

**STOR(Y)ING 1984:
TRAUMA, TELLING, AND THE ANTI-SIKH POGROM**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

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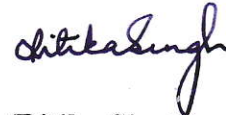


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This thesis titled "*Stor(y)ing 1984: Trauma, Telling, and the Anti-Sikh Pogrom*", submitted by me for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.



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INTRODUCTION

*The ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up,
in trauma, with the inability to have access to it.*¹

*31 October 1984: The sequence of events remains as vivid as ever.*²

This thesis seeks to study trauma of a catastrophic experience and (the possibility of) its representation in language and literature along with the politics that it reveals. Studying memory and trauma is a precarious field due to the sheer difficulty of understanding how memories are made and how they operate at the individual and collective levels. The purpose of the study is to go beyond the assumed unspeakability of trauma to locate how trauma is encoded and narrated in trauma narratives. The attempt is to look at pluriform ways in which fictional and non-fictional accounts of 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom provide a lens to study politics of remembering.

I use the word 'stor(y)ing' in the title as it succinctly captures the attempt to study: 1) the storing of trauma in individual and collective conscious and the questions it conjures on agency and politics of remembering. 2) how (psychic and somatic) trauma of the Delhi pogrom is encoded and narrated via language in the history of a community and its people. This relates to the psychological and physiological impact of the event raising larger theoretical debates on the capability of language to relay pain. 3) the way in which memories are graded or storied in these narratives. 4) how the body plays a crucial role in stor(y)ing trauma by encoding it through sensory inputs and narrating it through somatic expressions. Further, the thesis studies how trauma of one generation is transmitted through an invisible umbilical cord to the next generation that makes its own stories of the painful past that they inherit. The study goes beyond understanding trauma as a psychic entity and takes a psycho-physiological approach that moves away from Cartesian dualism to study how the mind-body encodes and narrates trauma.

¹ Cathy Caruth. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1996. Print. Pg. 152.

² Khushwant Singh. *Why I Supported the Emergency: Essays and Profiles*. New Delhi: Penguin India, 2009. Print. Pg. 54.

The context of 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom provides a rich ground for the study. There has been little academic research on fictional and non-fictional narratives emerging out of '84. Even though witness accounts, transcripts of interviews, and fictional works like novels and short-stories based on '84 have been published, no comprehensive study has taken them together to study the larger contextual and theoretical richness they offer as an academic area of investigation. It is this theoretical and contextual gap that the thesis tries to cover. Another reason for selecting this topic is aptly summarized in Uma Chakravarty's signature on my copy of *The Delhi Riots* – the role of scholarship in "joining one in bearing witnessing".

Literary Trauma Studies:

The field of trauma studies analyses how extremely distressing life experiences are narrated using language and literature. The role of memory in shaping individual and collective memory is another important area of investigation for the field. Memory, representation, and narrativization drive the major questions that the field poses. The represent-able nature of trauma with its potency to haunt the future and its refusal to detach from the past has been in debate since Cathy Caruth's assertion of its paradoxical nature. In the 1991 special issue of the journal *American Imago* titled *Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Trauma*, Caruth's introduction became the founding grounds of trauma theory. The volume³ included contributions from literary critics like Harold Bloom and Shoshana Felman, to psychiatrists and psychoanalysts like Dori Laub. The articles ranged from the Hiroshima disaster to the Holocaust along with analysing AIDS and ageing. The aim of the volume was to look at the "how we can listen to trauma beyond its pathology" ("Introduction" 1) – an endeavour that brought with itself an attempt to enquire new ways of studying suffering in accounts of traumatic experiences. All the essays were later compiled and published in a book – *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) that altered the way in which the field of cultural studies, memory studies and literature bleed into one another. Caruth asserted that the field would challenge us "to rethink our notions of experience, and of communication, in therapy, in the classroom, and in literature, as well as in psychoanalytic theory" (3). Drawing together theorists from diverse fields

³ From the issue: Harold Bloom. "Freud: Frontier Concepts, Jewishness, and Interpretation."; Cathy Caruth. "Introduction."; Shoshana Felman. "Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching."; Dori Laub. "Truth and Testimony the Process and the Struggle.". *American Imago*. Vol. 48, no. 1, 1991, pp. 1–152. *JSTOR*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i26302521>

(Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Geoffrey Hartman, Dominick LaCapra) the foundation of trauma theory was interdisciplinary and demonstrated an ethical turn of humanities. Caruth's introductory essay functions as the reference point for the origins of trauma theory for two prime reasons: one, it became an introduction to trauma theory itself and two, it brought together psychoanalysis and literature in a radical way to look at an issue that "[i]n the years since Vietnam, the fields of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and sociology have taken a renewed interest in" (*Trauma* 1). By including literature amongst the aforementioned fields, Caruth offered a new lens to study texts and simultaneously, offered a new medium to study trauma. It sparked an interest in this merger with its share of controversies and debates that have continued to look at Caruth's introduction to argue for or against the coupling. Important contributions to the subject of trauma and literature - *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1991), *Trauma Fiction* (2004), *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds* (2012)⁴ – refer to Caruth's theorization of trauma that was first articulated in this introduction.

In this context, it is crucial to understand the possible reasons for the developments that lead to the publication of this special issue of *American Imago*. Trauma was a term used to describe a wound on the body caused by a rupture of the skin that resulted in a catastrophic reaction of the entire body (Leys 11). A degree of shock and suddenness surrounded the concept with the subject's unpreparedness to face such an experience. With Freud, trauma moved into the realm of the psychological from the physiological. Jean Martin Charcot, under whom Freud trained, specialized in the treatment of hysteria in women and was the first to observe "the fact that hysterical attacks are dissociative problems—the results of having endured unbearable experiences" (Van der Kolk et al. 50). In public demonstrations, Charcot hypnotized his patients and urged them to narrate their traumatic dreams and hallucinations which seemingly cured them of their hysteria. Charcot's student, Pierre Janet, also looked at the psychological aspects of trauma and its implications on a subject's behavioural tendencies. Freud, however, was influenced by Joseph Breuer's treatment of a patient named Anna O., a case which Breuer used to conceptualize the

⁴ Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Taylor & Francis, 1992. Print.
Anne Whitehead. *Trauma Fiction*. Edinburgh University Press, 2004. Print.
Stef Craps. *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*. Springer, 2012. Print.

role of hypnosis and cathartic talking cure in the treatment of hysteria. Taking this forward, both Freud and Breuer worked together to publish *Studies on Hysteria* in 1895.

Post the World Wars, soldiers returning from the war scene were administered psychological first aid in the form of electrical shock and hypnosis in an attempt to cure them of “shell-shock” that brought on symptoms like depression and memory loss. However, Chaim Shatan and Robert Jay Lifton formulated a condition termed as “Post-Vietnam Syndrome”⁵ in 1972 after studying the psychological effects of the Vietnam War on veterans. Their main contribution to the field was their insistence on the inclusion of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder to the list of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) by the American Psychiatric Association that was successfully done in 1980. Group sessions wherein the soldiers were encouraged to share experiences with others gradually expanded to include women in the 1970s with the inclusion of rape, incest, child abuse and domestic violence as traumatic experiences. Exposure to multiple traumatic events by an individual was developed into a theory of “Complex Trauma” by Judith Herman. Her book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) looked at domestic abuse, father- daughter incest and wars to explore the psychosocial impact of these and to investigate whether recovery is possible.

However, the most important work that Caruth repetitively references in most of her work including her introduction is Freud’s “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1920) in which he postulated that a ‘death drive’ works in opposition to the libidinal ‘pleasure drive’. This was explained as a battle between eros and thanatos – the former being a sex drive that comes with an affirmation to live and latter was defined as a human instinct that seeks to “lead organic life back into the inanimate state...” (Ego 37). The purpose of the death drive is then to return the subject into a state of quiescence that was disrupted by life. In introducing this contestation between the two instincts, he moved beyond the pleasure principle because it did not explain repetitive disturbing dreams in trauma patients as these did not fit his theory that dreams are mediums of wish-fulfilment:

⁵ Chaim Shatan. ‘Post-Vietnam Syndrome’. *The New York Times* 6 May 1972. *NYTimes.com*. Web. 27 Apr. 2019. <<https://www.nytimes.com/1972/05/06/archives/postvietnam-syndrome.html>>.

The study of dreams may be regarded as the most trustworthy approach to the exploration of the deeper psychic processes. Now in the traumatic neuroses the dream life has this peculiarity: it continually takes the patient back to the situation of his disaster, from which he awakens in renewed terror. (*Beyond 2*)

The ‘repetition compulsion’ of these nightmares, became an important element of trauma theory. In the third section of “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, Freud studies his grandson roll a wooden reel away from himself and then pull it back. The child mumbles *fort* or ‘away’ during the first act and then *da* or ‘here’ when the wooden spool returns to him. It “was the complete game of disappearance and return” (14) and is the oscillation between renunciation of pleasure and returning to it. According to Freud, through the game, the child re-enacts the trauma of his mother leaving him to do household chores and then returning to look after him again. Freud argued that the game was the child’s way of gaining mastery over trauma in becoming the one who controls by changing his passive involvement to an active one. The subject enters a field of power play as trauma returns time and again through nightmares and hallucinations.

Caruth draws on these trajectories from the field of psychoanalysis but was also influenced by discourses from literary criticism at the time. The ambience of post-structuralism contributed significantly to her conceptions around trauma theory as she asserts that post-structuralism could, in fact, be used to address historical and political issues. Her work draws from Paul de Man’s, in particular, because of her insistence that literature has inherent contradictions. For de Man, “anxiety of ignorance” (Paul de Man 19) stems from the impossibility to ignore the text’s discrepancies and for Caruth, it is within these that the experience of trauma can be expressed. Literature uses a language that can convey the gaps and silences hence does have the power to become a fit medium to examine accounts of trauma. This point is developed in depth in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996).

Going back, Caruth’s “Introduction” to the special issue of *American Imago* begins with two observations: 1) PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) as “a

pathology has provided a category of diagnosis so powerful that it has seemed to engulf everything around it” (3). Rape, incest, and domestic abuse have been included in this term and its boundaries, since the term’s coinage, have been expanding. 2) attempts to provide any explanation of the disease have been futile because it has always challenged the meanings of what constitutes its pathology (3). Caruth substantiates this point by highlighting that the definition of PTSD by American Psychiatric Association as a response to an event "outside the range of usual human experience" (3) has been highly debated in fields of psychoanalysis, medicine and sociology. It answers why trauma theory has to take an interdisciplinary approach:

The phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology, and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience (4).

In doing so, Caruth indirectly answers why she draws from works on trauma from various disciplines and why essays from notable theorists from the different academic areas were included in this particular issue of *American Imago*. She clarifies that her intentions are not to provide a stable definition of trauma, but to study its impact and how it “forces us to rethink our notions of experience, and of communication, in therapy, in the classroom, and in literature, as well as in psychoanalytic theory” (4). At the onset, she elucidates that her introduction would focus on the challenges that trauma theory particularly poses to psychoanalysis and contemporary thought and that it is in no means an attempt to clearly define it. The impossibility of any clear definitions of the term, for her, lie in how trauma cannot be defined by the traumatic event itself. The event may not be equally traumatic for all, or for some, may not be traumatic at all. The trauma lies in the reception of an event:

The pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be

traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. (emphasis in original; 5).

The 'repeated possession' of the victim, links her concept to Freud's concept of repetition compulsion in his study of "war neurosis". Hence, immediately after making the above statement, she invokes Freud in his assertion that traumatic dreams are not an unconscious attempt at wish-fulfilment. However, she takes it further by arguing that there is an element of 'literality' in these dreams:

[T]he surprising *literality* and non-symbolic nature of traumatic dreams and flashbacks, which resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely, literal. It is this literality and its insistent return which thus constitutes trauma and points toward its enigmatic core: the delay or incompleteness in knowing, or even in seeing, an overwhelming occurrence that then remains, in its insistent return, absolutely *true* to the event... (5)

Caruth further argues that PTSD is a "symptom of history" because "the traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" (5). The event literally haunts the subject because it cannot be understood or completely known both, at the time of occurrence or during the time of possession. Devoid of any symbolic meanings or metaphors, traumatic dreams refuse an allocation of meaning. Evading meaning, these dreams become proof of an experience that is unassimilated and unknown by the conscious mind. While the hallucinations remain 'true to the event' in their literality, there is a crisis of truth in the experience. If the event is unknown, how can truth be ascertained? If the subject himself does not understand what the dreams literally mean, nor can psychotherapy answer these questions for the subject, how can one witness yet not be a witness at all? Caruth answers the above questions:

I would suggest that it is this crisis of truth, the historical enigma betrayed by trauma, that poses the greatest challenge to psychoanalysis, and is being felt more broadly at the center of trauma research today...In trauma

the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it, that immediacy, paradoxically enough, may take the form of belatedness. (6)

Being haunted by the event's belated return makes it possible to experience it for the first time. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud described the period of latency as the temporal gap between the event and the first appearance of its traumatic symptoms. Caruth does not view this as amnesia but argues that this quality of temporal belatedness and latency is characteristic of a traumatic event. The act of surviving the event is a moment of crisis for the survivor which takes time to undergo (9). Caruth ends the introduction with a statement that has become crucial to understanding the role of literature in trauma theory – “that the history of a trauma, in its inherent belatedness, can only take place through the listening of another” (12).

While this introduction focusses on trauma and psychoanalysis, her arguments in favour of literature as a medium that makes possible this ‘listening of another’ are made in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996). Literary language has the power to convey gaps, silences and even express what is beyond expression. If trauma is full of paradoxes, literature can offer a space to narrate these. In the essay “The Wound and The Voice” from the same book, Caruth examines Freud's choice of a literary text to ground his theory around trauma. In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” Freud interprets the Tancred and Clorinda story of Tasso's *Jerusalem Liberated* to substantiate his arguments on traumatic repetition. In the romantic epic, Tancred unknowingly kills his love Clorinda who is disguised as the enemy. He then goes to a magical forest and slashes his sword at a tree from which comes Clorinda's voice that Tancred has wounded her again. The ushering of the voice from the wound is of interest to Caruth and she asserts that it is only after listening to that voice that Tancred becomes aware of the first wound that he inflicted. This listening can only happen belatedly, though an unconscious repetition of the first act. Literature becomes crucial because:

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is at the specific point at which

knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet. (“The Wound” 2)

The possession and suppression of knowledge is a wavering between the poles of knowing and not knowing. Hence, Caruth sees trauma narratives engaging in a double telling. Narrating an experience that is not fully assimilated, telling the story of an event that is known yet unknown, and oscillating between a crisis for life and a crisis for death. She takes a deconstructive approach to literature with its inherent ability for aporias.

Caruth’s short “Introduction to Trauma, Memory, and Testimony” (2006) in *Reading On* (special issue of the journal *Comparative Literature* on trauma and witness) repeats her points on the language of trauma and the language of literature but acknowledges that other works study this in greater detail:

As Shoshana Felman demonstrates in her recent work on trauma and trials, the language of literature emerges at the moment that the frame of conscious knowledge, or the closure of history as a representation — whether legal, philosophical, or narrative — is both shattered and reformulated around the endless return that constitutes a traumatic history (Reading On 2)

Later, Caruth’s article titled “Afterword: Turning Back to Literature” (2010) returns to examine the role of literature and literary criticism in the 21st century and to “speak of the future of literary criticism is always to speak of the future of literature, which is a mode of language and an institution whose very being essentially touches on the possibility and fragility of its own future” (1091). Published in the PMLA, a decade after her introduction, the essay allocates to literature a responsibility of ensuring survival from loss, and to literary criticism of studying “the loss and survival of literature” (1087). Her call for a return of trauma theory to literature is also evinced in “Orphaned Language: Traumatic Crossings in Literature and History” (2011), where Caruth looks at writing as the orphaned medium in her examination of Plato’s *Phaedrus* and Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*. The written word is personified as

an orphan because it moves away from its parentage of speech. Words are personified as the suffering subject because they are vulnerable to constant danger as they “drift all over the place, getting into the hands of not only those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it” (Plato 521 qtd. in “Orphaned” n.p.). This drifting away makes language and literature open to be abused and traumatized. In *David Copperfield*, ‘orphaned words’ tell the story an orphan and at a certain level, also the story of Dickens as an orphan. In this the ‘orphaned language’ can adopt and narrate the writer’s childhood experiences as an orphan and at the same time, also becomes a story of survival. The novel depicts the relationship between the figure of David Copperfield and the referent – Charles Dickens – to bear witness to the trauma of latter’s own life. There is a return to questions around language, literature, and trauma in this essay, and a move from theorization to application of trauma theory. Her earlier works, stressed on a call for an interdisciplinary approach, a need to revise the way trauma is theorized, and can be seen as a preparation for future application of her concepts by her and others. A justification for the merger of boundaries, a theorization of literature as a medium to relate and study trauma and an in-depth descriptive look at different perspectives to study suffering – is a foundation that Caruth created in her earlier works. While she herself does not profoundly look at literary examples, her assertions like “we are implicated in each other’s trauma” (*Unclaimed Experience* 24), assigned a new role to language and literature.

From this Caruthian trajectory, trauma theory is rooted in the notion that trauma is inherently unspeakable. It works on an assertion that the traumatic event skips the level of consciousness at the time of occurrence and recedes deeper down into the psyche of a survivor who “bear[s] witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred” (*Trauma* 8). This inherent contradiction of experiencing yet never-fully-experiencing ushers the paradoxical nature of trauma. The struggle to be exorcised of this ‘possession by a past’ is ultimately futile because of the inability to access it. The past cannot be accessed and is resistant to conscious recall which gives trauma its defining unspeakable quality. For Caruth, literature has the power to convey gaps, silences and express what is inexpressible. If trauma is full of paradoxes, narratives can offer space to present these in “the project of listening beyond the pathology of individual suffering, to the reality of a history that in its crises can only

be perceived in unassimilable forms" (156). In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1995), Caruth argues that

Literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet (3).

However, I argue that this unspeakability has been taken for granted as the defining characteristic of trauma narratives. It ignores the distinction between the inability to talk of a traumatic past and the unwillingness to do so. In the former case, traumatic memory produces a passive subject with no agency and authority over recall while in the latter, the subject has agency to deny articulation. Silence does not automatically entail the former. While gaps may be an important element of such narratives, it is important to take that difference into account. In focusing on study of trauma, with the inclusion of both personal and collective experiences in its connotation, Linda Belau in "Trauma and the Material Signifier" (2001) contends that trauma studies "has also invited a dangerous elevation of traumatic experience to the level of an ideal" (34). The survivor is put on a pedestal as a carrier of knowledge that cannot be accessed by others. Caruth's stress on the incomprehensibility of the experience, its resistance to an assimilation in the subject's "narrative memory", for Belau, are arguments that overlook the fact that despite these definitions, trauma can be represented:

But, as we shall see, traumatic experience is not in fact inaccessible in the way or to the degree that its major theorists have asserted. Because traumatic experience—and experience in general—is tied to a system of representation, to language, it is necessary to come to an understanding of the role that the signifier plays in trauma...to move beyond the deconstructionist claim that trauma resides "beyond the limits of representation". (34)

The possibility of its representation is also the main theme of *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) by Dominic LaCapra who makes a similar argument that the survivor is the “living archive” (92) and that texts can become the gateways to enter their world of knowledge and to study the subjectivity of history. Taking this further, the Diagnostic Statistic Manual-IV Post-traumatic Stress Disorder criterion of an “inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma” (23, p 428) too misses out this point and is being challenged. Richard McNally's *Remembering Trauma* and “Debunking Myths about Trauma and Memory” questions some of the founding precepts of the field. McNally highlights the inherent contradictions in the field's basic premises. Repetition syndrome and traumatic amnesia are two syndromes that are sought in narratives as proof of the presence of trauma. The argument levied by traumatic amnesia theorists is that the mind guards itself via forgetfulness. Amnesia is a method of self-defence. However, the subject continues to be possessed by the past as the event resurfaces when the guards of consciousness are down. McNally argues that the ability of a traumatic memory to incite reactions exemplifies that the event is not lost in the unconscious abyss of the mind. It makes itself consciously felt. Then, traumatic amnesia is itself a myth. Literary studies of trauma narratives have been engrossed in locating silences. The search has been for gaps in trauma narratives with a focus on what the words conceal rather than how and what they reveal. Therefore, textual evidence of trauma needs to go beyond a study of narrative fragmentations and concealments. The redefinition of trauma as describable and not-always-unspeakable offers a new model to read accounts of trauma. Literary trauma theory then must move beyond the outdated 'Caruthian model' of trauma as unspeakable. If trauma can be articulated, how is it described via language? Naomi Mandel's *Against the Unspeakable*⁶ (2007) and Barry Stampfl's “Parsing the Unspeakable in the Context of Trauma”⁷ (2014) also fall in this trajectory that seeks to revise trauma theory's insistence on unspeakability.

Secondly, since the publication of *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Trauma Studies has privileged the psychic over the physiological. Locating the role of the

⁶ Naomi Mandel. *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America*. University of Virginia Press, 2006. Print.

⁷ Barry Stampfl. “Parsing the Unspeakable in the Context of Trauma”. *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*. Ed. Michelle Balaev. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014. 15–41. *Springer Link*. Web. 27 Apr. 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137365941_2>.

body in this discourse is crucial to understanding trauma, its impact and manifestations. In 2002, Bessel van der Kolk, one of the chief contributors to the text, addressed this gap in his article — "Beyond the Talking Cure" (1997) and argued that

Humans continuously filter, interpret, transform and make meaning out of incoming sensory input, which may come from inside: muscles, viscera, chemical balance related to food, breathing and fatigue, or from outside: images, touch, smell and sounds (6).

In 2014, Van der Kolk published *The Body Keeps the Score* to reinstate the importance of the body in encoding trauma and healing it via practices such as yoga, theatre and dance. Another key contribution to this trajectory was by Peter Levine who developed a sensorimotor approach towards a reintegration of the traumatized mind and body that dislocates the centrality of the Freudian talking cure. In the realm of psychoanalysis, Levine pioneered a body-oriented approach to trauma in *Waking the Tiger Within* (1997), *In an Unspoken Voice* (2010) and later developed 'Somatic Experiencing' therapy. It focused on healing and releasing trauma via the body. Literary studies of trauma narratives and witness accounts have given primacy to the unspoken underneath the words. The focus has been on the fragmentary nature of these reconstructions along with the inability of the traumatized subject to recollect the past. Therefore, the role of sensory and somatic experiencing is crucial to the understanding of articulation of trauma. I argue that somatic articulations and sensory witnessing need to be read in narratives of trauma. This thesis would therefore focus on the role of physical sensations in '84 testimony to locate how these accounts reveal somatic witnessing and remembering.

Another criticism levied against trauma theory is that it is Eurocentric and assumes universal applicability. While Caruth iterates that "history is precisely the way in which we are implicated in each other's trauma" (*Unclaimed* 24)", trauma theory is critiqued for its assumed universalism. This has splurged a need to decolonize trauma studies. In *Postcolonial Witnessing*, Stef Craps asserts that the founding texts "marginalize or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures" (2). This speaks of the urgent need to study trauma in non-Western contexts to open the domain and negate cultural exclusivity. The hegemonic definition

of trauma stemming from a predominantly Western medical discourse is now being questioned. In 1980, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was included in the list of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) by the American Psychiatric Association. It was defined as "a response to an event outside the range of usual human experience" (*Diagnostic* n.p.) wherein these events could be wars, bombings, rape, torture; natural disasters such as earthquakes; or manmade disasters such as accidents. Since then the term has been revised five times to broaden its scope. The cross-cultural validity of these definitions is questionable. A search for a universal, stable definition of PTSD privileges Western ontology. Several studies of medical literature have raised concerns over the DSM - III and IV definitions of PTSD in cross-cultural contexts. In "Deconstructing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder", Patrick Bracken argues that "Western psychiatry is, itself, an ethnopsychiatry: a particular, culturally based, way of thinking about and responding to states of madness and distress" (n.d.) while Devon E. Hinton in "The Cross-cultural Validity of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" questions the applicability of DSM-IV criteria to different cultural contexts. Both researches concluded that while PTSD can be diagnosable around the world, expressions and symptoms of trauma can vary culturally. Trauma theory, even in its borrowings from Western medical discourse, needs to revise what constitutes trauma by considering such revisions. In her study of the Indian Partition, Veena Das asserts that

The model of trauma and witnessing that has been bequeathed to us from Holocaust studies cannot be simply transported to other contexts in which violence is embedded into different patterns of sociality. (*Life* 103).

Therefore, it is necessary to look at the problems of applying the Western trauma-theory model blindly to non-Western contexts. Does the language of trauma borrow cultural codes? One example of this would be the demonstration of the performative mourning/lamenting ritual of '*siapa*' in some accounts of 1984. Literary trauma theory needs a culturally diverse narrative study to include such variables.

It is this trajectory that this thesis takes up as an area of study and further development by analysing how trauma can be represented through both verbal and non-verbal language; how the psychic and physiological are not two mutually

exclusive categories; and lastly, that silence does not necessarily mean unrepresentability of trauma. It takes from non-Western theories that speak of the mind-body as a whole to present a new way of understanding and reading trauma in narratives. This psycho-physiological turn of trauma studies, therefore, considers the recent developments in the fields of psychoanalysis. In “Pluralistic Trauma Theory: A New Model” (2018), Michael Balaev argues that it is important to go beyond the classical Caruthian tradition in order to understand the richness of trauma’s representability:

By moving away from a position that centralizes pathological fragmentation, the pluralistic model suggests that traumatic experience uncovers new relationships between experience, language, and knowledge that detail the social significance of trauma. The study of trauma within this approach provides greater attention to the variability of traumatic representations. (366)

Further, “trauma occurs in specific bodies, time periods, cultures, and places, each informing the meaning and representation of traumatic experience” (ibid.). These variables offer a new model for the field that can be diversified when such specifics are analysed in different subjective and cultural contexts.

1984 Anti-Sikh Pogrom:

The historical trajectory leading to the ’84 pogrom is politically complicated and contentious. In *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India: Political Leadership and Ethnonationalist Movements* (2008), Jugdep Chima traces the changes in the political environment immediately after the 1947 Partition of the Indian subcontinent to the ultimate decline of the Khalistan movement in the 1990s. Chima argues that post-partition India saw the state of Punjab rising as a “model province” by becoming the “granary of India” during the Green Revolution and by being largely free of communal violence with Sikh population seemingly “well-integrated into the national mainstream” (1). However, the ‘Punjab crisis’ of the 1980s changed the ambience of political stability in the state. It was during this time that a Sikh ethnoreligious secessionist struggle for the creation of Khalistan – a separate Sikh state – gained

momentum. Explanations of the Punjab crisis and a violent call for Khalistan range from leftist-Marxist theories based on the rising divide between the classes due to the Green Revolution to controversy theories that look at the role of Pakistan in playing with internal strife to divide India. It is argued that around 25,000 people, mostly Sikh, lost their lives in the struggle (Kataria 71). Going into the complications of this history is beyond the ambit of this thesis and cannot be justly addressed within the scope of this section.

The establishment of the Sikh panth by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 at Anandpur Sahib is seen as the birth of the Sikh *quam* – a distinct community with its own script, beliefs, and identity. Prior to the Partition of India, Sikhs served the British during the early years of their rule as members of the British Indian Army. The seed of Sikh animosity for the British can be traced to the Rowlatt Act of 1919 that gave the British power to imprison, without trial, any person suspected of plotting against the British. The wide-spread condemnation of this Act by the people of India and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi eventually led to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar on day of the festival of Baisakhi, 13 April 1919. The anger of Sikhs against the British rose when the promised 33-percent representation of Sikhs as a reward for their service was reduced to 15 out of 93 seats in the Punjab legislative council (Khwaja 1980: 204). Sikh leaders put forth the demand for a separate state, but Punjab was divided in 1947 in a way that the western Muslim-majority part of the district went to Pakistan leaving the Sikh-Hindu majority part with India. The demand for a Punjab Suba continued and in 1966 the state was again divided on linguistic lines into Punjabi-speaking Punjab and Hindi-speaking Haryana by the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi. Chandigarh was declared a union territory and the capital of both Punjab and Haryana. The sharing of Chandigarh was one of the issues that led to increasing dissatisfaction amongst the Sikhs against the Indian government. Adding to this, fair sharing of Ravi-Beas waters became another topic of debate during the time.

Politization of these issues was played out between Akali Dal representing Sikh interests, and the Congress Party under Indira Gandhi. In the 1972 state elections, Akali Dal lost to Congress and in 1973 the Akali Dal demanded more autonomy to Punjab in the form of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution that brought issues like handing over of Chandigarh to Punjab; allocating second language status to Punjabi in

neighbouring states of Himachal, Haryana, Kashmir, Delhi; proper representation of Sikhs in government sectors; and fair distribution of Ravi-Beas waters to the fore. The tussle between the Congress and Akali Dal marked the seventies. During this time, India saw a twenty-one-month long period of ‘The Emergency’ in which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi could rule by decree. In *Why I Supported the Emergency: Essays and Profiles*, Khushwant Singh notes that it was a period that saw censorship of the press and mass arrests of Opposition leaders:

I arrived back in Bombay the day the Emergency was declared. The night before, all the Opposition leaders had been picked up from their homes and put in jails across the country. The *Times of India* offices were in pandemonium. We were told that censorship had been imposed on the press: we had to toe the line or get out. (2)

In the following 1977 general elections, Congress lost for the first time after India’s independence and the Akali Dal won the Punjab Legislative Assembly elections. In *Beyond the Lines: An Autobiography*, prominent journalist Kuldip Nayar states that it in this atmosphere of defeat that the Congress cultivated a militant leader named Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale to weaken the Sikh support for its political revival:

Bhindrawale’s emergence on the political landscape of Punjab can be traced back to 1977 when the Akali-Janata government came to power after the Congress defeat in the assembly polls. Zail Singh, the defeated chief minister who later became president of India, was most unhappy... (n.p.)

A similar point is made by Mark Tully in *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi’s Last Battle* (1991) wherein he notes that Congress leader Zail Singh (who was the President of India during ’84) recommended “Sanjay [Gandhi] to look for a new religious leader to discredit the traditional Akali Dal leadership” (57). Bhindrawale became popular after the 1978 violent attack on Nirankari Sikhs – an independent sect that originated in the nineteenth century under Baba Dayal (Webster 2018, 2). The Nirankari’s viewed themselves as a reformist sect that sought to bring Sikhism “out of Brahmin

influence” that it fell under during Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s rule as he employed Brahmins to perform religious rituals (ibid. 1). Their orthodoxy was questioned because they believed in a living line of succession of Sikh gurus while orthodox Sikhs believed that after Guru Gobind Singh only the religious scriptures could be allotted that special status. The Nirankaris believed that Baba Dayal was divinely ordained to recall the *panth* back to its original duty from its strayed path (McLeod 121). Their acknowledgement of a line of gurus descending from Baba Dayal was critiqued by orthodox Sikhs. Considered heretics who insult the traditional doctrines of Sikhism, the Nirankaris were not considered members of the Sikhs commune. Representing this line of dissent, Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale played a key role in attacking the congregation of Nirankari Sikhs on Baisakhi day in 1978. The “extremist” Bhindrawale was seen by Congress as a force that can be used to dilute Sikh support of the Akali Dal whereas the Akali Dal saw him as a chief opponent of the Congress (Chima 76). In *The Sikhs of the Punjab: Unheard Voices of State and Guerilla Violence* (1995), Joyce Pettigrew interviewed farmers, pro-Khalistan activists, and military personnel on the issue of the Punjab crisis in which an account by a former Akali leader states that “Bhindranwale was a young man with honest intentions, a novice in politics. He was a *sant sipahi* [saint warrior]. He attracted the support of Sikhs of all hues” (33). Indira Gandhi-led Congress party came back to power in the 1980 election and began to see Bhindrawale’s rising local support as a problem. Two years later, Bhindrawale along with the Akali Dal strengthened their demands stated in the Anandpur Resolution by forming a movement called the Dharma Yudh Morcha. In the same year, the Golden Temple or the Anandpur Sahib, the holiest shrine of the Sikhs became his headquarters. In June 1984, in order to flush out the sant-militant leader and his followers from the temple premises, the Indian military carried out Operation Bluestar which led to the desecration of the holy premises, sacrilege of Sikh scriptures, civilian casualties, along with hurting Sikh sentiments at large (Pettigrew 35). The operation was critiqued by many for its timing and execution as 1 June ‘84 was being observed by Sikhs as the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev who founded Anandpur Sahib. Many civilians were present on site when the army entered the temple. In *Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Bluestar and After* (1984), Kuldip Nayar and Khushwant Singh note that due to the operation “feelings of hurt and humiliation among the Sikhs runs so deep that they seem to feel that they are a persecuted minority” (131). In *Betrayed by the State*, Jyoti Grewal

asserts that it was a time when “[m]uch happened which could only bring shame on the august institution of the Indian Army – people died of thirst and suffocation and of gunshots, mistreatment from the jawaans of civilian men whose hands were tied behind their back with their turbans” (71). It is this hurt that is seen as the reason that Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards on 31 October 1984.

The anti-Sikh pogrom that followed for three subsequent days has ever since been embroiled as a politically controversial issue. Conflicting interpretations of the past and antagonist struggles reveal that a range of narratives is a possible result of the relationship between a hegemonic narrative passed on as the dominant discourse of the past and a range of other narratives that emerges alongside it. This reconstruction of the past is open to discourse analysis. The 1984 pogrom is one such episode in modern Indian history that has multiple stories within it. There is a dominant narrative that records it as a case of mob-led riot spurting from feelings of anger and revenge in the general public against the Sikhs due to the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Then there are other narratives, like survivor witness accounts and citizen commission reports that have continually been resisting the reification of '84 as a riot. These sources insist that the violence was state-sponsored and orchestrated for political reasons by the Congress⁸. Nomenclature of 1984 is an evidence of the multiplicity of discourses around it. In public memory, '84 is remembered as a 'riot', violence spurting randomly as a case of mob-gone-wrong. However, those who are keenly aware of its nature resist this nomenclature and call it a pogrom – a Russian term for genocide. The two names clearly depict a contest of discourses. It was on 28 November 2018 that the Delhi High court declared that 1984 was indeed a pogrom that selectively targeted members of a particular community.

In this context, the event becomes a polylogic source of voices. 'Poly' or 'many' followed by 'logos' which has philosophical denotations of 'word', 'reason', 'thought', 'speech'; the polylogous event is the site of contest of these voices that are

⁸ Several reports on the role of the Congress in orchestrating the violence have been published by organisations such as People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL). For reference see: “Who Are The Guilty?: Report of a Joint Inquiry into the Causes and Impact of the Riots in Delhi from 31 October to 10 November 1984”. PUDR. 15 Nov. 1984. Web. 27 Apr. 2019. <<https://www.pudr.org/who-are-guilty-report-joint-inquiry-causes-and-impact-riots-delhi-31-october-10-november-1984>>.

produced from it.⁹ The event in the post-structuralist Caruthian lineage of trauma theory is the site of Derridean disruption, an abrupt emergence of an experience too shocking to be processed by the consciousness at the time of occurrence. In *Event: A Philosophical Journey Through a Concept*, Slavoj Žižek states that such an event lacks a solid comprehensible core:

This is an event at its purest and most minimal: something shocking, out of joint that appears to happen all of a sudden and interrupts the usual flow of things; something that emerges seemingly out of nowhere, without discernible causes, *an appearance without solid being as its foundation...*at its most elementary, event is not something that occurs within the world, *but is a change of the very frame through which we perceive the world and engage in it...*(emphasis added; 12)

1984 as an event lacking a solid core becomes a point of singularity that explodes plethora of discourses around it and therefore, has a polylogic character. It allows multiple narratives to emerge from it, narratives that further re-create the event. The causes of the event and its impact must be storied and then analysed in order to fathom the nature of it. 1984 began with three days of mass killings, loot and rapes; and it returns because as a traumatic event, it warrants deciphering. What led to the pogrom? How many suffered and how? Lastly, whodunit? The answers to these questions are contested and the event becomes a battlefield of ‘truth claims’. The witnesses produce knowledge about the nature of the event and the accused defend themselves through counter claims. It is a Foucauldian play of power relations. However, contesting claims of knowledge and power between both sides was already embedded in the event’s political and polylogic nature. Since 1984 as an event occurred suddenly and shockingly, the full extent of its nature has to be deciphered belatedly, in a state of ‘post-ness’. This is the point of singularity of polyphonic voices that clash in ascribing meaning to the event. In “Repressive Silences and

⁹ The possibility of ‘logos’ to have multiple meanings in different signifying processes such as literature, arts, discourses, language is shaped by Julia Kriteva in her book *Polylogue* (1977). See: H. Chen. “The Concept of the “Polylogue” and the Question of “Intercultural” Identity”. *Intercultural Communication Studies* 19 (2010): 54-64. Print.

Whispers of History”, Parvinder Mehta highlights how 1984 has become a “a dubious history, which then like a chameleon might assume mythic dimensions” (367) because of the many versions of its history in circulation. Mehta argues that there is a dominant discourse that repeats the “random vengeance motivated by earth-shaking logic of grief and trauma” and other counter discourses that reveal the orchestrated nature of the pogrom (366). Further, that there is a narrative bifurcation between the two:

Such narrative bifurcation between the predominant version of a mainstream, vocally resounding and public history premised on the logic of eradicating militancy and the reclusive, aphasiatic or quietly whispering history on the margins, that has been largely suppressed or silenced, must be understood and acknowledged for their ethical implications. (366 – 67)

These narratives or versions of a chameleon event reveal the politics of memory – a clash of memory regimes. All these versions co-exist in the world often entering a contest with each other. Different accounts that de/construct the past work to create a form of mnemohistory, an account of history mediated via memory. Therefore, the past becomes a cultural creation of the present. The role of the present in shaping past changes its definition from past as a gone-event to past as an ongoing-event. The assumed temporal gap between the past and the present can be put to scrutiny. Since it is the present that shapes the past, the past is then a thing of the present. The linear chronological link between the two fails to take this into account. The past is a narrative that is always in active construction. History is a form of memory and it is "appropriate to treat history as a mode of remembering, as a mnemonic practice" (Tamm 500). Reading trauma narratives of '84 reveals how the pogrom has allowed a voicing of this individual and collective history of suffering.

In this context though what remains without contention is that the three days of 1984 saw selective targeting of a community and its people in recent Indian history. The pogrom gave birth to endless accounts of trauma. An Orwellian dystopia finds a voice in these accounts of the killing of around 3000 men and endless accounts of rape and trauma. My interview with Uma Chakravarty on 16th December 2016

revealed to me that one only needs to mention the word '*chaurasi*' and Delhi bursts forth with stories. In the introduction to *Kultar's Mime* — a play based on 1984, Chakravarty reiterates that "[i]t's like an undercurrent in the life of Delhi. You get into a cab or go to a certain kind of gathering and say, "Where were you when 1984 happened?" and people will tell you their stories" (12). 1984 continues to echo. There is no shroud of forgetfulness in the consciousness of the city.

