Religious traumatic impacts that are portrayed in these literary works are shown as resulting from the feeling of betrayal, the break of trust in society and the attack directed against a particular religious identity.

The attack aimed at the religious identity of the community and its traumatic implications is a significant aspect of these fictional works. Attacks against the religious identity of the victim community were very common during the Riots of 1984. Symbols of Sikh religious identity were repeatedly targeted. Forcefully removing the turban of Sikh men and shaving their hair and beard were common methods adapted during the three days of violence (Mukhopadhyay, 2015, 100). Gurudwaras were destroyed or vandalised.

In the fictional writings, the trauma of the community is vividly portrayed through the representation of attacks against religious symbols. It is a well-established fact that religion and religious beliefs support individuals as well as communities recovering from severe experiences that have affected them. On the contrary, these literary works reveal how religious violence can lead to traumatising effects on the members of the affected community. The traumatic impacts of the desecration of the Golden Temple during Operation Blue Star and the trauma caused by religious attacks are interconnected in most of these writings. The attack against religion that affected the victim community is depicted as beginning from the destruction of the Akal Takh. It later turned worse

because of the targeted attack against hundreds of Gurudwaras and other religious symbols.

Sarpreet Singh's 'Phaji' which is part of the collection of short stories titled *Night of the Restless Spirits* conveys the religious dimension of trauma. The narrative delves into the mental distress stemming from Operation Blue Star and the lasting psychological effects of the violence during the 1984 Riots. Mummyji in the story reflects the trauma that affected the community. She transforms into a grieving, altered self after the attack on the Golden Temple complex. The evolving alterations in her behavior demonstrate the escalating severity of the traumatic effects of the incident. Her life in the past as a young girl is shown as centred on the shrine. Though at first, she was simply aghast after the attack on the shrine and expressed pain, her condition soon turned worse. After seeing the pictures of the shattered Akal Takht, she slowly slides into intense pain and stops cooking and having food. She even struggles to drag herself to the nearby gurdwara which she used to visit regularly before the incident. Her complete inability to follow her beliefs after the incident reveals the symptoms of religious trauma. Slade et al. has defined that "religious trauma results from an event, series of events, relationships, or circumstances within or connected to religious beliefs, practices, or structures that is experienced by an individual as overwhelming or disruptive and has lasting adverse effects on a person's physical, mental, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (2023, 3). Writers including Singh has portrayed a significant number of characters in their works as victims of religious trauma including Mummyji. Singh writes that she is psychologically devastated by the incident (19). The significance of the place, the intensity of the pain that resulted from the destruction, and its significant presence in the trauma narratives of the 1984 Riots are emphasized.

Turban became a target of attack and insult during the riots. The role of the turban, long hair and beard amongst the followers of the Sikh religion is another focus of the story. The religious trauma resulting from the riots is emphasised as also being associated with the attack against Sikh religious identity. The values that are seen associated with the turban and other markers of religion are emphasized by the writer. Trauma communicated by the use of different religious markers and attacks against it has become a way of expressing trauma in Vikram Kapur's novel *The Assassinations* (2017). In the novel, on their way back after picking Rakesh up from school on the day of Indira

Gandhi's assassination, Deepa and Savitri witness Sikhs being tortured by the perpetrators. The scenes of violence detail different incidents where Sikh men were attacked. Following a situation in which a Sikh man was attacked, and his turban pulled off by a group of rioters, Kapur writes, "Three men were holding a Sikh man down on the pavement. The Sikh's hair had been cut and lay scattered around. (...) The howl erupting out of the Sikh was silenced abruptly as the man shoved a handful of his hair into his mouth" (87).

Kapur's attempt to recreate the attack directed at religious identity is representative of the other works dealing with the same topic. He shows the witnesses of the incident as developing immediate bodily reactions while watching the scene of violence. In the pages that follow, the reader sees Prem brutally attacked by the perpetrators at Trilokpuri. Kapur tries to narrate the trauma of being surrounded by a group of perpetrators who were holding hockey sticks and other weapons. When the group led by a police constable asks him to stop the car, an unease clawed at Prem's chest and stomach. He struggled to find an escape route, to save his life. Kapur attempts to narrate the fear and panic of the victims trapped in an act of violence. The perpetrators search for any mark of religion on Prem's body. "The way the police constable's eyes travelled over Prem sent a chill through Prem's body. "Isko roko, yeh saala Sikh hai", the constable shouted suddenly. Too late, Prem remembered the kara on his wrist" (2017, 89-90). Here 'kara'²⁶ becomes the mark of Prem's Sikh religious identity. Though he was not wearing a turban, he was still identified and attacked. Prem becomes traumatized though his life was saved by his friend. From then on, he fails to fall asleep disturbed by the haunting memories. Sleep deserted him since the day of the attack. The course of events in the story following this shows an entirely transformed Prem. He wakes up screaming at night. "He seemed that those four men were waiting for him each time he closed his eyes, waiting with their taunting faces and maniacal laughter to deliver the blows that flooded him with pain" (129).

