

Between Knowing and not knowing: A Study of Trauma, History and ‘Memory’¹, and the ‘Crying Wound’² in *The Kashmir Files* (2022)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how Vivek Agnihotri’s film *The Kashmir Files* (2022) participates in recreating trauma, reconstructing memory, and how ‘history gets short-changed in movies’. It showcases the conflict in two narratives; radical Islamic extremists’ Jihad and the traumatic narrative amongst non-violent Kashmiri Hindus, ‘a war of narratives’ (1.22.0). The focal point is the complexities of adapting history to the silver screen, which creates complicated and debatable negotiations between knowing and unknowing, reality and history, and truth and fiction. Traumatic memories of Genocide³ often challenge the rational faculties. The article investigates how the intelligentsia needs to address traumatic narratives as a genre. ‘Traumatic neurosis’⁴ reflected through ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Kashmiri Pandits⁵ in *The Kashmir Files*, offers new assertiveness. The text hits upon the ethical dilemma of how not to betray the past. The ‘not knowing’ or ignoring Traumatic incursion is thus recreated through the film that demands social healing. The paper examines the impact of *The Kashmir Files* on post Genocide peace and reconciliation.

Keywords: Trauma, Genre, Narrative, Genocide, Holocaust, memory, history, Kashmiri Pandits.

Introduction

This paper neither explores in detail the historical issues behind the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus (remember Kashmiri Hindus’ recorded history of over 5000 years) from the valley nor takes sides but examines the cinematographic adaptation of the Kashmiri Pandits’ Genocide in the 1990s in *The Kashmir Files* (2022) directed by Vivek Agnihotri. The researcher also tries to analyze the statements in TKF (Abridged herewith) “Kashmir is politics” (21.31), and “Exodus nahi Genocide hua” (It’s Genocide not Exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits, 21.50), and the authenticity of Pushkar Nath’s memory, the film director’s claim to bear an artistic responsibility, and its contestation by high witness accounts of some Kashmir Pandit survivors

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and the director's aim at starting the conversation (The Lallantop interview). It also examines how Vivek Agnihotri's film *The Kashmir Files* participates in the memory reconstruction and intricacies of adapting history to the silver screen that creates complex and debatable negotiations between reality and history, autobiography and fiction, memory, and amnesia on the never-before subject of the Kashmiri Pandits. The researcher also examines the "based on the true incidents" (credits of the movie) (peri-textual/epi-textual marker which fictionalizes facts) trademark of the film in order to address the following questions; what it means to have a cinematic representation of history as an adaptation? Are these true incidents more reliable than history, reality, or even truth? Do history and movies have fruitful relationships? Does the film shape viewers' better understanding of the past? Is there any difference between history and the past? Is history capable of being objective? Does the film succeed in presenting the conflict between two narratives; the radical separatist narrative of Azadi and the traumatic narrative of Kashmiri Hindus?

Well, let us understand the word 'adaptation' for better understanding. It implies a break from the original to be rewritten in a new form to fit in existing contexts. For Patrick Cattrysse, the adaptation is an end process wherein markers play a vital role.

Markers can be spotted in different (textual, peri-textual, para-textual, meta-textual, or extra-textual) places, and at different times. (Cattrysse, 3)

Further, he states that historical adaptation deals with the selection and actual adaptation policies.

A selection policy... what (types of) source materials have been 'selected' (or not) to be adapted and why? Subsequently... how the items that have been chosen for adaptation have actually been adapted and why? (Cattrysse, 4)

The process of textualization through memory construction, be it oral or written, individual or collective, fits into creating visual images for the screenplay. Peri-textual and epi-textual markers play a major role in such selection. The adaptation process also deals meticulously with the selection of a few incidents. Two years of extensive research along with the memories of the survivors was considered by the director of TKF. The movie is a semi-documentary, shot on location, featuring 'real people', 'real news articles', and 'real videos' (remember the newspaper cuttings and Benazir Bhutto's video). Yet, history takes a 'new form' when adapted into films. Secondly, Art brings truth to the front of you regardless of its bitterness. Cinema is a

medium for the filmmaker to keep a part of history alive. The film must not whitewash the events but it is meant to push boundaries. That's why TKF, being a historical adaptation of the true incidents, may be called a faithful adaptation, as the movie moves the spectators.