Chapterization

The five chapters that comprise this study largely involve discourse analysis of the primary sources. Each chapter looks at a particular aspect related to encoding and narrating the horror of '84 with a psycho-physiological approach to trauma. Theoretically, there is a linear trajectory of development with every subsequent chapter. An attempt has been made to study all sorts of bodies in this specific context — from experiences of Sikh men to that of women and children.

The first chapter, **Hair, Hurt and Humiliation: Othering the Sikh Body**, studies the way in which the Sikh body was identified and othered during the pogrom. Emblems of belonging to the community were attacked during the three days — hair was cut, turbans were set on fire, and young boys were made to braid their hair. Uma Chakravarty in *The Delhi Riots* recalls the pogrom as "the making of a minority" (34). Khushwant Singh in his essay — "On the '84 Riots" — remembers how he "never believed that I had to be one [Indian] or the other [Sikh]. I was both an Indian and a Sikh and proud of being so" (qtd. in Kapur 93). The consciousness of one's Sikh identity is a recurring motif of these accounts. Emblems of this identity — the kesh (hair), turban, salwar-kameez come into conscious presence as identifiers for the self and the other. This chapter studies how attacks on these emblems resulted in a politics of emotions based on hurt and humiliation. Both are used to cause a metaphorical death before literal death of the subject. Notions of selfhood strongly attached to dignity and self-respect are attacked before murder. This chapter analyses how Sikh men had to negotiate their identity using these emblems both during and after the pogrom. It also looks at how the Sikh body is othered using physical and psychological hurt, humiliated using jokes and language, and attacked violently during the pogrom.

Chapter II: Been There, Seen That: Sensory Witnessing analyses how the body plays an important role in encoding traumatic experiences. The senses record the event and the sensorium is relayed in trauma narratives. The chapter looks at visual, echoic, olfactory memories along with other sensations such as thirst, hunger, taste and how these are used to encode the traumatic. This form of sensory witnessing highlights that language, even with its referential limitations, can adequately record the horrific ambience of the traumatic event. The event in turn marks its disruptive potential on the site of the senses as it unfolds. Horrific images, shrill screams that rupture the air, putrid stench of burning bodies – are encoded as somatic experiences that form an important part of witnessing the event first-hand warranting presence of the one who has seen it in the flesh. This also allows individualized versions of the same event because one survivor may remember a sight, and another may remember hiding in a corner and hearing noises on the streets. For example, some witnesses of 1984 often recount that their first interaction with the pogrom was via the smell of burning flesh in the air. Ajeet Cour's account — "November 1984" — reveals that "[a]nd then, for the first time, I felt a revolting stench in the air as the wind changed direction" (qtd. in Kapur 29). The role of the senses is crucial in the study of trauma. This chapter studies how fictional and non-fictional narratives of '84 relay sensory witnessing and shed light on somatic trauma.

Chapter III: *Siapa* and Shivers: Somatic Expressions studies the way in which the body narrates the impact of the traumatic on itself. This chapter would study how sensory and somatic memories are expressed via the narrative and how the past is encoded and voiced via the somatic. This chapter looks at how the body expresses itself through somatic expressions of trauma. Shivers, tears, vomiting, nightmares, goose bumps are captured in narratives as the body expressing the undigestible weight of overwhelming experience. Somatic expressions are narrative elements that relay the horror or pain of survival rather than depicting a failure of language to convey the horrendous. This chapter takes the view that non-verbal somatic communication forms an important part of daily interactions. Breaking down during narration is not a breakdown of language in the face of atrocity but another instance of the symbiotic relationship between verbal and non-verbal language systems. The chapter takes a psycho-physiological lens to analyse somatic expressions of trauma as a communication of pain and distress.

Chapter IV: Stor(y)ing Rape: To Speak or Not to Speak looks at testimonies by women that reveal that instances of rape and sexual atrocities are often marginalized in the discourse of 1984. In *Sikhs: The Untold Agony of 1984*, an account by an eyewitness — Swaranpreet — recounts that "she [a young woman] claimed that the police had inserted a stick inside her...internal examination proved that she had been cruelly violated" (49). The testimony of another witness in *Betrayed by the State* depicts "how male family members were forced to rape their wives and daughters before the mob raped the women again" (86). The dominant image of the pogrom is of the burning of Sikh men while rape and sexual molestation are side-lined. In the case of 1984, as of the Indian Partition of 1947, experiences of women belong to the 'other side of silence'. However, a forced silencing of these narratives solely based on honour/*izzat* is an oversimplification that negates the agency of women. Are there degrees of trauma based on contexts where the social self must function? Is there a dominant trauma narrative being constructed where one trauma is given prominence over the other? Ultimately, what is the agency of women in this process of stor(y)ing? This chapter looks at how the traumatic experiences of the female body are reconstructed in trauma narratives of '84. The focus is on sexual abuse and rape. This study of accounts by women will study how different, simultaneous traumas are graded by the subject. Women saw men in their family being humiliated and murdered before they were sexually molested by the attackers. On a simpler level, their testimonies function as counter discourse to the silence that negates their experience. However, instead of looking at silence as the obvious result of their subaltern position in a patriarchal set-up, this chapter looks at how questions of agency need to be conjured when understanding women's silence. The different possible reasons for women to choose silence over narration problematizes the notion that since 1984 was traumatic and that trauma is unspeakable, women's experiences are missing from the dominant discourse of history. This chapter analyses whether silence is an adaptive preference of women or an attempt at adaptation to ensure their survival with the return of the quotidian. Finally, it looks at the different realms in which silence operates in the context of 1984. In this context, how are traumatic experiences of the female body reconstructed and what factors figure in this process? A feminist-politics lens will be used to study the experiences of the female body to examine issues of agency and articulation. It would draw from theories on gender, postmodern feminism, subaltern studies.

Chapter V: Children of the Carnage: Intergenerational Trauma studies the intergenerational impact of 1984 on children who were young witnesses of the pogrom and those who inherited its haunting legacy indirectly. The focus is on different modes of intergenerational transmission of trauma that make themselves apparent in these narratives. Further, this chapter looks at some of the ramifications of '84 on the lives of the children of the carnage. It looks at how the past has altered the lives of the next generation. It studies how the haunting legacy of the past lingers intergenerationally.

Primary Works

The primary works used for this study are both fictional and non-fictional accounts of '84. *The Delhi Riots* by Nandita Haksar and Uma Chakravarty (1987) has transcripts of interviews of about thirty Sikh and non-Sikh '84 witnesses and survivors across different age brackets and classes. Chakravarty and Haksar began the interviewing process immediately after the pogrom as the urgency allowed the original experience to be recorded before it could be “transformed by subsequent events and experiences” (9). Efforts have been made not to edit the interviews in order to retain the structure, choice of words, pauses and silences in order to allow an academic analysis of these elements. The purpose of the work was to “present the experiences and perceptions of ordinary people” in order to highlight “an evocation of feelings and perceptions about everything that has gone into placing that event within the totality of the experience of the narrator” (16-17). These interviews allow a study of the immediate impact of the pogrom on the people of Delhi while recording their emotions and feelings about the tragedy.

The second work of non-fiction in consideration is *Betrayed by the State* by Jyoti Grewal (2007). The text is loosely divided into two parts wherein the first part provides an in-depth analysis of the historical trajectory leading up to '84. This section covers important issues like nomenclature, the rise of Bhindrawale, Anandpur Resolution and provides a critique of narratives that look at '84 as an event that erupted out of a social and political vacuum. The second part is a transcript of interviews of women widowed during the pogrom, resettled in the area of Tilak Vihar in Delhi: “*Oh Chaurasiye jithe rende ne* (where the carnage-hit women live)” (77). The interviews, conducted between 2004-06, rendered in a stream of consciousness are neither edited nor organized in any particular format (78). The stories of these

women reveal how the '84 altered their reality and the way they continue to negotiate their past twenty years later. Stories of sexual harassment, rape, and molestation are also directly recorded as narrated to Grewal. Similar accounts by women are chronicled in *Scorched White Lilies of '84* by Reema Anand (2009) – who worked closely with 18 women of Tilak Vihar to setup a rehabilitation centre for them involving papad making in order to provide them a self-sufficient means of financial support. The book is a collection of emotions and traumas of the survivors of 1984 who are still fighting for survival twenty-two years after the pogrom as drug addiction and lack of finances become major factors thwarting healthy survival of the women and their children. Survivor accounts are also taken from *Sikhs: The Untold of Agony of 1984* by Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay (2015) that contains accounts of survivors, activists, journalists, lawyers, and top officials working on several carnage related issues. It includes accounts by H.S Phoolka, the lawyer who launched the legal struggle for survivors of '84. Phoolka worked with journalist Manoj Mitta on *When a Tree Shook Delhi: The 1984 Carnage and its Aftermath* (2007) which provides an in-depth journalistic reconstruction of the carnage in the first part and first-person account of Phoolka's struggle for justice in the second part. It goes into details of how the violence was orchestrated and why several legal commissions have failed to mete out justice to the victims. It includes excerpts from several legal testimonies as recorded in official affidavits filed by the victims in court. It also includes disturbing photographs of the violence that defined the carnage. Mukhopadhyay also interviewed Jarnail Singh, a journalist who hurled a shoe at ex-Home Minister, P. Chidambaram during a press conference for the patronage that the Congress party was giving to Jagdish Tytler and Sajjan Kumar¹⁰ – both named in several testimonies as key conspirators of the violence. Jarnail Singh came out with own witness account in *I Accuse...The Anti-Sikh Violence of 1984* (2009) which also includes excerpts of interviews by other witnesses and '84 survivors. Another journalist, Sanjay Suri working with the *Indian Express* during the time of the carnage wrote *1984: The Anti-Sikh Violence and After* (2015) to bring his “own experience of reporting and

¹⁰ Congress leader Sajjan Kumar was convicted for his crimes and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Delhi High Court on 17 December 2018. “1984 Anti-Sikh Riots: Sajjan Kumar Sentenced to Life Imprisonment - “2013” Verdict Reversed”. *The Economic Times*. 17 Dec. 2018. Web. 27 Apr. 2019. <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/1984-anti-sikh-riots-sajjan-kumar-sentenced-to-life-imprisonment/2013-verdict-reversed/slideshow/67123913.cms>>.

witnessing the events of 1984” (viii). This book also includes interviews of police officers who were at the forefront of the violence. Lastly, in the non-fiction category, Vikram Kapur’s *1984: In Memory and Imagination* (2016) directly records first accounts of personalities like Punjabi fiction writer Ajeet Cour; defense and police personnel. The second half of the book is an anthology of seven short stories by writers like Harish Narang; Sahitya Academy Award winner Mridula Garg, Malayalam writer NS Madhavan to name a few.

Along with the short stories in the aforementioned text, *Kala November: The Carnage of 1984* (1995) is an anthology of nineteen stories originally written in Hindi, translated by Saroj Vasishth. It includes stories by eminent writer Bhisham Sahni, Hindi and Rajasthani writer Yadvendra Sharma “Chandra” along with others with the aim of “making a better human being, a better society with literature as the medium” (xii). In this context, the text self-consciously asserts the transformative power of literature put in service of humanity. These stories imaginatively reconstruct the humane dimensions of the tragedy of ’84.

Along with these short stories, two longer works are taken for consideration. *Pages Stained with Blood* (2002) is an Assamese work by Jnanpith Award winning writer Indira Goswami. Set in Delhi amongst the backdrop of the carnage, it is a semi-fictional account that depicts the gory violence of the ‘84. It is a work that meanders genres as “the line that bifurcates autobiographical narration and fiction that is narrated in first person is often blurred and evasive” (Satyanath 70). The narrative is about different people the protagonist meets during her research for a book she’s writing on Delhi. One such person is an auto-driver named Santokh Sikh who takes the author around the city regularly. Another is Sikh Baba, a silent figure looming in the background. Another character named Balbir Singh, a kabadiwala, reveals to the protagonist that Sikh Baba has not said a word since witnessing the rape and murder of his daughter during the Partition. All the three Sikh characters either disappear or are murdered during ’84 leaving the narrator with “two wooden boxes of Balbir” (8) and a diary stained with the blood of Santokh Singh. The narrator leaves for Guwahati on 20 November 1984 with painful memories of having witnessed such human tragedy. The text ends with a gruesome account of discovering the dismembered

corpse of Santokh Singh with “no beard, no hair, only bloody lumps of human flesh” (156) that haunts the narrator for days.

Helium by Jaspreet Singh (2013) is a novel of collective silences, memory, and personal trauma. It is a story of a 19-year-old boy, Raj Kumar, who witnesses his professor being burnt alive on a railway station as they are about to leave for a class trip. Raj returns to Delhi twenty-five years later to find his professor’s widow, Nelly Singh Kaur who is now working on compiling an oral history of ‘84 as an archivist in Shimla. Both Raj and Nelly meander through memories as they open themselves up to each other to discover that the ghosts of the past continue to haunt them. Raj discovers the role his father, a former high-ranking police officer, played in the violence of ’84 and confronts him about his direct involvement in the killing of many Sikhs. The novel is full of symbolism, bird imagery, rheology, and scientific elements that come together to form a dense narrative on the cost of the carnage on personal relationships. Memory and trauma are prominent themes in this lyrical exploration of a painful past that “recurs every day, every month, every year with its own chilling periodicity” (39) and that “refused to become past” (40).

The last novel for consideration is *Amu* by Shonali Bose (2004) based on the real story of a woman named Shanti Kaur who witnessed the death of her husband and son during the carnage. Shanti Kaur later committed suicide. At the time of the carnage Bose was a student at Miranda House, Delhi University and worked actively in camps set up around colleges and schools. In an interview with David Walsh, she notes that “working in the camps and hearing the stories first-hand was an unforgettable thing”¹¹ (n.p.). The story revolves around an Indian-American girl named Kajori (Kaju) Roy who returns to Delhi to discover her roots. Set in the form of a thriller, Kaju discovered that she was orphaned as a three-year-old as her father and brother were murdered in ’84. Her mother committed suicide unable to live with her loss. The novel meanders through memory through flashbacks and nightmares that haunt Kaju as she tries to solve the mystery of her past. In the end, her adoptive mother reveals to her the truth about her painful past that rebelled against repression

¹¹ David Walsh. “An Interview with Shonali Bose, Director of *Amu*”. *World Socialist Web Site*. 27 Apr. 2019. <<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2005/10/bose-o06.html>>.

and forgetting. Trunks of memories are forced to be opened as Kaju's journey leads to an acknowledgement of both loss and survival.

A nuanced understanding of the carnage and its repercussions would have been incomplete without the informal interviews I conducted with academicians like Uma Chakravarty, Amritjit Singh (Langston Hughes Professor of English, Ohio University), Prof. GJV Prasad, late Dr. Navneet Sethi; members of the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee (DSGMC) managing the '84 memorial called "The Wall of Truth" at Rakabganj Gurudwara, Delhi; and many other strangers, acquaintances, and family members who readily narrated their stories at the mention of the word 'chaurasi'.

CHAPTER I

Hair, Hurt, and Humiliation:

Othering the Sikh Body

*I wonder if it hurts to live –
and if they have to try –
and whether – could they choose between –
It would not be – to die –
Emily Dickinson, “I Measure Every Grief”*

In the context of 1984, the body was primarily an identifier to unleash selective violence. Visual markers of Sikh identity made it possible to identify and then target members of the community. The five Ks or *panj kakke – kesh* (uncut hair), *kara* (a steel bracelet), *kanga* (a wooden comb), *kaccha* (cotton underwear) and *kirpan* (steel sword) - are symbols worn by Sikhs as emblems of belonging to the community and date from the creation of the Khalsa Panth by the founder, Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. These are markers of creation of a distinct Sikh identity and are worn as reminders of the spiritual lessons of Sikhism. Uncut hair symbolizes a respect for creation of God and is considered to be a source of spiritual powers. The *kesh* is braided and knotted into a bun at the *sahasrara* or the yogic chakra at the crown of the head – the centre of consciousness. A turban covers the *kesh* and is the most visible sign of belonging to the Sikh community – a public symbol of declaration. “*Kesan ki kijo pritpal, nah(i) ustran se katyo vaal*” (Take good care of your hair. Do not cut it.) is one of the *hukams* or orders of the Sikh *panth* (Bhangu 7). It is intricately linked to the concept of *izzat* and *maan* (pride, honour) which are “closely associated with one’s ‘social credit’; it includes all the values and attainments that others give one credit for” (Desai 468). Therefore, these symbols are intricately linked to questions of identity and belonging. This chapter looks at how these emblems and their associative pride was targeted during the pogrom leading to emotions of hurt and humiliation and what it reveals about the nature of the pogrom and its effect on a people.

Hurt can be a physical wound to the body and a psychological feeling of pain. In *Hurt and Pain: Literature and the Suffering Body*, Susannah B. Mintz highlights that “[r]esearchers agree that any pain experience combines bodily, emotional, and cultural factors in a complex interaction that makes pain at once generalizable across human bodies and specific to individuals within social and family groups” (2). 1984 reveals that bodies were hurt through physical acts of violence and sentiments of the Sikh community were hurt as a result of the pogrom. The body was pained and became a carrier of emotional hurt at the individual and collective level. Hurt can force one to re-examine one’s relation to the self, body, and world outside. Pain is therefore a philosophical discourse. The reasons why one feels hurt, how one responds to it, who and what caused it in the first place are questions that emerge from one simple question – ‘Are you hurt?’. It can be a simple physical injury that heals in a day to a devastating experience that transforms into trauma. In the latter, the subject enters a long-lasting relationship with pain. More importantly, the agents and words that wound reveal discourses of power, domination, and identity-politics. In “Disability, Pain and the Politics of Minority Identity”, Toby Siebers argues that “[m]inority identity is supposedly about pain. Produced by coercion, clung to by subjects because the pain of coercion is hard to forget” (111). Therein, hurt can be used to oppress and marginalize. The felt-experience of hurt is captured in the narratives of ’84 where a particular sort of human body was marked. It is, as Siebers highlights, a case of coercion of minority identity of a collective. Sikhs were physically harmed, murdered, molested; and the pogrom left indelible marks on the psyche of the community. This pain is apparent in its physical and emotional manifestations in the narratives of ’84. Reading hurt in language is an attempt to begin to unravel the complexities of individual and collective responses to it. It sheds light on how 1984 produced narratives of pain and in turn, how pain is narrativized. Hurt is the lens of study used in this chapter to read ’84 narratives as they reveal the physical and psychological ramifications of the pogrom.

Secondly, humiliation is another area of investigation as it was also used to harm the body and psyche of members of the community. Humiliation, like hurt, is a universal human emotion but at the same time can be contextually specific. The response to it can vary individually and it is also unleashed through actions and words. A complex human emotion, “humiliation is about *putting down* and *holding*

down. The word humiliation comes from humus, which means Earth in Latin” (Lindner 3). Through this assertion of power in holding the other down, humiliation becomes a discourse of social dynamics. Therefore, like hurt it can be an evidence of coercion. Both require an agent and a body on which hurt and humiliation can be inflicted. Further, “emotions of shame and humiliation construct, destroy, and recreate volatile hierarchies of moral and social rank” and such emotions are “influenced by and dependent on social arrangements that elicit them, and the vocabulary used to express them” (Miller x-xii). Therefore, humiliation is means to understand power and decoding it requires an understanding of emotions like honour and pride that are coded in culturally specific ways. The value attached to the turban and what it stands for is to be understood before its disrespect during the pogrom can be studied as a sign of violence. It is a sign of pride and therefore, an attack on the turban is an attack on the honour and dignity of the community.

At this juncture, it is important to understand the innate relationship between the concept of humiliation, dignity, and self-respect. The relationship between these and its complexities have led to an international network of transdisciplinary academics and theorists who came together to form the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS) group with an attempt to theorize upon and ensure equal dignity for all. Evelin Linder, the founder of the group, in her article “Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies: A Global Network Advancing Dignity through Dialogue” argues that in an expanding-global-village conceptualization of the world it is humiliation that is the root cause of violence, genocide and terrorism (66). She notes that humiliation has changed meaning from a prosocial disciplinary act to an antisocial violation of dignity emerging from the stress on equality during the French Revolution. Earlier, hierarchal societies were based on behavioural honour codes for every estate, but the challenge to old orders with an aggressive call for equality changed the way humiliation was conceptualized. *Equality in dignity* became the sought-after human right in changing world orders. However, in “Humiliation, Dignity and Self-respect”, Daniel Statman argues that a normative understanding of dignity is not enough to diagnose humiliation. He argues that dignity is often used in battles for claiming rights, but without understanding its inherent paradoxes. Statman uses Aristotelian logic to derive at the problem that “paradoxically, if humiliation is injury to dignity, then precisely because dignity is a fixed feature of all human beings,

humiliation is impossible” (525). If all human beings have dignity by virtue of them being human beings, then it is hard to lose dignity. For him, a more useful means of understanding the damage humiliation causes is through the lens of self-respect. However, self-respect is a subjective phenomenon and even those who commit wrongs against others can situate them within their own notion of self-respect. What constitutes acts worthy of bolstering or damaging self-respect is subjective and ambiguous. Statman highlights that there is a psychological-subjective and a moral-objective definition of self-respect. The former is based on whether the subject perceives their self-worth to be harmed. It is subjective as the same experience can be humiliating for one and mean nothing to another. The moral-objective model of self-respect is based on “independent standards of worthiness”. It is the latter on which a normative understanding of human dignity is based (527). The creation of a just society pertains that it is a society that does not humiliate or allow humiliation of any member of its political organism. The demand for human rights is based on such an understanding of dignity. Ultimately, humiliation is “any sort of behaviour or condition that constitutes a sound reason for a person to consider his or her self-respect injured” (Margalit 9). If a person *feels* their self-respect was unjustly hurt by another, an evidence of humiliation can be found. If the motive of the act was to cause harm to another’s being and self-worth, then whether humiliation is felt from a subjective-psychological framework or an objective-moral one need not be a topic of conjecture:

The attempt to find a general justification for this fact is ludicrous. That’s the way it is, that’s life ... To ask why the Jews in the Viennese square considered themselves degraded when their Nazi tormentors forced them to scrub the pavement is absurd. If that is not humiliation, then what is? (Margalit 127)

In this chapter, humiliation is understood as an attack and conscious disrespect of another’s self-respect. Though abstract and unquantifiable, concepts such as hurt, and humiliation can be deciphered as instances of conflict that may result in shame, anger, trauma and a violation of individual and collective selfhood. In *Humiliation, Degradation, Dehumanization: Human Dignity Violated*, C. Neuhaeuser argues that

humiliation is an act that wounds notions of self-respect wherein the subject's humanity is degraded making humiliation an experience that injures healthy notions of selfhood. It can be directed against individuals, or at groups by targeting its constitutive members. This 'direct group humiliation' occurs when members of a particular group are targeted for the sole reason of them constituting this group (22). During '84, signs that stand for the identity of the Sikh community – gurdwaras, the Guru Granth Sahib, the turban, and hair were attacked. The disrespect of the *pagri* and humiliation of Sikhs by the mob can then be regarded as a method to induce physical and psychological pain in the collective. 1984 was an 'anti-Sikh' pogrom in that it was profound in its attack on Sikhs. It was an attempt at group humiliation in identifying, othering, and attacking members of the Sikh community. Like hurt, humiliation can be individual, collective, subjective, cultural and political. It can be psychological and somatic. In theorizing the concept of humiliation, V. Geetha in "Bereft of Being" makes an interesting point that

Fundamentally, humiliation is an experience that interrogates and recasts one's relationship to oneself. Whether endured as an occurrence where one's pride and self-esteem have been bruised or suffered as a condition that is degrading and wounding, humiliation is felt, held, and savoured in the very gut of our experience, in the core of our being. It exacts from us a range of responses: from the vengeful to the stoic... These are acts that appear intent on making the human body – a certain sort of human body – bear witness against itself; which wound the being at its constitutive core. (95)

This concept of humiliation as an act that involves the body 'bearing witnessing against itself' – one that wounds notions of selfhood and pride in the victim – is a form of violence. Humiliation is then a political weapon wielded against 'a certain sort of human body' (the Sikh body in the context of 1984). The assertion that being humiliated can be a traumatic experience in that it is 'felt in the gut of our experience' and stored in the 'core of our being' encapsulates its potential to cause emotional distress that can be felt somatically. The body registers and responds to humiliation. In *Humiliation*, Wayne Koestenbaum notes that

Humiliation involves a triangle: (1) the victim, (2) the abuser, and (3) the witness. The humiliated person may also behold her own degradation, or may imagine someone else, in the future, watching it or hearing about it...Humiliation involves physical process: fluids, solids, organs, cavities, orifices, outpourings, ingestions, excrescences, spillages. Humiliation demands a soiling. Even if the ordeal is merely mental, the body itself gets dragged into the mess. (7).

As both Koestenbaum and Geetha highlight, humiliation is a spectacle that involves witnessing. It can be one's self witnessing 'against itself' or a crowd watching from the periphery. And both note that humiliation is a somatically felt experience that hurts. It is violent in its attack on the subject's body-mind. The spectacle remains etched in the mind as an episode of devaluation of self-worth. The humiliating event reveals and alters social dynamics at play. For example, in the short story "Rumours", a man is bullied by the police during the pogrom and the narrative describes the episode as one where "[t]his humiliation had shaken him. Even if no one else saw him, his own eyes were a witness to the act. He was filled with fear, pain, a guilty feeling and self-hatred" (*Kala* 33). It can be traumatic because it is a form of violence against the self. Like hurt, humiliation can be used as a weapon to cause physical and emotional harm. This chapter studies the politics of hurt and humiliation and how they were used to attack the male Sikh body as an other.

Constructing the 'Other' Body: Violence and Words

Humiliation of emblems of belonging to the Sikh community – the hair and turban, was the first signature of the pogrom. According to the Mishra Commission report, by 5:30pm on 31 October vehicles of Sikhs were being stopped and their turbans were removed and set on fire (Mukhopadhyay 75). This humiliation of the turban continued over the next two days and was a direct assault on the *izzat* of Sikhs – a strike on their pride of belonging to a community. Suddenly, Sikhs were made visible and vulnerable to attacks. Name plates of houses had to be erased of Sikh names, men were hidden, boys were made to cross-dress, women were molested and widowed. The act of othering was unleashed through language and gruesome violence. The pogrom began with the humiliation of the turban. "Since most Sikhs are

easily identifiable by their turbans, it became the initial target for rioters as witnessed during the first phase of violence when it was tossed and kicked away” (ibid. 76). The humiliation of these emblems scattered all notions of selfhood and was a sort of assertion of power. In *1984: In Memory and Imagination*, Vikram Kapoor highlights that these emblems were immediately used to construct and identify Sikhs as the other:

A few days had transformed a Sikh from go-getting super-patriot to a bad character synonymous with sedition and murder. The mere sight of a beard and turban was enough to induce the taunt of *ugarwadi* or terrorist, and turbaned Sikhs, invariably, received ‘special attention’ from the security forces. (x)

Here, the phrase ‘the mere sight of a beard and turban’ is the reduction of a human body to its markers of identity – a beard and turban. The gaze is emblematic of its dehumanizing potential and speaks of an almost carnivorous reaction to attack the body carrying these symbols. The turban and the beard are visual markers and a public declaration of Sikh identity. The othering converts Sikhs from ones who are members of the sanctity of the body of the nation to ones that gnaw at it from inside and therefore need to be exterminated. A point to note here is of the special mention of ‘security forces’ that themselves are also defenders of the ‘body’ of the nation. Here, the nation can be conceptualised as a living organism, a body in itself. The discourse of othering places Sikhs outside the nation body or rather as those that do not belong to it. The animosity of the mob is justified through a narrative that asserts that Sikhs betrayed the nation and were “snakes” who needed to be taught a lesson. On the other hand, Sikhs felt betrayed by the state machinery that did not protect its citizens for three days of the pogrom. ‘Betrayal’ became the hinge word on which both the discourses were centred. On one hand, the mob placed the Sikhs as betrayers of the nation in its discourse to justify the violence. On the other hand, Sikhs justified their feelings of hurt in that the state failed to safeguard them. A politics of hurt emerges from both these subject positions and their discourses. The ‘special attention’ of the security agents hints that the atmosphere of ’84 was replete with a mounting suspicion of the state against the Sikhs. Also, ‘taunts’ are verbal weapons of attack, a

martial unleashing of words directed to cause hurt. In taunting the Sikhs as terrorists, the method of attack is verbal and stems from them being considered harmful to the nation. This battle, between Sikhs and the agents of their othering was waged on the map of Delhi during the three days of the pogrom. In the novel *Helium*, the protagonist, Nelly recaptures the humiliation her brother was subjected to before he was set ablaze:

As soon as the police disappeared the mob reappeared, and they dragged my brother out and made him sing the national anthem and bow before a calendar image of goddess Durga and cut his hair and his beard and cut his penis and cut his testicles and doused kerosene on him and burned him...
(132).

In making Nelly's brother sing the national anthem and bow down before an image of a Hindu Goddess, the narrative also builds on othering of Sikhs – that they are not Indians, they do not belong to the body of India. Humiliation and hurt are the first mode of attack before murder. A metaphorical death, of one's self-respect and human dignity precedes actual death. The subject is made to witness humiliation and self-degradation before death. Often, this was done in front of family members who, if they survived, carried the burden of witnessing such humiliation of their loved ones. Such a spectacle of hurt may become a cause of trauma. Such acts can be read as an affirmation of the Sikh community's minority status within the national 'body' of India and an assertion of their social and cultural difference. It was the "birth of a new minority" and "the suddenness of transformation from a very visible community with 'martial' image to one that was constantly being reminded of its 'two percent status' ensured the consolidation of the feeling of being a minority community and aggravated their sense of hurt and humiliation" (Chakravarty 23). The anti-Sikh pogrom raised consciousness that Sikhs are a minority community in India. The rapid transformation of Sikhs as those that betrayed the nation was based on a discourse that redefined them as traitors. Khushwant Singh remarks how "[b]ack then, I had no idea what it means to wake up one morning and find yourself as the other" (Kapur xii). Indira Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh body guards – Beant and Satwant Singh – put the onus of the act on the entire community that needed to be reminded of its

subservient place. The three days of violence following the murder of Gandhi saw an entire community become conscious of its subordinate position. The divide between Sikhs and non-Sikhs was aggressively drawn during the pogrom.

Narratives of '84 reveal that the divide was not just relegated to the adult world. Children were also absorbing the discourse of othering. A witness – Sushant Chaturvedi, youngest to be interviewed at the age of thirteen by Uma Chakravarty in May 1985 – highlights that the divide between Sikhs and others had even crept into the consciousness of children: “Did you have this ‘us and them’ feeling?” “Yes” (466). Prakash Kaur, another survivor notes that “I was upset thinking about the communal feelings which had penetrated down to the children” (ibid. 166). It was not just the adult world where the discourse of Sikhs-as-the-other circulated, but it penetrated to the world of children. The discourse trickled down to children who re-enacted and carried forward the violence of the adult world. Jarnail Singh in *I Accuse* recollects how the park transformed into a political space after the pogrom and a simple game of touchball turned into an episode of unleashing spite: “The three of us took a while to realize that we were being hit the hardest and most often...It was a war, not a game” (16). The targeting of Sikh children by other fellow players of the game mimics the pogrom. The violence is unleashed by the children through an otherwise simple game of touchball and it depicts that the pogrom changed the quotidian even for the children. The familiar and safe recreational space of the park becomes a politically charged territory. Othering is made apparent in the willed hurt executed through the game. Playmates become hostile and the game transforms into ‘a war’. Children absorb and act out the dynamics of the adult world. This humiliation percolated into the quotidian where the othering was also voiced through jokes and taunts circulating in schools:

An extreme and callous indication of the divide between the two communities having been so easily and insensitively internalized is the fact that the kids could so easily joke about the November carnage. Soon afterwards a joke that was circulating in the upper-class schools of Delhi was “What is a Seekh Kabab?” and the answer was “A burnt Sikh!” (Chakravarty 28).

A joke is a linguistic phenomenon that can be used to target, hurt and humiliate whom it is directed at. In *Organizing Words*, Yiannis Gabriel asserts that “some jokes, especially those that reinforce stereotypes, can be a part of ritual humiliation or bullying, bolstering relations of domination and subordination” (150). Jokes on Sikhs and their suffering strengthened the discourse against them and further caused damage to their self-respect. Jokes showcased a lack of empathy and an absence of affinity with the Sikhs. Further, they concretized power relations as the discourse entered everyday language. Jokes are weapons of attack that can cause both hurt and humiliation. The fact that such jokes were circulated in upper-class Delhi schools depicts how language was used to spread animosity. Also, how children created a discourse against Sikhs and circulated it in their world. This was an instance of humour emerging at the behest of hurt. The homophonic pun on the word ‘Sikh’ used in the joke derives its basis from a culturally and contextually coded meaning. A pun is a linguistic play that transforms one thing into another mostly through sound and a play with language (Pollack 22). Sikhs burnt during the pogrom are transformed in the macabre joke into Seekh Kebabs expressing a dehumanization of their hurt and a disdain towards their trauma.¹ Dehumanization is also antithetical to dignity. Jokes were used to further humiliate the suffering of the community. The joke further damages self-respect as a humiliating tactic. A survivor – Kamaljeet Singh – notes in his account that he no longer calls India ‘my country’ rather ‘this country’ because it is not a place where one could live with respect: “This sudden loss of self-respect – that is what got me het up. The right of walking down the road with your head held high is suddenly taken away from you just because you wore your hair long” (*I Accuse* 239). The human right to a life of dignity stands compromised. Since there is a felt change in social dynamics, Kamaljeet Singh’s language expresses the emotional hurt caused by it.

Therein, a political discourse of emotions becomes the vehicle of power and domination. Emotions of fear, hatred, vengeance, honour, pain, and revenge are acted out through language and violence. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, Sara Ahmed studies how “emotions operate to ‘make’ and ‘shape’ bodies as forms of action, which

¹ The play “Seekh Kebab”, directed by Prabhjot Singh, is based on the circulation of this joke in Delhi around the time of the carnage.
Prabhjot Singh. “Seekh Kabab”. New Delhi: An Atelier Repertory Company Production. 10 Dec. 2018. Web. 20 Oct. 2018. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yB9U9oLt2vQ>>.

also involve orientations towards others” (4). She argues that other faculties like reason have been prized over emotions since ages however there is a need to examine what emotions do and how they circulate in the context of power. Calling it the cultural politics of emotions, Ahmed asserts that “emotions show us how power shapes the very surface of bodies as well as worlds” (12). We ‘feel our way’ through the world that we encounter, and it is the surface of this interaction that gives way to emotions. Emotions are in the interaction:

I suggest that emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not simply something ‘I’ or ‘we’ have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the ‘I’ and the ‘we’ are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others. (10)

Emotions circulate in the public sphere and are social and cultural practices. During ’84 the point of contact was between an anonymous mob – an entity that spread and devoured its way through Delhi; and members of the Sikh community who were attacked inside the privacy of their homes. Often, along with it. Even the private space of the home has to be dug up for crevices to conceal the body from the mob’s infectious violence. A bloody game of hide and seek is fought for the Sikh body. It becomes the site on which such emotions can be played out in public view. The ‘body’ of the mob functions like a swarm of locusts – looting, plundering, molesting, and killing another kind of body. The bloody interaction between the two produces and is based on politics of emotions, or politicized emotions leading to a politics *of* emotions. The violent acts done by the mob are a form of writing power politics on the consciousness of Delhi. The clash of these two bodies – one of the mob, the other of the Sikh community reveals how the politics of emotions based on hurt and humiliation was played out.

Negotiating Identity: Hair, Survival, and Trauma

The attack on the turban and hair required Sikhs to negotiate their relationship with these emblems of identity. Some gave precedence to survival over symbols of

religion and chose to cut their hair and shave their beards to save their lives. Cutting of hair became a desperate attempt to safeguard the self from harm by reducing visible vulnerability of their body from agents of othering. Narratives reveal how some chose to cut their hair to protect themselves and conceal their identity. At the threat of being discovered, some Sikh men cut their hair willingly or at the advice of others. Also, in some cases they allowed their hair to be cut by others who were trying to save them from possible harm. For those who chose to cut their hair, survival took precedence under adverse circumstances and the act was not seen as a betrayal of one's identity. For Hemendra Singh (pseudonym used in the original), the only sense of betrayal he felt was by the Indian state: "The act of cutting his hair weighed on his conscience, he said. But does he feel the same in 2014?... 'No. Much has changed in India since then...I realised that I hadn't betrayed anyone by deciding to shun the turban. Rather *my* India failed me'" (ibid. 106). The use of the possessive 'my' reveals that for him the nation state is seen as the perpetrator of violence in that it failed to protect its citizens – members of its political organism. "The Indian state seemed to have withdrawn protection to its Sikh citizens" (Kapur 21). The *kesh*, the turban, became a site of contest – a Foucauldian play of power relations. Hurt operates as an emotional charge in their feeling of betrayal. A counter discourse against the state is narrated based on the emotion.

The forcible cutting of hair by the mob as a *modus operandi* is a gesture that communicates a violent othering of Sikhs. The 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom communicated its 'anti' stance deriding emblems that were a part of the Sikh body. This aspect is retained in witness accounts to different degrees of effect: for some it was a loss that caused pain and distress. For others, it was an unforgettable trauma. One such example is of the case of the maternal uncle of documentary filmmaker Teena Kaur Pasricha who made a film on 1984 called "1984, When the Sun Didn't Rise" (2018). The uncle who had to cut his hair under these circumstances could not recover from the experience:

So much so that even after three decades, he refused to talk during the making of a film on 1984. The uncle was traveling by train in Madhya Pradesh and owed his life to a pair of scissors which had hurriedly run through his long hair. The

incident left him scarred for life and inspired a seven-year-old girl to tell the world his story through a film. (Mukhopadhyay 68)

A similar episode is narrated in the novel *Amu* as a fellow passenger in a train cuts the hair of a young Sikh boy as a violent mob is shown barging into the compartment:

The young Sikh boy started crying but now he allowed Mrs Iyer to chop his hair. Meanwhile, the IIT boys came back and told us that the mob was very close, and they were approaching our compartment. I had never been so frightened – every second seemed to matter. Those boys swept the hair under the berth, very quickly. (Bose 93).

The boy allows Mrs. Iyer to cut his hair because the threat from mob becomes immediate, almost inescapable. The sacrifice is painful as he cries during the act to somatically express his hurt. The other boys hide the hair very quickly as even after being cut, it can point to its owner. The hair is cut and concealed, as the Sikh body is forced to relinquish a part of its identity under such circumstances. The degree of effect of the cutting of hair varied subjectively. In the short story “The Morning After” by Mridula Garg, a Hindu family tries to save a boy named Sarabjit as the mob approaches their house: “‘Son! My child! Hurry! Let Ajay cut your hair and take you with him.’ She was sobbing. Ajay was there too, with scissors and a razor ready in his hands. Sarabjit stood frozen with his hands raised above his head. Outside, the slogans were punctuated by tortured cries of pain” (Kapur 152). The mother, Satto, is murdered as she receives a blow on her head and “Sarabjit’s hair was splattered with Satto’s blood” (155). She safeguards Sarabjit and faces death as a repercussion. The final scene of blood of one mixing with the hair of another is a metaphor that death was the reward for her humanitarian efforts. Sarabjit and Satto become one as victims of vengeance.