After the attack, he never gets back to enjoying his old life. The trauma of the incident leads him to choose an entirely different life from then on. Religion plays a significant role in transforming him. Traumatic impacts from the incident are closely tied to religion

²⁶ The 'kara' worn by Sikh believers is a steel or iron bracelet, representing the concept of "oneness" and the eternal nature of God.

by the writer. Prem's trauma is made clear through the changes he undergoes after the event. Though he was not a strict follower of religion earlier, he later chooses the ways that are made available to him by religion and turns into a militant. Kapur here refers to the change that the members of the Sikh community went through after the riots.

A slightly different fictional context is used to showcase a different aspect of religious trauma in Rachel Bari's short story 'It Doesn't Matter Either' (2019). The story tackles the challenges faced by the victim community to follow funeral rituals and paying respects to the deceased in the aftermath of a close one's death. Bari explores the emotional struggles experienced by the parents of Jasleen, raped and killed by the rioters after finding themselves unable to carry out these essential rituals. The narrative delves into the religious significance of taking the deceased daughter's body to the Gurdwara, highlighting the complexities that arise in the process, which at the time of the event was not unusual. The story engages in a thoughtful discussion about the significance of completing traditional rituals at the Gurdwara and the cremation of the body, showing the profound trauma experienced among the victims when such practices become impossible.

Different writings show how the attempts to target religious identity were common during the days of violence and how it led to trauma. Mukhopadhyay pointed out that, the Sikhs were easily identifiable by their turbans, and this became the initial marker of Sikh identity for the rioters. According to Mukhopadhyay, this was "the first step in an attempt to annihilate the Sikh identity" (76). Survivors dealt with their religious identity in multiple ways after the incident. While some went back to a more intense or strident aspect of their faith, many were haunted by the experiences and decided to get rid of the religious markers like turban, hair, and others. Because, as Mulhopadyay writes, "they could never overcome the feeling of being spotted" (2015, 105).

Such widespread attacks based on the religious identity of the victim community led the victims to save their lives by getting rid of the turban, hair and other markers of religion. These scenarios are depicted in fictional literature, echoing the anguish experienced in real-life events of a similar nature. Eliminating the marks of religion is represented in these writings as traumatic. Fictional texts attempt to convey how such incidents severely affected not only those who had to go through similar experiences but the entire community as a whole.

The title character in Sarbpreet Singh's 'Phaji' was left with no other choice but to follow his mother's advice to save his life. Phaji was persuaded by his frightened family and friends to remove everything that identified him as a Sikh, which they found as the only way for him to survive. Their demand to change his appearance is shown to be completely unbearable and deeply unsettling to Phaji. Phaji expresses his shock and pain after listening to the requests of his family. Mummyji, Phaji's mother, sobs while making him understand the necessity of hiding his identity as a Sikh. The entire scene is represented as unfortunate and unsettling. Singh writes, "Phaji sat stone-faced in the chair, staring straight ahead, refusing to make eye contact with anyone. I could hear muted sounds of sobbing emanating from the crumpled head in the corner that was Sharan. Mummyji stood silently, leaning against the wall, silent, vicious tears that seemed to move deliberately as drops of mercury sliding down her cheeks" (2020, 28). The writer tries to convey the pain such situations cause to the members of the victim community. The involvement of other members is also mentioned, implying the collective nature of the process. The scene is represented as a forceful elimination of the most basic part of Phaji's self and identity.

Even the non-Sikhs present at the spot are shown as being deeply affected after witnessing the incident. The narrator a surge of excitement in his body every time he sees a clump of hair. He finds it deeply painful to watch. The narrator says that by the time he returned from the scene, his diaphragm was twisted and he was also hurting from the retching. He sees the changes that happen to Phaji following this. He finds Phaji's personality completely transformed. Phaji loses his confidence and arrogance, which was typical of him and starts to look sad and ordinary in the eyes of the narrator. Losing Phaji's religious identity in the story is represented as traumatic. Phaji's experience is represented as painful for everyone around him.

A similar scene appears in the story "When Big Trees Fall"(2016) by N S Madhavan. Juggy and his mother had no other way to escape from the attackers who were following them. Juggy forcefully resists cutting his hair which he finds so closely tied to his Sikh religious faith and identity. The nuns at the monastery, where Juggy and his mother had taken shelter from the perpetrators, had to apply force to cut his hair to save their lives. Juggy tries to free himself ferociously, like an animal. "Sister Mary created a trap for his knee with the crooked side of the walking stick. Sister Margarita closed his eyes with her

hand. When he started crying out loud, sister Karuna covered his mouth with her hand (...) Juggy's helplessness grew. He stopped crying" (2016, 123). The writer has tried to portray how strongly Juggy sees himself as associated with the Sikh religious identity. The pain and discomfort here are not just Juggy's. Rather the intensity of the scene is shown through the impact the incident creates on everyone around.