TKF gripped the world's imagination and was criticized for publicizing the 1990s Kashmiri Pandits' Genocide and their great exodus. The issue would not be so controversial if the filmmaker had not insisted on the absolute truthfulness of his 'selection' of Kashmiri Pandits' plight back in 1990s Kashmir through the memories of Pandit Pushkar Nath and his friends. Vivek Agnihotri was strongly condemned for not showing the killings of Kashmiri Muslims in the 1990s and accused of not presenting accurate historical facts of the then Kashmir, which is not true. Krishna, a young survivor of Genocide and a strong contender for the presidential election of the reputed university, rightly tells the fact that it wasn't only about Kashmiri Pandits being killed but the moderate Muslims, Sikhs, and Dogras were also the victims of the wrath of radical Islamic groups in the valley (2.16.10) But then, E.H. Carr, in his *What is History?*, opines, 'The function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the key to the understanding of the present.' (14) Later he adds, history is, "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past. (16)

The film industry and academia harshly criticized the film as triggering a communal breach and exaggerating the event by colouring it as a religious divide, it's a 'polarized film', and some critics even called the movie 'vulgar and propaganda' (Recall Israeli Director's comment as a jury). The director has been quoted to have said that neither the movie has any political agenda nor does it boast of providing any answers on the great exodus of Kashmiri pandits who were/are forced to live their entire lives as refugees in their own country for the last three decades. Remember the reaction of the people after watching the film. It cannot be a propaganda. Nevertheless, history is to be written with objectivity, which is highly impossible because historical writing is done by human beings that reflect subjectivity. History is not past as history requires a record of a particular event later narrated through books, documents, articles, and videos, which were mostly missing in the case of the 1990s insurgency in the valley. To Jyotirmaya Sharma, 'History is not for 'revenge and retaliation'. (Moses, 98) According to Nesterenko,

There is no objective criterion to measure the correspondence between the description of the past and the past itself. As a result, everything a historian considers true is true. The criterion of truth in historiography is the historian himself. (749)

Moreover, the ‘selection policy’ in adapting historical events into Films is often subjective. The fact remains even though history is objective (though much contested), the past is pretty subjective. If history were objective, we would never have to rewrite it. So, the director cannot be accused of tailoring or presenting inaccurate historical facts because it’s how the historians interpreted it or simply ignored it (pretty subjective though). Its truthfulness or accuracy is an often-contested issue. But then, why the world remained silent on the barbarity and mayhem inflicted upon Kashmiri Hindus? Why history failed in recording it? Because the deep tradition and culture of non-violence among the Kashmiri Pandits made them suffer in silence, with not even a single act of retaliatory violence on record. Well, Jews (remember Hitler shouting, “Jews are our misfortune”) never let the world forget what happened to them (1.23.03). It didn’t happen with Kashmiri Pandits. Their silence put them in oblivion.

Conversely, it is not at all propaganda or if it is, then, all history of all time is a kind of propaganda. Renee Hobbs and Sandra McGee suggest,

Some definitions of propaganda focus on the concept of intentionality and motive on the part of the author, impact on the receiver’s actions and behaviors as well as receiver’s level of free will in accepting or rejecting the message (Hobbs, 57).

If TKF is a propaganda movie, do we receive the Hollywood movies Schindler’s List, Hotel Rwanda, and Judgement at Nuremberg, as propaganda? Every historical film focuses on a particular event that took place in history and is fictionally adapted into films. The survivors’ memories, their interviews, newspaper coverage of the events, and the archival facts become the source of information for the readers if history fails (deliberately?) in recording such events. In fact, it was media propaganda that hid the black chapter of 1990s Kashmir from the whole world. In the context of Indian culture, Bollywood movies are capacitated to influence the public mind and significantly affect the flow of history and power. Media shapes people’s everyday life. Indian Cinema which calls for explaining or resolving historical moments through metaphysical traditions is imperative. And if the historian follows history as a methodology to capture objective historical account, then only it isn’t propaganda, and it is highly impossible to keep away one’s whims, subjectivity, and views while interpreting the

truth. Vivek Agnihotri chooses the plight of Kashmiri Pandits and asserts to have projected ‘National consciousness’ through the film. Later he firmly corroborates the purpose of the film to ‘start a conversation’ and is reportedly quoted to have said, ‘the film must be used as a ‘soft power6’ (The Lallantop Interview). In this regard, John Dean rightly argues:

Literature precedes history as a practice of inquiry, as a creative record of human events.