Due to the vulnerability and visibility of these Sikh emblems, the members of the community had to negotiate their relationship with them. An eyewitness account of one claustrophobic room in Block 30 of Trilokpuri reveals the complexities of this

negotiation as recounted in *Sikhs: The Untold Agony of 1984* by Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay:

In one corner of the room lay a steel *paraat* – a circular utensil with a raised edge – traditionally used to knead dough from wheat flour. Even in faint light, she [Surjit Kaur, Joginder Singh’s wife] could see clumps of hair stuck to the perfectly kneaded dough. A fan had accidentally been switched on by someone when hair from the heads and faces of several Sikh men had swirled into the *paraat*...(50-51)

A man named Joginder Singh refuses to cut his hair as a mark of resistance:

Only Joginder Singh had refused to shear his hair...The others – his two sons, an elderly brother and a few relatives visiting from West Bengal – had heeded the advice sounded earlier in the evening: ‘If Sikhs want to be safe, they better cut their hair and shave off their beards’. Joginder Singh was firm in his decision and categorically told the others that he was prepared to lose his life but not his turban. Although he wasn’t a devout Sikh, he felt outraged at the pressure that was being exerted on him to cut his hair...and felt a sense of valour with the turban on his head... (ibid)

The advice that safety lies in the ‘cutting of hair’ and ‘shaving off beards’ is a call to relinquish the Sikh identity. An advice is a verbal act that passes on the responsibility of the decision to the one who is the agent. The repercussions that follow can be linked to the choice made. Joginder Singh’s refusal to cut his hair can be seen as a political act that declares a crucial link between identity and life. He rejects giving up religious identity *forcibly* under violent circumstances marking the difference between life and death. Life and identity are intricately linked wherein relinquishing the latter could possibly mean a metaphorical death of the self. It could also be an assertion of not willing to give up his *izzat* – the valour attached to the turban. Though not a devout Sikh, Joginder Singh chooses not to follow this advice and ultimately, he was “convinced that God had rewarded him for his unflinching devotion in his refusal to

cut his *kes* (hair)” (ibid. 53) since he managed to escape the violence of the pogrom. Survival reaffirms his religious belief in the power of these emblems as divine grace. Another witness hiding in the house of his neighbours suggested that Joginder Singh cut his hair. When this suggestion was turned down, the neighbours asked him to leave because it made them vulnerable to mob violence: “sensing danger to their house, they suggested that I cut my hair and shave off my beard. Since I was unprepared to make such a sacrifice, it was clear that I would have to go elsewhere” (Phoolka 98). The sacrifice of hair was seen as a sacrifice of life and the choice was between death at the hands of the mob and metaphorical death at the hands of one’s self. In the context of cutting hair, knives and scissors became instruments of survival or weapons of humiliation of identity. There was also a sense of cowardliness attached to the act of giving up one’s identity especially when it is under attack. When a survivor, Kuldip Singh, was questioned why he did not cut his hair to save himself from a mob coming towards the train he was traveling in during the pogrom, he answers:

I felt that suppose I were to cut my hair and then nothing happened then I would have a permanent “guilty conscience” about the fact that I’d cut my hair out of fear. I feel that I would never have been able to put my point of view firmly after that. Also, people would say, “Oh this chap cut his hair because he was scared!” These things would do more long-term damage to me than facing up to the actual crisis. Even my family said afterwards that I was mad and that I should have cut my hair... (Chakravarty 126)

Kuldip Singh chooses to uphold respect twined with his *kes* to avoid guilt in the future. The fear of possible humiliation in the future reflects in the phrase “people would say”. Although it is an imagined possibility, a hypothetical scare created by the mind, it is strong enough to jeopardize the present. Here, cutting of hair is seen as a cowardly act that can put the future-self in question by others. Upholding dignity means self-preservation against odds. The ‘long term damage’ that it may cause could be putting the self in a vulnerable spot in the future. Also, the act would be read by others as a cowardly choice in desperate times. The damage to the self is considered

larger than the ‘actual crisis’ of facing death at the hands of another. His family on the other hand, questions his sanity in making this choice. Perhaps, for them it was safety and survival that took precedence. He survives the carnage without the guilt. However, in some cases, the choice turns out to be a traumatic one. In the tragic case of Shanti Kaur, whose story was the basis for the novel and movie *Amu*, her husband’s decision not to relent to such circumstances turns out to be devastating for the entire family. He refuses to cut his hair. The mob finds him and burns him alive along with their two sons. Unable to survive the trauma, Shanti Kaur committed suicide. She is unable to bear the weight of her pain. The past keeps replaying itself in her mind and she cannot forgive or forget her husband’s persistence. She remains trapped in the past, imagining a different outcome and a better future:

See, what was unique about her was that her two younger sons – one son who got killed was eighteen – but her two younger sons got killed, because of an unfortunate combination of circumstances. They were hiding with their father in a house. The father apparently was a very uncompromising kind of man from what I gather from people now. He refused to get himself shaved, he refused to let his younger sons come out saying, ‘I do not trust anybody but me. I want to keep them with me.’ (Bose 138).

Others chose to cut their hair *after* the pogrom in order to survive in a world where the discourse othering Sikhs continued to echo even after the three days of violence ended. It was often to survive in a world that has changed its relation to members of a community:

For six months, I stayed with my uncle because no one wanted to rent a place to a Sikh. Finally, I cut my hair and shaved off my beard. I didn’t tell anyone I was a Sikh. Even then, I got a place only because my landlord was a South Indian who had no idea that Grewal is a Sikh name. (*Assassinations* 206)

Here visibility of being Sikh is erased in order to return to the everyday. It is done to find a rented apartment – a place of shelter in a world turned hostile. In the novel *Helium*, the protagonist recalls the case of his classmate who decides to go to the barber after he is framed for molesting a Dalit woman on the IIT campus:

After the incident the Sikh boy in our class came to me and urged me to accompany him to the market, and he told me take him to the barber's shop and the first barber refused to cut his hair, and the second one confirmed with him several times. And I remember that day clearly when his hair was being cut. He had shut his eyes tight, and the crackling of the transistor radio could be heard in the barber's shop and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's voice: *when a big tree falls, the Earth shakes.* (34).

A Hindu boy adorns a turban before molesting the woman taking advantage of the pervading suspicion and scorn. None of the other classmates give away his name or reveal the truth out of fear acquiescing in his misuse of the general apathy against Sikhs. The Sikh boy decides to give up his turban and hair in order to make this everyday bearable. The political speech given by Indira Gandhi's son, Rajiv Gandhi justifying the anti-Sikh violence through a metaphorical language is reiterated in the background to highlight the dismal times. The short story "When Big Trees Fall" by a retired Indian Administrative Service officer, N.S Madhavan, was titled after Gandhi's controversial remark. Later, it was loosely adapted into a film – *Kaya Taran*. In the story a young Sikh boy named Juggy is saved by a Christian nun named Sister Agatha who cuts his hair:

Amarjeet removed the white handkerchief from Juggy's hair. I untied his hair that was tied to the crown of his head. It stretched down to his shoulders. I sprinkled water to make it damp and a big pair of scissors, started cutting his hair. As strands of hair fell on to the floor of the monastery, he became more and more naked...He ran his hands through his hair with the sorrow of broken clan-continuity. The knowledge that the

hair I cut off sprouted in his mother's womb started suffocating me. (Kapur 123-24).

The act weighs heavy on both Juggy and Sister Agatha at the sorrow of cutting 'clan-continuity'. It starts suffocating Sister Agatha who understands the meaning of the cutting hair and what it severs. The lines depict hair as an umbilical cord that is cut severing a continuum. The loss is lodged as a splinter and starts suffocating Sister Agatha. Similarly, in the short story "Karma", Rajinder Kaur is unable to identify her father and cries at the loss his beard and its associative memories:

With a shock that I remember to this day, I realised that one of the 'clean-shaven men' on the sofa was my father! His turban and beard were gone and he looked such a different man...I went up to my father and hugged him tightly, missing for the first time the rugged feel of his beard on my face. Tears began falling from my eyes. ("Karma" 205)

Tears express her hurt. Kaur is shocked at her inability to identify her father amongst a group of clean-shaved men. The act depicts how personal relationships were reshaped by the pogrom. Identities are changed as appearances take on a different meaning. Similarly, in the novel *Assassinations*, Jaswant is unable to recognize his friend: "Amarjeet was waiting when he reached Shanti Niketan. Jaswant could barely recognize him. Amarjeet had discarded his kara and shaved off his beard. His hair was also cut much closer to the scalp than Jaswant remembered" (116). The inability to recognize familiar faces after they lose the turban and the beard, metaphorically stands for a recasting of personal relationships with oneself and others after the pogrom. In the short story "The Bier" by Bir Raja, a Sikh man named "Huzoor had asked Bhagwan Das, "What is our fault? Why are we being punished for someone else's acts? Is it because we have long hair and beard? Where do we belong...who are we...why are we...Is this how we shall have to live...?" (65). Huzoor's questions capture the existential crisis around notions of identity and belonging after the pogrom.

In a proud assertion of difference, some Sikhs reaffirmed their identity by growing their hair or choosing to become baptized after the pogrom. The case of Gurpreet Singh is a direct example of this:

It was this sense of outrage, tucked carefully away in the deep recesses of her mind that impelled her to convert to an *amritdhari* Sikh, just a month before her wedding. Her parents had already tasted the “*amrit*” or nectar of baptism after the riots in 1984 and their daughter followed suit to reinforce their Sikh identity. (Mukhopadhyay 95)

The act of reaffirming the Sikh identity after the pogrom is a defiance of the attempt at their annihilation. It is an attempt at recovering from collective hurt and humiliation. It is an effort to display resilience in the face of odds and bring back *izzat* of the community by reinstating the emblems that were humiliated during the pogrom. The family’s conversion to become *amritdharis* or baptized Sikhs after 1984 is a reinforcement of their Sikh identity to show reserve or strength of the community at large. It is a method of countering the attack on self-worth at the individual and collective level. Dignity is sought to be re-established through an assertion of identity overcoming hurt and humiliation. When a witness – Chhatwal Singh – reached a rehabilitation camp in Delhi, the sight of ‘bizarre haircuts’ and ‘untidy turbans’ was a testimony to how the pogrom caused visible damage to identity of the collective. An elderly man’s desperate plea for a turban and ‘nothing else’ is a plea requesting reinstatement of lost dignity: “On reaching, Chhatwal was more distressed to see large number of Sikhs with bizarre haircuts and untidy turbans balanced precariously on their heads. Suddenly, an elderly Sikh walked up to him, clutched his hands and cried inconsolably... ‘Please give me a turban. I want nothing else’” (Chakravarty 99). The plea is an attempt at reinstating self-respect intricately tied to the turban. These vignettes of the complex relationship between *izzat* and identity reveal that ’84 caused a traumatic wound at the level of the collective.

Given the importance, hair and turban become the focus in both fiction and non-fiction on ’84. The lens of narratives and witness accounts lay special emphasis on the treatment of these symbols. On 2 November 1984, Swami Agnivesh, a witness

and a lead organizer of peace marched across Delhi during the pogrom, went to Block 32 of Trilokpuri and saw hair and turbans spread all over the battlefield of Delhi:

Agnivesh walked through row after row of houses in Block 32, Trilokpuri and noticed burnt and demolished homes. Clumps of hair lay scattered on the streets, in doorways, inside rooms, on staircases and roof corners, indicative of a frenzied struggle between the attackers and the dead. Alongside lay several yards of turbans in various colours. (Chakravarty 78)

The scene is profound in its implication that hair and turbans were attacked first and then the men were murdered. Here language humanizes these emblems, almost to the point of personification – ‘clumps of hair lay scattered...alongside several yards of turbans’. The personification of these emblems is also a running motif in literature on ’84. For example, in *The Assassinations: A Novel of 1984*, as Jaswant travels across Delhi in search of his Sikh to-be-son-in-law, he finds that

Dead bodies, charred beyond recognition, lay about in the streets. Several had hair sticking out of their mouths. Locks of hair were adrift on the road, perhaps looking for the heads from whom they had split so cruelly. (*Assassinations* 117)

The language focuses on hair and turban as objects of attack and evidence of selective violence. They are personified and made the focal point of attention as these were attacked first during the pogrom. The unnamed protagonist of Indira Goswami’s novel *Pages Stained with Blood* travels through Delhi and she notices turbans spewed on roads:

As I reach the gol chakkar near the Roshnara Road police station, suddenly a turban rolls onto the road. Someone pushes a Sikh gentleman out of the bus, making him trip and fall near the footpath...I see two more turbans on the road at the Shakti Nagar crossing and stains of blood, like dried paan juice. (131)

and she goes onto see that

A sweeper is sweeping a side lane. There is a crowd around him. I go ahead and stand by him. He is trying to sweep into a pile a heap of long hair and beard, wrenched from the heads and faces of the Sikhs. (141)

These instances highlight that the visibility of the turban called for violence and, later lay scattered on roads as a declaration of it. Piles of hair being brushed aside by the sweeper metaphorically declare the death of those to whom the hair belonged. Similarly, in the short story “One Dead Day” by Maheep Singh, the protagonist Harnam Singh leaves for work on 31st October and is caught in the violence of the pogrom. He is faced by a mob that cries “Why you Sikh – You have killed Indira Gandhi...” “I...?” he uttered, “What have I got to do with that?” (*Kala November* 49). Unable to comprehend the reason for him being cornered, Harnam Singh tries to evade but is unsuccessful:

He [Harnam Singh] could hear the loud blaring of car and bus horns. Just then he felt that someone had removed his turban and some hands were dragging him by his hair. Something heavy fell on his head. He screamed loudly and then all was quiet and he blacked out. (ibid. 50)

The question “I?” displays disbelief at being the one held responsible for Indira Gandhi’s death. Harnam Singh refuses to accept the onus of a criminal act. However, the assassination is projected as a burden of all the Sikhs. Beant and Satwant Singh are not individuals guilty of Gandhi’s murder rather the discourse of violence is based on projection of the entire Sikh community as vicious. The flawed logic of the discourse is revealed when Harnam Singh asks: “What have I got to do with that?” and the question incites a violent reaction but no answers. The unjust reason behind hurt and humiliation is exposed. With this exposure comes the plea to examine the assassination as an individual act and not punish other innocent individuals for it. However, a discourse of othering is set-up to conceal the irrationality of the pogrom.

The mob first attacks the turban as it is the locus of identity and pride that they want to hurt. The gaze and the reaction the hair and turban incite depends on the

social bias of the onlooker. On one hand, as depicted in Agnivesh's account, the security forces and unruly mob identify these symbols as those belonging to a community that's an Other while on the other hand, Goswami's protagonist and Swami Agnivesh both sympathetically read these as a sign of the violence done on the Sikh community. The same symbols change meaning depending on the gaze of the onlooker. The symbols become texts on which meaning is projected by another. Another example of these two readings of the turban and beard is in the killing of Mahan Singh, a retired army havildar who fought in the 1965 and 1971 wars against Pakistan:

The mob was chanting, "Kill these Sardars, traitors of the country.' They first surrounded Mahan Singh and pulled off his pagri...A few neighbours tried to stop the beating, 'He is an old army man,' they said. 'He has fought for the country.' Some people from the mob shouted back, 'How does it matter? Sardars are traitors.' (Singh 56)

Here, there is a stark line of divide in the conceptualization of Sikhs as insiders or outsiders – the neighbours substantiating Mahan Singh's stake as an Indian citizen and the mob defining him as a traitor to the nation. Humiliating the turban and cutting the hair became a signature of the pogrom that is present in both non-fictional and fictional accounts of '84. In *Assassinations*, as the characters are on their way to a different part of Delhi, Rakesh and his mother witness the way a Sikh man is murdered by the mob after his hair has been cut:

They were halfway there when Rakesh cried out, 'Mummy, look.' Three men were holding a Sikh man down on the pavement. The Sikh's hair had been cut and lay scattered around. A heavy man, dressed in a pair of jeans and a red t-shirt, had prised his mouth open with a knife. The howl erupting out of the Sikh was silenced abruptly as the man shoved a handful of his hair into his mouth. The crowd of men standing about and watching cheered. (87)

The crowd watching the violence cheers in support of the carnivorous mob adding voice to its power discourse. The Sikh man's voice is muffled by his own hair depicting and an assertion of power is voiced by the cheering crowd. The former is silenced and the mob languages its discourse of domination through the spectacle of violence. Delhi becomes a theatre of emotions during the pogrom that culminates in a show of horror. First the emblems of Sikh identity were humiliated, then the body carrying these was subjected to terror.

Sikh men who did not have long hair or a beard (colloquially called *monas*) were not as susceptible to violence as others. While it could be due to less visibility of their Sikh identity, accounts reveal that they are not considered to be true Sikhs by some because they do not openly display their Sikh individuality by keeping long hair. An interview of three residents of the Gujjar community of Khirchipur reveals this kind of a reading:

I mean Sardars are different from monas (*matlab sardar aur mone mein to farak hoga na*)? Those who have cut their hair, we don't call them Sardars do we? We'll say they are like you and us. We will consider only those who have judas [long hair] and beards as Sardars, regardless of which *jaat* [caste] he may be...Whether he is from Haryana or Punjab...
(Chakravarty 443)

While keeping long hair is one of the religious dictates of the Sikh faith, not all Sikhs keep long hair. This is condemned by the religion. The Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Act of 1971 – a legal document centered on management of gurudwaras – declares that a “Sikh means a person who professes the Sikh religion, believes and follows the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the ten gurus only and keeps unshorn hair” (2). In 2(11) of the Gurudwara Act of 192, a Sikh who cuts their hair is labeled ‘patit’ which “means a person who being a *kesadhari* Sikh trims or shaves his beard or *keshas* or who after taking *amrit* commits any one or more of the *kurahits* including disrespect to the hair”. Perhaps this is why the residents of Khirchipur do not identify *monas* or *patits* as Sikhs. The instances of attacks on *monas* were fewer in comparison to practicing Sikhs who kept long hair. It was through other emblems of their identity – surnames, the *kara*, that *mona* Sikhs were made vulnerable to attacks. The absence

of a turban is also read socially and culturally. The pogrom reveals that identities cannot be solely created by an individual but belong to the public sphere where they are deciphered. Even if monas were Sikhs in their identity, they were not ‘Sikh enough’ to be considered as an other. The interviewees reveal that ‘they are like you and us’, and a divide between Sikhs and monas is constructed although the latter are also members of the community. They are however, read differently from ‘Sardars’ - a word with Persian roots used only for adult male Sikhs who keep long hair and wear a turban.

Crossdressing: Braiding Boyhood

In some cases, instead of cutting off hair or burning the *pagri* (turban) of Sikh men forcibly, the mob braided their hair and made them wear women’s clothes. For example, one witness account reveals that the humiliation of two Sikh boys was made into a spectacle of mockery, one that caused irreparable damage to their being. The testimony of Bhagi Kaur reveals how this forced cross-dressing traumatized her sons:

The boys were traumatized by their experiences: Balwant Singh and Balbir Singh’s joodas were undone by the mob and their long hair tied into braids; the mob also forced them to wear girls’ clothes. The fear and humiliation had their impact on the boys. They fell into the drug habit. Balwant Singh is thirty-one years old today and is addicted to Proxyvon tablets. Though he has a job at the Rakab Ganj Gurudwara, he is always drunk. Balbit took to drugs when he grew up and later committed suicide. It might have been an overdose. (Singh *I Accuse*, 51)

The two boys are unable to come to terms with having witnessed their humiliation at the hands of the mob. They bear witness against themselves and are unable to forget the hurt that festers inside as trauma. Even though they survived the pogrom, the experience left them traumatized, unable to regain their lost sense of self. Drug abuse, alcoholism and suicide is the result of their inability to regain self-worth. Here, humiliation caused a metaphorical death of their being. By making this a spectacle, humiliation produces a *tamasha* – a spectacle of ridicule and mockery. Balwant and

Balbir Singh lose literal and metaphorical control over their body and their identity when they are emasculated in public.

However, some young Sikh boys were made to wear girl's clothes by their own family members to save them. Adolescent boys were made to dress as girls – hiding both their gender and Sikh identity. Hair was manipulated into braids to circumvent the violence. In this context, crossdressing is a reversal of gendered-power positions in a patriarchal society as maleness is hidden under the protection of a female appearance. The same act of cross-dressing changes meaning depending on the intentions of the doer and the way it was carried out. The mob uses it to humiliate, while others used it to survive. The account of Phanda Singh, interviewed by Uma Chakravarty in May 1985 reveals that he dressed his adolescent son as a girl to escape the danger of the mob (Chakravarty 77). Kuldip Kaur, another victim of the pogrom remembers that her “older son's hair was plaited in two so that no one could recognize him as male, you know” (Grewal 95). In the novel *Amu*, a Sikh woman tells Kaju when interviewed by her that: “I dressed my son like a girl, in a brown salwar kameez. Just like yours. He was scared and said he didn't want to go out. But I reassured him, told him that no one would recognize him” (104). Similarly, in the short story “Karma” by Aditya Sharma, the act of cross-dressing is described in detail as a mother persuades his son to temporarily adopt a female disguise:

My mother then unfastened the cloth used for tying my brother's hair in a bun. She combed his hair and tied it in two small braids. ‘Inder, you look like your sisters now,’ my mother told him firmly. Turning to Poonam Aunty, she added, ‘Nobody can make out now that he is a Sikh boy.’ Inderjeet resented being turned into a girl, but Mother promised him that if he co-operated, she would ask Papa to get him a box of Five Star chocolates...Thirty-two years have passed since then, but even now I can't forget the man who barged into Mr Aggarwal's house. I often find myself recalling the images of their naked swords lying on the table and the depraved look in their eyes. (“Karma” 202-05).

While the narrator of the story is relieved to recall that crossdressing saved his brother from the ‘naked swords’ of attackers, there are instances where this method of crossdressing also caused irreparable damage to the self. As an example, a survivor of ’84, Nirpreet Singh related, “I used to tie the *dastar* those days myself but before we sat in the car my hair was braided. So, they couldn’t make out that I was a Sikh.” After this traumatising episode Nirpreet never tied the *dastar* again (*I Accuse* 129). Nirpreet Singh is unable to tie the *dastar* again as perhaps, he is unable to overcome the hurt in relinquishing a part of his self. The hurt caused to pride reverberates in him through time.

Often, crossdressing failed as a survival strategy and the mob identified Sikh boys by undressing them in public view. Boys were stripped naked and once the female garb was removed, vulnerability and violence are ushered in. “‘Look what I found,’ the man said. ‘The *saali* had dressed the little pup in a girl’s clothes. She thought that way she could fool us’” (*Assassinations* 122). The mob expresses anger at the fact that they could be fooled. Here the mob tries to save its image from being made a mockery of by murdering the boy. In his interview, Gurmeet Singh Gill, narrates an episode wherein a young boy dressed as a girl falls prey to the mob:

We saw a child of about ten, dressed in a *salwar-kameez*, who was moving on the road...He was actually a young boy in the process of fleeing to safety and had been dressed as a girl. Something about the child’s appearance made the mob suspect that the child was a boy, and someone shouted, “*Sardar ka ladka hoga* (it must be the son of a *Sardar*)”...To my horror the mob dragged the boy up to the father’s body, threw the child on him and burnt him saying “*yeh sap ka bachcha hai, ise bhi khatam kar do* (This is the son of a snake, finish him off also)”. (*Chakravarty* 153)

Once the Sikh boy is identified and the façade of his appearance fails, the young boy is instantly brandished as ‘*saap ka bachcha*’ (son of a snake) and burnt alive. The phrase ‘*saap ka bachcha*’ depicts that even children were seen as traitors to the country by virtue of them being Sikh. The phrase is used to justify killing of innocent children. The boy is burnt along with his father as the violence is meted out across

generations. Since the young boy's body was that of a Sikh, it had to be brandished, and burnt. Therefore, the body again becomes a site of concealment and revelation of identity. External projection of the body is played with in the play of power politics. Cross dressing is an attempt to create an alternate meaning for the body in order to project it as something else. Boys were made to pass as girls, and men were forced to shave their beards. This is not to say that the female body was not vulnerable (Chapter 5 focusses on instances of rape and sexual molestation) rather that the male body was forced into negotiations with outward displays of masculinity. Bodies are read in contrast to other bodies and function as texts that produce meaning through difference – male and female, Sikh and Hindu, Sikh and Muslim. In the novel *Assassinations*, a Muslim man named Irfan is about to be attacked by the mob that mistakes him for a Sikh. He undresses himself to show that his body validates his Muslim identity: “‘How can I be a Sikh?’ he said. ‘Just look at me. There is no turban, no beard...’ He unbuttoned his trousers and let them fall. Dropping his underwear, he showed them his penis which was clearly circumcised” (*Assassinations* 101). A circumcised penis affirms his Muslim identity. Disrobed and deciphered for its markers of identity, it is the body that becomes a text on which meaning is inscribed. Irfan distances himself from the turban and allows his body to reaffirm his difference.

To conclude, the complicated negotiations of Sikhs with their hair speaks of how certain bodies are produced and read socially. It was due to the anti-Sikh impulse of the pogrom that a negative reading of the turban and beard allowed the mob to target Sikh men who carried these emblems of identity on themselves. The body, therefore, becomes a text that produces various meanings culturally and socially. It produces and provokes interpretations. The clash of the body with those who seek to ascribe negative meanings to it, produces a violent cultural politics of emotions. Hurt and humiliation are used to disrespect and disregard the social position of Sikhs within the matrix of society. Subordination is inscribed on their bodies through a discourse of othering. This othering of the Sikhs was carried out by humiliating the emblems that are a core religious constituent of their identity. The contempt of the Sikh body during the pogrom was depicted in acts of humiliation. It caused harm to their self-respect and the episode is remembered as one that altered the state of being, changing social dynamics. It forced Sikhs to negotiate with the identity that the body carries, due to which it was attacked in the first place. The responses create their own

discourse of hurt – against the state, the anonymous mob, others who did not help curtail the violence, or against oneself for not being able to defend their self. The inscription of power through humiliation and hurtful acts can be traumatic in that it damages notions of selfhood, social relations with others, or a healthy understanding of the self. These narratives highlight that emotions circulate and are registered in narratives as discourses in themselves. They are also felt and expressed somatically. The pain that is coded in these reveals how the event is perceived by those who experienced it and its long-lasting repercussions at the individual and collective level. Both hurt, and humiliation are felt and stored in body that responds to it through sensations. These are encoded in the narratives as evidence of the unjust nature of the pogrom that immediately recanted Sikhs as the other. Language carried this othering through jokes and taunts across age brackets and different sections of society. It further displayed a disregard of their hurt and highlighted their devalued place as fellow citizens in the imagined community of the nation. Hair, hurt, and humiliation enter into a complex dynamics of power shedding light on interconnected strands of domination, disdain, disrespect, and indignity that mesh human relationships.

The body witnesses and encodes sense-perceptions about the pogrom as it experiences the carnage. The next chapter focusses on how the body encodes the traumatic event and how memories are registered through sight, smell, taste and the senses and what it reveals about narrating trauma.

CHAPTER II

Been There, Seen That:

Sensory Witnessing

sen-sa-tion: n. 1. A perception associated with stimulation of a sense organ or with a specific body condition. 2. The faculty to feel or perceive.¹

In India it was real, 1984 is burned fully into my retina; it recurs every day, every month, every year with its own chilling periodicity.²

The senses form the basis of everyday interaction with the outside world. It is here that the stimuli received makes an impression on us through the sensations that it evokes. To sense is to experience and perceive in order to make meaning or make *sense* of what is received through the senses. Interdisciplinary study on the role of the senses has gained traction with the publication of the peer-reviewed journal *The Senses and Society* in 2006 with a renewed focus on what characterizes the ‘sensory’ or the ‘sensuous’. The somatic turn in fields of sociology, anthropology, and cultural sciences with the birth of ‘sensory studies’ is a novel area of investigation that carries potential in its applicability to literary studies. As the sensory is narrated through language, it allows a new approach to understanding how experiences are encoded and relayed in narratives. This is especially relevant to the field of literary trauma studies as a traumatic event is a felt experience that involves sensory encoding. Simone Gigliotti’s term ‘sensory witnessing’³ is borrowed to study how the senses play a crucial role in encoding and narrating the experience of the traumatic as it witnessed. Sensory witnessing can be defined as a testament of presence that allots authority to the witnessing self, wherein the narrative relays the sensory aspects of experiencing the traumatic. This chapter looks at multisensory approaches to witnessing and narrating the trauma of 1984 as it unfolded.

¹ *Compact American Medical Dictionary: A Concise and Up-to-date Guide to Medical Terms*. Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin, 1998. Print. Pg. 410.

² Jaspreet Singh. *Helium*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Print. Pg. 39.

³ Simone Gigliotti. *The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009. Print. Pg. 3

The role of the senses in relation to being-in-the-world has moved beyond the hegemonic grasp of psychology to other disciplinary fields such as sociology, anthropology and history. In “The Expanding Field of Sensory Studies” (2013), David Howes, traces the development of the field through these disciplines to argue that a sensuous turn in the humanities reveals how the senses “mediate the relationship between idea and object, mind and body, self and society, culture and environment” (n.p.). The senses mediate our existence and survival in the world. Our sense of smell warns us of unpleasant stimuli, sight helps us navigate our surroundings, and sounds help us understand our environment. Senses might be a basic human (and animal) characteristic but their role in intermediating cognition of the world has led to a rich field of theoretical study in diverse academic areas. The four-part foundational text to the field of Sensory Studies called *Senses and Sensation* (2018) has 101 essays from theorists and academics from fields like humanities, fine arts, neuroscience, geography, anthropology. It looks at the cross-cultural importance of the senses in our understanding of the world. The plethora of articles validate that senses mediate our world and that the world itself is mediated through the senses.

These mediations between the senses and the world differ culturally and also structure it in ways. Almost every culture uses and understands the senses in its own way leading to cultures of taste, sight, smell. Even the number of senses and their presupposed hierarchy is contested socially and culturally. For example, in the Western tradition of all the senses (five, or six, or seven), sight has been held in the highest of regard. In “The Nobility of Sight”, Hans Jonas and Eleonore Jonas trace the pedestal given to the sense of sight throughout Western philosophy descending from Plato and Aristotle both of whom applaud it as “eye of the soul” (133). This might not be true for non-Western societies where other senses might presume a more important role. In the case of India, Howes argues that ancient Indian texts allot more importance to other senses over the faculty of vision. He gives the example of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* – a text of Indian philosophy that lists eight senses of which the sense of smell is given importance and therefore, breathing plays an important role in meditative practices such as yoga. Whereas Aikhenvald and Storch note that hearing was valued in pre-colonial India especially in circulation of Vedic texts, the recitations of which the lower castes were debarred from accessing (2). The point to note is that studying senses can reflect on societal structuring and cultural

practices. In fact, societies and their cultural practices are often based on what one can access through the senses. Untouchability in India, for example, as a practice to ostracize the lower castes was based on the premise that touch can spread impurity. Menstruation untouchability or menstrual exile (for example, the Chhaupadi tradition of Nepal where girls and women are required to live away from the community, typically in a livestock shed, during menstruation) or the restrictions placed on menstruating women from touching food items are examples where touch acquires socio-political connotations. Even the sense of smell has been diagnosed infected with social stratification where body-odour particularly the smell of sweat has been linked to the lower class.⁴ Smells are even categorized into feminine and masculine brackets. The capitalist world has an entire industry of perfumes that sells artificial smells with advertisements that link shame with body odour. On the other hand, aromatherapy using essential oils has been used since ages in China, India and Egypt as a healing treatment. Another example would be that cuisines differ around the world and the study of the sensuous experience of eating has cemented the value of taste as a part of human experience. This highlights that senses are culturally mediated.

In doing so, the field of sensory studies does establish a need to study the role of senses in forming perceptions of experience. However, the next question would be whether the sensorium can be captured in language. Can language be used as a medium to convey sensations? There are difficulties in assuming that language can convey the sensorium as is. For example, can colours be explained without a visual reference to them? Describing the colour red without referring to the visual of a rose is a difficult task. The visual aspects of the colour can be described through visuals associated with it. While there may be intrinsic limitations to language and how it can aptly encode the sensuous, it is not to say that language fails completely in the task. In “The Senses in language and Culture”, Asifa Majid and Stephen C. Levinson point to an important aspect that what may be the limitation of one language, may not be there in another:

Just because English is poor for the description of
smells, it does not follow that the odor domain lies inherently

⁴ See *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* for a detailed discussion on the relationship between odour, power, and politics. Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott. *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.

beyond the expressive power of language. This is where the second line of linguistic insight comes into play: in another language and another place odors can be richly coded, showing that what seems like an inherent limitation of Language is a mere limitation of our language, and the culture that supports it. (7)

The failure of one language to convey the sense of an odour may not be the failure of Language with a capital I. This is an interesting observation that then posits that the sensorium is culturally constructed based on language through associations. If a language carries a direct code for an odour then it may be able capture the smell through that very coding. However, even if it does not have a direct code, it can use associations to describe it. It is this that gives language the power to deliver an aesthetic experience through it. Further, if language is not used to convey the sensory, then the experience of perceiving the outside world remains a private act. The intersubjectivity of human experience would be missed:

What language adds is the projection outwards from the individual psyche of private sensations now clothed in public representations, and conversely, the introjection of public representations into private psychology – with all the effects already noted in the color and odor domains. Language gives us intersubjective sensory experience, without which there could not be a social science of the senses. (ibid. 9-10)

The felt experience of sensorium is shared between human beings to collectively decipher the meaning of being-in-the-world and experiencing it. This experience may be brought to language where phenomenology and semantics converge to highlight that “language gives access to a world of experience in so far as experience comes to, or is brought to, language” (Csordas and Harwood 11). The ability of language to convey human sensations of experience, even if it mediates it, is what allows it to bring private experiences to public representations. The senses come together to formulate a totality of experience which is then relayed through language in its limited representational scope to convey it to others. “Every language has a way of talking about seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching” (Aikhenvald and Storch

1) and these can be studied to show what constitutes human experiences in their sensory modalities.

Witnessing and then narrating a traumatic experience is one domain of experience that is brought to language in trauma narratives. First-hand witnessing of an event involves the idea of presence that is sanctioned by having seen, heard, or been there first hand. It is here that the sensory acts as an annal of history. The act of witnessing itself conjures connotations of having personal knowledge from observation during which the senses capture, record and then re(p)lay the meaning of being present through the traumatic event. In *A Critical Introduction to Testimony*, Axel Gelfert asserts that bearing witness to a traumatic event involves bearing weight of having observed it in the flesh and testimony primarily is a vehicle for assigning to others the social status of being a knower (37). In doing so, the body becomes a vessel of stored experiences and language becomes a medium through which these are narrated. Sensory witnessing stands as a testimony or evidence of the event having occurred; of history. The witness performs the role of physically encoding the stimuli or the immediate environment of the traumatic event. This is translated through verbal language as sensations, sights, and sounds that reconstruct the character and atmosphere of the event. The lived experience is captured and narrated in its physical indexes. The aura of the traumatic event is an important aspect to understand the horror of it.

The reader or the listener can gain access to the experience of the traumatic through these accounts. Sensory witnessing, with its encoding of the effect of the traumatic on the senses, can reconstruct the ambience of the event, the knowledge of which is shared with the readers/listeners who can then perceive the traumatic environment through their own senses. For example, if the narrative gives a gory description of the mutilation of bodies, the reader can get a sense of the extent to which the visual might have been catastrophic to the one who directly saw it happening. Even senses that are difficult to label verbally, like the stench of burning bodies, can be perceived through the language that describes them as a horrid olfactory experience. The abstract quality of 'horridness' can be comprehended even if the reader cannot physically smell the same odour. There might be a distance between the one who directly experiences the event through sensual presence to one

who has to use their senses to comprehend the traumatic. However, the narrative unlocks channels of bridging experience with understanding that may be important in empathizing with the pain of others. This is important as without this, pain would also remain a solely private experience. Even if one does not experience the event first-hand, getting a sense of it makes it possible to participate in acknowledging the pain of others. The sharing of these experiences in their sensory affects makes it possible for a society to collectively respond to the wrongs done to another section of their own being. It bridges the gap between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and makes collective healing possible. This collective healing is also initiated when survivors come together to narrate the event as it made itself felt on their being, and the effect it has had on them. Their ability to share and discuss the subjectivity of their experience also reveals the myriad ways in which the event can affect different individuals bringing to fore their particularities of experience. Herein lies the subjectivity of experience and the pluriform ways in which different individuals construct the memory an event. Physical presence instantly grants the witness an authority – of being the one that has access to knowledge of the event and then having the responsibility of authoring its characteristic hues through narration for others. Testimony is a discursive practice and “to vow to tell, to promise, and to produce one’s own speech as material evidence for truth is to accomplish a speech act, rather than to simply formulate a statement” (Felman 5). The illocutionary force of testimony is perhaps an assertion of one’s capacity as a witness. The witnessing self and knowledge of experience share a dialogical relationship. The self *becomes* a witness by being exposed to the event, and exposure to the event *converts* the self to a witness in the first place. This dialogical relationship between knowing and being is captured in these narratives. It is laying claim to unfolding of historical events as a subjective and sensory experience as sights, smells, sounds all make it into the narratives of 1984.

Witness accounts and narratives shed light on grainy details of the unfolding of such historical events. Accounts of 1984 carnage reveal *how* the experience was encoded subjectively by those who had been there physically to witness it first-hand. The body of the witness grants an interaction with and response to the terror of the carnage. An interaction with the eventful allows a recording of presence while a response to it relays the impact and post-traumatic affectations of it. The witnessing self and the traumatizing event act out a shocking clash on the site of the senses. It is

here that seeing, hearing, touching, tasting acquire importance and give the narrative of a witness account the definition of an eventful experience. What it felt like to be there, what sights and sounds are lodged in the memory, are nuances narrated in these accounts and a discursive analysis of these holds importance in relaying physiological sensations stored in the mind. It sheds light on somatic encoding of trauma and the way language conveys the sensory aspect of living through the traumatic as it unfolds. Ultimately, it is through the senses that the world is perceived based on an interpretation of environmental stimuli that bombard the brain. Perception is a conversation between the senses and the mind and a step towards making the event *sensible*, to make meaning of it. Sensory witnessing is an important aspect as the senses play a crucial role in encoding the event.