Parvinder Mehta's short story, 'The Fiery Embrace,' unfolds scenes of violence driven by religious identity, shedding light on the profound significance of turbans, hair, and beards within the victimized community. The protagonist, Raja, falls victim to a brutal attack, during which he is set on fire. Mehta underscores Raja's pride in the marks of his religious identity, emphasizing the subjective importance these elements held for Raja's sense of self and identity (132). Mehta effectively conveys the community's collective sentiment regarding the importance of these religious symbols. Rano, later in the story, discovers Raja's turban on the road, expressing shock and dismay at its disrespectful abandonment (136). Mehta vividly captures the community's pain and challenges arising from targeted attacks based on religious identity, as well as the profound shock and bewilderment at witnessing their religious symbols treated with not just indifference but outright hatred.

Balkar, Raja's father, faced with a life-threatening situation as attackers surrounded his shop, felt forced to remove his hair and beard. Mehta narrates the profound impact this decision had on Balkar and his family. Balkar undergoes a transformation into "a weak, frail man" in the eyes of his wife and maid. Mehta describes the shame that lingers in Balkar's eyes, a shame that permeates the family, robbing them of dignity and leaving them smeared with the pain of grief and loss (138). Mehta skillfully conveys the role these symbols of religious identity played and the enduring impact of the attacks on the victimized community.

Places of religious worship like gurdwaras and the Golden Temple can be observed as continuous mentions in fictional works, used as references to the traumatic memories of the past. These places of worship appear as memory places of the traumatic past and do not merely serve the function of shrines. For example, Goswami's mention of the Sheeshganj gurdwara in her *Pages Stained with Blood* reflects memories of the horrific incidents that happened there, portraying the place as a symbol of bloodshed and violence that the community had to go through over the years. Similarly, in Sarpreet

Singh's 'The General' gurdwara works as a constant reminder of the suffering of the community, a place for the grieving and the helpless. Pain takes a religious appeal in the story. The protagonist's trauma caused by losing her husband in the riots of 1984 is emphasized through her difficult relationship with the Sikh religion and frequent visits to the gurdwara. Gurdwara is a significant presence in the story and works as an emblem of the suffering of the protagonist and others.

4.3 Partition of India as a Point of Reference

In Goswami's *Pages Stained with Blood*, Sikh Baba remains silent and refrains from speaking. Neither the narrator nor anyone in the locality has observed him engaging in conversation or attempting to articulate any words. He stopped communicating with others ever since his daughter was raped and killed during the Partition of India and Pakistan in the year 1947. His daughter was kidnapped and raped while they were relocating to Delhi from Pakistan and he lives with the trauma left behind by the incident. He is the victim, witness, and survivor of the horrific events in history. In the novel, he is the most significant representative of the traumatic suffering of the entire community of Sikhs. He is silent, numb, and incapable of communicating through language.

The novel revolves around three main characters and the narrator's relationship with all of them. During her time in the capital city, she had made close relationships with all three of these individuals, Sikh males, whose lives had been radically upended and changed during the three days of violence that left the city in complete devastation. The fourth important character in this novel is named Sikh Baba, though his real name is never revealed in the novel by the narrator. Sikh Baba is a constant presence throughout the novel. He is there throughout the development of the story as a silent presence and representative of trauma. Sikh Baba is the human manifestation of trauma suffered by the members of the victim community. He is the representative of the pain and suffering the community members had to undergo during the horrific incidents of the partition as well as the 1984 riots.

He becomes a connecting link between the trauma the community has been going through after the Partition and the Anti- Sikh Riots. Goswami writes, "Like a madman, the Sikh Baba kept looking for Kuldeep of Khankhana Sahib. He was taken to the field

to identify the body. She had no clothes on. Her breasts had been cut off and hung on a peepal tree. Baba has not spoken since that day” (2002, 25). Sikh Baba is one of the one hundred and seventy people who came to Delhi from his village in Pakistan. The long journey filled with death and fear, witnessing his daughter’s horrific death and escaping bullets and swords- during migration to India is given special mention in the novel, by the writer. The novel shows the suffering of the community, which as represented by the writer started from the Partition of 1947 and never ended. Life for them was completely transformed into misery and hardship like the life of Sikh Baba.

Indira Goswami’s mention of the Partition is not unintentional. It almost seems impossible for the writers of 1984 fictional works to have left the trauma of the Partition unmentioned. Firstly, if we look at the intensity of the riots of 1984, it was intense enough to remind one of the terrors of the Partition. A significant and recurring mention in the fictional as well as different non-fictional writings is the 1947 Partition and the traumatic impacts that resulted from it. Trauma in these fictional renditions is not separate, caused by two isolated incidents. On the other hand, trauma is represented as a constant and never-ending process which began from the violent acts during the partition.

Similarly, in Mridula Garg’s short story ‘The Morning After’(2016), the traumatic sufferings resulting from the Partition are used to enhance the growing fear and helplessness that resulted from the violence. While encountering the violent incidents that happened during the riots, Satto is also tormented continuously by the traumatic memories from decades ago. ‘The morning after’ in the title stands for the morning that comes after the assassination of Indira Gandhi on 31st October when the events of violence turned to direct attack and killing from the less serious incidents of crime that preceded it. The fear which is introduced by the very news of Gandhi’s assassination gradually turns into the helplessness of facing the savagery of violence. The scenes of violence are approached through the eyes of Satto, a middle-aged woman who tries to save the life of a Sikh boy from the hands of a group of perpetrators.

The horror that happened in the year 1984 is represented by the writer as similar to the events of violence that happened during Partition. The attacks of violence that started after the assassination led to the return of traumatic memories from the year 1947 when she had to witness violence that turned her family into refugees. There is continuous

reference to the incidents of violence that followed Partition as if 1984 happened as a continuation and reproduced similar situations of crime and bloodshed across the country. The writer also looks at the cruelty a mob is capable of during incidents of communal violence. She writes, “Once a crowd gathers, it soon becomes a mob. A mob out to celebrate or annihilate. A man in a mob is not a man” (2016, 141). Satto’s understanding of the way people organize to kill each other is formed from what she witnessed and experienced during the Partition. Garg’s creative attempt to look back at the 1984 Riots is closely tied to the devastations and trauma caused by Partition.

The mention of the Partition is given in the first paragraph of the story and Satto's mind is shown as constantly travelling back to the horrors that had happened decades back. Garg’s character wonders, “Why remember it now? That was before Partition, before they had turned into faceless refugees”, (2016, 141) because of the flow of memories from the long-forgotten past. It is Satto's memories of the horrific events of the Partition, that she had witnessed, that led to her attempt to save the life of Sarabjit. Trauma here is not just an unhealed, unspeakable wound. It is Satto's trauma inflicted from past experiences, which leads her to act on time and to save the targeted victim. She reminds her children that they were not there in 1947 and she has already seen what the worst in similar situations can be (140).

The fictional writings of the 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots incorporate the traumatic memories of Partition. However, the connection between these two incidents is not the sole reason for their inclusion here. There is also mention of the traumatic impacts of migration and the persistent feeling of being hunted down and targeted. The victim community has been left burdened and targeted. There is the reality of human life in India after the Partition which was enmeshed in violence and the criticality of the time.

Harish Narang's ‘Another Kharku’ also illustrates the connections between trauma and violence present in both historical events. By revisiting the partition era through the recollections of his protagonist, Mahendar Singh, Narang draws parallels between the aspects of trauma experienced by the victim community during the 1984 riots and those during the Partition. Narang gives a vivid picture of the aftermath of the 1984 riots in Delhi, describing the sky as overcast with black soot and the air filled with the acrid scent of burning flesh. The protagonist reflects on this scene, comparing it to his

memories of a film called *Tamas* that depicted the violence of the Partition riots. Narang writes, “After those days, for weeks together, the sky over Delhi had been overcast with black soot and the environment filled with a pungent smell of burnt flesh. The whole sight was like what he has once seen in a film called *Tamas* based on the partition riots” (2019, 158). In subsequent paragraphs, Mahendar Singh witnesses echoes of the Partition's dark aftermath. The migration of Sikhs, forced to sell their businesses and homes, mirrors the mass exodus that occurred during the Partition. Families, after facing attacks during the riots, chose to relocate to Punjab, where the Sikh population was more concentrated, or even abroad, seeking safety from the haunting memories of the incident (159). Mahendar Singh perceives an atmosphere within India reminiscent of the conditions during the formation of Pakistan, and the similarities between the two periods are very obvious in the story. “In the scare that followed the riots, thousands of households had been uprooted. Selling their businesses which had been running well for scores of years, and well- established households for peanuts, Sikhs from all over the country had gone to Punjab, to live among their own. Similarly, Hindus had fled from Punjab to Delhi, Mumbai, whatever! Within India, an atmosphere prevailed like the one at the time of the formation of Pakistan” (2019, 159). The violent events of the 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots serve as a painful reminder of the horror of Partition.

Trauma is accompanied by the loss of trust, brotherhood and the feeling of fear and insecurity in Kapur's *Assassinations* (2017). This is portrayed as the alarming transformation that happened as a result of the Partition. The plan of interreligious marriage between Prem and Deepa brings anxiety and confusion to the plot. Troubled by the memories of the Partition and the political unrest within the nation, Deepa's parents struggled with their confusion about accepting a Sikh as their son-in-law. The tension and distrust which was caused after the Partition is expressed through the memories of Jaswant, Deepa's father. Jaswant says, “I am a refugee from Rawalpindi. I saw the worst of the madness. I saw a friend turn against friend, neighbour killing neighbour...I saw people go so completely paagal that nothing mattered to them- not friendship, not age-old relationships, all that was left was hatred- a blind, unthinking hatred that survives to this day” (2017, 27).