Sights and Spectacles: Visual Memory

The spectacle of the traumatic is encoded as visual details of the event's unfolding that are expressed in language. What one saw unleashed on the streets, or the gruesome violence that marked the pogrom, for example, are encoded in these accounts. Visual memory or memory of visual stimuli is any information received by the retina that is stored for a period for time. These can be familiar images one sees every day that are seen and discarded in microseconds. On the contrary some sights, especially the ones that are extraordinary in their nature, can be retained for longer amounts of time. Others may become hazy or can eventually fade away from the mind. This depends on what was seen, how much importance the individual allots to the visual, and what emotions the individual associates with the sight. Eventful and extraordinary visuals bombard the senses during a catastrophic episode such as '84. Different individuals may retain different aspects relating to the same event. For example, one may remember blood splattered on the roads, another may remember the glasses of one of the assailants. What is formed as a visual memory of the event, may be coded subjectively. These subjective encodings in their visual aspects reveal the clash of the traumatic on the sense of sight. Sight also relays the immediacy of this experience where having seen stands for having experienced the nature and impact of the traumatic event. Writers are aware of the impact of such visual images. Therefore, the sights of 1984 are an important narrative element of non-fictional as well as fictional accounts of the pogrom. The iconic is seen and then perceived forming an

experience that are then narrated in the account often along with their emotional impact.

During sensory encoding, the iconic could vary from a dining table to the unforgettable sight of mutilated bodies. For example, a forgettable dining table becomes an icon of memory of 31st October 1984 for Sanjay Suri, a witness, and a reporter for *The Indian Express* during the pogrom:

As dining tables go, the one in our simple house in Malviya Nagar was forgettable. Who remembers tables anyway? But a vision of that table froze in my mind on the morning of 31st October 1984, and it's a vivid picture...It was a friend in the police. 'Pata kar,' he said, 'Indira nu goli vajji ay.' (Find out, Indira has been shot.) I must have been looking at that table when I took that call, memories of moments that stun do freeze pictures in the mind that never go away...The momentous attached itself to an image of the mundane and stayed that way. (Suri 161)

The vivid picture of the table is recalled years later as Suri narrates his experience. The momentous and the mundane become latched to an ordinary object – the sight of which is retained as a memory of the event. For Suri, a mundane table is elevated to the level of an iconic memory of 1984. The frozen quality of the picture of the dining table is lodged in the mind that is stunned with the onslaught of the extraordinary. This is evidence of visual signs being retained long after stimulus can no longer be seen. The impact of the news of Gandhi's assassination on Suri's senses is coded in the image of the table. Such vivid images stored as memory of the event are snapshots of the past – a capturing and recording of it. 'I saw with my own eyes' is an assertion of the illocutionary aspect of witnessing. This frozen quality of visuals provides memories their characteristic traumatic quality. Traumatic iconic memories are different from ordinary ones in the aspect of persistence long after the visual stimuli is offset. Ordinary iconic memories – for example seeing signboards from a moving bus – are stored in the brain for a short term. Traumatic iconic memories often remain lodged for a longer time and become the defining quality of the witness being possessed by the past. In *The Anti-Sikh Violence and After*, Sanjay Suri, further

elaborates on the quality of these traumatic memories to remain etched for a long time:

What was it about 1984 that those memories never seem to fade? They haven't for me: I can hardly remember most of my reports over two years as crime reporter before 1984, or over the four years after 1984 that I continued as crime reporter with *The Indian Express*. I can say accurately that I remember very much more of that day of the assassination and the few days following than I can of the rest of my six years as the crime reporter of *The Indian Express*. Those memories keep returning sickeningly in grainy detail. I do believe that none of us who witnessed those events, however fractionally, was ever quite the same again. (66)

It is these 'grainy details' that display the graphic: visually reconstructing the carnage and its terror. The visuals never seem to fade, immune to the passing of time, and return marking its possession of the witness. These do not 'return to the possessed' belatedly in Freudian terms, rather remain wedged in mind in striking detail. For Suri, it might be the mundane that became momentous; for others the horrid sights of burnt bodies was evidence of the pogrom's catastrophic nature. Vivid, shocking scenes constitute the ghastly nature of the pogrom as summarized in *The Delhi Riots* by Uma Chakravarty who states that "we saw ourselves the charred remains of the corpses, the burnt-out shells of houses, and the 50,000 uprooted and traumatized people huddled together [in a rehabilitation camp]" (14; emphasis added). The phrase 'we saw ourselves' is a means of providing visual evidence to the catastrophe and the extent of its damage.

In the context of iconic memory, narratives of '84 reveal that the visual introduction to the carnage was through columns of black smoke that engulfed the skyline of the city. Sanjay Suri goes on to recount that:

The story in Delhi on the morning after the assassination stood written in the sky. The moment I stepped out of my house in Malviya Nagar I saw columns of smoke rising in the

sky, dozens of them. Smoke was going to be my guide through the city that morning...The smoke signals were guiding me on the ground, they gave my scooter direction. They had become a reporter's sources in the sky...The sky was saying we would see worse than we'd feared. (186-188)

The gyres of smoke not only functioned as markers of destruction on the ground – burning of bodies, Sikh-owned properties but functioned metaphorically to reconstruct the devastation in the air. As Ajeet Cour recaptures in “November 1984”: “Those were black days, full of strange fear of death. A choking sensation rose from the earth to the sky like a black cloth smothering all” (Kapur 24). The black sky then becomes a spectacle – a site of violence of the carnage, a shroud over the city. In *Sikhs: The Untold Agony of 1984*, Lakhbir Singh's account reveals that “[a]s word spread about the violence in the city and smoke began rising on the horizon, rooftops of houses doubled up as viewing galleries” (65-66). These galleries of terraces served as spatial areas of interaction between the private sphere of the home and the public arena of the city outside. The witnessing body stood and watched from the threshold of both worlds – between the assumed safety of the former and the threat of the latter. Later, as the violence escalates, even private spaces lose the safety. Several accounts reveal that this sight was an initiation to understanding the growing extent of violence that marked Delhi:

Reports in the newspapers were few; but our family and friends would hear about the violence from *their* families and friends...We had seen spires of black smoke from burning taxi stands from our roofs; we had heard about innocent Sikhs being brutally beaten; accounts of massacres in Kalyanpuri and Trilokpuri were beginning to come out. All this was frightening, because no one knew why this had happened; who was behind it. (Singh 15; emphasis in original)

The gyres of black smoke were a visual introduction to the pogrom, an entry of the violence into the city. Even before news of massacre of Sikhs could be confirmed, the columns of smoke testified that the eventful has begun. The quotidian is punctuated by this visual confirmation of violence. In *Sikhs: The Untold Agony of 1984* Nilanjan

Mukhopadhyay highlights that there was a dread in the air as recounted in the witness account of Mita Bose:

Like in the past, she [Mita Bose] got down to change a bus at Connaught Place, but was confronted with a bizarre sight of a black skyline with smoke billowing from beyond the arcade of shops...Occasionally, a Sikh ran across the street with his turban undone and hair hanging loosely around his face. Crowds chased Sikhs with shouts that sounded like battle cries. (57)

The canvas of the sky tainted black is a repetitive sight in accounts that marks the entry of disruption into the quotidian pulse of Delhi. It is symptomatic of the beginning of the event – a rupturing of the seeming ordinariness of life. The sight stands for abruptness of the event’s occurrence that enters the everyday and changes it. Routine actions – of Suri’s ‘stepping out of the house’ to go to work, Bose’s taking the usual bus home, stand in direct confrontation with the event. As Veena Das argues in *Life and Words: Violence and its Descent into the Ordinary* that “the event as attached to the every day, I think of the everyday itself as eventful” (8). During three days of the pogrom, the everyday is suspended wherein daily activities are remembered for not having been successfully completed. In this suspension, the everyday is heightened to the eventful. It is this confrontation and disruption that define the beginning of the act of witnessing. Aseem Shrivastava, a transnational activist, economist, and an academic, testifies in Jyoti Grewal’s *Betrayed by the State: The Anti-Sikh Pogrom of 1984* that:

The night of October 31 was a tense one and it was hard to sleep in peace. The sight that greeted me, when I woke up the next morning and opened the door to the terrace, is so clear in my recollection that it could have happened yesterday. The day was clear, and the sun was up, but there were many places on the horizon, and some much nearer than the horizon, from where streams of black smoke were billowing up to darken the sky. (133)

The clear recollection of that day stands for Shrivastava's introduction to the violence as it marks itself on the skyline. The view is remembered and retrieved during narration. The 'spectacle of smoke' is also a running motif even in fictional accounts on the carnage. These accounts use similar language to highlight the sensation of dread in the air as the carnage interrupted the quotidian pulse of the city. Smoke billowing from gurudwaras and Sikh houses validated the introduction of violence to the ordinary life of people. In the short story "Twilight" by Bhisham Sahni, it is this spectacle that confirms that news of the pogrom is true:

Professor Kanhaiya Lal went up to the roof of his house to check if the news about the fire was true or just a rumour. He was surprised to notice that not one but many areas were on fire. There was smoke from as many as three places in Karol Bagh. People were standing on roof tops and conjecturing about the possible areas that had been set on fire. (*Kala November 9*)

The smoke provides visual evidence and confirmation that the carnage is happening. Here, sight validates experience and seeing the spirals of smoke confirms the reality of the violence. In the novel *Helium* this validation almost seems to betray the sense organs, as reality seems almost unreal. The overwhelming nature of the horror is confirmed, validated through the aspect of sensory witnessing:

Khatam kar do sab sardaron ko. Khatam kar do saap kay bacchon ko. Finish them, children of snakes. Destroy them all. He is not very tall and wears black glasses. I will never forget that Congresswallah's black glasses...It was sickening, you had to see the horror to believe the horror and it was so unreal I almost didn't believe my own sense organs. But the fire and the smoke were so absolutely real, different from the way they are done in the movies. (*Helium 31*).

Similarly, in the short story "Who has been Looted" by Abha Gupta, it is this smoke that metaphorically invades homes and ushers in the violence as a carrier of hatred and vengeance:

The sky was overcast with dark black smoke, the entire atmosphere was full of smoke, smoke that was soaked with the odour of burnt clothes and tyres, smoke that floated in carrying the smell of petrol and kerosene oil, smoke that forced the violence and hatred generated by deranged minds into each and every home. (“Who has been looted?” Abha Gupta 144)

The repeated use of the word ‘smoke’ in the above lines fills the narrative with a sense of pervasion mimicking the claustrophobic, smoke-filled air of the city. The narrative carries the feeling of saturation within it, giving the reader a sense of the asphyxiation that the pogrom brought with it. In the novel *Assassinations* city roads become a theatre of cruelty as Jaswant travels from one point of the city to another and the sky becomes the colour of ‘cigarette ash’:

The evening sky had deadened to the colour of cigarette ash by the time Jaswant left his office. On his way home, he passed cars and buses on fire, burnt shells of shops and houses billowing smoke, dead bodies of Sikhs cremated alive, bands of goondas brandishing machetes and crowbars...The stench of fire and smoke, the hapless victims and their remorseless tormentors, even the mob’s war cry of *khoon ka badla khoon*. (106).

The fact that the sky ‘had deadened’ connotes a sense of pathetic fallacy where the sky reflects the pervasiveness of death that constitutes the pogrom. Similarly, in *Helium*, the protagonist witnesses the rising ‘Eiffel Tower’ of hatred and violence:

As the jeep passed Tolstoy Marg I saw dozens of Sikh bodies on fire. Smell of burning wool and rubber tyres and human flesh. I saw taxis being smashed. And the black cloud of smoke touched the sky. This was our Eiffel Tower. This was our carnival. Our periodic table of hate. (*Helium* 32).

As one moves from 31st October to 1st November 1984, the degree of disruption garners force as the tempo of violence rises with passing time. The

magnitude of the event widens and the visual atmosphere, as displayed through these accounts, is injected with more violence. It is here that the ambiance of smoke-filled sky turns to bloodstained roads, scattered limbs, instances of loot, and plunder. The visual is injected with escalating horror of the catastrophe. Several accounts graphically reconstruct the aspect of watching and vividly recount the destruction of life and property during '84. Scenes video graphed and stored as frozen frames in the mind with "their [Sikh men's] heads bashed with iron rods, drenched in petrol and set on fire, alive. Being burnt with kerosene-filled rubber tubes and tyres around their necks" (Cour qtd. in Kapur 26). Such visual descriptions provide crucial investigative clues into the modus operandi of the mob. It reveals how the violence was orchestrated. The aspect of recording these gory graphic details highlights how the trauma of '84 is encoded visually. Brij Raj Singh, a professor in Department of English in Delhi University at the time of the pogrom succinctly captures the power of seeing traumatic sights as an evidence of watching and therefore, witnessing. "And I must say I have no words to describe the sense of stunned horror that assailed me when I saw the [a naked Sikh man's] corpse" (Chakravarty 547). Here, even though words fail to describe the impact of the sight on his senses, language relays the traumatic nature of it in the 'stunned horror' of his experience. Maina Kaur's account in *Scorched White Lilies of '84* also reveals the impact of these unforgettable traumatizing visuals:

I was twelve years old, didi. I had never *seen* a human die till those fearful days. When it became a little quiet, I came out with others to *peep*. I walked in a direction opposite to others and *saw* a completely burnt man on the road. He was breathing and moaning for water. I was scared at *seeing* burnt flesh hanging from his body...I went back to him, gave him water and there, *before my eyes*, he died. The dead man still comes back to haunt Maina's nights. She shivers and sweats and sits up throughout the night. (52; emphasis added)

The repeated reference to the aspect of seeing highlights that the visual encoding of the carnage replete with gory graphics was encoded and lodged in the mind. It is the sights that haunt Maina Kaur in her post-traumatic affectations of witnessing and

surviving the carnage. Similarly, Ratnabehn's account of watching an old Sikh man being burnt alive at Tughlakabad railway station on 1st November also captures the traumatic aspect of watching:

We just *watched* helplessly. The smoke from the old man burning on the platform was all over the compartment. The whole thing was unbelievable. The scene was something out of George Orwell with some people being killed while others silently look on. I cannot forget that scene. (Chakravarty 450)

Her inability to forget the scene and her position as a passive onlooker along with others who 'silently looked on' hints at the guilt she perhaps carried in not being able to rescue the Sikh man from the mob. The language is full of a sense of passivity.

The disturbing visuals are also narrativized in fictional accounts that relay similar disturbing experiences. As the protagonist of Indira Goswami's *Pages Stained with Blood* discovers the mutilated body of her friend Santokh Singh, she is unable to recognize his body and then unable to forget the traumatic sight that keeps replaying in front of her constantly even days later:

"This is the corpse of Santokh Singh..."

"Santokh Singh's corpse?"

Two days have passed...But the events of the past fifteen days eat into my heart, penetrating recesses I never knew existed...Lumps of flesh, hewn by swords hang before my eyes. No beard, no hair, only bloody lumps of human flesh... (Goswami 156).

Similar affectations of the visual are found in the short story "Karma" by Aditya Sharma as a man is unable to process witnessing his house being burnt by the mob: "Unable to see flames leaping out of both our house and cat; I collapsed on the divan. I was so numb that even tears refused to come from my eyes... (Kapur 203). In same story, the narrator goes to describe that "A few meters away was a severed leg. A wrist some distance away and then the torso to which these organs must have

belonged. My siblings clutched at me in fear. I could feel their tiny fingers tightening around my hands. I wanted to tell them to close their eyes but felt so nauseated that I couldn't utter a single word" (214). The sight is too traumatic to be processed by the mind and emotional numbness pervades the senses that are shocked at the sight. These non-fictional and fictional accounts depict how the visuals of the violence form a narrative element in these accounts and how visual memory is encoded and then relayed through them in their emotional affectations.

Slogans, Screams and Silence: Echoic Memory

While iconic memory is one aspect, sounds form another aspect of sensory inputs. The sounds that are heard as a part of experiencing the event are also encoded these accounts. The perception of sound and a human response to it are important in the cognition of the experience. There are three broad steps that form the process of hearing: 1) the production of sound from a source, 2) the propagation of the sound to the listener through a medium or a channel, 3) the reception and human response to it. Listening to history as an 'earwitness' is a crucial aspect of unravelling the specific dimensions of experiencing one's environment. In *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (1994), R. Murray Schafer gave innovative insights into how our sonic environments formulate our relationship with the world and unlike sights which can be blocked by closing the eyes, sounds are less easy to ignore. Schafer coins the term 'earwitnesses' for writers who narrate "sounds directly experienced and intimately known" (8). These 'earwitnesses' reveal the aural characteristic of history as it is perceived through hearing. He argues that writers like Tolstoy, Thomas Hardy, and Thomas Mann have captured the noises of their sonic environments and their works reconstruct past soundscapes. Using such an understanding of the aural unfolding of history, this section looks at the noises that become a part of these 'earwitnessing' accounts of 1984.

In *The Delhi Riots*, Ratnabehn recalls that "[t]here were a lot of frightening noises from the platform as the crowd tried to have the [train] doors opened" (449). Echoic memory or the memory of auditory stimulus is one form of encoding that becomes obvious as another channel of initiation to the violence. Khushwant Singh in his testimony before the Nanavati Commission remembers that "[t]hat same evening Mr M.J. Akbar (newspaper editor) came to my house for dinner. I heard some noise

outside on the main road and I went to check. I saw about 20-25 policemen standing on the road and the mob was looting shops belonging to Sikhs at Khan Market” (Singh 215). Another witness, Aseem Shrivastava, on his way to New Friends Colony from Kaka Nagar in Delhi in the afternoon of 31st October recalls that “[a]t the Ashram bus stop I heard voices reaching into our packed bus from open windows, asking whether there was a Sikh on the bus. I held my breath, holding on to the rails at the back of the bus with my sweaty palms” (Grewal 132). Similarly, Goswami’s *Pages Stained with Blood* is full of aural references to the destruction caused by the pogrom. For example, the protagonist narrates that as the carnage took over the city, she heard “crackling and bursting sounds of something going up in flames! A heart-rending cry seems to split the sky into two” (Goswami 133). While Mita Bose, recounting the memory of her bus ride through Central Delhi on 1st November, recounts that “one could hear noises...And it was just very, very ominous. You could feel that something very, very terrible was happening”. Furthermore, she adds, that she “never felt such a...you know what they call a terrible hush in the air” (Chakravarty 570) and herein silence too becomes encoded as a part of auditory memory.

As the violence on the streets called for the need to hide and conceal the body to ensure survival, other modes of sensory witnessing emerge. Visual encoding calls for the body to have some sort of an access to the scene, to be able to see what is happening on ground. In the context of 1984, Sikh men and boys were hidden in confined spaces of almirahs, concealed corners of houses so that the mob cannot get to them:

Surjeet’s elder brother-in-law, hiding inside the almirah. asked again and again, ‘Have the rioters left?’ She would say, ‘Nahin ji, not yet.’ Remembering that terrible day, she says, ‘We would give him something to eat and water from time to time in the almirah itself.’ She still remembers his scared face as he hid in there.’ (Singh 23)

Concealing the body from view requires reliance on other sensory perceptions to guard the self from harm. There is a heightened sensitivity to auditory stimuli, for example, as the vigilant self attempts to guard itself. It is therefore natural for these

inputs to be encoded and narrated in these accounts of '84. Phanda Singh who lost two adult sons in 1984 recounts how the echoic forms a part of his memory of the carnage in that “[t]here was a lot of noise – people crying, running up and down the lanes...I kept on hiding – I didn’t know where others were” (Chakravarty 76). Human cries and sounds associated with the violence unleashed by a mob are often mentioned in accounts of '84. The hypnotic slogan of '*khoon ka badla khoon*' is the strongest evidence of echoic memory that discloses itself as an echoic signature of the pogrom. “And rest of the time there was nothing on TV except people swarming around the body of Mrs. Gandhi and also you know this '*khoon ka badla khoon...*'” (ibid. 571). “They were calls for 'blood for blood' which Satpal [a witness] heard without really understanding. But fear had gripped her; her heart was racing” (Singh 72). H.S Phoolka recounts that this slogan was repetitively telecast on Doordarshan, the only television channel then:

Whether it was due to the [Doordarshan] telecast or not, that incendiary slogan caught on in our neighbourhood the next morning on 2 November. All of a sudden, around 11am, we heard it shouted loud and clear, again and again, right next to our house. *Khoon ka badla khoon se lenge*. It was more than just a chilling slogan. (76)

The slogan was played again and again to the point of being hypnotic. The mob used it as the tagline of the killings, to inject it in the mind of the listeners and to justify the violence. Kuldip Kaur recounts that the sounds of '84 have become a part of her memory and that she “can still hear sounds at night – ‘Ho, ho, ho, maro, maro, maro.’ [kill, kill, kill]” (Grewal 103). The slogan became a tag line of the violence and captured the emotional charge of the violence. The public announcement of vengeance was telecast on Doordarshan – a state-controlled television channel, and it showed a mob shouting the slogan outside AIIMS where the body of Indira Gandhi was brought.⁵ The instigating slogan spread throughout the city, inciting either reactions of vengeance and violence or dread for those it sought to mar. It became the acoustic signature of the pogrom: “I made you flee to safety from the barbaric slogans

⁵ *Justice Nanavati Commission of Inquiry (1984 Anti-Sikh Riots)*. New Delhi: Justice Nanavati Commission, 2005. Print. Pg. 68, 110, 132, 171, 179.

of hate: *khoon ka badla khoon se*. It wasn't just the fire, you see, it was the acoustics" (*Helium* 89).

Along with the slogan that spread like wildfire, rumours against Sikhs were also passed from 'ear to ear' in order to spread a feeling of animosity in the general public. A rumour is "a proposition for belief of topical reference disseminated without official verification" (Knapp 22). Rumours spread by word of mouth becoming hearsay in that they lack factual confirmation. In particular, "aggression rumours or wedge-dividing rumours" are directed against members of the same community in order to induce or justify divisive purposes (ibid. 24). Further, in "An Analysis of Rumor", Allport and Postman argue that an "aggressive rumor, for example, by permitting one to slap at the thing one hates, relieves a primary emotional urge. But at the same time in the same breath it serves to *justify* one in feeling as he does about the situation, and to explain to himself and to others why he feels that way. Thus, rumor rationalizes while it relieves" (503). The rumours against Sikhs that pervaded the immediate ambience of the pogrom served both these purposes – one of justifying the violence against them and the other of creating a psychological divide in the masses. The emotional urge of harming the Sikhs was carried in the slogan 'blood for blood' and cemented in the rumours that the community's existence can be harmful to the peace and life of others. Stories that Sikhs celebrated the death of Indira Gandhi by distributing sweets, poisoned the water tanks, and that trains carrying dead bodies of Hindus were sent from Punjab, are the three predominant rumours that are recounted in both fictional and non-fictional accounts of the pogrom. In the introduction to *Kala November*, an anthology of short stories on 1984, Maheep Singh highlights that these rumours added excitement to the aggressive ambience of the three days:

Rumours have always played an important role in aggravating communal riots. Exaggerated and sometimes fabricated versions and descriptions are transmitted in a manner that gives birth to maniac excitement. The desire to take revenge is fortified, causing much destruction. The killings during November 1984 saw an upsurge of rumours. "The trains arriving from Punjab are full of corpses of Hindus, the Sikhs have poisoned the water tanks of the city, Sikhs are

celebrating the assassination of Indira Gandhi, they are distributing sweets,” are some of the rumours that did the rounds. (*Kala November* xiii)

The communal charge of the violence was driven by a discourse that had no factual evidence. In turn the orchestrated nature of the pogrom was given a communal definition through the circulation of these rumours that could justify the emotional upsurge that led to the violence. In the short story “Rumours”, Hriyadesh highlights the way these rumours worked to create a communal divide in the society and people joined the violence against Sikhs believing these rumours to be true. The infectious nature of these is revealed: “The Sikhs celebrated her death by distributing sweets. In our city, the gurudwara was illuminated,” said one of the residents...Sohan Singh bought sweets last night,” said one of the onlookers in a tone that implied that he was present during the purchase (ibid. 26, 30). A point to note is the performative deliverance of the rumour. The tone with which the onlooker uses, hints at having some validity even if he did not see anyone buy sweets. The story narrates how Brij Kishore, a Hindu, and Sharif Mohammed, a Muslim enter into a killing contest to prove themselves a better man than the other. “This Muslim has killed a Sikh; we Hindus should be ashamed of ourselves” (41) exclaims Brij Kishore as news of Mohammed “bettering his record” spreads throughout the colony. The story is an indictment of the way rumours circulate and incite emotional upsurges in people: “What was the source of this information? Who was transmitting this information? Who acts as the vehicle? No one knew the truth, but the information was being circulated. There was no way to check on the authenticity of the news, therefore it was being accepted in totality” (ibid. 31). The tragedy of the short story is relayed in the fact that it was baseless information that eroded the unity in society. Even though the information lacked authenticity, it was believed because a certain predisposition against the Sikhs was already formulated. Similarly, Mridula Garg’s short story, “The Morning After” is another fictional account that traces the spread of hatred in people who hear and believe such rumours. In the story, a boy named Ashok falls prey to hearsay and joins the murderous mob that later kills his own mother for protecting a Sikh boy named Sarabjeet Singh who is also Ashok’s childhood friend. The transformation of Ashok’s character from a friend to Sarabjeet to a member of the maniac mob is subtly portrayed as he starts to believe rumours:

‘They were distributing sweets, they have taken revenge. We had no choice, they had to be killed. The blood in the veins of Hindus has not yet converted into water,’ said Bansal.

‘You saw them dancing and eating sweets?’ asked a baffled Ashok.

‘Am I lying then?’

‘You saw...did you really?’ Ashok’s voice grew shaky.
(*Kala November* 89)

At this transformative point Ashok leaves his house in search for visual verification – to see and find out for himself. In the lines above, he asks Bansal ‘you saw them’, ‘you saw’ seeking visual verification from him. Later as Satto, his mother, is attacked for protecting Sarabjeet, she sees “her elder son on the fringe of the crowd” (100). Both the stories give a fictionalized account of the way these rumours spread and the impact of hearing-and-believing false information became the vehicle of separatism and sectarianism.

Paradoxically, a dreaded silence also becomes a part of auditory memory of the pogrom. Narratives note the dread in the ambience that covered the city in a shroud of stillness and silence. In the absence of sound, unaccustomed silence mars the daily humdrums of the routine of city-life. There are no vegetable-vendors calling out to potential customers, no honking of cars, or horns of cycle rickshaws as the city comes to a stand-still. The pulsating life of the city comes to a death-like pause:

A booming silence, of a kind that is not heard in Delhi even in the dead of the night, greeted the new day spreading itself across the sky, as bright red as a freshly inflicted wound. It was a ghoulis silence that packed more death and grief in it than the most harrowing cries of Muharram. (*Assassinations* 111)

The silence stands for dread, fear, grief ushering an inevitable wait for life to return with its routinely rhythms. Compared to the cries of Muharram, the absence of sound adds to the horror of the experience. It captures the quiet that stops a world otherwise full of noise. This highlights that silence is also a coded phenomenon whose meaning depends contextually. In the context of 1984, silence adds a heightened sense of dread and horror to the ambience: “The roads were drowned in total silence. At every step all we saw were burnt cars, demolished houses, it was a horrifying sight as if death and time had descended on earth personally to trample everything” (“Something Unsaid”, *Kala November* 118). The isolated streets, devoid of the noise of life stand for a city robbed of its pulses: “Everyone is silent...As I step on to the main road I do not find anyone stirring. No noise, nothing. I walk back. I don’t know why but I find the silence ominous and disturbing” (Goswami 131). Silence is read as a disturbing sign of the impending gloom:

All I could hear was silence, all I see were blind alleys, not a single chimney was emitting smoke, not a single sound emerged from the machines. The silence was reminiscent of a mountain valley, tranquil, and undisturbed like that after an earthquake. (“Evil Darkness”, *Kala November* 74)

Also, the silence that is heard in these narratives relays the atmosphere of dread. Abruptly punctuated by shrill human cries, bullet shots, the sloganeering mob, the city wavers between sounds harbingering death and a deathly silence: “She got up to hear a long, drawn-out human scream rent the air” (ibid. 146); “Gun shots could be heard throughout the night” (115). Ultimately, the disruption of this scary silence itself becomes fearful: “Even the slightest sound startled me and made me shiver, my eyes would turn lithic” (74). The stillness depicts what transpired during the seemingly endless wait for the pogrom to end. As the violence draws nearer, the silence is replaced by noises that assault the senses: “The night had been full of yelling and screaming and the sound of things being smashed. The stench of smoke and burning flesh wafted all over the neighbourhood. No one got a moment’s sleep as they sat quaking in their homes” (*Assassinations* 117). Sitting in the shelter of their homes, it was these sounds that conveyed the sense of dread to people.

These sounds are retained in the memory and can haunt the ‘earwitness’ even after a substantial passage of time. In the novel *Amu*, Amrit witnesses her father being murdered by the mob. She remembers the aural quality of her experience: “As he was finally overpowered by the mob, he started quoting from the Granth Sahib, reciting the Gurbani that, many years later, his daughter would hear floating down from the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara and into her nightmares” (Bose 122-23). Whenever Amu hears the gurbani, she feels something strange even though she does not remember the experience. *Amu* is a novel that brings in the soundscape of the traumatic experience into the narrative. In the short story “Karma”, witnessing a Sikh man being burnt alive causes Rajinder Kaur’s mother to manifest symptoms of PTSD. She is unable to save the man and forget his pleas: “What could I have done?... It would have been much better to die than to witness this spectacle...his cries still haunt me, puttar, his cries still haunt me!” (Kapur 221-22). These instances show that the aural quality of history is narrated in these trauma narratives of ’84.

Stench and Smell: Olfactory Memory

Olfactory memories form the third mode of sensory input and associative memories. “The sense of smell is our oldest sense and strongly connected to basic functions such as memory and feelings. The olfactory nerve is directly connected to the amygdala, the centre of feeling, and the hippocampus, where memory is stored” (Lindqvist qtd. in Creet 183). It is noted that human beings link pleasant and unpleasant feelings with odours and that these can be linked to form positive or negative memories. Every time we encounter a familiar smell, its associative memories can be conjured. In *The Perception of Odors*, psychologist and leading theorist on sensory perception, Trygg Engen clinically demonstrated that for olfactory memories, time plays no role in diminishing retention and that there is no difference between short-term and long-term memory for odour memory (107). Also, olfactory inputs are stored directly in the limbic part of the brain and olfactory inputs “may therefore be processed more quickly and with less editing than visual and auditory information” (109). Further, in *Odor Sensation and Memory*, Engen asserts that “an odor is integrated into the mental representation of an experience; it has no identifiable attributes of its own but exists as an inherent part of a unitary holistic perceptual event” (7). While the smell might be linked to an image, a sound, or an

experience; it may lack a name for itself. Therefore, odours have verbal-semantic associations (Schab and Crowder 10). This is where language plays a role in relaying the experience of a smell. Especially in traumatic situations involving the sense of smell, narratives can describe the experience of an olfactory sensory assault that causes avoidance issues in the future. Olfaction can be a major factor in PTSD and trauma-related smells can haunt the survivor long-term (Vermetten 203; Aiken and Berry 95).

Disturbing olfactory inputs are retained in narratives on 1984 as an important aspect of sensory witnessing. Smells are encoded and conveyed as a part of the horrific experience of the carnage. The overwhelming stench of burning bodies, for example, finds mentions in these accounts as a shocking olfactory attack on the senses: “Wafting across their narrow bylane, a putrid stench hit their nostrils. Joginder Singh turned around. It was a truck in which corpses and unclaimed body parts were being tossed” (Mukhopadhyay 52). The stench ‘hits’ Joginder Singh as the traumatic event reveals its ghastly nature. Ajeet Cour remembers that there was a “revolting stench in the air as the wind changed direction” (Kapur 29). The ‘revolting’ smell of burning hair and bodies that Cour remembers seeps into her account as a memory of the pogrom. In November 1984, People’s Union for Democratic Rights and People’s Union for Civil Rights published a report of a joint inquiry into the causes and impact of the pogrom in Delhi wherein a witness account reveals that:

3 November 1984: ‘As soon as we entered Block 32, we were greeted by a strong stench of burnt bodies which were still rotting inside some of the houses. The entire lane was littered with burnt pieces of furniture, papers, scooters, and piles of ash in the shape of human bodies. Dogs were on the prowl. Rats were nibbling at the still recognizable remains of a few bodies. (Grewal 162)

Block 32 of Trilokpuri in Delhi was one of the worst-hit areas in Delhi. The ‘strong stench’ of bodies that saturates the air bears witness to the gruesome killings in unprecedented numbers that happened in block 32. This olfactory memory of the pogrom is also noted in fictional accounts. In the novel *Pages Stained with Blood*, the protagonist recalls that “the stench of burning tin, rexine, gunny bags, petrol and

human flesh spreads all around” (Goswami 134). In the short story “The Path to Living the Truth”, the narrative describes that “the stinking atmosphere full of burning rotting human flesh” (*Kala November* 2) was an assault on the senses.

Fire was one of the primary weapons used to murder the Sikhs. Several legal reports and witness accounts note that kerosene, a combustible white powder, and rubber tyres were used to burn people alive. The strong smell of burning bodies is therefore one of the most perverse olfaction that is recorded. Also, this smell lingers in the air even long after the act is done as burnt bodies were left to rot on the streets. In the short story “Karma”, the protagonist traveling across Delhi in a rickshaw narrates that “bodies were swollen, some charred beyond recognition. Because of the horrific smell – the smell of decaying flesh – the rickshawala covered his nose with his cloth while we squeezed our noses. (*Kala November* 214). The odour stands testament to the murder. The claustrophobic, smoke-filled air of the city, was soaked with this stench especially in areas like Trilokpuri that were most affected by the carnage. These are described in the narrative with the emotional response that they elicit. Adjectives like ‘revolting’, ‘shocking’, ‘putrid’ carry the somatic ramifications of the odours on the body and relay it through language. Attributive adjectives like these modify the noun that follows adding a descriptive characteristic to it. These verbal odour descriptions show that olfaction often combines both perception and verbal expression. The intensity of these smells that do not usually form a part of everyday exposure to the world ‘hits’ the nostrils. This aural violence done to senses is described through attributive adjectives that give a *sense* of the experience.

While the smell of death was all around, it was also the smell of urine, sweat and other odours that formed a part of the experience. During the pogrom, people huddled together in confined spaces to save themselves from the threat of violence lurking outside on the roads. The confined spaces became cauldrons of other kinds of odours – blood, sweat, urine, human excrement. In-hiding these bodies had to bear the stench of other bodies. Some women of Nand Nagri while being clustered in a room of a Hindu man’s house who offered it as a shelter to them reveal that “the odour in the room had become an odd mixture of sweat, stench of urine – for many a young girls had urinated in their salwars because of sheer fear” (ibid. 30). Fear manifests

itself through these excremental odours. Smells therefore function in these narratives to highlight the sensory assault of the pogrom as it is encoded.

Hunger, Thirst and Taste: Other Sensations

While sights, smells, and sounds predominate the narratives of '84, other sensations are also recorded in them. It is commonly believed that human beings have five senses. This has been contested by neurologists to give way to a 'count controversy' that argues that human sensations cannot be categorized to such a small number. "Five is obviously not just enough to account for the huge range of sensory possibilities which the human species is capable; seventeen senses is probably a more accurate count" (Rivelin and Gravelle qtd. in Macpherson 20). The senses are classified into exteroceptive senses that perceives objects in the outside world and interoceptive senses which are perceptions about the inner workings of the body. For example, the sense of proprioception depends on the notion of force and relates to perceiving the relative position of body parts. It is an example of interoceptive sense due to which even in the dark one can sense the position of one's hands. The sense of balance or equilibrioception is an exteroceptive sense as it relates to perceiving gravity which is an external force. The five 'traditional' senses also fall in the realm of exteroceptive senses. Other human sensations like hunger, suffocation, thirst, pain, sexual appetite have been advocated as additional senses (Macpherson 20).

These 'other' human sensations – like taste and hunger make it into the narratives of 1984. For example, bodily need for food and water, taste, are encoded as experiences of witnessing the pogrom. A survivor distinctly remembers the taste of biscuits consumed while hiding:

When the noise of the mob began to get louder, Mother told us to climb up to the 'oltee', the small space at the head of the staircase, and hide there. It was suffocating up in the attic. Mother had been too distracted to give us any food and we had not even had our breakfast that morning...We were famished till we found a large tin box full of wheat flour biscuits from Chander bakery... I can still remember how good they tasted. (Singh 10)

The taste of biscuits consumed under life-threatening circumstances link the extraordinary event with the ordinary that are elevated to form long-term memories. A regular tin box of biscuits is retained in the memory as it becomes a momentous token of survival. The survivor remembers the taste years later and recounts the famished state of his body as one had to survive not only the violence but live through bodily needs during the carnage, fulfilling which under such circumstances was a herculean task. On the contrary, in the short story “Evil Darkness” by Yadvendra Sharma ‘Chandra’, food becomes tasteless, turns to ‘death bites’ losing its appeal:

Unable to cast off my gloomy forebodings I ate my food and drank some tea mechanically. Everything was tasteless. Ever since Indiraji was killed each moment had been transformed into death bites. I was particularly frightened because I am a Hindu and my wife a Sikh. (*Kala November 71*)

Eating becomes mechanical as worry, gloom, and sadness permeate the unnamed protagonist’s mind. The tastelessness of food depicts that the sense of taste is overtaken by emotional duress. While in the short story “One Dead Day”, the sense of thirst takes primary importance. Harnam Singh - the Sikh protagonist of the story is beaten by the mob and left bleeding on the road to die. As he comes to his senses, he is overtaken by thirst. He wanders the deadly roads of the city asking for water, risking his life in an attempt to quench his thirst. For him, relieving thirst becomes more important than life:

“Give me some water...”

“I ask you are you a Sikh?” another one asked more sternly.

“Yes,...yes...but give me some water, brother...” he sounded uncontrollably pathetic.

“Be thankful that you’re still alive. Run away from here. We have no water.”

“Give me water first, then you can kill me. I am going to die in any case if I don’t get water.” (*Kala November 53*)

The appeal to ‘brothers’ for water is a metaphorical appeal to humanity. The men refuse and turn away Harnam Singh who is later rescued by a poor family of labourers. The story meanders through despair and hope in Singh’s desperate search

for water through the streets of Delhi. In the short story “A Black House”, the unnamed narrator recounts “I was locked up in the Matador for two days. I could not even relieve myself. Let alone sip a drop of water, I didn’t get even a single bite of food” (*Kala November* 81). Later, he narrates that he “sitting on this pile of ashes, I feel pangs of hunger. It is amazing Mr. Gupta next door, sends food for me every day” (82). In “Have You Seen a Sikh Beggar”, a Sikh man is beaten up in a train coach. After he is rescued by the other passengers he says, “Please, give me money for tea and snacks. I will return it in Bilaspur.” This man, after all he had suffered was asking for money for tea! A shivering sensation ran down my spine.” (*Kala November* 172). These examples highlight how these kinds of sensory experiences and their perceptions are narrated in the accounts to depict the sensory assault of the traumatic.

To conclude, the experience of the senses forms a key element in the formulation of autobiographical and fictional narratives of the traumatic event. What is encoded by the mind through such sensory inputs is often retained as memory of the traumatic event as it occurs. These become a narrative element in witness accounts and help re-count the assault on the senses that ’84 ushered. Viewing these sensations as a narrative strategy sheds light on how language can be used to reconstruct the experience. Iconic, echoic, olfactory memories, and all other kinds of sensory inputs form a part of these witness accounts. Living through the event and re-living it through narration is evidence that witnessing, and surviving are done through the somatic. The mind and the body together perceive and encode the trauma of the event. One may remember a sight, smell, or sound and then give these bodily sensations language to construct a narrative of the event. Sensory memory is a mode of remembering wherein the somatic finds voice for its wounds. First person and fictional accounts of ’84 negotiate the lingering effects of these memories that operate as evidence of being physically present to record and capture the trauma of the event, thus giving a sense of authenticity to fictional accounts. The sensory is encoded and narrated with vividness in witness accounts of ’84 shedding light on how its memory is stored and storied. The next chapter studies how the body expresses trauma as recounted in these accounts.

CHAPTER III

Siapa and Shivers:

Somatic Expressions

Speechless complainer, I will learn thy thought;

In thy dumb action will I be as perfect

as begging hermits in their holy prayers:

Thou shalt not sigh, nor hold thy stumps to heaven,

Nor wink, nor nod, nor kneel, nor make a sign,

But I of these will wrest an alphabet

and by still practice learn to know thy meaning.¹

A purely disembodied human emotion is a nonentity.²

The torture courses through her body every day, every moment.³

A traumatic event can leave indelible marks on the subject. These psychic and somatic signs of being affected by a traumatic experience make themselves apparent in '84 narratives. The impact varies subjectively, and it reveals the pluralistic ways in which the body expresses itself through somatic articulations. Sleep disorder, cardiovascular and respiratory problems, hyperarousal, chronic pain, musculoskeletal and neurological disorders are often associated with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A disturbed mind can generate physical disorders called psychosomatic abnormalities; a physical wound can cause psychic disorders called somatopsychic disorders; and the body and the mind can both have disorders independent of each other (Stora 12). These are just some examples that reveal the need to look at the crosstalk between psychoanalysis and neurobiology coming together to formulate a psychobiological (or biopsychological) lens to study an integrative mind-body connection, especially in the context of trauma and overwhelming stress. While

¹ William Shakespeare. *Titus Andronicus*. London: John Cawthorn, 1809. Print. Pg. 58.

² William James. *What Is an Emotion?* New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013. Print. Pg. 103.

³ Pratyaksha. "Dried Apricots Smell Like Dead Fish". *1984: In Memory and Imagination – Personal Essays and Stories on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots*. Ed. Vikram Kapur. 1 edition. New Delhi: Amaryllis, 2016. Print. Pg. 173.

vulnerability factors figure in which individual shows what somatic symptoms, these nonetheless, are an evidence of the repercussions of experiencing a hyper-stressful, painful experience. This chapter studies the ways in which the body expresses its state of distress through non-verbal expressions that nonetheless are an important narrative feature of emotional expression. The focus is on how these whole-body expressions (not just facial expressions) may be read, or perceived, rather than how these are produced from a biological standpoint.

Reactions like crying uncontrollably, fits of anger, and other somatic expressions during recollection, are a narrative feature if one reads them as an expression of the nonverbal that accompanies, and often validates the pain expressed. To read these as disruptions in the narrative are to say that these are interruptions rather than expressions. To say ‘I feel deeply hurt’ without nonverbal signs of it (sobbing, for example) would be a robotic, cold, dehumanized statement. “Emotions are...matters of the body: of the heart, the stomach, and intestines, of bodily activity and impulse. They are of the flesh and sear the flesh. Also, they are of the brain and the veins” (Minton et. al 12). Different parts of the body feel and express emotions such as anxiety, fear, distress or pain. The mapping of emotions to the body has been done since ages. In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1897), Charles Darwin studied whole-body expressions of emotions such as shame, disgust, love, grief and deduced that “movements of expression in the face and body, whatever their origin may have been, are in themselves of much importance for our welfare” (365). Darwin argued that perceiving emotions in others – an infant reacting to the mother’s smile or reading another’s anger through facial expressions – forms the basis of social interaction and helps us interact with the world around us. Such emotional expressions “reveal the thoughts and intentions of others more truly than do words, which may be falsified” (366). Emotions are difficult to fake, and subtle differences can be picked up by the human brain. These expressions are read universally and even shared across cultures in that “all the chief expressions exhibited by man are the same throughout the world” (361). Darwin links it to his evolutionary theory in that several races of human beings descended from a single-parent stock and have therefore, mapped body expressions to emotions on similar lines. It helped the survival of the fittest.

Even before Darwin, psychologist William James in “What is an Emotion?” (1884) argued that emotions are embodied states. Instead of the mind producing emotions, it was the body states that gave way to emotions being psychologically felt. It is not that we fear that we tremble; for James, it was because we trembled that we could feel and perceive fear. The mind perceives the body states in the consciousness to change an “object-simply-apprehended into an object-emotionally-felt” (202). It is the interpretation of the physical responses to stimuli that cause emotions. A similar conclusion was asserted independently by Carl Lange in “On Emotions: A Psychophysiological Study” (1885). Lange also argued that emotions are a result of physical affectations and not a producer of them. Together, this hypothesis that the mind perceives the body to yield emotional states was termed the James-Lange theory of emotions.

However, the theory was disputed later, the strongest contradiction to the James-Lange theory was postulated by Canon-Bard theory in the 1920s, also known as the thalamic theory of emotions. Developed by physiologist Walter B. Cannon and his peer Philip Bard, the argument espoused was that the brain reacts physically and emotionally to stimuli simultaneously. The thalamus in the brain directs emotional expressions at the same time as the hypothalamus directs behaviour. This is to say that human beings recognize and respond to fear at the same time. The body, as such, does not produce emotions, rather arousal and emotions occur at the same time independently of each other.⁴ The debate continued in the 1960s to the Two-factor Theory of Emotions or the Schachter and Singer theory that argued that there are two factors that determine an emotional state: physiological arousal and two cognitions. First, the subject feels physically aroused, then recognize that they are in the state of arousal (first cognition), and lastly, link the arousal with the source (second cognition). A person trembles seeing a bear then labels the trembling as fear. Further, when the source of the arousal is unknown (such as bodily ailments), the subject has the task of deciphering why the arousal is being caused in order to label it later. The attribution of arousal to emotional source leads to emotions. For example, one may cry in happiness or pain, the source determined how we label and interpret the act of crying. Therefore, the approach was also called cognition-based theory to emotions.

⁴ Walter B. Cannon. “Again the James-Lange and the Thalamic Theories of Emotion”. *Psychological Review* 38.4 (1931): 281–295. *APA PsycNET*. Web. 20. Oct. 2018.
< <https://philpapers.org/rec/CANATJ> >

The study was met with criticism for its heavy reliance on cognition to diagnose emotions.⁵

More recently, there has been stress on a more integrative method to understand the mind body connection. Instead of dividing the body into components and analysing what produces what, there has been a rising focus on understanding the whole experience. It matters little whether we tremble because we are afraid; or we are afraid, so we tremble; or we *understand* we are afraid and therefore tremble. While fields of neurobiology, psychology, physiology continue to engage in the debate, there is a need to look at non-Western models that focus on an integrative mind-body approach. The energy-based models of Hinduism and Buddhism, for example, have led to appreciation of yoga, acupuncture, and meditation for holistic well-being.⁶ In *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory* (1987), Yuasa Yasuo explores the mind-body connection from the Asian perspective. Yasuo studies Taoism, Buddhism, practices such as zen, yoga, traditional Japanese theatre to highlight that there has been a long-standing divide between the West and the East in terms of understanding the mind-body relationship. Western Philosophy has always been focussed on dualism – a Cartersian spilt that he argues is injected with a Christian matter-spirit divide. It takes the mind-body balance as something given which is disturbed by the world outside. Eastern philosophy, however, asserts that a oneness of the mind-body should be cultivated through practice. It is the desired goal:

Briefly, Western philosophy (especially since the early modern period) has tended to think of the mind and body as two separate entities related in some still controversially defined manner. The thrust of Western thought has been to isolate and define that essential relationship between two entities.

Yasuo highlights that Eastern philosophy differs in its approach to the relationship between the mind and the body, viewing it as a single system:

⁵ For a detailed discussion see: Rainer Reisenzein. “Arnold’s Theory of Emotion in Historical Perspective”. *Cognition and Emotion* 20.7 (2006): 920–951. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*. Web. 20 Oct. 2018. <<https://doi.org/10.1080/02699930600616445>>.

⁶ For a detailed discussion see: Padmasiri de Silva. *Emotions and The Body in Buddhist Contemplative Practice and Mindfulness-Based Therapy: Pathways of Somatic Intelligence*. 1st ed. 2017 edition. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Print.

In Eastern thought, on the other hand, the mind-body has generally been viewed from the start as a single system, and the emphasis has been on articulating the evolution of that system from ordinary human life to the highly integrated, exemplary mode: the accomplished artist, theoretical genius, enlightened religious master. (31)

In the Western branch of metaphysics, Descartes's rationalism and Kant's advocacy of allotting the higher faculty of reasoning to the mind, are instances of the mind-body split where the former is privileged. Even when the mind-body dualism was contested, as in the case of Spinoza who argued that these are not two separate entities but two attributes of the same thing⁷, it was not a widely accepted notion. Therefore, the focus has been on deciphering a metaphysics of being-in-the-world. The Eastern philosophies can be called *metapsychics* or *metapsychophysics* as Yasuo argues in that these deal with the metatheory of body-mind (217) and emotions are the "bridge between the mental and the somatic" (157).

This holistic view of the human *being* has recently been adopted by Western sciences to look for ways of healing. Peter Levine, with 40 years of experience in the field of stress and trauma that includes being a stress consultant for NASA, developed a naturalist way of dealing with stress and trauma called Somatic Experiencing. Levine argued that PTSD occurs when a natural reaction to overwhelming experiences does not return to normal. When faced with danger, our bodies respond in fight, flight or freeze modes. We scream back in anger (fight), run away from the situation (flight) or feel in a numbed state unable to do anything (freeze). These are automatic reactions wired into us to ensure self-protection. However, in terms of traumatic events, sometimes the body gets stuck in one of these modes and may need help restoring itself. Somatic Experiencing uses techniques that are aimed at the "release of thwarted survival energy bound in the body" (n.p.). It is not the traumatic event that causes trauma, rather an overwhelming response to it that causes an unbalanced nervous system:

⁷ Guttorm Fløistad. "Mind and Body in Spinoza's "Ethics"". *Synthese* 37.1 (1978): 1–13. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Oct. 2018. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20115249>>.

Because trauma happens primarily on an instinctive level, the memories we have of over whelming events are stored as fragmentary experiences in our bodies, not in the rational parts of our brains.

When we are able to access out “body memories” through the felt sense then we can begin to discharge the instinctive survival energy that we did not have a chance to use at the time of an event. (*Healing Trauma* 40)

Somatic Experiencing is a prominent move away from a Freudian, cathartic ‘talking-cure’ where narration was seen as an important step in recovery. Trauma theory descending from a Caruthian trajectory has focussed on the need to narrate trauma and give voice to wounds. However, somatic experiencing, yoga, theatre, body-movement therapies have been tested positive in healing and dealing with stress and trauma. Bessel van der Kolk, one of the foundational theorists of the Caruthian trauma theory trajectory, diverged from his earlier insistence on the mind to a greater focus on the role of the body in guaranteeing holistic healing from trauma. In *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma*, van der Kolk returns to Darwin’s study of the somatic expression of emotions to assert that there is where healing can begin:

Of course, we experience our most devastating emotions as gut-wrenching feelings and heartbreak. As long as we register emotions primarily in our heads, we can remain pretty much in control, but feeling as if our chest is caving in or we’ve been punched in the gut is unbearable...How many mental health problems, from drug addiction to self-injurious behaviour, start as attempts to cope with the unbearable physical pain of our emotions? If Darwin was right, the solution requires finding ways to help people alter the inner sensory landscape of their bodies. (“Brain-Body Connections” n.p.)

The ‘unbearable physical pain of our emotions’ is therefore an important aspect of realizing the mind-body connection as espoused in Eastern philosophies analysed by

Yasuo. It is this somatic expression that can be found in trauma narrates as the body relates the experience of witnessing or surviving an overwhelming event. Reading these emotional reactions as narrative elements rather than as a failure of words would lead to an enriching analysis of how pain is expressed using both, where verbal and nonverbal (language) show a symbiotic relationship. In *Trauma and the Body*, Minton et. al. assert that “[w]ithout the balance of the non-linguistic world of images, feelings, and sensations, the seduction of words and ideas can keep us from direct experience in our daily lives and professional work” (xiv). In fact, the English language is already coded with words and phrases like ‘heartbroken’, ‘cold feet’, ‘shiver down the spine’ to relay emotional states. The emotional and somatic responses form the narrative of horror. During narration, somatic expressions are proof that the body aids, supplements and can even take over the verbal to replay the pain. Breaking down, for example, is an evidence of the latter. Anxiety, panic attacks, depression, hallucinations are recorded in many of these accounts through the non-verbal. Even when verbal narration is overtaken by an overwhelming non-verbal somatic response, storying continues to happen through these somatic expressions. These examples depict that the non-verbal is as much a narrative component as the verbal.

In the discourse of non-verbal communication, ‘emotional experience’ is internal, and intrapersonal while ‘emotional expression’ is external and interpersonal wherein emotions are a response to precipitating events (Burgoon et. al. 289). Emotional expression occurs when one narrates (verbally, somatically) to others leaving it to them to feel their pain. These somatic expressions need decoding as one physical expression can have different meanings depending on the context. For example, crying can be linked to negative or positive feelings depending on the context of the emotion (overwhelming sadness vs happiness). Because of this need to decode, these somatic expressions can be seen as texts that can be interpreted. Interestingly, because of this being an interpersonal act, somatic expressions can be socially and culturally arbitrated. Often emotions can be socially managed wherein some are culturally encouraged and others are mediated. Crying, for example, is considered a weakness in patriarchal societies like India and therefore young boys are socially conditioned not to cry (*ladke rote nahin hai* or boys don’t cry). Therefore, there is an encoding and decoding that is a part of reading emotions based on social

and cultural aspects. Mourning is an important example of an emotional expression that is rooted in the cultural. In Punjabi culture, *siapa* is a collective mourning ritual where women of the community of the deceased come together, beat their breasts, cry loudly and traditionally, even sing a song in chorus to remember the deceased one. Professor Brij Raj Singh, a witness of 1984 remembers a woman “beat her breast and lament loudly and cry that everything was lost” (Chakravarty 547) when she first realizes that her house was burnt and husband was probably dead. Professional mourners, called *moirologists* were hired in Greece, Rome, Egypt, Israel, Middle East, and China to perform mourning rituals. In Western Rajasthan, these (women) are called *rudaalis*. Their job required them to wail loudly, lament the loss, and to incite tears in others. Mourning is a public, collective, and physical performance. *Matam manana* (performing grief) is a concept that encapsulates this performative aspect of grief.

It is here that these somatic expressions could be read as a performance of trauma. However, this must be done with ethical concerns of not reducing or ridiculing the trauma of survivors to *tamasha* – a show or deliberately orchestrated drama of emotions. The fear of this ridicule may be one reason for choosing not to talk about one’s trauma socially. Since nonverbal signs of emotions have to be decoded as intended, there could be a fear of rejection or misreading. In *Betrayed by the State*, Harjit Kaur, who lost her husband during ’84 recounts this fear of her account being reduced to a *tamasha*: “We have repressed the pain of our loss inside. We don’t show it anywhere because people will think of it as a *tamasha*.” Jatinder, her son, adds, “I don’t want my mother’s sorrow to become a spectacle (90). Here, *tamasha* is a derogatory word used to show that external, outwardly show of emotional expression can be misjudged and the agency of choice between emotional experience (intrapersonal) and emotional expression (interpersonal) does lie with an individual.

The point to take is that emotional expressions of grief, loss, or mourning are performative in social and cultural contexts. Somatic expressions as narrative elements can operate as performative features that display the pain to others. Crying, breaking down, sweating, shivering project trauma outwardly and can *convey* it for others to relay the aftereffects of trauma. It connects the suffering of one with

listening by another: “All testimony carries parts of widely distributed communal performatives. The ‘always’ is important here. I am not concerned with a special case; I am concerned with *all* testimony. All testimony is *in part* performative; thus, all testimony is generative of knowledge” (Kusch 349). To add, in *A Critical Introduction to Testimony*, Gelfert asserts that “[t]estimony too, is often taken to have its basis in perception, both in terms of how we receive it – through listening to someone speak or by reading printed words on a page – and in terms of its content” (58). Since nonverbal communication is a form of communication that may involve a speaker and a listener, ethical engagement of the latter is a critical concern. It requires the listener or reader to decode the verbal and the nonverbal to garner empathy for the survivor. This facilitates an understanding of the trauma of survivors of the carnage of ’84, projecting the repercussions of the pogrom and its humane cost. In “Anthropological Knowledge and Collective Violence” Veena Das proclaims that the “need to talk and talk” characterizes victims of 1984 and recounts the tale of one man who lost two sons in carnage and offered to raise fifty rupees in order to get his account published in the newspaper. Das recounts that telling and the need to have listeners is a political assertion of having suffered:

We discovered thus that being subjected to brutal violence for two consequent days had not been successful in stripping men of their cognitive needs, nor could it blunt their desperate need to have the truth recorded and communicated...they wanted their suffering to become known as if the reality of it could only be reclaimed after it had become a part of public discourse” (5).

Emotional expressions of distress create an ethical bridge between the listener and teller during narration. In *Trauma and the Body*, Minton et. al. assert that “[c]lients suffering from unresolved trauma nearly always report unregulated body experience; an uncontrollable cascade of strong emotions and physical sensations, triggered by reminders of the trauma, replays endlessly in the body” (xxviii). The body, therefore, becomes a site where stress is *felt* and through which, it is also expressed. The following sections look at different somatic peritraumatic (occurring at the time of the event) and posttraumatic expressions of distress and the narrative role that they fulfil.

Talking with Tears: Connotations of Crying

Tears are a widely studied phenomenon – in the academia and in everyday, inter and intra subjective interactions. A newborn begins life with crying. A variety of emotions are expressed through it – pain, distress, sadness, ecstasy, to name a few. The breadth of emotions that crying covers is phenomenal and a complex quality to decipher. Crying is highly contextual with tears denoting different things at different times. When we see someone crying, the first question that is often asked is why unless we already know the reason. In “Theories of Crying”, Kottler and Montogemy discuss the biochemical, psychological, social and communicative theories ranging from a Freudian analysis of tears as a cathartic discharge of repressed energy to the social function of tears across cultures and deduce that “no single explanation can account for the complex phenomenon of crying” (13). The important point to take from the study is that tears are a language system:

Among its interactive causes and effects, crying can be treated as a language system, or rather an evocative *paralanguage* that is designed to communicate condensed information through nonverbal cues. Complete with its own syntax, grammar, vocabulary, and varied dialects, crying may have evolved, or at least been adapted, to communicate intense emotional states to oneself or others. (11)

Crying is an important way in which emotional states are expressed. As a language in itself, it can be read as a narrative part of trauma narratives. For one woman survivor tears have become a part of her existence “[s]ince 1984, when her husband and son were murdered, her family has never recovered... Today she just sits and weeps, still unable to understand the events that robbed her of everything she had” (Singh 56). ‘Just sits and weeps’ is a physiological, emotional sign of being unable to forget the traumatic past that haunts the victim recurrently. There is a connotation of continued suffering which lends a passivity to her being. Another survivor, Bhagi Kaur narrates the gruesome experience she had while staying in Block 32 of Trilokpuri, one of the worst affected areas of Delhi during the pogrom, and shows signs of anger and breaking down:

In the morning I had watched my husband and ten members of my family hacked to death...*The memory still fills her uncontrollable anguish and rage.* The mob mercilessly stripped all women, still in a state of shock and disbelief at the death of their husbands and other family members in the morning. 'How many times we helpless, dependent ladies were raped by how many men, I can't remember...The men did not allow any of the women to wear clothes the whole night.' *Saying this she breaks down.* (Singh 42; emphasis added)

Bhagi Kaur 'breaks down' during narration – a semantic sign that denotes a transfer of meaning from verbal to non-verbal language. The recounting is interjected verbally from 'what happened' and carried forward to crying to show the event continues to affect the survivor. As such the phrase 'break down' means a systemic crash, a state of being overwhelmed to an extent that verbal language can no longer serve its communicative function. The nonverbal takes over communicating to the listener or reader, the heightened state of distress in the narrator. Similarly, Mita Bose breaks down while narrating the story of Shanti Kaur who lost her sons and husband to the pogrom. *Amu* – the film and novel by Shonali Bose are based on the story. As Bose recounts the tragedy during her interview, she is unable to come to terms with Shanti Kaur's death: "I feel angry with Shanti, I feel angry with Shanti – She was so selfish, she was so self-centred, she did not think of ...' (Mita broke down at this point and took a while to compose herself – Shanti's grief and suicide were, even three months later, too raw to recount without identifying with her)" (Bose 142). The repeated phrase 'I feel angry' depicts that in this case tears depict a similar inability to comprehend a tragic event. Narratives of '84 are replete with symptoms of a condition called 'traumatic bereavement'. In *Treating Traumatic Bereavement*, Pearlman et. al state that traumatic bereavement is characterized by an inability of the survivor to cope with sudden, often violent, and sudden death of a loved one which manifests itself in complicated symptoms of both trauma and grief:

Although lack of anticipation alone can render a death traumatizing to a survivor, a death is more likely to be

traumatic if it is *untimely*; if it *involves violence* or mutilation; if the survivor regards it as *preventable*; if the survivor believes that the loved one suffered; or if the survivor regards the death, or manner of *death, as unfair and unjust*...Following a sudden, traumatic death, a survivor may experience traumatic bereavement, which is associated with enduring problematic reactions, including symptoms of trauma and grief. (4)

Adding to it, lack of an intact body to bury or perform funeral rites can be another reason that can cause bereavement to last over long periods of time. Anger, intrusive and disturbing images of the mutilation of the loved one's body, a concern for what the loved one felt during the last moments of life, existential crisis, guilt, and distrust in social relationships are some of the symptoms of traumatic bereavement (Pearlman et al. 7). Traumatic bereavement is different from acute grief in its prolonged presence. While all deaths cause an upsetting emotional response, some circumstances can cause survivors to remain in grief for a long time due to the traumatic nature of the death of their loved one. The catastrophic nature of 1984 pogrom abounds with most of the aforementioned circumstances, and accounts reveal that expressions of trauma and grief are part of the narrative, gravity of which is expressed in uncontrollable tears. For example, in "Why Not a Collective Cry for Justice!" Humra Quraishi captures the emotional expressions of Balwinder Singh, a Sikh carpenter living in Trilokpuri during the carnage, as he narrates his ordeal: "For hours, he kept recounting the horrors that rioting that heaped on his family. He'd lost not just his home and belongings, but even the will to carry on. His hands trembled; his face was drawn. There was a constant flow of tears as he continued muttering..."(qtd. in Kapur 90). The trembling of Balwinder Singh's hands, and the constant flow of tears are physiological responses expressing his emotional state as he recounted the horrors he experienced. The constancy denotes an inability to come to terms with what has happened. Here, tears complement verbal narration lending an emotional force to it.

The social function of tears is one of mediating distance between the narrator and listener. Drawing the latter in the emotional state of the former, tears form the crucial link of forming human bonds based on sympathy. Tears are often an invite to

others for help, consolation, and empathy. In *Seeing through Tears: Crying and Attachment* (2005), Judith Kay Nelson argues that crying is a form of attachment behaviour. Instead of looking at tears as an emotional discharge, there is a need to analyse crying as a social function that helps establish human connection. “Instead of being a “one-person” behavior aimed at discharging negative affect, crying is a “two-person” relationship behavior, aimed at recharging and rebalancing internal equilibrium through human connection after a separation or loss” (21). This human response from others helps one move toward healing and recovery in providing a sense of solidarity and support. In the short story “Twilight”, Kanhaiya Kumar reads his tears to be a part of his humanity, a proof that he is sensitive to the wrongs done to Sikhs during the pogrom. It is this sensitivity that helps him demarcate himself from the inhumanity of others who stand by and laugh as a Sikh man is attacked by the mob:

The crowd dispersed and Kanhaiya Lal, too, started moving towards his house. he was mumbling under his breath, “Very bad, this should not have happened, very bad!” He experienced an agony, a lingering feeling of being admonished by his mind. But he tried to console himself, “At least I did not laugh and joke like others. Tears did well up in my eyes. At least my sensitivity is not dead.” (*Kala November* 14)

The words ‘at least’ convey a certain sense of reassurance and self-validation when he is ‘being admonished by his mind’ probably for not being able to do anything to save the man. Guilt is superseded by tears that console him. The inner contest of emotions between guilt and compassion is won when tears are read and given a certain meaning by Kanhaiya Lal. Even when crying is a solitary act for him, it displays solidarity with others. Crying helps form circles of association and attachment in announcing a participation in another’s pain and emotional burden. The short story “The Bier” by Bir Raja, is a story based on the cultural practice of *siapa*. Ishwar Das comes home to find burnt down remains of what was once his house. His best-friend and neighbour, Bhagwan Das tells him that his father was burnt alive during the carnage. Ishwas Das and his family decide to perform the last rites for his father which involves taking his

bier through the colony (of neighbours who were mute spectators to the killing). As Ishwar Das' wife, Lajwanti, begins to wail loudly people from the neighbourhood begin to join the procession:

Hearts started melting as Lajwanti continued weeping and wailing. Soon the women from the neighbourhood joined her in the lamentations. Soon a big crowd assembled outside their house...He was pleasantly surprised to see that the major part of his belongings was being brought back. As they brought the things back they mumbled some vague explanation before joining the assembled crowd. (*Kala November* 63)

The neighbours who were guilty of looting Ishwar Das' house join the cultural ritual of collective mourning along with others who were guilty of not being able to rescue the old man. Their participation is a metaphorical act of reforming social bonds and possibly, a step toward shedding their guilt. As Lajwanti begins to wail 'hearts started melting' and people begin to reformulate the community. Similarly, as Reema Anand listens to an old Sikh woman named *Agya bhenji* recount her husband's last moments, tears build up in everyone's eyes:

Sardarji gave me a last look which showed his concern for the whole family, especially the girls. With that he let himself out quietly into the lane. I saw them hitting sardarji with lathis and dragging him towards the end of the lane...We found no trace, no ashes, no body. No cremation took place. *Agya bhenji's* tale came to a stop, *our eyes moist...* (Anand 62; during in an informal interview in 2007).

Point to note is that *Agya bhenji's* narration makes 'our eyes moist' as the pain is shared verbally and non-verbally with others. Crying urges others to respond and their response – tears, an embrace, or even coldness conveys their empathy or its lack. The resonance of feeling in others helps define and re-define social bonds.

Gut Feeling: ‘Second-brain’ Expressions

Medical science has established that the human body has not one but two brains. The gut is now widely accepted within the medical community as our second brain. This acknowledgement of the power of the gut was started by Michael Gershon who published *The Second Brain: A Groundbreaking New Understanding of Nervous Disorders of the Stomach and Intestine* (1998) as a forerunner to the field of neurogastroenterology. Gershon showed that the stomach is lined with neurotransmitters that are similar to the ones found in the central nervous system. In fact, 95 percent of the serotone or the ‘happy-hormone’ in the human body is produced in the stomach. The enteric nervous system has its own mind with little or no interference from the ‘primary’ brain in the head:

The ugly gut is more intellectual than the heart and may have a greater capacity for “*feeling*.” It is the only organ that contains an intrinsic nervous system that is able to mediate reflexes in the complete absence of input from the brain or spinal cord...The multiplicity of neurotransmitters in the bowel suggests that *the language spoken by the cells of the enteric nervous system is rich and brainlike* in its complexity.
(xiii; emphasis added)

Gershon’s study proves that the gut has capacity for feelings and may be one of the key centres where our emotions are produced and felt. These can be read as the gut’s own form of psychoneuroses. The digestive system can communicate these feelings to other parts of the body or express emotions through signs like nausea that imbibe it with a language of its own. This ‘rich’ language of the gut is even evidenced in everyday language with expressions like ‘butterflies in the stomach’, ‘hate your guts’, ‘a gut feeling’, ‘a gut-wrenching’ experience’. Emotions are as much a matter of the gut as of the rest of the body. In *The Mind-Gut Connection* (2016), Emeran Mayer asserts that the “gut mirrors every emotion that arises in your brain” (31). For example, in the case of distressing situations we vomit so that the body can retain energy dealing with the threat rather than spending it on digestion. In normal day to day life, we may not notice gastric sensations unless something goes out of order and demands our attention so much so that 90 percent of gastric sensations do not reach

the conscious mind (55). Even despite this the microbes in gut are capable of influencing emotions because of the close connection between the brain and gut. These “are tightly connected to sensory nerves that signal directly back into the brain’s emotion regulating centers, making them an important hub within the gut-brain axis” (23). It is these emotions that then become a part of the narratives of stress and trauma.

Fear, disgust, distress, are prominent emotions that are a part of these trauma narratives that use the ‘gut language’ to convey meaning especially in the case of peritraumatic responses. During witnessing, the expressions of the second brain convey emotions like fear and disgust. Disgust is the most prominent emotion that is relayed described by Darwin as a sensation felt primarily through the faculty of taste:

Disgust is a sensation rather more distinct in its nature, and refers to something revolting, primarily in relation to the sense of taste, as actually perceived or vividly imagined; and secondarily to anything which causes a similar feeling, through the sense of smell, touch, and even of eyesight.
(*Expression* 254)

Etymologically, the word ‘disgust’ is derived from the Latin root ‘gustus’ which means taste. The gut is therefore strongly connected to taste which is a faculty of the digestive track. When we touch, taste, or see something revolting, the body-mind reacts by eliciting a strong sense of rejection or expulsion. Vomiting is one of the natural rejections to something disgusting and is different from vomiting caused by other factors such as eating contaminated food in that it happens immediately after the disgust is *felt* (259). In the case of witnessing the mutilation of bodies brutally disgust is captured in the narratives through the act of vomiting. In the novel *Assassinations*, when a Sikh man is publicly murdered in a brutal hair-raising manner: “Rakesh threw up all over his school uniform. Deepa’s eyes widened as her hand leaped to her mouth. Savitri gulped back the bile filing her throat” (87). All three characters react by vomiting unable to process the sight. A similar case is found in the short story “When Big Trees Fall” where the protagonist witnesses many gruesome deaths and remarks that “I couldn’t take the same tragedy enacted in three platforms. My entrails started stretching heavily. I bent to the washbasin and vomited. Thus, for the first

time, history touched me physically” (Kapur 115). The stretching of the entrails followed by vomiting is an assertion of ‘history being felt physically’. The sight is undigestible. As Jaswant Singh wanders the streets of Delhi in search of his son-in-law the gory visual of charred remains of body with limbs strewn all over incites a similar reaction:

It was much later that Jaswant experienced the full horror of that walk through Trilokpuri...In memory that moment came back stripped of his concern for Prem...Each charred face, each broken limb. The way he recoiled as he stepped on a corpse. How bile filled his throat as the smell of death invaded him. (*Assassinations* 119)

Jaswant feels the horror of his experience in his gut as ‘bile filled his throat’. Vomiting is an act of gut reaction. The sense of smell is strongly linked to the sense of taste and therefore bad odours can also incite a similar response. The visual combined with the ‘smell of death’ are almost personified as invaders that attack the body-mind. The response is a fight against this invasion through a strong expulsion in the form of bile that fills his throat. It is as if the body-mind is consciously removing the toxicity of the sight and the smell from it. Similarly, in the short story “Karma” by Aditya Sharma, as the protagonist Rajinder Kaur and her family come out of hiding on 5 November, she feels the impact of the visuals in her gut: “As we passed by the adjoining Gorakh Park, I suddenly felt a sinking sensation in my stomach. A human hand, with a steel bracelet around it, decapitated from the elbow, lay on the ground. A few metres away was a severed leg” (214). Vomiting is a strong gut response while the ‘sinking sensation’ could relay both a physical reaction and the use of an everyday idiom to convey a sense of uneasiness in the narrative. Also, in the short story “Trilokpuri”, the lead character Mohammed wakes up with a ‘knot in the stomach’ that refuses to go away even with medicines making him feel uneasy:

Mohammed woke up that morning to a knot in his stomach. Not the kind of knot that accrues from worry or fear – it was far too loose for that. It was more like an uneasiness that had planted itself in his gut and kept prodding him as if to say I’m here...The confounded knot proved to be maddeningly

resilient, beating back even the antacid he took in his bid to untie it. (“Trilokpuri” 157)

The story proceeds with Mohammed trying to understand why it is there and deciding to go to a café for some fresh air and a cup of coffee in the hope to “disentangle himself from the annoying knot” (157). On his way, he opens his mailbox to find a letter. He reads the first two lines of it and is transported twenty-seven years back to the day he lost his friend Jeet to the anti-Sikh pogrom. He tries to save Jeet but is faced by an angry mob. He remembers that moment when he felt fear and his “mouth felt as if he had swallowed sawdust” (164). The letter is from Jeet’s father whom he last met when he came from Chandigarh to collect Jeet’s body. The family has been writing to him to testify as an eyewitness against one of the politicians involved in instigating violence. Mohammed had not responded to the request as he is afraid of the repercussions of testifying against someone with political power. As he contemplates on the memory of that ill-fated day and his subsequent inaction “His stomach felt tighter than it had all day. He had lost the urge to drink his latte” (164). Later, as he tries to distract himself from the emotions, he sees Jeet sitting on the divan with “his bloody face and unruly mane” (169) haunting Mohammed. The ‘knot in the stomach’ is used in the story for a whole range of emotions. It is the uneasiness that gives Mohammed a ‘gut feeling’ that something is wrong urging him to call and check on his wife. It is the undigested past which he “had never been able to outdistance” (171) lodged in his core and making itself present to him. Lastly, the knot symbolizes the many complicated emotions that are tied to losing his friend, not being able to bring himself to testify, and trying to run away from the ‘haunting’ past.

Apart from disgust, vomiting can also connote other emotions like exhaustion and distress. In the short story “Rumours”, Janaki Sahay is forced by police officers to do twenty sit-ups just for fun:

Janaki Sahay was a shattered man when he reached home. There was no rapport between the upper part of his body and his legs. He had had to hold his ears and do the sit-ups. This humiliation had shaken him. Even if no one else saw him, his own eyes were a witness to the act. he was filled with fear, pain, a guilty feeling and self-hatred. He vomited as he

reached the front door of his house. He vomited once again as he stepped into the courtyard...The memory of the humiliating incident kept haunting him. (*Kala November* 33)

The humiliating incident makes itself felt through his body as he vomits repeatedly. He is unable to come to terms with witnessing his own disrespect. The bundled emotions of 'fear, pain, a guilty feeling, and self-hatred' are probably too much to be ingested and a state of hyper-arousal and anguish are expressed in the narrative through his regurgitation. These gut expressions encoded in '84 narratives reveal a range of emotions from uneasiness to disgust. These can therefore be read as another way in which the horror of the carnage is encoded in its psychophysiological ramifications.

Nightmares and Haunting Images: Body Possessed

The American Psychiatric Association in their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) cite nightmares as one of the symptoms of being exposed to a traumatic event. If the nightmares (or other symptoms) persist one month after the experience a person may be diagnosed with PTSD. Dreams have been a subject of study of the impact of trauma since Freud's study of war neurosis in soldiers after the second World War. The soldiers suffered from repeated nightmares that did not align well with Freud's earlier exposition that dreams are a wish-fulfilment of the unconscious (*Interpretation* 404). In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), Cathy Caruth takes Freud's discovery of the persistence of these nightmares to argue that trauma is the repeated possession of the victim, and "[t]o be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event (5). Intrusive dreams, nightmares and images return belatedly after a period of latency as a return of the event to the psyche. Caruth's theorization of trauma as a "symptom of history" led to the foundation of trauma studies as an area of academic and medical exploration. It was Bessel van der Kolk's study of the dreams of fifteen Vietnam war veterans diagnosed with PTSD that established repeated nightmares one of the primary symptoms of trauma. Kolk's findings revealed that traumatic dreams replicate the traumatic event as it was experienced by the subject. Eleven out of the fifteen veterans claimed that their nightmares were an exact replica of their disturbing experience. However, there were problems with Kolk's study. In *Remembering Trauma*, Richard

McNally makes an interesting observation that the claim of exact replication cannot always be true. The nightmares were matched with the veterans' reconstruction of the event and therefore, the dreams cannot be a mimic copy of the event and are a reconstruction of how the event is constructed by the subject (110). This makes dreams a narrative mode of subjective experience. In "Dreams and the Body", Stanley Keleman notes that dreams are a language of the body:

Dreams, as a language of the body speaking to itself, offer clues about behaviours seeking to be embodied, or constitutional issues seeking to be resolved. The insight that the language of the body, interacting with itself, is revealed in the neural, muscular, imagistic, and feeling states that we call dreaming...Our embodied life is its own subject, as well as its own personal creation. The cortex gathers the body's metabolic excitation and sequences it into a narrative of image, expression, and feeling.

In trauma narratives the reference to dreams automatically denotes a stressed body, one that is haunted. The sensory witnessing of the horror plays itself in the form of dreams. Dreams are a narrative in their own that also add to the narrative of the teller or the text. Especially in fictional accounts of '84 these are used as narrative devices, as metanarratives, in their structural inclusion as a narrative-within-a-narrative. In the novel *Amu*, by Shonali Bose, the protagonist Kaju suffers from these nightmares throughout the text and goes on a journey to discover the cause. The narrative is full of references to Kaju being possessed by the past that returns in the form of hallucinations, sounds, and disturbing nightmares. As she reaches Trilokpuri to find some clues a woman tells her about the carnage and "Kaju heard the loud sounds of the train in her head again as Durga recounted the story" (91). She meanders through the neighbourhood and as "she reached the tracks, a train passed by, then suddenly through the gaps between the carriages, spotted a woman with a dupatta over her head" (63). This was a replay of watching her mother try to get help from the police officers that were standing across the same train track on the ill-fated day that Kaju's father and brother were burnt alive. As she gets closer to unravelling the mystery of her haunting past, the nightmares are ushered in: "Kaju would have nightmares every

night...Keya got up and went to the bathroom. On the way back, she heard a muffled whimper from Kaju's room. She opened the door and was shocked to see that Kaju seemed to be having a nightmare" (68). Keya discovers through Kaju's nightmares that the past that she had tried to bury cannot be so easily repressed. The trauma makes itself felt calling attention to its presence. When confronted about it, Keya tells Kaju that "You didn't speak for six months after I adopted you. Not one word. I was afraid of telling you about Trilokenagar. The traumas... 'And see, I was right. Your nightmares have begun again" (88). Ultimately, she tells Kaju about the pogrom and her mother's suicide some months after witnessing the deaths. The nightmares supply the text with a mystery and *Amu* becomes a story about Kaju's discovery of the past that already resides within her. In one dream, she also manifests symptoms of traumatic dissociation:

That was the strange thing about dreams: her consciousness hovered with Bublee, but she was also elsewhere in the dream. Bublee was screaming and calling out to her, but she didn't seem to hear. On one edge of the pit, a woman stood with her head covered and her face turned away. (44)

She was 'elsewhere' in the dream and also a part of it. This is an instance of depersonalization that is often found as a dissociative symptom in PTSD patients. Having an out-of-body experience is an example of depersonalization where the survivor might feel detached from one's body or emotions (Keane and Wilson 130). It is seen as one of the ways in which the body responds to trauma by imagining a distance between the self and the experience. In the dream Kaju is with Bublee but does not respond to her screams. Kaju is witnessing the episode from a distance and is also taking part in it. The self is split up into one who views it and another who experiences it.