Jaswant's unease and anxiety worsen as the narrative approaches Indira Gandhi's assassination and the Riots. As the story develops, Jaswant's memories of Partition and

the way it transformed his life along with thousands of others start to haunt him more. His anxiety worsened when the political unrest in Punjab before the Anti-Sikh Riots turned worse. Jaswant is shown as a wounded survivor of the Partition violence who struggles to live in the present world because of the trauma inflicted by it. Even the slightest change in society unsettles him deeply showing the severity of his trauma. Kapur writes "Memories of Partition, when he and his family were forced to leave their ancestral home in Rawalpindi with little more than whatever they could carry in their hands, returned to unsettle him" (2017, 32). The intensity of the traumatic memories grows so vivid sometimes in his mind. The cries of the hate-filled mobs echoed in his ears and the stench of dead bodies lying on the streets ran up through his nostrils.

The memories of the partition narrated here resonate with the catastrophic events that happened in New Delhi. There is mention of how severely his parents were affected by the violence and the forced migration that followed the Partition. They resembled the other people who were similarly affected - those who were "far too consumed by past shadows to care about the present" (Kapur, 2017, 32). Jaswant's memories of his parents reveal how much they were traumatized by the Partition. The changes they underwent psychologically following the migration reveal the symptoms of trauma. The process of migration turned their lives upside down and ravaged their minds. They become depressed and "The impossibility of forgetting had robbed them of their ability to draw fresh breath and experience life again (..) They both had died within ten years of the partition " (33).

The recurrent mention of the traumatising aftereffects of partition enhanced the horrific ambience of the violent environment and traumas during the violence. Other than that, these references also throw light on the sufferings of the victims of Partition whose lives never went back to normal. Along with the hostility and violence, fear and trauma became the defining emotional states of the time as represented in these writings. Similar mentions appear in numerous other writings as well. Sarbpreet Singh's 'Curfew' and 'Phaji', Simarjir Kaur's *Saffron Salvation*, Radhika Oberoi's *Still Born Season*, along with similar other works have attempted to communicate the significance of looking at the trauma of both incidents as interconnected. The inability to forget life before Partition, coupled with the hardships that followed their migration to India, is a central theme in Sarbpreet Singh's *The Curfew*. In this story, which primarily addresses the

organized nature of the 1984 Anti-Sikh violence and the neglect of authorities, Singh also delves into the trauma of migration and the persistent violence that continues to affect the victims. Through the first-person narrative, the protagonist reflects on the life his family once had before their migration to India, constantly haunted by memories of a lost homeland and the ongoing trauma of displacement. He points out that “Partition had robbed my father of an education, as the family struggled to survive” (86).

These writings try to express how both incidents are intertwined as traumatizing experiences on multiple levels. The representation of the trauma of the 1984 riots brings in a lot of other aspects that are relevant to the sufferings of the affected sections.

4.4 Violence as Organized

Unspeakability can be considered as only one of the characteristics of the traumatic experience rather than taking it as its only fundamental attribute, as recent scholarship in the field suggests. So, it is important to move beyond the trope of the unspeakable to emphasize and concentrate on the various other aspects that are visible in the traumatic representation. The literary representation of the Riots of 1984 emphasizes the observations of Barry Stampfl. As he has pointed out, the literary gestures that are employed in a literary work to acknowledge the limits of language in representing the traumatic experience are limited to just showing a moral authority. Such literary gestures show the lack of commentary upon the atrocity (2014, 18). However, the way of expressing trauma and suffering in the works analyzed here is not limited to such an acknowledgement of the limits of language. These works have unquestionably played the role of commentaries upon the atrocities that happened. More than recreating the incidents of violence, with maximum precision and attention to detail, the narratives work as commentaries on the political involvement and organized structure of the incident. The testimonial nature of the majority of fictional writings makes these literary voices more credible in their attempts to talk out the truth and confront state terror and atrocities. The involvement of government and political parties is something that otherwise would have stayed suppressed forever and remained never openly expressed and known.

Other than limiting the narration to unspeakability of the atrocities that happened during the days of violence, these testimonial voices ensure that the truths of the catastrophe are

made recognizable within the discourse of the incident. So, literary accounts here have given voice and addressed the agents that lead to suffering. Mentioning the role of political parties and police in these organized scenes of violence can be found in all literary works.

The section titled 'Rioter' in Radhika Oberoi's novel *Stillborn Season* (2018) deals with the organised nature of the incidents. Hari becomes a puppet in the hands of the political leaders and takes the role of a perpetrator in the story. Oberoi tries to explain how people were bribed and forced into attacking Sikhs during the days of violence. Hari along with many others was persuaded into taking the role of perpetrator by the "party workers". They were given money, alcohol, and food to lure them into committing crimes. Oberoi also tries to recreate scenes of violence in ways similar to what can be found in other literary works. Hari and his co-workers were asked to follow certain methods of attacks and killing. They were provided with rubber tyres, kerosene and iron rods to handle their roles as planned. They were asked to burn shops owned by Sikhs and attack Sikhs who were travelling in vehicles. The rioters torched the hair of Sikh men, poured kerosene over their bodies and set them on fire. The role of the party-workers in organizing and controlling the rioters including Hari, is emphasized in the novel. Oberoi tries to show how most rioters were indifferent to committing the crime and became tools in the hands of those in power and influence.

The main cause of the narrator's trauma in *Helium* is the killing of his professor he had to witness during the violence. In the description of the scenes of violence that happened at the railway station, emphasis is given to point out the presence of the police force as well as political leaders. The narrator shares the disbelief in knowing the role of the police in the riot scene. The cops stationed at the railway station where he sees traces of violence bring relief at first. The cops were armed with guns and lathis and made them believe that the situation was under control. But as the mob became violent and prepared to burn Professor Singh alive, the cops became just onlookers. Even the continuous attempts of the narrator to force the police to take action and bring the situation under control fail. The police here are portrayed as the passive witnesses of violence and killing in the presence of the political leaders.

About the presence of the political leaders, Singh writes, " A senior Congress leader, his Nehru-Gandhi khadi clothes fluttering in the wind, is standing close to the station

master's office on the platform, guiding the mob like the conductor of a big orchestra”(2013, 31). It is significant here to point out that, even while talking about the narrator's traumatic past, there is an intentional effort from the writer to describe the role of the police and the political leaders in organising the catastrophe. The intensity of the traumatic memory here is not limiting the narrative language from paying attention to details. Rather, the writer ensures bringing clarity to the reality of the incidents that happened as a strong commentary upon the atrocities committed.

Kaju's journey to bring to light her past life in Delhi, which has led to her traumatized self, unravels slowly in the novel. Along with the story of the past that led to her trauma, Arun's involvement in the catastrophe is revealed. Arun's role in the riots of 1984, as a high-ranked civil servant in the capital city, is exposed slowly parallel to Kaju's attempts to unearth her troubled past. Nowhere in the story, the writer points out Arun as someone who played a major role in the organization of violence. But his role is indirectly implicated on multiple occasions through the realizations of his son Kabir. Kabir distances himself from his father after coming to know about the facts.

Arun loses his calmness and character while encountering queries regarding the violence of 1984. When his friends pointed out that he was in charge of important responsibilities in 1984, he became stunned and silent. He struggles to give a response to the question, presumably due to the guilt, trauma, and shame caused by his involvement. He is shown as incapable of answering the question and struggles to stay composed. Later, when Kaju directly approached him about the charge he handled during the incident, Arun immediately looked tense and annoyed at her question. He blames Kaju for getting his son interested in the issue and quickly tries to change the subject instead of giving a proper reply. The same happens when Kabir asks him a similar question. The incident is shown as the main reason that led to the troubles in Arun's and Meera's married life. The strange inactivity Arun displayed during the occurrence of the incidents of violence and completely avoiding the responsibilities he was supposed to handle because of the orders from higher authorities brought a split in their relationship.

Another credible mention of state involvement in the atrocity happens when Keya disclosed everything that happened to Kaju and her family at the time of violence. It is significant here to point out that the recollection of incidents that happened two decades back does not leave out mention of people who were responsible for the disaster that

happened to her family. The clarity given to this detail is again more important and intentional, as it was told to Keya by Shanno, Kaju's mother. The role of political leaders and the state is given in their accounts of the incidents that happened after her father and brother were killed by the rioters. Unable to recognize the intensity of cruelty that was unleashed around her, she runs in search of her mother who had gone to find help. After seeing her house being burned to ashes by the rioters, where her brother was trapped, Kaju runs to fetch her mother whom she finds near the railway station. Bose writes, "Amu saw Shanno running across the tracks on the far side of the station. She was tearing her way towards a truckload of men packed near a white Ambassador car. It had a red light on the top. The men were brandishing sticks and yelling out slogans. The little girl screamed to her mother but remained unheard" (2004,124).

Through Keya's narrative of the incidents that happened to Kaju and her family, Bose has attempted to bring to light the reality of the situation. Groups of men were brought to the areas where the Sikh population was higher and then they were given weapons to unleash violence. The state was involved and led the violence everywhere just like how it went in Kaju's locality. These literary accounts have tried to carefully demonstrate the role of the system in the incident, including the ruling governmental bodies, and the political parties. These writings prove what Jyoti Grewal has pointed out in her book *Betrayed by the State: The Anti- Sikh Pogrom of 1984* (2007). The large-scale violence that took place during the three days was, points out Grewal, "carefully orchestrated by the central authorities". She adds that "the law enforcement agencies were complicit in this orchestration" (2007, 4). So, it can be said that the literary attempts including Bose's have been playing the role of demonstrating the active involvement of the system.