Dreams also show emotional states of the dreamer in these narratives. In certain cases, the subject is haunted by a situation in which one did not or could not act as one desired. The emotion of guilt is often depicted by the character being haunted by the past in a situation where they could have saved another's life. In the novel *Assassinations*, a woman begs Jaswant for help as the mob is attacking her

husband. He is unable to help her as he must get to safety himself. This woman returns to haunt Jaswant in his dreams:

Her keening voice lunged at Jaswant like a knife, plunging through skin and bone to raise shivers worse than anything he had felt even on a freezing December morning. Her pinched face loomed in front of him. Her eyes were squeezed shut, as she reached into the depths of her desperation to hurl her most soul-shattering scream at him. Her long hair hung ragged on her shoulders and flailing arms. *Save my son! Save my son!*
He sat up in bed with a gasp. (123)

The dream is elaborate with visual and acoustic details. Jaswant remembers how he felt ‘shivers worse than anything’ as she screams out to him for aid. The nightmare disrupts his sleep and he ‘sat up in bed’ unable to relive the experience. The shocked somatic reaction of waking up ‘with a gasp’ is an attempt to remove the self from facing the situation again. As such the nightmare can be seen as a well-formed narrative form that reveal something about the actor in the dream or the dreamer’s association with them (McNamara 85). In Jaswant’s dream the woman appears gothic as almost an entity out to attack him. The language of the dream displays her aggression towards Jaswant with a scream that she ‘hurls’ at him in a voiced that ‘lunged’ at him ‘like a knife’. He is made to feel vulnerable under violent threat by the woman who is almost demonized. A sense of self-victimization is connotated where the dreamer becomes the sufferer. In this case the suffering woman and Jaswant almost exchange positions of vulnerability. Guilt makes the self suffer through these nightmares. In the short story “The Bier”, unable to save his friend’s father from the mob, Bhagwan Das has sleepless nights where “[a]ll he could remember was the face of Ishwar Das’s father. Bhagwan Das had not slept ever since the old man had been massacred” (*Kala November* 60). Similarly, in “Trilokpuri”, Mohammed refuses to testify and help his friend’s family fight for legal justice. The guilt is represented in the narrative in the form of his hallucinations:

The exchange with Abhay had brought Jeet into the room. He was sitting in the divan with his bloody face and unruly mane of hair. His eyes, shadowed by blue-black bruises, were

watching him; sad, reproachful eyes that were as damning as a pointing finger. Mohammad dropped his gaze...His eyes, which were bigger than ever, commanded his attention. They were no longer accusing him. Instead, they were brimming with pain; a pain that went beyond skin, beyond bone. (“Trilokpuri” 170-71)

Jeet’s accusing eyes are as ‘damning as a pointing finger’ and Mohammed ‘drops his gaze’ in response. He imagines the apparition as a projection of his feelings. He ‘reads’ emotions in Jeet’s eyes as they express reproach and then pain. This dream is also starkly visual complete with a ‘blue-black bruises’, a ‘bloody face’, and ‘unruly mane of hair’ – as Mohammed last saw his friend on the day that he was attacked to death by the mob. The state that he last saw his friend is etched as a visual encoding of the traumatic event that remains lodged in the mind like a frozen frame. This visual haunting is found even in witness accounts of the carnage. A survivor, Kuldeep Kaur speaks to Reema Anand and “her grey eyes either flash with anger or darken with pain; both emotions present simultaneously and seamlessly” (Anand 91). She completely breaks down during her testimony but continues to narrate her experience (95) and declares that “every Diwali I think of his murder. It would be lies to say that his memory, his way of being killed does not come to my mind every Diwali” (101). Kuldeep Kaur is haunted by the circumstances of her husband’s death and is caught in a cyclical pattern of remembering showing signs of traumatic bereavement. And, Darshan Kaur reveals that her “elder brother-in-law Gyan Singh’s entrails had spilled out when his stomach was slashed. She felt as if he was still outside and blood was still dripping from his body” (Singh 82). The gory visuals haunt her imagination and display her inability to cope with the brutality of his death.

The haunting is manifested physically as signs of sleeplessness and fatigue are somatised. The body shows that it is suffering. In *Assassinations*, Prem, a young Sikh man is humiliated and attacked by four men during the pogrom. He survives but is unable to forget the experience. The men return to taunt and trouble him in his nightmares:

The taunting faces of those four men, however, loomed large in his thoughts. They continued to beset his sleep, often

keeping him up until the early hours of the morning. It had come to a point where he was scared to fall asleep and was attempting to stay awake for as long as possible. The lack of sleep, coupled with his pressing need to evade those men, had given his face a hunted look, and his eyes never remained still. (136)

Prem's sleeplessness is visible somatically in his 'hunted look' and 'eyes' that 'never remained still'. He is troubled by the 'taunting faces' of the men who attacked him. He is 'scared' of falling asleep and risking his self again. He evades sleep in order to avoid being re-traumatized by re-experiencing the episode in his nightmares. He becomes a living vessel of history as subjectively experienced by him. The humiliation makes it difficult for Prem to return to his former self and towards the end of the novel he becomes a Khalistani terrorist eventually killed by the bomb he himself planted in a bus. For him, trauma lies in witnessing his own self-degradation. The nightmares remind the reader of the impact of the traumatic on his self – a self that cannot exorcize itself of the haunting.

Goose Bumps to Turning Numb: Other Responses

The body communicates through non-verbal signs of distress during exposure and often long after the stimuli is offset. Trauma narratives are full of peritraumatic and posttraumatic somatic symptoms of anxiety and stress. Peritraumatic reactions are a form of stress response displayed during or immediately after the event. These range from behavioural reactions stemming from emotional states (fear, helplessness, panic, horror, shame) as the shock of facing a violent often life-threatening situation confronts a person. In trauma narratives these are displayed through various descriptive details relayed somatically. For example, in *Pages Stained with Blood*, the protagonist goes to a rehabilitation camp in search of her Sikh friends and sees hoards of women victimized by the pogrom: "Women widowed on the same day at the same time! As I go near them, I get goose bumps on my arms" (149). The goose bumps are a somatic evidence of her cognitive and emotional response to the sight.

One of the peritraumatic emotional responses captured in these narratives is that of fear. It is shown through limbs going numb, hearts pounding faster, and blood

being drained from the face. In the short story “Karma” a woman returns home with ‘quivering lips’, her face ‘turned very pale’ with a panic-stricken look about her that made it “obvious that she had seen something terrible” (Kapur 201). In “Twilight” a man is told that a Sikh ‘was roasted alive in West Patel Nagar’ and “[w]ith his eyes wide open, the South Indian’s face turned pallid” (*Kala November* 17). In “They will Return at the Next Station”, the unnamed protagonist witnesses a Sikh co-passenger being harassed by the police at multiple stations. The story ends with the Sikh man in a state of panic with a ‘stark white’ face requesting help:

Suddenly I was shaken out of my slumber. He was shaking me up, his eyes were moving, mechanically, his face was stark white.

He was whispering softly,

“They are returning...” (*Kala November* 205)

In a similar train journey narrated in “Have You Ever Seen a Sikh Beggar?”, an old Sikh man is attacked by an unruly mob inside the compartment in front of everyone:

The Sardarji was holding on to the rod very firmly. Innumerable people were trying to pull him off his berth, but they failed. He was screaming like a goat being slaughtered, his eyes, were terror stricken, and his body was drenched in perspiration. He was trembling in a desperate manner. 169)

The description of the man with his body ‘trembling’ desperately ‘drenched in perspiration’ is a somatic description of the attack on his person. Trembling is retained in the narratives as both a peritraumatic and a posttraumatic reaction to the horror of the carnage – of literally being shaken by it. In some accounts it captures fear and in others, it relays the persistence of the event with its ability to cause hyperarousal even after years. In “Twilight”, Kanhaiya Lal’s “legs had been trembling ever since he heard about the carpenter who was roasted alive. He was very sad and depressed” (*Kala November* 19). While a witness, Inderpal Singh trembles as agonizing memories of witnessing the gory death of his brother return to haunt him: “Inderpal Singh was left watching his father and brother die. Even today, he starts to

shake when he remembers the state of Harkirat's body" (*I Accuse* 55). The trembling could be a replaying of his original somatic response to the horror of watching the mutilation of his brother's body. It could be a manifestation of fear for the self and a response to witnessing. It occurs as a posttraumatic symptom of the pathology. In the short story "Dried Apricots Smell Like Dead Fish", Phulo still trembles at the sight of fire which reminds him of the way his father-in-law was burnt during the carnage. He survives the carnage badly injured but succumbs a month later. Phulo is left scarred with memories even after 30 years:

She closes her eyes and breathes his body. her body is a shell...It has been thirty years. Thirty long years. But if she closes her eyes, it is happening now. The stench of burnt skin fills her. Even now, she cannot look at fire without shivering. So many times, while cooking, she has ended up burning her wrists and fingers. Sometimes she has deliberately put her palms above the flame. How does it feel?... She closes her eyes and his screams fill her whole body... (173)

Phulo's body becomes a 'shell' carrying painful memories within it. Her senses are haunted by the event – she remembers the stench and screams that 'fill her whole body'. She tries to burn her fingers while cooking to understand what he must have felt somatically. "Phulo would often wake up mumbling, Bebe, my skin is burning, Bebe, my chest is hurting. Bebe, cover me up. I am naked, cover me up, Bebe" (178). The psychosomatic affectations of the horrific experience refuse to go away even after years and she is rendered a victim of PTSD.

Another symptom captured in these trauma narratives is of social avoidance. For example, Jasmeet Singh, a child witness of the horrors of the pogrom, was affected to the point of being afraid to expose herself to the outside world even to perform mundane tasks:

Jasmeet was never allowed to forget how grown-ups in the family would often clamp her tiny mouth – even risking asphyxiation – to stop her from crying, lest the marauding mobs hunted down the family. Three decades and several

other events later, Jasmeet continues to feel hunted and manifests extreme nervousness, fear of strangers, and a reluctance to open up to new people. (Mukhopadhyay 20)

The memory of being on the verge of asphyxiation, of physically being in a state of suffocation in an already suffocating atmosphere of fear has perhaps caused Jasmeet's body to encode the somatic and express its traumatic effects through the body in signs of extreme nervousness and fear. Jasmeet shows a 'reluctance to open up to new people' as the traumatic even changes the relationship between the self and the world. Similarly, another survivor, "Chandu Singh, is so emotionally scarred from his experiences in 1984, he can't go out of the house. He is so scared of the sight of a khaki uniform that he starts running when he sees a police officer. He just sits, staring blankly in front of him all day" (ibid. 119). Here, the visual of a khaki uniform reminds Chandu Singh of the traumatic event and it has become an icon of fear that drives him to 'run away' and conceal the body from the potential threat of the world outside. Even for women survivors interviewed by Reema Anand, fear concretized into an inability for them to physically move out of Tilak Vihar (a resettlement colony) to look for livelihood. Most of these women were those who had either lost their brothers or fathers at an early age during the pogrom (Grewal 16). Perhaps, like Chandu Singh, for these women, fear was expressed through physical immobility and self-confinement to limited areas. Another survivor, "Arvind developed a fear of the crowds and would feel his limbs go numb whenever he was accosted by people...Arvind could never overcome the feeling of being spotted (Mukhopadhyay 105). Arvind's 'limbs going numb' could possibly be a psychosomatic symptom of trauma. The fear of being 'spotted' is the fear of making the body vulnerable to danger again. In these narratives, a boundary between the self and the world has been drawn which manifests itself in physical withdrawal from the outside world. An illusory cocoon where the self could protect itself is created where transcendence could mean risking the self and inviting death. In these cases, the traumatized self can no longer expose itself physically to an unsafe world where violence and death possibly await. This internalization of fear of the outside world can be read as an attempt to protect the body from harm even after the threat outside is over. A tactic of self-preservation, a neurosis of fear and the incapability of the self to expose itself to the world as a result of trauma. The Diagnostic Statistic Manual – IV states that one

of the symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is a persistent re-experiencing of the event along with physiological reactivity and psychological distress “to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event” (Treatment). “Feeling of detachment or estrangement from others, efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma, and impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning” (ibid.) are other signs that can be read as a symptom of the pathology. In the novel *Helium*, Nelly’s husband is burnt alive and she is unable to touch anyone after that withdrawing from physical contact even with her son:

I slipped into a vegetable-like state. My son was playing in the other room. I asked Maribel not to tell him that his father was no more. My son had already observed a lot...But something had changed in our relationship. I was not able to touch him after that. I have not been able to touch anyone since November’84. (134)

Her son in turn keeps “saying over and over *saah ghutda hai* about the pogrom in ’84 (I’m choking). It is impossible to translate; no equivalents exist in English” (173). Here, ‘saah ghutda hai’ is a phrase that carries an existential note to it. It invokes feeling suffocated, not being able to breathe in a world has been drastically altered by the traumatic event and therefore, struggling to find breath in it.

These examples depict that the body-mind expresses itself through physical signs that can be read as a feature of trauma narratives. Reading somatic expressions reveals the way in which traumatic experiences can be narrativized in a psychobiological manner. Understanding the symbiotic relationship between the mind and body sheds light on how trauma is an embodied experience. The body-mind expresses itself through non-verbal language like facial expressions, crying, vomiting, trembling to show its disturbed state. These can be read as a language of trauma in their own – a narrative feature of accounts of ’84. The next chapter looks at the placement of women’s bodies within the world of the carnage and the discourses that emerge from it.

CHAPTER IV

Stor(y)ing Rape:

To Speak or Not to Speak

Hordes of people hunting for men of a particular community and slaughtering them. Raping their women on open streets with their children looking on in dumb awe...When women were being smoked out of burning homes and sexually assaulted right there, next to the bodies of their sons and husbands. Right there on the streets, covered with blood and mud, these atrocities were being committed.¹

This chapter will look at the specificity of the experience of the female body during 1984. It is an area where gender, body politics and trauma theory merge to highlight how sexual exploitation during 1984 is stor(y)ied. Violence unleashed on women's bodies is a recurring pattern in history of India. The Partition of the subcontinent in 1947 saw thousands of women raped and abducted, the Gujarat riots of 2002, or the communal riots of Muzzafarnagar in 2013 are also replete with accounts of gang-rapes. In "Women's Bodies: Violence, Security and Capabilities", Martha Nussbaum states that "many women are murdered in the course of sexual violence. In wartime and communal conflict this happens in large numbers. It has been estimated, for example, that about one-half of the 2000 Muslims murdered in Gujarat, India, were women who were raped and tortured, then set on fire" (171). These statistics are a result of estimation due to a lack of official data. Rape cases have also not yet been accounted for in the official record of '84.

However, the storying of '84 remains incomplete without addressing the violence that women faced. Narratives of gruesome accounts of rape and sexual molestation during the pogrom need to be unearthed to shed light on how women were subjected to atrocities during the three days of the carnage. The dominant narrative of 1984 is one where Sikh men were burnt and murdered at the hands of a

¹ Arpana Cour. "November 1984". *1984: In Memory and Imagination – Personal Essays and Stories on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots*. 1 edition. New Delhi: Amaryllis, 2016. Print. Pg. 26.

vengeful mob. However, the experiences of women remain at ‘the other side of silence’² and are rendered invisible in this chapter of history. The shroud of silence over such instances reveals a matrix of power. Being subaltern, occupying the periphery in a patriarchal world necessitates a different level of negotiation for women who survived gender-based violence. This context raises a crucial question of investigation: is trauma graded according to the social fabric that the self is a part of? Women were subjected to witnessing the violent death of men in their families and some were then gang-raped by the mob. They saw men in their lives being humiliated and burnt alive and then saw themselves become targets of gender-based violence. Both these traumatic experiences were a part of women’s experience of the carnage. For them 1984 as a traumatic event had two major catastrophic experiences within it as a result.

The female body becomes a site of power play, male control and domination. Located between storeys of gender, caste and community, the female body is a text on which meaning is ascribed from the outside. Women are placed on different locales socially and culturally depending on what constitutes their identity. Sikh women were sexually assaulted during 1984 because they belonged to a minority community under attack and being women, such modes of violence *could* be unleashed on them. The female body does not belong solely to the woman rather belongs to the community that she is a part of. Therefore, sexual violence on Sikh women was a means to attack the Sikh community. In “Rape and the Construction of Communal Identity”, Kalpana Kannabiran highlights that “the rape of women of minority groups – religious as well as caste – which signifies the rape of the community to which the woman belongs and is justified by demonstrating its inherent immorality. It is also an assertion of difference and separateness and a reinforcement of the aggressor’s position in the right” (33). While Sikh men were humiliated and murdered openly, Sikh women were raped to further assault the community as an other. This violence becomes sexual because the bodies of women often become the custodians of honour or *izzat* of their community. Therefore, humiliation of the Sikh community was carried forward to the humiliation of women’s bodies:

² Urvashi Butalia. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Books India, 1998.

Women's bodies are considered by Indian men, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, as the repository of men's honour. 'Power rape,' the raping of women to demonstrate and defeat rival men in patriarchal societies, is quite common in many parts of India, as indeed in many other areas of the world. The rape of a woman is akin to the rape of the community to which she belongs. (Ray qtd. in Pandey 2004: 105)

This conceptualization of 'power rape' – gender-based violence unleashed on women's bodies to deride men of a particular community depicts how women's bodies are treated as instruments of attack on notions of masculine selfhood. Raping Sikh women was an attempt to emasculate and humiliate Sikh men by highlighting their failure to protect their women and therefore the *izzat* of the community. It is emasculation since men failed to perform their role of protectors and guardians. An internalization of patriarchal discourses centred on notions of *izzat* or honour, shame and fear, keeps women from articulating their own experiences. Male dominance and social inequality are produced and maintained through language. In *Feminist Rhetorical Theories*, Cheri Kramarae labels this martial use of language to wield power through words like shame, guilt, honour, chastity, immorality, virginity, lust, modesty, outrage, penetration, consent, rape, for example, as sexual terrorism (qtd. in Kannabiran and Menon 43). Interestingly, when women are labelled as custodians of *izzat*, they become upholders of the honour of the social units that they belong to – the family, community, and the patriarchal world at large.

There is a discourse of silence around the experience of women and their sexual molestation during the carnage. The 'unspeakable' is a complicated discussion within the domain of trauma studies. After Adorno's declaration that no poetry is possible after Auschwitz, trauma theory emerging from Holocaust studies has reified the notion that trauma is inherently unspeakable and unrepresentable. In "Parsing the Unspeakable in the Context of Trauma", Barry Stampfl argues that trauma theory developed in the works of Shoshanna Felman and Dori Laub (1992), Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996), Marianne Hirsch (1997), and Geoffrey Hartman (1995) laid the foundation of understanding trauma through negations of representation (Balaev 15).

However, the unspeakable has been overhyped as the chief constituent of trauma narratives:

I will seek to begin the making of this inventory by zeroing in on the commonsensical idea that the unspeakable may be merely a phase in the process of traumatization, not its predetermined endpoint. Were it not for the accumulated weight of literary trauma studies' insistence on the unspeakable as trauma's distinctive, core characteristic, this thought would probably seem quite obvious, especially since all I wish to suggest is that traumatization need not necessarily conclude in a state of involuntary, deeply conflicted silence. (ibid.)

There is a need to remove silence from its pedestalized position from which it is shown to point at the limits of language in face of atrocity. Taking Stampfl's point, there have been literary and artistic representations of individual and collective traumas (novels and films on the 1947 Partition of India, for example). Moreover, the stress on unspeakability may evade ethical and political responsibility of engaging with concerns that the traumatic event raises. "What is unspeakable evokes the privileges and problems inherent in speech while actively distancing itself from them, performing a rhetorical sleight of hand that simultaneously gestures toward and away from the complex ethical negotiations that representing atrocity entails" (Mandel qtd. in Stampfl 18). Further, the discourse of silence can reveal a politics of silencing – who and what dictates the narrative and public discourse of the traumatic event. Reading silence as a characteristic of trauma negates this politics. There is a difference between one's inability to talk about the atrocity they survived and unwillingness to do. "Can the subaltern speak?" is a crucial question that can be raised in this context especially due to the marginalization of women and their voices in a patriarchal social set up. The carnage of 1984 is stored in public consciousness as an anti-Sikh pogrom in which Sikh men were burnt alive. The brutality of sexual molestation that women had to face hardly makes it into the discourse of '84. This chapter analyses this lack to deconstruct the silence around sexual violence unleashed on women's bodies during the pogrom.

Negating ‘Official’ Silence: Testimonies as Counter Discourse

During the three days of the carnage women were gangraped, sexually molested in public view. Yet there has been a veil of silence around the issue. Accounts of sexual violence are not a part of public discourse of ’84. In the ‘official’ version of history women’s experience has yet again been sidelined as it has been through different episodes of Indian history such as the ’47 Partition, Gujarat riots of 2002, or the communal riots of Muzzafarnagar in 2013. This is where the testimonies published in non-fictional accounts function as counter discourse to ‘official’ versions that silence experiences. There has been a chain of 11 legal commissions and inquiries on 1984. These legal reports reveal how an event is susceptible to an orchestration of discourses. The murky causes of violence have opened a plethora of possible meanings and herein a political, traumatic event becomes a text that is open to interpretation.

In ‘official’ versions, instances of rape and sexual molestation have been placed on the periphery. In 2006, Ensaaf an NGO working towards achieving justice for crimes against humanity in India published a report titled “Twenty Years of Impunity: The November 1984 Pogroms of Sikhs in India” that listed why rape was an underreported issue:

Several factors contributed to the underreporting of rape. First, societal shame silenced the victims...Survivors used euphemistic language to describe what happened. Sarabjeet Singh saw his pregnant wife stripped naked in the middle of the road and “dishonoured.” After the mob also dishonored his sister-in-law, they poured acid on the bodies of the two women. Second, doctors intimidated women from getting a medical examination and registering complaints. Third, in India, rape cases are medico-legal cases that require special evidentiary procedures which doctors in relief camps could not follow. These doctors failed to refer women to competent hospitals. Fourth, the majority of the investigating officers of the Misra Commission were probably men and failed to elicit the personal testimonies from victims. (38-39)

The use of euphemisms in reporting rape using words such as ‘dishonoured’ is also noted by Grewal in her interviews where it is revealed to her that during legal trials, “victims changed their statements, others suggested it in their statements for the savvy to understand without naming it, many pretended not to know what happened because they lost consciousness while still others claimed to know someone to whom it had happened” (170). There was an indirectness in language that was used to report sexual molestation that possibly made it difficult to address rape directly as a serious crime committed during the carnage. Further, as pointed out, the legal procedure for registering rape as a medico-legal case requires evidence that was not or could not be collected. An interviewee named Dr. Mandira Kapur was on duty at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in Delhi during the carnage and recalls how a woman brought her daughter to be checked for the need of an abortion. Several other women who were raped came to Kapur later. When asked why this woman did not wish to report a case of rape, she responds:

When she was talking to me she was quite normal but when I told her if she wanted to record it as a medico-legal case she told me that *aapko pata hai kaise hota hai, ladki chakkar kategi ghar mein aadmi koi bacha hi nahin aur ladki ki izzat chali jayegi* (You know how it is, the girl will have to go round and round, none of the menfolk in the house have survived and the girl will lose her reputation), and for that reason she did not want to make it a case. (Chakravarty 642)

The woman describes that the hassle of going ‘round and round’ and the fear of losing reputation in society checked her from reporting rape. Compounded with such reasons, rapes were not reported by women themselves. Even when there were affidavits that directly mentioned sexual atrocities, they were not given due seriousness in the court as offences in themselves but were rather sidelined as a part of the carnage. “The closest the Nanavati Commission came to touch upon the subject of rape in its report was where it paraphrased the affidavit of a widow from Sultanpuri in west Delhi, Padmi Kaur” (Mitta and Phoolka 71). Reema Anand also notes that “[n]one of the commissions, enquiries or journalists – except perhaps for Madhu Kishwar – brought up the word ‘rape’. Even People’s Union for Democratic Rights

(PUDR) failed to mention the atrocities committed on Sikh women and their young daughters” (*Scorched* 51). The marginalization of these accounts in legal reports is further cemented in the fact that no one has yet been convicted for rape in the legal cases of ’84 and compensation rolled out to the survivors has not taken it into account either. As an advocate fighting for legal justice in the context of ’84, H.S Phoolka notes that this ignorance of rape has had legal repercussions:

The glossing over of rape allegations by all concerned, including the Citizens Justice Committee, had two legal repercussions. Nobody was ever tried, let alone convicted, for committing rape during the carnage, whether as a separate offence or along with other offences. Secondly, as a corollary, no victim of the carnage has been paid compensation for being raped. The compensation package that was announced in three rounds over the years never mentioned rape. (*When a Tree* 69)

In the media, it was Madhu Kishwar’s article in a magazine called *Manushi* that brought out the first public disclosure of a rape account. “In a special issue of *Manushi* brought out in the wake of the carnage, Kishwar, defying all traditional restraints, put a captioned picture of a rape victim on the cover, and published her [Gurdip Kaur’s] first person account” (Mitta and Phoolka 69). Gurdip Kaur’s testimony revealed the brutality of her experience and brought media attention to sexual atrocities committed during the carnage for the first time. Putting Gurdip Kaur’s picture on the cover was a plea to bring such experiences into the limelight and make them a part of the discourse of ’84. Before this even the media remained silent on the issue. Sanjay Suri working as a reporter for *The Indian Express* during the carnage recounts that rape was deliberately not reported by the media to check further violence:

As advised by Devsagar, I reported this to Mr Dar back in the office. He was firm that the rapes must not be reported. He then mentioned a reason for not reporting that I’ve never forgotten. ‘Three hundred have died, let not 3000 be killed,’ he said...I abandoned that report with some

reluctance. But I did recognize then that Mr Dar had a point. He no doubt thought that in that knife-edge atmosphere, a report on rapes could become extremely provocative, and lead to violence and clashes, in Delhi and who knows, in Punjab. So we blanked rapes out of our reporting. (Suri 201-202)

Reporting on ground during the pogrom, Suri went to Block 32 of Trilokpuri that was one of the worst hit areas. There he met a lone Sikh man sitting on a *charpai* who told him that “there had been thirty men, and they had all raped. He spoke of more rapes that had taken place in other houses, in which now nobody was left” (201). As Suri informed the editor of this, he was advised not to proceed in the matter for the fear that reporting rape could be ‘provocative’ and lead to more violence in other parts of the country. The volatile situation of the times called for a ‘blinking out of rapes’ out of media reporting. Suri published this experience in his book titled *1984: The Anti-Sikh Violence and After* in 2013 almost thirty years later.

It is here that these published accounts of witnesses and survivors work to counter the silence that has surrounded gendered violence. Instances of rape and sexual molestation are described as a part of the atrocities the women had to face. In *Scorched White Lilies of '84*, Reema Anand interviews women survivors who describe their gruesome experiences of gendered violence in their interviews. These women residing in the resettlement colony of Tilak Vihar “broadly classified as widows of 1984 anti-Sikh riots” (11) recount how 1984 continues to “remain etched on their minds” (16). Puppy, Baby, Maina and Kali recount how several women were picked up by the mob after the men had been burnt alive (48-52). The version of history revealed through their interviews contests ‘official’ versions where rape finds little or no mention. Similarly, in *Betrayed by the State*, Jyoti Grewal interviews the women to shed light on similar atrocities. A woman named Jatinder Kaur recalls how a young Sikh girl was molested by the mob that “turned on her and said, ‘We’ll straighten you out, you little Sardar bitch.’ Then what they did to her – all of them raped her repeatedly till she fainted” (Grewal 84). Another interviewee and author of an article titled “The Winter in Delhi, 1984: The Legacy of Organized Cowardice”, Aseem Srivastava recalls that “[g]irls of ten or eleven to women of 75 or 80 were raped. Some of my female friends recorded painful testimonies of gang-rapes of

women in the presence of their own children, overseen by the main organizers from the Congress party near drains and *nalas*” (145). Harjit Kaur reveals that with “the girls all sorts of improprieties happened; girls and women had to face that. For four days we remained hidden” (82). The sexual ‘improprieties’ were a part of the carnage and a threat these women had to deal with while men of the community were openly being butchered. Jagrup Kaur also remembers how it was difficult to survive the carnage as “people there [in a house they were hiding in] started to misbehave with us, tearing at our clothes, grabbing at the girls” (108). In an interview to Uma Chakravarty, a woman named Nanki Bai remembers a woman from Kalyanpuri was brutally raped: “On the 1st. they grabbed her, took her to the park and raped her. Her salwar was torn off and she was left naked” (40). Another woman named Puppy recollects that “[o]ur immature bodies and mind could not comprehend what the word ‘rape signified. But still when we were pushed out into the street next to the colony park, we could see naked bodies of girls and women being thrown into a truck close by” (Anand 61). These accounts function as counter discourses by including sexual violence as a part of the experience. They challenge the dominant discourse of ’84 as a pogrom in which Sikh men were burnt by a carnivorous mob.

Women’s Silence or Women Silenced: Questions of Agency

While silence is a part of the dominant discourse there is a need to understand some of the reasons why women themselves chose not to speak of their experiences. This conjures questions of agency when it comes to narrating trauma. Some women deliberately preferred silence over narration. Understanding the link between narration, power, and social stigmas sheds light on the matrices of power that discourses work with. It further reveals the negotiations that women had to do after the carnage as they returned to the quotidian.

One of the most prominent reasons for not disclosing rape found in these narratives is the fear of social ostracization and shame. In *Sikhs: The Untold Agony of 1984*, Nilanjan Mukhopdhyay reveals that after the ‘main job’ of killing the men was done, sexual violence against women was used as a tool to further attack the Sikh community where women refrained from disclosing rape due to notions of ‘izzat’ and honour:

It was also argued that news reportage and public discussions at the time had deliberately ignored instances of rape against Sikh women and its use as a recurring tool of “revenge” mainly because the victims were guided by considerations of *izzat* or “honour” and either refrained from disclosing rape or described it figuratively...women who were either raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence, felt that their suffering paled in comparison to that of the entire community. (Mukhopadhyay 72)

The internalization of these conventions of honour and shame perhaps caused some women to remain silent about their sexual exploitation. However, another important aspect of choosing not to speak is highlighted in Mukhopadhyay’s observation that “women felt that their suffering failed in comparison to that of the entire community”. The grading of women’s trauma as one that ‘paled’ in comparison juxtaposes the experiences of women against the larger collective trauma of the community. “If there was a veil of silence over the rape cases, it was partly because of social stigma attached to the victims involved, and partly because they, at the same time, had been orphaned or widowed, and rendered homeless – tragedies that overshadowed their sexual trauma” (Phoolka 67). The overshadowing of their sexual trauma by other tragedies reveals a certain form of gradation. It is as if rape and sexual molestation are not considered a part of the trauma of ’84 but, rather as aberrant instances. These are therefore not included in the dominant narrative of the pogrom that focusses primarily on the violence against men of the community. The subaltern stands silenced internalizing the unimportance of its own narrative. In an interview to Jyoti Grewal, advocate H.S Phoolka makes a similar observation that “[t]hey were standing there [in court] talking about the murders of the men, do you think they wanted to tell everyone that they had just been raped? That was the last thing on their mind.’ Where in the hierarchy of crime do we, as a society, place rape?” (*Betrayed* 171). This shows that there is a hierarchy of traumas in these accounts. The murder of their men was a bigger atrocity for these women in comparison to their sexual molestation. It mimics the ‘hierarchy of crime’ in a patriarchal society that ‘places rape’ below other atrocities committed during the carnage. This reveals that there is a grading of

traumas – a hierarchy where rape is sidelined because it is also neglected in the world that the social self has to return to.

Further, women were not only guided by their own *izzat* but also of the men in their community. A politics of silence is highlighted in the testimony of Gurdip Kaur who reveals how women chose to remain silent about their sexual traumas in order not to offend men of the community: “The unmarried girls will have to stay unmarried all their lives if they admit that they have been dishonoured. No one would marry such a girl...Those women in whose homes there is one or more surviving men, cannot make a public statement because they will be dishonouring those men” (Mukhopadhyay 73). Kaur points out that going public with their accounts of rape would further dishonour men by reminding them of their failure to safeguard women. In *Betrayed by the State*, Jyoti Grewal makes a similar observation that women remained silent because talking of rape would hurt men reminding them of their failure to ‘protect’ women:

For some women, the violence was done twice over, first to their body through rape, and then loss of male family members. Unfortunately for them, in public discourse the second superseded the first in its importance. The raped women had to bear the burden of the honour of their family being sullied because they were raped; it was a reminder that the inability to ‘protect’ them had compromised the masculinity of their men and then the personal horror with which they have lived for many years. (Grewal 169)

Ultimately even in traumatic instances of rape, women consciously placed the honour of men above their own sexual trauma. Perhaps, grading it over and above their own. “For many rape victims, silence has been the only recourse: the means of maintaining the family honour she must embody against all odds” (Grewal 170). On one hand the statement hints at the double marginalization of women – at the hands of the mob who sexually abused them and at the hands of constructed notions of masculinity whose honour the women had to protect. On the other hand, this shifts the locus of shame from women to men. It is a reversal of roles wherein women become upholders of the *izzat* of the community choosing to remain silent in order to protect their men from

shame. The agency of women is exercised keeping in mind the nuances of a patriarchal society and socially constructed definitions of honour and masculinity. In “Engaging with Women's Words and their Silences”, Anju Saluja notes that the women she interviewed exercised considerable agency during narration:

Many narratives dealing with the concerns of women survivors of the 1984 pogrom end up reducing them to the status of passive subjects, while discounting the ‘layers of experience’ that are critical to formulating and moulding their distinct voices. These women often get type cast as mere helpless and hapless beings, devoid of any agency and capacity to determine the course of their lives...(356-57)

However, Saluja notes that these women exercised complete agency over their actions:

Indeed, I got glimpses of women exercising powerful agency in the face of heavy odds and determining their own course of action during my fieldwork. While sharing their accounts, they exercise considerable agency in determining the themes and issues that should be included and those which need to be silenced. (356-360)

Women control what they narrate, how and to whom. In making this choice keeping in mind socio-cultural nuances of the world around, women cannot be seen to be mere passive subjects. The control over authoring one’s story is an attempt to gain authority. During fieldwork, Saluja also notes that women narrated the past in gruesome details while men were more concerned about rehabilitation and improving their economic conditions. She argues that the men refrained from delving into the past because it reminded them of their emasculation and humiliation (357). An interesting observation that highlights that in the aftermath of ’84 even men are guided by notions of honour or izzat. They chose silence in order not to further humiliate themselves. “Typically, male survivors of the 1984 pogrom also do not want to remember and reflect on the very moment of their supposed emasculation” (ibid. 358). Gender roles therefore influence exercising of agency when it comes to

narration. While this was one reason for the men to maintain silence, women had to use silence to ensure that the honour of men is retained.

The women also had to remain silent due to the negotiations they had to do to ensure survival. The issue of remarriage was one such factor. In some cases, there was pressure to remarry from within their own families. For example, a survivor, Popri Kaur, “was hardly nineteen when she was widowed. She had been gang-raped during the violence. She said fine when her family pressurized her to marry her brother-in-law” (Grewal 127). As also pointed above in Gurdip Kaur’s testimony, women whose husbands had been killed had to maintain silence to be eligible for remarriage. In *Betrayed by the State*, Jaya Srivastava an activist with Nagrik Ekta Manch makes a similar observation:

The issue of rape was buried. You know the whole thing of social ostracization. I remember Baby changed her affidavit. When we returned to speak with her with regard to the Mishra Commission, her statement had changed. There was a lot of difference between the two statements of the first report and the one for the Commission. Because by the next time she had married her older brother-in-law, so she said she was unconscious and does not know what happened...

Srivastava also notes that social pressure to remain silent on the issue of rape was another reason that these did not speak of their traumas:

Later on, the community pressurized them so much that the women just did not want to talk about rape. So all the rape cases were either camouflaged or were pushed aside or whatever you might want to say...I witnessed male dominance in full operation at a time like that. And here were some of us trying to empower women. For several of them, there were pressures to remarry. (126)

The forced silencing of women from inside the community due to ‘male dominance in full operation’ reveals the politics of discourses. As the traumatic event recedes into the everyday, women had to go back to gender-based social structures. Publicly

declaring their sexual exploitation would further mar their chances of re-establishing domesticity and marital relations. Remarriage within the patriarchal Sikh community is dependent on men's acceptance of these women. Telling their tales is putting the hope of conjugality at risk. Women negotiate their dependency on men in a patriarchal, heteronormative world. Silence becomes a form of 'adaptive preference' theorized by Amartya Sen in *Resources, Values and Development* as a state wherein due to long socialization to systemic, social and cultural injustice, the subject adapts and even bases preference on existing structures even if they are oppressive:

The most blatant forms of inequalities and exploitations survive in the world through making allies out of the deprived and the exploited. The underdog learns to bear the burden so well that he or she overlooks the burden itself. Discontent is replaced by acceptance, hopeless rebellion by conformist quiet, and – most relevantly in the present context – suffering and anger by cheerful endurance. As people learn to survive to adjust to the existing horrors by sheer necessity of uneventful survival, the horrors look less terrible in the metric of utilities. (309)

If narration is an inaccessible option due to social stigma, silence is preferred though this preference can be socio-culturally coerced. Agency then becomes illusory. The preferred choice is from a set of limited options, limited by conventions. If women prefer silence, it may be because gender-politics forces that preference upon them. Being socialized beings, aware of power structures their preferences may not be autonomous. Developing Sen's thought, Martha Nussbaum argues that such adaptive preferences check the development of human capabilities such as life, bodily health, bodily integrity, emotions, since it problematizes the notion of autonomy and preference.³ However, in *Adaptive Preference and Women's Empowerment*, Serene Khader argues that "adaptive preferences are a moral mystery" since it is difficult to establish the difference between adaptive preferences stemming from bad social conditions and other forms of preferences (41). How does one decide whether a preference is adaptive or not? And, aren't all preferences done within a set of limited

³ Martha C. Nussbaum. "Symposium on Amartya Sen's Philosophy: 5 Adaptive Preferences and Women's Options." *Economics and Philosophy* 17.1 (2001): 67-88. Print.

options mediated by socialization? Lastly, can an autonomous notion of agency exist? Khader further asserts that representing third-world women as passive recipients of violence in “backward cultures” negates the way these women navigate their options. By reducing the complexity of social relations to the binary of oppressor-oppressed, Western scholars set up for themselves the task of ‘saving’ third-world women (34). Saying that women are silenced and need rescuing from it, would negate the agency they exercise in making choices (even within restrictive domains). While the ability of having and making free choices is a feminist appeal, it is yet to be achieved in all spheres and is not often available to all women especially those embroiled in rigid patriarchal structures. There is a need to study the negotiations made by women as sites of potential resistance.

The debate is applicable to questions of agency of women and its link to narration. If silence is preferred to narration, as in the case of rape accounts of '84, is it a form of adaptive preference where the choice of not speaking about one's own sexual trauma is due to the adaptive internalization of one's inferior position? Or is it a question of adaptation in terms of Darwinian survival that uses silence to best deal with one's immediate social environment? It can be argued that silence is a form of negotiation between both these positions. Silence is an adaptive preference based on an acknowledgement of one's subservient position in the power matrix yet is used to adapt to ensure survival. The former is an absorption or internalization of the socio-cultural makeup of the world whereas adaptation is a response to it. One is a passive position, the other active. This negotiation highlights that to speak or not to speak is a complicated choice. The paradox itself is the solution or an answer to the question whether silence is adaptive or an adaptation. It is both adaptive and an adaptation but in being both is neither completely. Silence is both coerced in the light of larger politics and preferred in order to survive power politics. Therefore, as a negotiation it is acceptance of the world order as well as a resistance to it when used in favour of one's survival.

The silencing of women's accounts of sexual exploitation is already well theorized as a direct result of the placement of women below men in a patriarchal world wherein they are forced to remain silent about their own sexual trauma due to cultural and social notions of honour. However, there is a need to go beyond this

simplistic hierarchy-based approach to understand why women themselves *chose* not to speak about their experiences and if they really do get the chance to make a fair choice. In *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives*, Zoë Brigley Thompson and Sorcha Gunne note that “[t]here is still then a need to ‘recuperate what has too often been left out; the physical violation and the women who find ways to speak it’ (although it is important to note that sometimes silence can be just as communicative as voluble speech)” (4). Here too, silence may not always be read as an evidence of the failure of language to convey trauma, rather incumbent upon the agency of teller. In the case of women, agency is subjected to gender inequality, social and cultural stigmas, patriarchal discourses, and survival raising problematic questions on the autonomy of this agency itself.

At this junction it is pertinent to ask where silence operates, in which locale? In the realm of official legal reports, news coverage, judicial proceedings, and the dominant narrative of '84 there is an ambience of amnesia around rape. However, in the world of women, rape is shared knowledge – part of the larger collective trauma they endured as women. A survivor named Harjit Kaur tells Jyoti Grewal that “[y]ou felt like my own so I opened up to you. I don’t speak about these matters to anyone” (*Betrayed* 90). During her interactions with the widows of Tilak Vihar, Reema Anand also notes that women do not share their stories with everyone: “There are many girls in the group who have not opened up completely; probably, it is difficult for them to trust people even now” (*Scorched* 52). This a direct assertion of agency in choosing the audience and selectively sharing one’s narrative.

Women who narrate their accounts often talk about rape and sexual molestation as a collective experience using plural pronouns such as ‘our’, ‘we’, and ‘us’:

Indra Bai narrates: “*We* women *all* huddled together and they offered *us* some water. As *we* were drinking water, they began dragging off whichever girl they liked. Each girl was taken away by a gang of 10 or 12 boys, many of them in their teens. They would take her to the nearby masjid, gang rape her, and send her back after a few hours. Some never returned. Those who returned were in a pitiable condition and without a stitch

of clothing. One young girl said 15 men had climbed on her.”
(*Manushi* 4; emphasis added)

The account is a collective story of women who were ‘huddled together’ in being subjected to sexual violence. These are not specific individual stories rather what the women saw and experienced together as a group. The account of another victim, Bhagi Kaur uses similar language:

In the morning I had watched my husband and ten members of my family hacked to death and now at night these bastards had come to take *our* honour,’ says Bhagi Kaur...’How many times *we helpless, dependent ladies* were raped by how many men, I can’t remember. I had become unconscious. The drunk bastards kept on satisfying their sexual hunger. The men did not allow any of the *women* to wear clothes the whole night.’ Saying this she breaks down. (41; emphasis added)

Another woman named Gopi continues the narration:

‘Not even three dupattas are enough to wipe *our* tears,’ she says. Nobody was spared – neither old women nor little girls. And there was no one they could call for as all the men in that colony had been burnt alive that morning – all 500 of them. When the *women* begged to be spared from molestation, their attackers asked them why they were being bashful since they no longer had husbands. ‘If you try to run away,’ their attackers told them, ‘we will cut your breasts off.’” (Singh 41-42; emphasis added).

When Bhagi Kaur breaks down during narration, Gopi completes the narrative by joining in immediately. The stories link together and flow seamlessly from one woman to another. It is this linking of their narrative, their ability to add to each other’s accounts that helps them form a culture of remembering and mourning. Another woman named Kali narrates that:

‘It has been twenty-two years didi, but the nightmare doesn’t go away. In front of my eyes, they kept seizing young girls in *our* group. They flashed torches in *our* faces. They used knives to slice open the fronts of the shirts and cut open the cord of the salwars of the *girls* they thought passable.

‘These *girls* were picked up like pigs – two people holding on to the legs and two holding their arms – and they were carried out of the rooms, screaming and howling.’ (Anand 50; emphasis added)

Here too, Kali’s account is not her individual story. It is about *girls* being picked up, torches being flashed in *their* faces, and *their* group. The use of plural pronouns in all three accounts highlights that these women witnessed violence unleashed on themselves as a collective and share a common knowledge of it. Having witnessed and survived it *together*, narrating it within the collective is a negation of amnesia at some level. Talking as a collective also ensures that individual women are not made vulnerable to social ostracization. ‘It happened to us’ is means of narrating the experience collectively but safeguarding women individually. This collective comprises both of narrators and listeners. Women talk to other women about their accounts, even if they do not publicly declare their plight in courtrooms and affidavits or even to men of the community. As Grewal notes while interviewing the women that these tales circulate off-record:

At this point they asked me to switch off the recorder. The details I heard off the record were chilling. Unfortunately, I cannot repeat them here; unfortunate because the written record is necessary for posterity. But I must respect their wishes which were explicit that I not repeat events, names, and references. What I heard were the details of rape, how male family members were forced to rape their wives and daughters before the mob raped the women again; it was more than I could bear...The scale of the brutality was such that it doesn’t bear repeating. (Grewal 86)

Silence in official records and media coverage does not necessarily mean there is a silence in all spheres. The women request Grewal to turn off the recorder and then narrate in detail the scale of the brutality they witnessed. These ‘off-record’ accounts deconstruct, in a post-structuralist vein, objective grand narratives of history. They contest public or official narratives of the history of ’84 wherein stories of sexual trauma are forcefully repressed. Therefore, to analyse storying of memory is a Foucauldian or Gramscian invitation to read power. To unveil who speaks, how, and with whom reveals politics of memory that can uncover resistances to dominant narratives of a historical event. A study of memories reveals that there exists regimes of silence and narration. To say that trauma of gendered violence is unspeakable would be an oversimplification of politics between speech and silence. It may be unspeakable publicly or officially; but there is no silence around it in the private space shared by these women. In fact, it is a part of their collective story. Storying is a process of knowledge sharing, where the teller uses agency to choose whom they want to narrate their tales to. Women give detailed accounts of their trauma within their own circle or to a selective audience. This creates a regime of memory where women’s version of the past based on their subjective experiences is storied and circulated. Consequently, within this space articulation is possible because they do not have to negotiate social or patriarchal pressure: “Take your foot off our necks, then we will hear in what tongue women speak” (MacKinnon 45).

Surviving ’84: Expressing Trauma

When narrated, these accounts relay the horror of women’s experiences – the carnal sexual hunger of the assailants, gruesome details of rapes, the traumatic repercussions of surviving it. Commenting on the widows of Tilak Vihar, Reema Anand notes that these women carry the weight of the past as they negotiate their life after the carnage: “These are ordinary women, similar to those found in a lower income group, yet different, as they carry deep scars and unpleasant memories of what ’84 and post-’84 brought to them” (*Scorched* x). Interestingly, as Anand first approaches these women, she is met with silence and a refusal to recount the past. The women do not immediately start recounting their tales. It takes Anand sometime to gain their trust. She is first met with resistance and a ‘protective wall’ that the women had built around their feelings:

I would try to read their faces, but it was not easy to read beyond the looks that had been their masks for years. They were clever at hiding their thoughts and feelings. It did not take much time for me to understand that it would take me some time to find a way to penetrate the protective wall that these girls had built around themselves. (Anand 37)

The ‘masking’ of their feelings is a wall that speaks of the agency of these women. Anand has to ‘find a way’ to become a chosen listener to their tales. Some women choose not to go back into the past for fear of reopening wounds while others want to focus on surviving the harsh realities of their life rather than letting the past dictate. “The signs show a coexistence of life moving on for some and life standing still for others” (3). Mataji, a woman in her seventies shows no signs of emotions as she recounts how seven members of her family were killed. Anand notes that “there are no tears in her eyes. I try to trace some emotion in those shrunken eyes but find none. I wait for the tremble in her voice, maybe a break too, but it’s not there.” Mataji becomes “a picture of indifference to her past. She has struggled and survived, perhaps that in itself speaks volumes” (13-14). For Mataji the past had to be locked in and is narrated as a dead thing of a time gone by. Her focus on surviving the past and her ability to do so perhaps has more ‘volume’ as it speaks of her strength and courage. Even for another survivor named Puppy, it is the consequences of the pogrom that take precedence over what happened during the three days: “After talking to Puppy at length – which meant touching pre-riots years, the days during the riots when she was just eleven, and years after the riots – I was gripped with this strong conviction that riots did not matter anymore, it was the consequences of riots, which was more relevant in the year 2009” (19). Some women do not want to look back and are conscious of being judged by the listener: “We have repressed the pain of our inside. We don’t show it anywhere because people will think of it as a tamasha” (Grewal 90). Another survivor named Jatinder Kaur notes that “I try not to recall those times; when I do remember chills go down my spine” (ibid. 85). The choice of not recounting the past is exercised as an attempt to gain mastery over it. However, as the ‘protective mask’ falls off, their narratives speak of the pain that they still carry inside. In an interview to Jyoti Grewal a survivor, Kuldip Kaur initially recounts her past in a rehearsed manner as if ‘practised’ and ‘repeated’ many times:

From this point forward she started her account of the events of 1 November. Initially, it was delivered in a clinical way, as if practised, repeated, and relived so many times that emotion had spent itself. But her angst, rage and sheer frustration found expression as she continued talking. Silences punctuated her narrations; it felt as if she retreated into her own world of painful memories from where she had to drag herself out, forcefully. (Grewal 92)

As Kuldip Kaur continues to narrate the past, she recedes deeper into its abyss and strong emotions of ‘angst, rage, frustration’ find a way into her narrative. The outer protective layer or the mask is stripped to reveal the hurt and anger she carries inside. Anand’s interviews show a similar trajectory where as the women start recounting their tales, the past raises its head to reveal its grasp over them. By the middle of the book, Anand becomes an active listener to traumatic accounts of rape and sexual molestation that depict how sexual violence remains a traumatizing force in the lives of the survivors:

I would never know if my girls also had to face such trauma. For instance, when Maina refers to seeing a stark-naked girl in the streets of Trilokpuri, trying to hide her shame between clasped thighs and arms tightly wound around them, I cannot help wondering whether she is referring to herself or a stranger? (51)

Anand notes that Maina continues to be traumatised after the incident:

‘I stopped and spread my cotton chunni around her. Just accidentally my hand touched her bare back and she screamed sharply; she continued to shriek like a wounded creature – howling in pauses.’

Maina relives all her traumas day after day. (52)

In *When a Tree Shook Delhi*, Maina’s mother notes that:

Padmi Kaur, Maina Kaur's mother filed an affidavit in 1985 and narrated that the mob "broke the hands and feet of my daughter and kidnaped her. They confined her in their home for three days...Now my daughter Maina Kaur has fallen ill and has become like a mad girl". (Phoolka 72)

The tragic story of Maina Kaur, depicts the trauma of her experience and its continuing impact on her psychologically and somatically. The slightest touch of a hand on her bare skin makes Maina 'howl like a wounded creature' highlighting how she has locked herself somatically from human touch. Psychologically, 'she has become like a mad girl' unable to bear the burden of experience. The weight of knowledge is often unbearable. Trauma is a crisis of knowing and surviving – knowing the horrific details of the event's unfolding and carrying that weight of knowledge within. During her interview Kuldeep Kaur cries: "Those times, those times...how I passed those times, only I know and my heart knows. I know, only I know. I know how I travelled through the trials of those times. Only I know, I know. And my heart and soul know. *At this point she completely broke down; she was inconsolable.*" (Grewal 95). The repeated declaration 'only I know' is an assertion of the fact that the knowledge of lived experience lies with the self. It can be narrated within the limits of language but can be only fully known by the one who has survived it. Somatic expressions of trauma can be read in the above accounts. Bhagi Kaur "breaks down"; Gopi Kaur asserts that "[n]ot even three dupattas are enough to wipe our tears"; during narration "Kali paused, her eyes wet and hands cold, sweat breaking out on her forehead"; and Maina Kaur reacts horrifyingly to a harmless human touch. These are instances of the somatic speaking to relay the horror of experience. Another survivor Darshan Kaur "recalled how after the men in the family were killed, she was raped, and her clothes burnt. Numb with grief and frantic with worry because her two-year-old son, Darshan Singh, could not be found, *she shivered through the night*, and somehow managed to walk to Patparganj to the Pandav Nagar gurudwara, hoping to find him" (*I Accuse* 83; emphasis added). Darshan Kaur remembers 'shivering through the night' as the horror of the pogrom unleashes itself on her body. She witnesses the murder of men of her family and is then raped by the mob. Both experiences are weaved together in the story of her survival. In her

interview to Grewal, Kuldeep Kaur's narration is overtaken by non-verbal somatic expressions of trauma:

There were no more words as Kuldeep began to weep uncontrollably. She tried very hard to speak out but could not control herself; minutes passed...They came back three times that night, three times, looking for me... 'Where is the Sardar's beauty? Where is that Sardar's Mrs?'...They were so persistent, kept asking for me. (*Betrayed* 94-95)

It is perhaps this complete overtaking of the self by trauma that women try to negate through their silence. Harjit Kaur summarizes why women do not openly talk about their trauma:

You speak for a few hours, and then for weeks those thoughts don't leave you. One cries for no reason at all; *dimag kharab ho janda hai*. One replays those scenes, hears those sounds over and over again. I cannot watch violence on television; if the children are watching, I make them switch it off. I get anxious and cannot sleep at night. (Grewal 90)

The phrase '*dimag kharab ho janda hai*' (I lose my mind) stands testimony to the fact that narration is not always a cathartic step towards healing. On the contrary, it can summon sleeping demons and reopen wounds that have been bandaged in order to survive. The sights and sounds emerge from the trunk of memory and haunt Kaur 'over and over again'. Any stimuli that can open this trunk is avoided including watching violence on television. The choice is to willingly bury the past by choosing silence. It does not however, mean that is a moving on based on forgetting the past. Rather it is a form of making do with the painful memories stored inside. When recounted, the trauma returns in its somatic force. Even in fictional accounts of '84 remembrance ushers in the gravity of trauma. In the short story "Dried Apricots Smell Like Dead Fish", Phulo is raped and manifests signs of PTSD:

They had torn away her salwar, they had clamped her mouth shut with their calloused palms, they had bitten her everywhere, they had burnt her body with their cigarette

stubs, they had laughed uproariously when she whimpered with pain. They had taken drunken turns to violate her brutally. (Kapur 178)

As the story progresses, Phulo suffers from memories of her torture “when all thoughts come crawling out of her body, her skin, like maggots. She washes her body constantly; she scrubs her body; she menstruates her body to cleanliness. But the stench of dead fish doesn’t leave her body” and she would wake up mumbling, “Bebe, my skin is burning. Bebe, my chest is hurting. Bebe, cover me up. I am naked, cover me up, Bebe.” (ibid. 182). Phulo’s body becomes a carrier of trauma and she “wants to leave her body” (180). Here, surviving is a traumatic situation that leaves the victim unable to recover from the past. Similarly, in the novel *Helium*, Nelly recounts the unforgettable episode of witnessing two women being raped:

My body responded in a strange way at the mere thought of travelling to that city. In ’84, from the upstairs room in my saviour’s house where we had initially taken refuge, I had witnessed two women being raped. No clothes on, dishevelled hair, the women completely exposed. Four men discharged their hate into those two one by one, then again...The lawyer later made me aware of the silence and denial around sexual violence. Sikh men chose silence, Hindu men chose complete denial. The loudest denials came from those who had committed the crimes. (*Helium* 168).

Her body responds in a ‘strange way’ at the thought of going back to Delhi – a city that reminds her of the past. The denials around instances of rape are reminders of the politics of silence. Nelly carries the memory with and within her.

Lastly, the weight of knowledge also has the ability to somatically affect the listener. For example, as Reema Anand notes that “[a] few days after this conversation, I was laid sick with acute sinus. Perhaps the weight of her revelations had settled in my lungs like sputum” (*Scorched* 70). The ‘weight of her revelation’ expresses itself somatically in the listener who passively receives the knowledge of

trauma. Further, as Anand hears painful accounts of the past, she is empathetically moved by the accounts so much so that she feels the weight of their pain in her gut:

‘Kali, I want you to recount what happened in ’84. How old were you? Do you remember anything?’ To my horror, this tough woman started sobbing. I held her hand tightly, drawing her close to me, kissing her forehead – my intestines deep inside my stomach did a somersault and my ribs squashed the breath inside my lungs. (49)

Her stomach ‘did a somersault’ and her ‘ribs squashed’ as she partakes of the knowledge. In this she becomes a participant in sharing the dreaded knowledge of the pogrom. She is deeply and somatically moved by the accounts and “every time I spoke to them, I cried. I couldn’t sleep, I would dream about them and hear their voices in my mind” (77). Similarly, Swaranpreet Singh, a specialist in post-traumatic stress disorders, was deeply affected by an account of a woman who “claimed the police had inserted a stick inside her...When he finally found the courage to give her an internal examination, Swaranpreet realised that she had been cruelly violated. That night, he gulped down a bottle of whiskey to numb his mind, before sleep finally overtook him” (Mukhopadhyay 49). Unable to bear the weight of her trauma, Singh turns to alcohol to numb himself to sleep. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominic Lacapra argues that it is important to maintain distance between the teller and listener in order to avoid secondary traumatization through listening or reading trauma narratives. Lacapra asserts that this can be done through ‘emphatic unsettlement’ that “involves a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other’s position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place” (78). This ensures an ethical engagement with the suffering of others without risking traumatization. Empathy allows feeling the pain of another and retaining a distance checks vicarious trauma in the listener. It is a delicate balance of compassion for another and conflation with an other. Compassion retains a distance between two bodies – of the teller and listener, conflation merges the two.

To conclude, accounts of sexual trauma highlight the terrific nature of the pogrom. There is a veil of silence around gendered violence against women during ’84, however these narratives reveal that silence also entails agency. Whether that

agency is autonomous or coerced due to socio-cultural pressures is an area of speculation. Narrative study of trauma needs to go beyond the trauma-as-unspeakable model and analyse contextual nuances. The female body has to deal with its own gendered position within the world that self has to function in. The choice between speaking and not speaking is complex and often not a static position. Women may choose silence in one sphere of their lives and detailed narration in another. Often, they meander through both positions, conscious of the audience that's listening. They are not passive victims of coerced silence but active agents of their reconstructions. Ultimately, survival takes precedence and becomes a dominating factor in making the choice. Speech and silence are not binary opposites pulling the subject in two directions. There is a possible and necessary reading required of silence as speech.

The next chapter analyses the impact of '84 on children who witnessed the carnage or grew up with its devastating repercussions. It focusses on the intergenerational transmission of trauma from one generation to the next through the umbilical cord of inherited memories.

CHAPTER V

Children of the Carnage:

Intergenerational Trauma

What cannot be talked about can also not be put to rest; and if it is not, the wounds continue to fester from generation to generation.¹

Whether they suffered grave personal offences or escaped due to divine providence, almost every Sikh family kept the memories of 1984 alive by passing it on to the next generation.²

Memory can be passed down from one generation to the next and carries with itself the ability to affect intergenerationally. The *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma* (1998), the first multidisciplinary and multidimensional (physiological, cultural, and socio-political) study on the lingering effects of violent histories on the future generations, analyses modes of transmission and the possible intergenerational impact of trauma. The study validates and examines the complexity in which ramifications of a traumatic event infiltrate the lives of future generations. At the end of thirty-eight chapters of cross-cultural study, the work concludes that it “provides a solid clinical, theoretical, and empirical basis for understanding the multigenerational legacy of trauma and strongly suggests that it is a universal phenomenon” (669). In chapter thirty-seven of the same work, Yehuda et. al. add that “intergenerational syndrome” may have the same neurobiology as PTSD (702). In *Lost in Transmission: Studies of Trauma Across Generations* (2011), Gerard Fromm argues that trauma is an overbearing experience that cannot always be contained within one generation, therefore, is passed on to the next one as their heritage. It is symptomatic of the condition that the “tragic aspect of the intergenerational transmission of trauma is that it is potentially generative of new

¹ Bruno Bettelheim qtd. in Vaughans, Kirkland C. “Introduction: Confronting the Other Within”. *Trans-generational Trauma and the Other*. 19 Dec. 2016. Web. 8 Nov. 2018. <<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/>>. Pg. 166.

² Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay. *Sikhs - The Untold Agony of 1984*. New Delhi: Tranquebar, 2015. Print. Pg. 175.

trauma” (64). The ‘new’ generation in its inheritance of a painful past may formulate stories of its own subjective and collective negotiations. A cascading series of cause and effect occurs with origins in the event’s occurrence. Traumatic memories of one generation haunt the next who formulate their own stories of dealing with the event and its affects. The traumatic event becomes a site of ruptures and disruptions as it affects subjectivities and the inter-subjectivity of lived experience. In *Haunted Legacies* (2010), Gabriele Schwab studies trauma narratives in the context of the Holocaust, slavery and Apartheid, and colonization to assert that the second-generation “need to patch a history together they have never lived by using whatever props they can find – photographs and stories or letters but also, silences, grief, rage despair, or sudden unexplainable shifts in moods handed down to them by those who bring them up” (14). It is here that history is passed on as it was felt by the first-generation to become a mysterious entity that needs a certain decoding. The second-generation may not have lived *through* the traumatic but have the task of living *with* it as the traumatic past shapes the present in its hauntings. In *The Generation of Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch studies the manner in which photographs, stories, and behaviours can give access to an event of the past leading to the possibility of “inherited memories”. Hirsch asserts that the past of one generation can haunt the future of another, conceptualized by her as a ‘postmemory’ of the event:

Postmemory is not a movement, method or idea; I see it, rather, as a structure of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike posttraumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove... Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. (4)

Making ‘memories in their own right’ these intergenerational memories transcend the scope of the first generation. The symptoms of this haunting in the second generation include substance abuse, unresolved grief, depression, guilt, rage, nightmares, to name a few. The pathology is classified under different names such as “secondary traumatization” (Rosenheck and Nathan 1985), “covicimization” (Hartsough and Myers 1985), “secondary survivor” (Remer and Elliott 1988), “vicarious traumatization” (McCann and Pearlman 1990), “traumatic countertransference” (Herman 1992), and “secondary traumatic stress (STS)” (Figley 1995). These pathologies “build on the idea that what human beings cannot contain of their experience – what has been traumatically overwhelming, unbearable, unthinkable – falls out of social discourse, but very often on to and into the next generation as an affective sensitivity or a chaotic urgency” (Fromm xiv). This carrying forward of memories from the ‘body’ of one generation to another through an imagined umbilical cord makes possible for the traumatic event to cause disruption beyond its immediate effect. The next generation negotiates these memories twice removed from the point of origin, but still caught up in it.

Here it is important to make the distinction between memories of those who witnessed the event *directly* and those of the later generations who inherit it *indirectly*. In *Fantasies of Witnessing*, Gary Weissman critiques Hirsch’s concept of postmemory and argues that “no degree of power or monumentality can transform one person’s lived memories into another’s” (17). The distance between memory and postmemory is generational but is also in the immediacy of experience. There is a difference in substance of memories. Lived experiences and inherited memories are conceptually different. However, as already stated, Weissman notes that “while the second generation will never know what their survivor-parents know in their bones, what the second generation knows better than anyone else is the first-generation” (18). In their knowing the first-generation closely through familial bonds, the second-generation is linked to the traumatic hauntings as it makes itself apparent in their everyday lives. Weissman makes another interesting observation that ‘nonwitnesses’ who do not have familial connections with the past but are deeply interested in it may also be affected by traumatic accounts of the past. Then, what is the difference between nonwitnesses exposed to the event through friends or individual interest and second-generation survivors? It is important to understand the difference between the three – first

generation survivors, second generation witnesses, and nonwitnesses. The former experience the event directly, the second generation inherit memories through the first generation and absorb it from their immediate environment that carries traces of the traumatic event. Nonwitnesses, on the other hand, are at a certain distance from both. They can be exposed to the event out of curiosity or through an accidental encounter. The degree of affect may vary amongst all three. The prefix 'non' itself signifies a lack, a certain distance. This difference needs to be highlighted not in order to deride the latter's affectations but to respect the first-generation's story of survival. The difference between nonwitnesses and second-generation witnesses is in their closeness to the traumatic event's effect having seen it in their parents or immediate environment. Therefore, it can be argued that trauma varies horizontally and vertically through generations. Here, Aliecia Assman's categorization of memories into four brackets can be useful. In "Memory, Individual and Collective", Assman argues that there is individual memory made of what one directly lives through; social memory that is a result of sharing stories and lived experiences with others; political and cultural memory which are not grounded on lived experience and are transmitted transgenerationally through public monuments, archives, and libraries dedicated to the event. Individual and social memories, on the other hand, can and often are transmitted intergenerationally. It is these that the second-generation characteristically inherit.

While one's lived experience cannot be transformed into the experience of another, the second-generation has the task of negotiating these memories for themselves. They see and hear how their parents' lives were disrupted and changed because of the event. Further, their own lives often stand altered due to it. In witnessing this haunting close hand, they become second-generation survivors. This familial closeness to the lingering effects of the traumatic episode makes it possible for the next generation to be affected by it. A child may not have witnessed the event directly but can realise the narrative and political dimensions of the what and why belatedly through parents who had seen it all in the flesh. They become immediate witnesses to the event's hauntings through the affectations of their first-generation-survivor parents and are also victims of the same event in their own way. In this line of thought, the first and second generation both become witnesses and victims of the event. The children witness how their immediate environment and relationships are

marked by trauma. This may victimize the children when issues like prolonged mourning, emotional outbursts, altered financial status, loss of home, daily frustrations, traumatized parents become a part of their traumatic environment growing up.

Also, while the chapter focusses on transmission of memory and aftereffects of the pogrom on the lives of children of the carnage, this is not to say that children did not come face to face with the pogrom directly. Many children, especially Sikh boys, lost their lives and were murdered along with the adults. Aseem Srivastava an eye-witness recounts hearing “[y]eh saap ka bacha hai, isko maro, mat choro, agar chhoro toh bada dukh dega’ (He is the child of a snake, kill him, don’t spare him, if you spare him, he will give a lot of pain)” (Grewal 145). Young children did face the violence of the mob directly and like the adults, were affected deeply by the carnage. The event was directly witnessed by children caught up in the centre of the event’s unfolding and thrown, albeit early, into an adulthood of suffering. Satpal Kaur, a thirteen-year-old teenager at the time of the pogrom witnessed the violent death of her family. It is a day that marked the disruption of the quotidian as she went from being a carefree child to becoming a surrogate mother in a day:

The three adults were murdered right in front of children’s eyes...Seeing her mother, father and uncle die front of her eyes, Satpal lost consciousness. She felt she was dead too. When she came to, she realized that she had survived; she couldn’t give up. She crept out stealthily from the still burning house. All around was the stench of burning human flesh...Eight-year-old Mahinder clutched Satpal’s dupatta while Satpal carried her youngest sister Surinder in her arms. Surinder was crying from hunger – she hadn’t had any milk since morning... (Singh 108).

Children like Satpal Kaur are first-hand witnesses of the pogrom. Like her, many children were thrust into the traumatic often without understanding the politics behind it. They witnessed the death of their family members and gruesome violence unleashed all around them. For example, a “thirteen-year-old Inderpal and eleven-year-old Harkirat, watched in horror from the roof...Inderpal was left watching his

father and brother die” (*I Accuse* 55). Young girls were sexually molested and formed their own stories of suffering. Here they become first-generation survivors of the pogrom. Since the repercussions and nuances of direct witnessing have been covered in the previous chapters, this chapter focusses on the intergenerational transmission and impact of the pogrom on young lives who inherit the legacy of memories. A report on the carnage titled “The Truth About 1984 Delhi Violence – Report to the Nation” (1985) published by a human rights group called Citizens for Democracy highlighted that the children of the carnage have the burden of facing the pogrom’s repercussions as they grow up:

Then there are the kids – 4000 orphans as said by Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora, many of whom have seen their fathers they adored, dragged out and burnt alive, their mothers they rushed to in trouble, beaten up and raped. These kids with frightened and bewildered eyes, will they ever come out of their trauma and be normal happy jolly children again? This is only one aspect of human life the violence has thrown up – broken homes, shattered children and old desolate parents. Someone someday will write upon. (Truth about violence 7)

The doubt whether they will be able to have any semblance of a ‘normal’ childhood is a pertinent question. These children have collective and individual memories to deal with. In *Scared Sick: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Adult Disease*, Robin Karr-Morse argues that because “the youngest children have no experiential ballast against these forces, early chronic fear can have a formative role in lifelong health” (x). Therefore, children are more perceptible to being traumatized by an overwhelming stimulus because they have not yet developed psychological guards that adults build with experience. In this light, if their first encounter with the pain and politics of the adult world is through a massive catastrophic event like the ’84, there could be devastating effects for these children of the carnage. This chapter looks at the ways in which the children not only come face to face with the distressing, often traumatizing, repercussions of the carnage but also the ways in which memories are transmitted. Further, it studies the aftereffects of the carnage on their lives as it lingers in their everyday lived experience.

Passing Down Memories: Modes of Transmission

The disruption to life caused by the '84 pogrom is a crucial part of trauma narratives that relay its impact on family units, community, and the everyday. The descent of violence into the quotidian³ often causes a transformation of it. As families struggle to 'move on' with respect to chronological time the event lingers constantly in its fixity to cause long-lasting damage. The first generation of survivors had to deal with the task of survival and children of the carnage had their own negotiations to do with memories of the past. In this context it is pertinent to look at some of the ways in which trauma is transmitted intergenerationally as revealed in these narratives.

The first mode of transmission is through oral narratives. The stories of the first-generation may be recounted by family members for whom the past continues to echo. The knowledge of the past is often inherited through oral narratives of those who had witnessed it first-hand, one's parents, for example:

In October 1984, Jasmeet Kaur was barely forty-five days old when her mother had taken the "still unnamed one" for the customary post-natal visit to her parents' home in Gurgaon, Haryana. It is obvious that Jasmeet Kaur only had second-hand account of violence in the aftermath of Mrs Gandhi's assassination, in the form of oral narratives from members of her family...Three decades and several other events later, Jasmeet continues to feel hunted and manifests extreme nervousness, fear of strangers, and a reluctance to open up to new people. (Mukhopadhyay 19-20)

Jasmeet Kaur becomes a second-hand witness of the carnage who inherits the pains of the past through stories passed down to her from her family members. Yet, the memories take a toll on her as she grows up. Just forty-days-old when the carnage broke out, Kaur is too young to form her own memories of the event. The stories she hears from her family members are the medium through which experiential

³ A reference to Veena Das. *Life and Words – Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. 1 edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. Print.

knowledge is shared. The oral narratives carry the affective weight of the event through to the second generation.

Jasmeet Kaur was clearly paranoid. The initial fears took root at the time of her birth, but the memories lasted because of the constant buzz around her: tales of how her maternal grandfathers had been targeted in Gurgaon during her first visit to their home as an infant. (Mukhopadhyay 96).

The ‘constant buzz’ of tales Jasmeet Kaur hears through her childhood depicts how these stories reverberate through time. Trauma carries within itself the ability to transcend space and time. It is both present and absent – never dissolving completely nor always spoken about constantly. It is a ‘buzz’ that highlights trauma’s murmuring aftereffect on Kaur. For children like Jasmeet Kaur, the stories bring along traumatic effects. The traumatic event comes alive every time it is conjured through narratives. Listening to another’s trauma is a double-edged sword. On one hand, listening allows pain to be shared with others, while on the other hand the listener may be injected with the infectious nature of trauma. Oral narratives carry trauma signals such as emotions of pain, fear, anger which are expressed through verbal and somatic signs. Children of the carnage become active listeners to how the event has impacted their close ones as they hear stories of the past.

Even when the stories are not expressed verbally, the somatic can express the continuing hauntings. Children can read somatic signs of trauma in their parents through their body language. In *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma*, Gabriele Schwab notes that it is through a reading of the somatic that the second generation becomes aware of the presence of pain in their parent’s unconscious:

Children of a traumatized parental generation, I argue, become avid readers of silences and memory traces hidden in a face that is frozen in grief, a forced smile that does not feel quite right, an apparently unmotivated flare-up of rage, or chronic depression. Like photography, traumatized bodies reveal their own optical unconscious. It is this unconscious

that second-generation children absorb. Without being fully aware of it, they become skilled readers of the optical unconscious revealed in their parents' body language. (14)

The traumatized body relays its pain through somatic expressions which can be deciphered by others (see Chapter 3: “*Siapa* and Shivers: Somatic Expressions”). The past does not have to be necessarily storied through a verbal narrative. In “Memories Between Silence and Oblivion”, Luisa Passerini suggests that unspeakable, lost or hidden memories may survive through generations in silent bodily gestures and movements (242). For example, looking back at his own memories of the pogrom, Jarnail Singh “found it strange to see his mother walk outside their home to remove his father’s nameplate” (Grewal 56). As a child, Singh did read his mother’s behaviour of removing the nameplate as odd and out of the ordinary. In his eye-witness account published in *I Accuse*, Singh recalls how “[s]hock and worry had gripped my parents; my brothers and I were scared as well, but we were children and we did not really understand the full extent of the violence” (*I Accuse* 15). The behaviour of his parents guided by fear and worry was read as an alarm bell even before the ‘full extent’ of the pogrom was immediately seen. Similarly, in the short story “Karma”, Rajinder Kaur remarks that “[e]ven though I was just a ten-year-old, I could sense that the carefree expression people wore the day before had been replaced with a sense of numbness” (Kapur 199). The protagonist reads the changed expression on people’s faces as a sign that something is wrong. Children become readers of such non-verbal expressions as the event unfolds and later, as it haunts the survivors. When the event gives way to traumatic affectations, body language or somatic articulations narrate the past. The somatic relays the psychological pain in its own language to the next generation. The non-verbal becomes a means of transmission. The absorption of the trauma through a reading of the parental unconscious opens the way for trauma to affect intergenerationally. The homeplace becomes a site of transmission. The violent past lingers and makes itself present within the private space even if public discourse on it stands silent. The next generation formulates its own collective memory through these individual negotiations. The traumatic event becomes a common denominator of these stories. Children grow up to decode the various ways in which the previous generation encodes and expresses their experience – through verbal and nonverbal signs. The revelation of the event’s nature occurs slowly as pieces of the past’s puzzle

come together. One such example of this is of Gurpreet Kaur, born during the carnage, who discovers the meaning of her own name 'Behan Chaurasi' through old photographs that urge her to decode the past. Kaur matures into an adult who manifests anger and fantasizes about changing the past:

Around this time, it was on a Sunday when her father was cleaning out a cupboard that a few old photographs tumbled out and scattered on the floor. In that lot was a typical studio shot – a young picture of Sardar Lakhbir Singh Virdi and his wife, Manmeet Kaur...The little girl pranced around and picked up yet another photograph of a burnt shop and asked her father about it...The child in Gurpreet obviously understood little of politics but grew up with an intense hatred for the deceased prime minister and her son, Sanjay Gandhi...She would often fantasize about chasing a mob and wielding the baton like a policewoman. (Mukhopadhyay 92-95)

The photograph of her father's burnt shop becomes a keyhole to the past. As in this case, photographs are another channel through which one can get a glimpse of the past. Hirsch argues that photographs allow us "to see and to touch that past" (12) and offer access to a world that has been severed. It is this altered world that Kaur is born into and must make sense of. Part of solving the puzzle requires her to decode the meaning of her name. She is called 'Behan Chaurasi' as she was born a month after the carnage. The pogrom becomes a part of her name and identity. It marks her even before she can come to understand what 'chaurasi' (number 84 in Hindi) means. As she grows up to understand the narrative that preceded her birth, she harbours an 'intense hatred' for those who thought to be culpable in the crime. The puzzles of the past are decoded to give meaning to the present. As it comes together, Gurpreet Kaur's fantasies allow a Freudian wish fulfilment to be accomplished through an imagined righting of the wrong. They are also proof of her own affectation. The fantasies allow Kaur to work through her inherited trauma. She imagines herself to 'wield the baton like a policewoman' as a wishful retelling of what the state machinery should have done to prevent the pogrom holding it accountable in her eyes.

It is a reworking of a past that can only be altered imaginatively. It is her own response to the memories she inherits. The past evokes a curiosity in the second generation who try to understand the altered world. A woman survivor recounts her inability to explain this transformation to her children who keep asking her questions:

When these children were little, I remember how they stared outside during mealtimes. They would say we will eat when daddy gets home. I would placate them all the time. They asked me all sorts of questions for which I had no answers. (Grewal 89)

The past requires a decoding for the second-generation who have the task of coming to terms with the pain they see their loved ones carry and understand what caused it. This curiosity to unravel the past and understand its causes and repercussions is a difficult task that may require them to reach out to clues all around them – the stories they hear, the somatic expressions of their traumatized parents, the collective stories of suffering they grow up hearing from others around them. The novel *Amu* is based on a story of a young girl named Amrit who had survived the carnage but lost her brother and father to it. Her traumatized mother later commits suicide. Amu grows up being haunted by memories she does not understand the source of – nightmares, hearing voices in her head, being pulled to Trilokpuri where as a three-year-old she watched her father being burnt by the mob. The novel is based on her quest to unravel the source of her hauntings. She meanders through the slums of Trilokpuri, goes on a hunt for official documents on the pogrom, tries to locate her father to ultimately find out the truth. The entire novel is a decoding-in-process. While she witnessed the carnage as a young three-year-old child, it is only through stories that she can fully know what happened in her past.