Sarbjit Singh's short story 'The Curfew'(2020) is focused primarily on this topic. The story revolves around the life of a civil servant during the days of the violence and the changes it brings to his life following it. After Indira Gandhi's assassination, the government officials who were responsible for bringing the situation under control remained inactive following the order of higher officials and political leaders. The protagonist's decision to take his duties as a civil servant, denying the orders of his seniors makes him a culprit and transforms his life forever. Singh throws light on the realities of situations when even government officials had no other option than to listen to higher orders to either cooperate to organize the violence or to stay inactive for the

proper handling of the violent actions. Singh shows how police forces had played major roles in the atrocities, by helping the rioters and not taking actions to help the victims. Even those officials who wanted to handle their responsibilities were not allowed to do so. When like the protagonist, they tried to represent justice, they were handled like culprits by the higher authorities. The story is a commentary on the actual situation that existed during that time.

4.5 The Trauma of Cultural Identity

As discussed in the previous chapter, the community of Sikhs has always played important roles in Indian history. Even years before Indian independence, their roles and contributions gave the community the identity of a significant section of the region. The significant contributions of the community have led to the formation of their identity as strong warriors, hardworking, and successful and were considered, unlike the other communities in India.

The cultural identity of the community faced challenges when troubles started emerging in Punjab with the demand for Khalistan, which later led to the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. The members of the community then were seen in stark contrast to how they were seen in India till then. The ‘protectors’ of the country within a short period were seen everywhere in India as traitors and enemies. Jarnail Singh has written about this transformation; “I had read how Sikhs had fought against the atrocities of the Mughals, sacrificed their lives to fight British rule and sowed their valour against the Chinese and Pakistanis in 1962, 1965 and 1971 wars. How could the Sikhs be regarded as enemies of the country? Why did people have to connect the word ‘Sikh’ with ‘terrorist?’” (2009, 138).

The Anti- Sikh Riots saw the extreme side of this situation. The pain it resulted in and in hurting the Sikh communal identity was immense. The Partition of India in 1947, which happened with the partitioning of the traditional homeland of Punjab, which was central to the cultural identity of the community, had been yet another difficult episode in the history that happened before it (Pav, 62). But during the partition, the community was not the only section who were affected and so never felt targeted individually. But the 1984 Riots were unlike all incidents that happened so far, including the Partition, in the history of the community.

The community felt singled out and treated unfairly by their nation. For the community's members, this shift, which went beyond the point of saturation, was shocking and hard to understand. The fictional writings have attempted to share the disbelief and pain that resulted from this targeted attack and the treatment which for the members of the community was traumatic. Their writings share the pain and disbelief in the way the community was treated by the country which they always served and saw as their own.

In 'Major'(2010) Sarbpreet Singh has attempted to focus on this topic. The story is about the shock and tremors that the incident brought to the community following Operation Bluestar till the Riots of 1984. These incidents affected even the members who didn't directly identify themselves as Sikhs in the real sense of the term in Singh's story. The attack against the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of worship in the community, is depicted as an attack on the religious and cultural identity of the people. Along with all other ways of reacting to the trauma caused by the incident, there is an assertion of truth. There is an assertion and attempt to remind themselves and those who are responsible for the incident, about their significance and contributions. These assertions, alongside strongly expressing their contributions throughout history, convey the disbelief of the attack against their community and the intensity of pain it resulted in.

In the short speech, the anonymous Sikh youth gives while addressing the gathering he says, "My father came to this country forty years ago to start a new life. He became an American citizen, but he was always an Indian first, then a Sikh and finally an American. My grandfather and great-grandfather served in the Army. My family has sacrificed many men in the wars that India has fought since Independence" (2020, 46). Here, emphasis is given to the role played by their relatives and the community as a whole in the Army, to indicate their contributions to the country as members of a community and their nationalistic fervour. What is expressed here is the disbelief of being questioned about what they associate themselves with and questioned about the socio-cultural roles they represented till then.

There can be noticed active and constant assertion of their sociocultural identity and roles the community has been representing in times of crisis. In Mridula Garg's 'The Morning After' (2016), reminders of cultural identity are evident in the scenes of violence, where they are hunted down by the perpetrators. More than as reminders of their significance and uniqueness as a community, these self-assertions function also to

seek courage and moments of relief for the victims while encountering traumatising incidents. Sarabjit's thoughts while he was locked up inside Satto's store room are filled with worst fears. Garg shows how he comes to terms with those ravaging thoughts filled with fear of being killed, by telling himself about his identity as a Sikh. "You don't know me, I'm a Khalsa, equal to a hundred thousand of you. I'll not die trapped like a rat. I'll kick the door and be out to take revenge. I'll kill you all before I die. I'm ready to die for the faith" (2016, 148).

Even when he is in fear, he wonders why the guards assassinated Indira Gandhi whom they were assigned to protect. They had chosen to protect her (147). Sarabjit thinks that what the guards have done does not suit their role and identity as true Sikh warriors. He thinks that the Sikhs are not traitors and never will commit such a crime. He feels that hiding inside a store room to save his life like a coward should not be what he ought to do as a Sikh in a time of crisis. Garg writes after this, "There was just a door between him and death. He was ready. If he had to die, he had to. But he would die like a true Khalsa, after killing the enemy" (2016, 150). Re-establishing the cultural identity here is a strategy for survival and protecting him from the clutches of violence and trauma. A similar reaffirmation of cultural identity can be observed in *Saffron Salvation* as well.