Oral narratives, somatic expressions of trauma in others, photographs, are some of the ways in which the second-generation inherits the trauma of the first-generation in narratives of '84. The second-generation's physical and emotional proximity to first-generation survivors makes it possible for them to stand affected by historical trauma intergenerationally.

Disruptions, Drugs and Distress: Aftereffects of the Pogrom

This section looks at the way in which the event transforms the quotidian, especially for the second generation as revealed in narratives on '84. The carnage caused immeasurable damage to life and property at a mass scale. Young boys and men were burnt alive in public view, factories and homes were burnt, women and young girls were sexually assaulted and there was mass loot and plunder. The devastation it caused seeped down to the everyday life of children. The altered world of the first-generation automatically alters the world of children who live with and depend on them for nurture.

The childhood of those who survived was altered as they witnessed and survived the carnage. Children like Satpal Kaur must negotiate a reality that is instantly altered for them by the event. Satpal Kaur lost both their parents to the carnage and was suddenly thrust into adulthood that changed the meaning of the ordinary for her (*I Accuse* 108). Some are thrust into it suddenly while others slowly unveil the meaning of the narratives that preceded their birth. Even children who slowly unravel the past for themselves instead of directly and suddenly standing face to face with it are vulnerable to the past. As they grow up to decode the narrative, they become vulnerable to trauma's infectious potential. The knowledge of the past risks an inheritance of victimhood or a realisation of it. In "A Question of Identity", Preeti Gill, narrates how her daughter decided to do her PhD dissertation on 1984 after hearing Gill and her family talk about the past. The daughter takes on a garb of "potential victimhood":

I opened the door to her room one afternoon to find her listening to her tape recorder, the earphones plugged into her ears and tears rolling silently down her cheeks. She was weeping in helpless anger, sitting there by herself and dealing with the hurt and trauma of an entire community. It is a moment I remember with sharp pain. It was as if she, too, had taken on the garb of potential victimhood. (qtd. in Kapur 82)

Later on, the daughter feels that 1984 is an integral part of her:

What she said to me when I brought this up much later is also something that has stayed with me. She said, “I was introduced to 1984 as an event and I now feel it is an integral part of me. I may not have lived through it, but I too remember.” (ibid)

The emotional effect of these stories changes the daughter from a curious bystander to a member of collective suffering. Here, ‘I too remember’ is a declarative effort to participate in collective memories of the community – an assertion of one’s own membership. A shift from ‘it happened to you’ to ‘it happened to us’ occurs in this moment. After talking to survivors, the daughter became ‘silent and withdrawn’, discovered one day crying while listening to the stories of survivors she interviewed. Her curiosity about “those days” leads to a journey of discovery, vicariously experiencing the past through the stories of others. The trauma is implanted once the magnitude of suffering of an entire community is understood – a community that one is a part of. Individual stories change to collective memories when the second-generation takes on the role of becoming emphatic listeners. Active listening becomes an activity which involves “sensing, using one’s entire being” (Wilson 2). Ideally, this sort of listening should allow wounds to be voiced without a transference of trauma to the listener. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominic LaCapra argues that it is important to retain the difference between oneself and the victim when one is exposed to these stories:

It is dubious to identify with the victim who has a right to victim’s voice or subject position. The role of empathy and emphatic unsettlement in the attentive secondary witness does not entail this identity; it involves a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other’s position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other’s place. (78)

This “emphatic unsettlement” may be difficult for children of survivors because they are too close to the world that has been altered by the event since they have been born

into it. Generational proximity may cause its own effects on these children since their own lives have been altered. The privilege of listening without risking victimization may not be accorded to those who are victims of its lingering effects. Therefore, even in the second-generation variables like proximity to the disruptive potential of the event, environment at home, parental behaviour factor in intergenerational transmission.

In order to be guarded from the past, a positive nurturing environment at home is required. In the late 1960s, a British psychologist named John Bowlby coined and development a concept called Attachment Theory⁴ in the field of developmental psychology. Bowlby argued that children have a genetic disposition towards forming attachments with at least one primary caregiver to ensure a Darwinian survival and that this tendency is built into the nervous system (*Attachment* 1969/1982; 8). Forming attachments is an evolutionary aspect. Further in *Separation*, he argued that lack of access to the primary care giver may lead to pathological issues in the children when they grow up. Bowlby noted that “[i]n contrast to common forms of insensitive care and insecure attachment, attachment disruptions represent severe threats to the attachment bond and constitute a significant risk for the development and maintenance of psychopathology” (1973; 4-5). In the absence of accessibility to the primary care-giver a sense of security is impaired in children. This is conveyed in trauma narratives of '84 where women are conscious of not being able to be around their children to take care of their emotional needs. The home is affected by the absence of both the mother and father as accessible care-givers to the children to potentially healthy attachments. The emotional distress caused by this absence is noted as a point of concern in some narratives of '84. Kuljit Kaur, a survivor laments the loss of his husband and the ‘ruined’ state of her children as she struggles to meet their basic needs:

Our murderers must be punished now; they are
roaming free. Their children have fathers, and our children
have nothing...My children have been ruined; they have
grown up without the direction of a father or mother at home.

⁴ The main tenets of attachment theory were first introduced in a paper titled “The nature of the Child’s Ties to His Mother” (1958) which were later developed into a three-volume book titled *Attachment and Loss* (1969, 1973, 1980).

I wake up at 4 in the morning, make rotis at 5.30 and leave those for the children. My children are eating cold food, stale rotis; that has been their life... I am ruined, my children are ruined. I will continue to live but I want justice (Grewal 99-103) [Kuljit Kaur]

The children grew up ‘without the direction of a father or mother at home’ as Kaur toils to provide for them. The family unit of the ‘murderers’ with present fathers is juxtaposed with missing ones at home. The comparative language used to contrast ‘their’ family units with ‘ours’ denotes a feeling of being unjustly robbed of a ‘normal’ man-woman-child model. Therefore, Kaur’s statement includes a demand for justice. She regrets the sorry state in which the children must grow up. During his interview with Jyoti Grewal, Harjit Kaur’s son manifests anger and distress at being robbed of a father as a result of the pogrom:

I [Jatinder Singh] have nobody backing me up – no father...Nobody is going to back me if something were to go wrong, only I stand alone facing the world. *His sense of frustration begins to appear in an otherwise calm attitude and even disposition. It begged the question, what is boiling right underneath the surface?* (Grewal 87)

The ‘sense of frustration’ expressed as feelings of isolation and a loss of sense of security in the world makes evident a lacuna at home. The heteronormative family unit of man-woman-child is disrupted by the pogrom. The dysfunctionality of the family unit gives way to emotional outbursts, distress, anxiety and fear. The absent fathers stand for an absence of normal childhood. After the pogrom’s destruction of the family unit, survival required most mothers to go out in search of jobs. The absence of both potential care-giving figures (mother and father) at home makes it a locus of loss. The mourning for the husband/father is felt by both Kaur and her son. Gabriele Schwab notes that trauma victims “fall into a melancholia that embraces death-in-life. Where there is no grave, one cannot mourn properly; one remains forever tied to a loss that never becomes real” (*Haunted* 3). Mourning becomes a task that is carried on by both the generations. The sudden horrific deaths of their family members are not digested by the first-generation alone. The second generation

continues to mourn as the loss continues to be felt at home inciting emotional outbursts of anger, frustration, grief and lamentations.

The emotional burdens may lead to other consequences in the second generation of '84 survivors. Narratives reveal that the issue of rampant drug abuse in resettlement colonies like Tilak Vihar are linked to indigestible emotions. In *Betrayed by the State*, Jyoti Grewal notes that “[t]hese national orphans did not become terrorists but they have turned the rage and frustration into self-destructive behaviours” (185). The narratives of '84 are abound with stories of how the youth is wasted in their addiction to drugs⁵. A woman named Shanti Kaur lost her fifteen-year-old son to drugs “when she started going to work, people engaged in the drug trade pushed Sohan Singh towards the drug habit...Sohan was addicted to smack” (*I Accuse* 117). Another victim, “Gurmeet Singh fell into the drug habit, became addicted to smack, and died of his addiction” (119). Jarnail Singh asserts that is a worrying sign of how '84 continues to disrupt the lives of future generations:

Two of Barfi Kaur's nephews lost their lives in the prime of their youth by taking drugs. The terrible events of 1984 cast their long shadow, blighting even the lives of young people, who grew up in an atmosphere of the despair and bitterness of their families who had lost everything...In the widow's colony, more than 200 young men have lost their lives to drugs. Kids in the age group of ten to fifteen years were targeted and lured into the drug habit by unscrupulous pushers who preyed on unsupervised young boys. (*I Accuse* 119-120)

The ‘unsupervised young boys’ were made vulnerable to being lured by drug peddlers. Another survivor, Harjit Kaur remarks that “those loafer children who have now grown up and have become completely useless, *puree tarah bigad chuke hain*” (Grewal 80). In this context, the Hindi word ‘bigad’ loosely translates to being

⁵ The documentary – *1984: When the Sun Didn't Rise* (2017) directed by Teena Kaur Pasricha, is based on the lives of three women and their children living in Widow's Colony. It presents their interviews on how the pogrom continues to affect their lives thirty years after it happened. Drug abuse is one of the issues dealt with in the film. (Teena Kaur. *1984, When the Sun Didn't Rise*. Green Earth Pictures, 2017. Film.)

rendered useless or becoming a miscreant. It means that the youth has lost itself to the drug habit beyond recovery. The pain of watching their children being consumed by addictions makes the first-generation survivors to continue to live with the pogrom's continuing devastation of their families. Another woman, Baksheesh Kaur, widow of a man named continues to suffer as she lost her husband and a son to the carnage and later lost two sons to drugs (*I Accuse* 56). These accounts narrate how '84 has had devastating effects for both the generations of survivors. Strong correlation between trauma and substance abuse is found in those with violent histories. In *Recovery from Trauma, Addiction, or Both*, Lisa Najavits notes that substance abuse is often used by trauma patients to shift their feelings and momentarily escape from memories:

It makes perfect sense that people reach for something to try to feel better when they're distressed. A trauma survivor may drink to deal with nightmares or binge to soothe inner pain. People abuse substances, gamble away their money, overeat, work too hard, and spend too much because they want to shift feelings...Feelings get thrown off balance due to trauma...Addictive behavior can "solve" trauma problems in the short term even though it's destructive in the long term.
(4-5)

As the past becomes an unbearable burden on being, addiction becomes one of the means of handling it. The stories of drug abuse in children of the carnage reveal a similar pattern and validate the intergenerational impact of the traumatic event. Dysfunctional families, lack of access to good education, economic restraints magnify the impact of the event on these children. The resulting deaths to drugs are a casualty of the past. Shanti Kaur lost her father and brother to the carnage and later her son to cocaine addiction: "Shanti Kaur had pulled her son Sohan Singh out of the quagmire of drugs after a lot of effort. But the drug traders had killed him for refusing to buy any more. His body was hidden in his house, beneath the bedding" (*I Accuse* 78). Drug addiction is shown to lead to crimes like stealing for want of money to fund the addiction: "The youngsters addicted to drugs stole whatever they could lay their hands on – from copper wires to hand pumps, from bulbs to tubes to satiate their craving for drugs" (Anand 88). The addiction points at a complicated mesh of socio-economic

issues that the children are caught up in. The issue of drugs has also led to a burgeoning of discourses around it. On one hand, the narratives reveal that trauma coupled with financial stress and dysfunctional families made the youth turn to drugs, on the other hand, a discourse also exists wherein drugs are seen as another method to ensure that survivors do not end up testifying legally. The head of Sikh Riot Victims' Action Committee, Jagdish Singh, alleges that there is a well-thought-out conspiracy behind the spread of drug addiction in the widow's colony perpetrated by those powers that are against the riot victims (121). Like the polylogous event leading to a burgeoning of discourses and counter-discourses, the issue of drugs has become a locus of the powerplay of more discourses centred around politics and conspiracies.

Taking this further, loss of family members and a sense of security, homelessness, joblessness, economic degradation (Sikh-owned houses and property were burnt during the carnage), parental neglect, add to the burden for the children of the carnage. The narratives reveal how economic losses and the struggling first-generation's frustration also make an impact on children of the carnage:

As a child, Jasmeet often overheard his parents speaking about the financial losses but understood little except that they were unhappy. For instance, the thrashing he once got from his mother for demanding to eat a typical North Indian delicacy, a paneer or cottage cheese curry. It became more apparent when he and his brother were pulled out from an English-medium school and admitted to a Hindi-medium one in the neighbourhood. (Mukhopadhyay 66).

As a child, Jasmeet Singh is unable to understand why his parents are unhappy. As adults negotiate the transformation of their world, children try to decode their parents' frustrations. Often, children become targets of 'unmotivated flare-ups' leading to stories of their own affectations. Jasmeet Singh and his brother slowly realise the reason for their poor economic condition. Having lost their shop during the pogrom, the parents had to deal with the financial impact of the carnage on their family and its future. Being thrashed for demanding a simple dish depicts the frustrations of the first generation projected onto the next. Herein, economic degradation after the pogrom is another factor that both adults and children must deal with. The change in status

transmits the trauma from one generation to the second as both try to make do in the transformed world. A thirteen-year-old child survivor and witness named Satpal Kaur remarks that “[w]e were princesses, but this massacre turned us into beggars” (*I Accuse* 112). Many Sikh houses were burnt, factories were torched, and the three-days saw mass loot and plunder.⁶ Many families were left with nothing and were later allotted small houses in resettlement colonies like Tilak Vihar. The harsh reality of losing their homes and financial assets required the survivors to build everything from scratch. The financial repercussions had to be borne by the parents and their children. A thirteen-year-old survivor Tarvinder Singh, like many other children, had to drop out of school as his parents were unable to fund his education:

Life in the Nanaksar Ashram was a unique experience for the thirteen-year-old Tarvinder. At the time of his father’s death, he was a student of class seven, but he had to drop out of school after he took refuge at the retreat...I asked whether his children knew? ‘Yes, and only too well. But I have ensured they do not venture on the path of vengeance...’ (Mukhopadhyay 65)

Financial burdens automatically entail repercussions like loss of education for the children. When the pogrom occurred in 1984, “Satpal was then in class eight but after that day in November 1984 she never went to school again. It’s been twenty-five years since Satpal’s life change irrevocably, but to her it feels as if it happened only yesterday” (*I Accuse* 102). The loss of access to education further mars opportunities of progress for children and their families. Without education, employment is an issue, and without employment, the financial frustration continues to manifest itself. Reema Anand notes the schools in Tilak Vihar do not offer a conducive environment for growth:

People would often retort: ‘Why do you keep harping about 1984, it was twenty-five years back?’

⁶ A detailed account is given in Amiya Rao et al. *Truth about Delhi Violence: Report to the Nation*. New Delhi: Citizens for Democracy, 1985. Print.

I want to tell them that the residue of 1984 has been passed on to the next two generations of the riot victims. There was hardly any provision for good schools in that area. The ones that were there were those where children ran away in break time or the teachers came to school high on alcohol, or there was free exchange of abuses between students and teachers. (88)

Further, those who could get good schooling had difficulty continuing it to higher studies due to a lack of funds. In her interviews with the women of Tilak Vihar, Reema Anand notes that “girls, who had completed their school education and wanted to study more, either couldn’t do that for lack of finances or their parents were in a rush to get them married to escape from the deteriorating environment in Tilak Vihar” (*Scorched* 106). The chain of repercussions continues intergenerationally with both the first and second generations unable to cope up with all that the pogrom took away. Therefore, the loss of financial security changed the world for second-generation survivors. In this transformation, the traumatic impacted the children’s every day and they grow up formulating their own stories of how it changed their lives. The resettlement colonies made of many such houses create a locus of collective suffering and similar stories of the pogrom’s after-effects. These children being the burden of collective trauma and mass atrocity and encounter an entire culture of mourning around the event. The children of resettlement colonies grow up around several homes marked by the pogrom. The colonies – an extension of the idea of home – substantiate the collective suffering that children grow up around. It is not just personal stories that cause problems, but collective stories of other households that make the colonies. They grow up in an ambience of loss surrounded by collective stories of suffering. In the case of ’84, housing was allotted to the victims in marked colonies of Delhi. One such area in Delhi’s Tilak Vihar is locally known as ‘Widows’ Colony’ or ‘Vidhwa Vihar’ since most of the residents there are women who lost their husbands in the pogrom. The 944 houses that it comprises were part of the compensation given by the government to rehabilitate the victims. It is a place where the “children had witnessed their mothers begging and fighting the oppression for many years” (Anand 16). In witnessing the first-generation’s continued battle for survival against odds, the second-generation becomes susceptible to more distress.

However, in order to check the intergenerational transmission of trauma, some narratives reveal that transmission through oral narratives is consciously checked in order to not risk traumatizing the children. Some parents try to guard their children from feeling the aftereffects of the pogrom in their own capacity. Harjit Kaur remarks that she tries her best to ensure that her children do not 'live in suffering':

I don't like to talk about those times; I don't talk about it or tell the children too much or else they will be negatively affected by these violent deaths. You think I want to ever celebrate Diwali? I do it because the children should have this enjoyment; they cannot live in suffering like I do. (Grewal 90)

The decision to not talk about her trauma is a step taken to guard her children from vicarious or secondary traumatization. It is a conscious exertion of her agency to check, in whatever way, the lingering effect of the carnage. The reparative step towards a possibility of healing comes with Kaur keeping the past to herself to ensure the children are not 'negatively affected'. In *The Shell and the Kernel* (1994), Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok assert that the past may be passed down to the next generation in form of a crypt or a phantom as an undisclosed family secret. The unspeakable secret of the past is entombed in the silence as a form of 'preservative repression' that "seals off access to part of one's own life in order to shelter from view the traumatic monument of an obliterated event" (18). The past is not buried but is entombed in the self as willed silence on the pogrom, Kaur creates this crypt within her own self. The act is preservative as it is an attempt to check the destructive force of the carnage. The performance of 'normalcy' supplied by celebrating festivals like Diwali against her own will is an attempt to regain the quotidian from the abyss of the past.

The silence may not always be a forgetting. In case of '84, to forget and move on is not seen as a healthy step either: "Those who advise us to forget should be treated like accused and punished for it" (*I Accuse* 8). However, the transmission of these stories may not always lead to a victimization of the child. Transmission can take the form of transference of a task from one generation to another. This can either be handed over to the next generation consciously or taken upon oneself subconsciously. In *Scorched White Lilies of '84*, Reema Anand notes that she decided

to work with the widows of '84 because she wanted to continue her maternal grandfather's fight for justice: "Nanaji's fight for justice for the victims of 1984 has unconsciously become my fight" (4). Here transmission functions as a step towards reparation and healing. Therefore, intergenerational transmission of trauma can also lead to a positive move towards learning how to deal with memories. Another example in this light is of Phabhsahay, daughter of H.S Phoolkha the lawyer who spear-headed the legal fight for justice for victims of '84:

Prabhsahay was born in April 1985 and grew up amongst stacks of files in her father's home in Rajouri Garden. After almost a decade and a half, she took her first decision about the events of 1984, albeit with little or no understanding. While embarking on the journey, she was reminded of her father's oft-repeated rule about victims of 1984 – the only way forward is to not get emotional yet keep the sensitivity intact. (86)

Prabhsahay can maintain the distance required for emphatic unsettlement as she is warned of trauma's potential to victimize the listener. Her father's rule advocating sensitivity but not emotional vulnerability to the narratives of victims offers her a guard. Though this distance, as demonstrated above, is not available to all. The intergenerational transmission of trauma therefore depends on subjectivities of those who inherit it. Wounds may fester intergenerationally, if not bandaged.

To conclude this chapter highlights the potentiality of memories to be passed from one generation to another. The first-generation's stories of suffering are narrated verbally and somatically to be read by children. The daily frustrations of the first-generation as they emotionally and financially struggle to survive in the post-event world are made visible to these children. These may even be projected onto them. The pogrom altered the world for both the generations. The disruption it caused to homes echoes intergenerationally. The examples of drug abuse, lack of access to education, unemployability, petty crimes speak of the ways in which the carnage has led to socio-economic problems for the second-generation. The narratives of '84 highlight that there is a fluidity to memory that seeps through the porous boundary between one generation and the next.

CONCLUSION

The quivering of human voice is not a failure of language.

In this thesis, I have attempted to examine how reading the body, its memories, its symptoms of distress in trauma narratives can shed light on the ways in which language, verbal and nonverbal, can be used to convey the nature of an event and its experience. Peritraumatic and posttraumatic effects of trauma are encoded and expressed through the mind-body. These narratives are stories of encoding and responding through the psychic and somatic. Accounts of 1984 are a site of dialogue: between the self and unhealed wounds; between the mind and body; the verbal and nonverbal; silence and narration; between one generational and the next. An archaeology of this site is useful in understanding the complexities of this dialogue.

The first chapter analyses the manner in which the Sikh body was othered during the carnage using hurt and humiliation. Hurt and humiliation are used to disrespect and disregard the social position of Sikhs within the matrix of society. Subordination is inscribed on their bodies through a discourse of othering. This othering of the Sikhs was carried out by humiliating the emblems that are a core religious constituent of their identity. The contempt of the Sikh body during the pogrom was depicted in acts of humiliation. It caused harm to their self-respect and the episode is remembered as one that altered the state of being, changing social dynamics. It forced Sikhs to negotiate with the identity that the body carries, due to which it was attacked in the first place. The responses create their own discourse of hurt – against the state, the anonymous mob, others who did not help curtail the violence, or against oneself for not being able to defend their self. The inscription of power through humiliation and hurtful acts can be traumatic in that it damages notions of selfhood, social relations with others, or a healthy understanding of the self. The use of hurt and humiliation to attack these symbols was used as a means to turn the (Sikh) body a witness against itself. Both hurt and humiliation are unleashed using instruments like jokes, violence, and language to make a public *tamasha* or spectacle of ridicule. It shed light on how 1984 produced narratives of pain and in turn, how

pain is narrativized. Studying hurt puts the physical and psychological ramifications of the pogrom into perspective shedding light on the nature and effect of the pogrom.

Due to this, narratives of '84 reveal that men had to negotiate their relationship with these emblems of belonging. Some men chose to cut their hair in order to hide their identity during the carnage while it was forcibly cut for others. This was a traumatic experience that left indelible marks on their psyche. The hair of young boys was braided, and they were made to wear girl's clothes. The true character of the pogrom being anti-Sikh in nature is revealed when such acts of humiliation are brought out through these narratives. The politics of emotions is played out using hurt and humiliation. Language carried this othering through jokes and taunts across age brackets and different sections of society. Hair, hurt, and humiliation enter a complex dynamics of power shedding light on interconnected strands of domination, disdain, disrespect, and dignity that mesh human relationships.

Such experiences are encoded by the senses that mediate the relationship between mind and body, self and the world. The felt experience of the sensorium is brought to language that makes possible the sharing of that experience with others. Witnessing an event first-hand involves being present – seeing, hearing, and then encoding what it felt like to be there. Sensory witnessing can shed light on how the experience was encoded by those who were present on site. It also allows a capturing of elements like sights, sounds, and other sensations to be encoded and storied. Visual inputs recorded in '84 narratives reveal the horrid sights that marked the pogrom. Echoic inputs capture rumours, slogans, screams, and even silence as these narratives convey the soundscape of the immediate experience. Olfactory sensory inputs such as the stench of burning bodies, sweat, urine, and other odours depict how trauma-related smells can haunt the survivor. Lastly, other sensations such as hunger, thirst, and taste are also embedded in '84 narratives shedding light on the myriad ways in which it was encoded.

The second chapter demonstrates that this felt experience of the sensorium is shared between human beings to collectively decipher the meaning of being-in-the-world and experiencing it. The ability of language to convey human sensations of experience, even if it mediates it, is what allows it to bring private experiences to public representations. The senses come together to formulate a totality of experience

which is then relayed through language in its limited representational scope to convey it to others. Witnessing and then narrating a traumatic experience is one domain of experience that is brought to language in trauma narratives. First-hand witnessing of an event involves the idea of presence that is sanctioned by having seen, heard, or been there first-hand. It is here that the sensory acts as an annal of history. The act of witnessing itself conjures connotations of having personal knowledge from observation during which the senses capture, record and then re(p)lay the meaning of being present through the traumatic event. In doing so, the body becomes a vessel of stored experiences and language becomes a medium through which these are narrated. Sensory witnessing stands as a testimony or evidence of the event having occurred; of history. The witness performs the role of physically encoding the stimuli or the immediate environment of the traumatic event. This is translated through verbal language as sensations, sights, and sounds that reconstruct the character and atmosphere of the event. The lived experience is captured and narrated in its physical indexes. The aura of the traumatic event is an important characteristic in beginning to understand the horror of it. What is encoded by the mind through such sensory inputs is often retained as a memory of the traumatic event as it occurs. These become a narrative element in witness accounts and help re-count the assault on the senses that '84 ushered. Viewing these sensations as a narrative strategy sheds light on how language can be used to reconstruct the experience. Iconic, echoic, olfactory memories, and all other kinds of sensory inputs form a part of these witness accounts. The mind and the body together perceive and encode the trauma of the event. The sensory is encoded and narrated with vividness in witness accounts of '84 shedding light on how its memory is stored and storied. Visual, olfactory, auditory inputs are encoded in the accounts of '84 to reveal the horrific nature of the event's unfolding.

The third chapter shows how this encoded experience is narrated through somatic expressions such as crying, sweating, breathing heavily as the mind-body relates the experience of surviving an overwhelming event. Emotions are embodied states that are relayed through the somatic. Also, representability of trauma when read in psycho-physiological terms sheds light on how narrative elements such as breaking down, vomiting, fainting can be read as a representation of the overwhelming weight of the traumatic experience. Narrative breaks in verbal narrativization due to such somatic expressions adds a human tinge to these narrations. To recount pain without

such somatic expressions, such as crying, would be a robotic recital. The quivering of human voice is not a failure of language. Doing so limits language to its verbal aspects.

The study reveals that reactions like crying uncontrollably, fits of anger, and other somatic expressions during recollection, are a narrative feature if one reads them as an expression of the nonverbal that accompanies, and often validates the pain expressed. Different parts of the body feel and express emotions such as anxiety, fear, distress or pain. Reading emotional reactions as narrative elements rather than as a failure of words leads to an enriching analysis of how pain is expressed using both, where verbal and nonverbal (language) show a symbiotic relationship. During narration, somatic expressions are proof that the body aides, supplements and can even take over the verbal to replay the pain. Breaking down, for example, is an evidence of the latter. Anxiety, panic attacks, depression, hallucinations are recorded in many of these accounts through the non-verbal. Even when verbal narration is overtaken by an overwhelming non-verbal somatic response, storying continues to happen through these somatic expressions. These examples depict that the non-verbal is as much a narrative component as the verbal.

Further, reading the somatic opens avenues to understand how the mind-body experiences, encodes, and narrates trauma. Non-western practices like Taoism and yoga reveal that the somatic can bring about the equilibrium of the mind-body without depending on the Freudian talking cure. The need to verbally recount trauma to assimilate it in narrative memory in order to ultimately be purged of it is not necessary. This is especially true when the mind-body can express and relieve itself by, for example, crying about it. Reading trauma narratives with equal focus on the verbal and somatic can offer a new lens to read trauma and the different ways in which the mind-body expresses its pain. This psycho-physiological approach allows trauma theory to go beyond its assumed Eurocentricism to a more inclusive look at non-Western theories based on the unity of the mind and body. The hegemonic status of the mind over the body is displaced in such theories where the symbiotic relationship between the two is richly understood. It is here that reading the somatic is an attempt to highlight the richness with which the human mind-body narrates its experiences. It, therefore, decolonizes trauma theory by including non-Western

theories of understanding being and experiencing. Tears, nightmares, goose bumps, and ‘second-brain’ expressions of the gut such as vomiting – highlight that the body-mind expresses itself through physical signs. These signs validate that the non-verbal is as important as the verbal in narrativization. It is also through these signs that affectations can be shown to others. The inter-social aspect of somatic expressions is brought out as these have to be decoded by the listener/reader. For example, crying can have different meanings depending on the context. It has to be decoded by the listener from verbal and contextual clues. It is this decoding that makes somatic expressions operate as texts that need deciphering. However, this decoding is dependent on cultural contexts as very often, emotions are socially managed and culturally mediated. Mourning is one such important example of emotional expressions being embedded in the cultural. The performative mourning ritual of *siapa* that involves people coming together and wailing loudly is one such act based on cultural mediation of somatic expressions. This concept of *matam manana* (performing grief) too is captured in ’84 narratives.

The study verifies that the mind-body not only encodes the sensory, but also narrates its affectations through somatic expressions. Reactions like crying uncontrollably, fits of anger, and other somatic expressions during recollection, are a narrative feature if one reads them as an expression of the nonverbal that accompanies, and often validifies the pain expressed. To read these as disruptions in the narrative are to say that these are interruptions rather than expressions. Somatic experiencing is a prominent move away from a Freudian, cathartic ‘talking-cure’ where narration was seen as an important step in recovery. Trauma theory descending from a Caruthian trajectory has focussed on the need to narrate trauma and the inability to give voice to wounds. However, somatic experiencing, yoga, theatre, body-movement therapies have been tested positive in healing and dealing with stress and trauma. During narration, somatic expressions are proof that the body aides, supplements and can even take over the verbal to replay the pain. Breaking down, for example, is an evidence of the latter. Anxiety, panic attacks, depression, hallucinations are recorded in many of these accounts through the non-verbal. Even when verbal narration is overtaken by an overwhelming non-verbal somatic response, storying continues to happen through these somatic expressions. These non-verbal

expressions are as much a narrative component as the verbal. Crying, breaking down, sweating, shivering project trauma outwardly and can *convey* it for others to relay the aftereffects of trauma. It connects the suffering of one with listening by another. Fear, disgust, distress, are prominent emotions that are a part of these trauma narratives that use ‘gut language’ to convey meaning especially in the case of peritraumatic responses. During witnessing, the expressions of the gut as the ‘second brain’ convey emotions like fear and disgust. Further, in trauma narratives the reference to dreams automatically denotes a stressed body, one that is haunted. Sensory witnessing of the horror plays itself in the form of dreams. Dreams are a narrative in their own that also add to the narrative of the teller or the text. Especially in fictional accounts of ’84 these are used as narrative devices as metanarratives in their structural inclusion as a narrative-within-a-narrative. Also, trauma narratives are full of peritraumatic and posttraumatic somatic symptoms of anxiety and stress. Peritraumatic reactions are a form of stress response displayed during or immediately after the event. These range from behavioural reactions stemming from emotional states (fear, helplessness, panic, horror, shame) as the shock of facing a violent often life-threatening situation confronts a person. In trauma narratives these are displayed through various descriptive details relayed somatically. One of the peritraumatic emotional responses captured in these narratives is that of fear. It is shown through limbs going numb, hearts pounding faster, and blood being drained from the face. Understanding the symbiotic relationship between the mind and body sheds light on how trauma is an embodied experience. The body-mind expresses itself through non-verbal language like facial expressions, crying, vomiting, trembling to show its disturbed state. These can be read as a language of trauma in their own – a narrative feature of accounts of ’84.

In this context, it is crucial to understand the specificity of experience of the female body during the carnage. Traumatic experiences of rape and sexual abuse depict how the female body becomes another site of assertion of an aggressive, masculine power wielded to assault an entire community. Sexual violence becomes a means of attacking the *izzat* or honour of the community as women operate as its custodians. The humiliation of the female body is another means to humiliate the community. Women saw men in their family being humiliated and murdered in front

of them and then they were raped by the mob. 'Power rape' or raping of women in patriarchal societies to defeat rival men categorizes the sexual violence done against Sikh women during the pogrom. The dominant narrative of '84 constructs it as an episode where Sikh men were brutally attacked. However, narratives of women reveal that brutal sexual molestation did form the carnage. It is important to locate and study the narratives of sexual abuse during the carnage as they reveal crucial insights into the gendered violence. These function as counter-discourses that negate a silencing of such experiences.

However, the fourth chapter demonstrates that a simplistic understanding based on silencing- of-the-subaltern is not enough to answer why women themselves choose to narrate their stories selectively, or not at all. Women make negotiations based on the social-cultural context that they belong to in order to adapt to the world after the traumatic. It can be argued that patriarchal discourses defining masculinity and notions of honour dominate the negotiations women make in order to return to the quotidian, but negotiations themselves hint at a certain level of agency. A deconstructive reading of silence offers grounds to analyse the complications involved in women's choice to narrate or selectively narrate their stories. Here, women create their own collectivity by sharing their stories of surviving gender-based violence with a select audience. Therefore, it is important to understand in which sphere silence operates. The choice to speak, how and with whom reveals that silence is based on agency. Silence could be an adaptive preference based on an internalization of patriarchal notions like shame or a means to adapt and survive. The accounts of women reveal that the choice is made keeping socio-cultural factors in mind. Issues like remarriage and reformulating domesticity figured in the choice that women made between silence and speech. Herein, silence does not point at the unspeakable nature of trauma rather at the politics involved in making that choice. The gap in classical Caruthian theory borrowed from Western psychoanalytical theories is that it is premised on silence, post-structuralist aporias, and the limitations of language in expressing pain. It readily takes the referential limitations inherent in language for granted. Silence is read as an inability to express rather than an agency-based decision. Whereas, accounts of '84 reveal that women choose to narrate their trauma – an act that does accord them agency over articulation. This finding is important as it

negates the total dissolution of the subject's self in the face of trauma. Narrativization becomes a willed process conscious of its audience. These accounts by women reveal the complexities involved in understanding the possibility of giving a voice to wounds.

Lastly, the fifth chapter depicts that the impact of the carnage reverberates through time and generations. Young children who witnessed the carnage form their own memories and narratives of '84. Others grew up with stories of '84 reverberating around them. As families tried to 'move on', the event continued to linger. Even those who were too young to understand the nature of the pogrom at the time of its occurrence, grew up inheriting painful memories and stories. The pain of one generation is transmitted to the next generation through an imaginary umbilical cord of memories. Photographs, stories, even silence can operate as modes of transmission of trauma. Children of survivors read verbal and nonverbal expressions of trauma in their parents. They negotiate the past in its lingering effect on them, their families, and their socio-economic standing. Transmission to the next generation may further victimize the second generation. First-generation's stories of suffering are narrated verbally and somatically to be read by children in their proximity to the former. The daily frustrations of the first-generation as they emotionally and financially struggle to survive in the post-event world are made visible to these children. These may even be projected onto them. The pogrom altered the world for both the generations. The disruption it caused to homes echoes intergenerationally. The examples of drug abuse, lack of access to education, unemployability, petty crimes speak of the ways in which the carnage has led to socio-economic problems for the second-generation.

The last chapter highlights that the ongoing impact of the traumatic event can contagiously contaminate the following generations. These narratives reveal that drug abuse, signs of distress, lack of education and employment opportunities plague children of the carnage especially those who grew in resettlement colonies like Tilak Vihar. Along with this, it gives validation to the different ways in which 1984 continues to affect people. The narratives of '84 highlight that there is a fluidity to memory that seeps through the porous boundary between one generation and the next.

Further Scope

1984 is a rich field of study. The future scope of research on it can take several directions. Stor(y)ing in art is one such area. A study of plays, cinema, paintings, and cartoons can look at imaginative retellings of the 1984 pogrom. Plays such as *Kultar's Mime* by Sarpreet Singh, *Seekh Kabab* by Prabhjot Singh; cinematic renditions like *Kush*, *Kaya Taran*, *Maachis* and *Dilli 1984*; documentaries such *1984: When the Sun Didn't Rise*, *Widow Colony* can look at how '84 is captured using medium of a camera lens. Artistic representations such as paintings by Arpana Cour titled "World Goes On" (series), "1984" by Sikh Twins and "1984" by Gurleen Kaur and cartoons by *Sikhtoons* artist Vishavjit Singh can look other forms of visual media. Apart from this, digital stor(y)ing and memory projects can look at recorded testimonies on platforms like the *1984 Living Memory Project* and the *Indian Memory Project* that are aimed at preserving memories and stories of the past. Other online sources like websites such as nov1984.org, carnage84.com, ensaaf.org, sikhchic.com, sikhgenocide.org contain witness accounts, photographs, oral testimonies that can be used to study digital stor(y)ing.

In the theoretical context, there are other strands that can be analysed. The issue of justice, for example, can look at how many witnesses address the state as the perpetrator of violence. In *1984: In Memory and Imagination*, Khushwant Singh exclaims that "I witnessed the anti-Sikh riots here in New Delhi and saw for myself the police doing nothing to arrest or even control the rioters...justice is still waiting for the victims' families" (89). In the discourse of justice, these accounts work as counter-narratives to official state-promoted versions of the past while demanding a revision of the mainstream version. In "Writing Survival", Pramod K Nayar argues that these narratives create foundation for human rights beyond the judicial-legal discourse by situating it in the cultural (14). Witness accounts perhaps seek justice via memory. Is cultural justice a social purpose of these accounts? If yes, then how is it sought? Stor(y)ing justice can be one of the other areas of research that looks at how justice operates in the cultural realm through these accounts. Legal reports are one evidence of a voice emerging from the three days of the pogrom; witness accounts published in primary works for consideration here are another. There are citizen commission reports like People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) report titled

“1984 Carnage in Delhi: A Report on the Aftermath”; “Twenty Years of Impunity: The November 1984 Pogroms” by a non-profit organization named Ensaaf; and “Truth About Violence in Delhi: Report to the Nation” by Citizens for Democracy” that form another voice, occupying the hybrid space between the purely legal-judicial and the cultural.

In the legal context, the establishment of guilt is a complex process. “Who are the guilty?”¹ is a simple question that exposes the complicated storeys or layers of politics behind storying 1984. The courts operate as an arena where the fight for legal justice is played. However, it is not the only place. Collective consciousness of the public operates as another arena where justice can be sought. Therefore, both legal justice and social justice are crucial in this context as both these spaces are intricately linked. Legal justice requires that due punishment be awarded to those who are proven guilty and social justice requires that idea is reflected in the social structure that both the victim and the perpetrator operate in. However, relative subject positions of the victim and perpetrator in the matrix of power affect the flow of justice. Power politics between the dominant and subaltern is fought through language via narratives that expose the event. A discourse analysis of these reports can be an interesting area of study. Along with this, strong emotions of anger, resentment, and emotional hurt reverberate in narratives on '84. While this thesis looks at hurt and humiliation, other emotions can be studied in not just '84 narratives but other stories of trauma and survival.

Though this thesis focuses on a specific episode of Indian history, its psycho-physiological approach to trauma focussing on its representability through verbal and non-verbal language systems can be applied to different contexts. This would enrich the field of trauma studies in its applicability and would perhaps reveal other ways in which such experiences can be read in a nuanced manner.

¹ A reference to People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)'s report on 1984. “Who Are The Guilty?: Report of a Joint Inquiry into the Causes and Impact of the Riots in Delhi from 31 October to 10 November 1984”. PUDR. 15 Nov. 1984. Web. 27 Apr. 2019.

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