Simarjit Kaur's novel deals entirely with the pronouncement of the ethos specific to the community as manifested in its attitude and aspirations which seem to play various functions. Primarily the writings that have emphasized the characteristic identity, culture, and ideals of the community function as a healing mechanism to recollect their lost faith and fervour after the incidents of violence. Apart from that, the hurt sentiments of the collectivity are also expressed. While there is an active representation of the pain and atrocities that the community had to undergo during the time of unrest in Punjab and Operation Blue Star, there can also be seen attempts to hold back the hurt faith and identity of the community. In another way, through the literary efforts, the writer seems to reaffirm the ethos and identity of the community as a means of overcoming such complexities of traumatic experiences that had marked the psyche of the community after the riots.

Sharn's transformation after coming to India from her life abroad at a time when violence hit life in Punjab is worth mentioning in this context. Sharn's affinity to the Sikh cultural

and religious identity increases as she goes through different incidents like communal clashes in Punjab, Operation Blue Star and finally the Anti-Sikh Riots. She transforms from someone less aware of the identity and spirit of the community into someone who embraces her cultural values and identity firmly. She holds on to the ethos specific to the community as she is dragged into more hardships in life due to the incidents of violence that followed.

Kaur emphasizes the identity and values of Sikhs in the novel which can be considered as a response to the sufferings of the community. She gives importance to the marks of religious identity. The characters are presented as being proud of their identity even when they are facing death at the hands of the perpetrators. Raju and Sunil when they were surrounded by the group of rioters with weapons and kerosine they shouted. " I'm proud to be a Sikh (...) Sat Siri Akal (...) I am the son of Guru Gobind Singh! I will die fighting your evil" (2019, 312). What can be found significant in Kaur's writing is the constant mention of all factors peculiar to the cultural identity throughout the novel.

A similar insistence on the cultural and religious factors of identity appears as a result of the trauma in Sarbpreet Singh's 'The General' (2020). Raja becomes more inclined to his beliefs and involved with the other members of the community. He starts to wear turban, grows his beard and finds it significant to acknowledge his beliefs and identity as a Sikh. Raja's transformation is shown in the story through the eyes of his wife. "He had stopped shaving and was letting his hair grow, which worried me (...). I wasn't the least surprised when Raja declared that he was returning to his Sikh identity. Raja told me with great pride that finally he was going to become an Amritdhari Sikh or a Khalsa" (2020, 53). Trauma resulting from the damage to communal identity in these contexts is expressed through a more rigid and visible proclamation of the same. Later in the story, after Raja's death, his wife also goes through a similar transformation. The trauma of losing her husband is here communicated through her changed self and increased identification with the Sikh religious identity and culture.

The transformation these characters undergo, including Raja in 'The Major', Sharn in *Saffron Salvations* (2019) reveal a cultural manifestation of the traumatic experiences. The struggling characters of both works go through a restructuring whereby more affinity to their collective identity is attained or forcefully established. Ramona Ceciu writes in 'Trauma, Identity and Culture: An Interdisciplinary and Multicultural Exploration' (2019)

that traumatic experiences “get integrated into the self through a series of negotiations, emotional reverberations and (often painful) transactions, yet constantly carry within them the potential of implosion/explosion in specific circumstances; they lead to processes of restructuring both the self and identity through myriad interactions with the world”(63). The transformation or the processes of restructuring of both the self as well as identity through expressing an intense affinity and sincerity with the cultural identity is achieved through the explosion/implosion, as suggested by Ceciu, following the integration of traumatic experiences. This implosion/explosion because of the integration of trauma is shown here as having a significant role to play as far as the victim community is concerned. It is represented as having a political role considering the emancipatory role transformation provides. Traumatic suffering in these literary contexts is not suggested as a weakening or silencing state. Rather, the characters start to actively express their collective identity while going through the experience of trauma.

‘Night of the Restless Spirits’ (2020), part of the same collection of short stories written by Sarbpreet Singh, carefully brings together the trauma inflicted by different incidents and the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. The representation of trauma in the story differs from the approach of the two works analysed before. The story is heavily filled with mentions of different elements that are specific to the collective identity of the community. The story emphasizes the strong collective spirits of the members of the community through the character of Fateh Singh. The different aspects of cultural identity are portrayed through the character Hukam Singh who was attacked by the soldiers while he was performing inside the gurdwara. He is represented as someone who breathes ragas and Gurbani. After being attacked, "he would like to say the Sodar once again, but he can't collect his thoughts. Each time he tries to mouth the first verse, his thoughts disintegrate into visions of violence and anger and discord" (2020, 119). Different aspects of the cultural identity are emphasized in the story.

All the above-analysed literary contexts and characters signify the multiple ways traumatic experience is represented in the fictional writings written based on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots. Traumatic experiences, as seen in these writings, are influenced by various aspects like religion, culture, politics, and financial factors. The channels for traumatic expression are hence not limited to a literary language that is focused on silences and erasures.