Later he contends, ‘movies and history relation is more a connection rather than a similarity, an association rather than nearness.’

Most often ‘subjectivity of spectatorship’ overpowers the ‘objectivity of cinema as the Nation’s collective consciousness.’ (Hsu, 1)

Well, no historical record of Kashmir Pandits’ ‘ethnic cleansing’ from Kashmir valley, is recorded ever. Even the world remained silent. Catastrophic events in the lives of Kashmiri Pandits generate a ‘trauma narrative’ where violence has become an inevitable way of Kashmiri lives. Moreover, the lack of historical context that mostly makes the violence meaningless and consequently plays as a ‘victim card’ narrative, was never been the case with Kashmiri Pandits. They became the scapegoats in the hands of powerful political leaders. They didn’t hold pistols in their hands to retaliate and never murdered any persecutor. Yet, the pain of history never infused in Kashmiri Pandits the ‘revenge for past humiliation’. This ethnic group simply left the valley to save their lives with nothing to claim. Yet they were called cowards, refugees. Through art and literature, they gave voice to age-old injustice and created a stream of trauma narrative (Remember Rahul Pandita and many more).

Patrick Catrysse rightly justifies the post-modern analytical approach to historical film studies as, not (so much) to describe and explain how things happened in the past... (But) how the past means rather than caring about the things which happened in the past that gave rise to the meaning’(3). For the filmmaker, what this ugly past means to these uprooted people, is a matter of concern. The director offers a salve to the subtly devastating personal memories of Pushkar Nath Pandit that created a trauma narrative; whereas a collective trauma narrative is created through the memories of his four friends juxtaposing both personal and cultural history. Such personal memories often include “truth’ blended with imaginative construction. The violence is thus minimized and only shown through the memories in flashbacks. Yet the viewers, scholars, and academicians must understand that movie is like ‘literature, in fact, literature, but it cannot be history.’ In fact, the disclaimer of the movie says it is ‘based’ on true incidents. ‘Based’ itself tells its association rather than nearness. Well, it isn’t a film but an experience. History is nothing but juxtaposing knowing and not knowing. It won’t be an exaggeration that

such a troubled past becomes a ‘crying wound’ in the words of Cathy Caruth, that keeps threatening the peace and security of Mankind and Human Rights individually and the society at large.

In Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), the idea of trauma was an unrepresentable event. According to M. Balaev in his *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, “Trauma remained an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradiction of experience and language.”(Balaev, 2014:1)

In addition, the traumatic narrative is only a medium, a vehicle for revisiting reality, a ‘Belated Experience.’ This medium of representation is nothing but recreating trauma which is an essential yet overlooked aspect of World Politics.

The Crying Wound

TKF revisits and reinvents the prevailing assumptions about trauma, memory, and History., The concept of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in Kashmir is, since the beginning, much contested and controversial in its rewriting of the infamous 1990s events. The insidious Azadi campaign with the mass rallies and incendiary speeches in Kashmir requires academic attention that gave birth to Genocide, often denied by the then Government. The film offers an open ending that prioritizes Nationalism. The movie can be studied as the politics of division, communalism, and majoritarianism, and a critique of the Education system. Vivek Agnihotri well executes the relationship between history and textuality to recreate Kashmiri Pandits’ position in Kashmir and visually reproduce how space, society, time, and history were shaped and reflected in the once salubrious region of Kashmir, now merely ‘politics’. The director focuses on ‘Historical Consciousness’⁷ through the movie (Remember Romila Thapar).

Kashmir is Politics: Literature Review

Kashmir, a geopolitically diverse region, is home to a number of ethnic and religious groups with total tolerance. 5000 years of the rich history of Kashmir is known to all. They lived amicably for centuries together. The valley was named Kashmir after Rishi Kashyap (many other stories are covered in *Rajtarangini*). It was the ‘center of Knowledge’ and a ‘Seal of Quality’ and a ‘cradle of civilization’(2.17.15). For centuries together, many foreign dynasties like Pandavas, Mauryas, Loharas, Dakota, and Kushans ruled Kashmir with the only commonality of suppression and exploitation of the natives of Kashmir. Well, at the beginning

of the 14th century Kashmir was invaded by Muslim invaders and almost all of the population was converted from Hinduism to Islam. The plight continued even in 1752 after the decline of the last Mughal Emperor, when Kashmir was invaded by utterly oppressive Afghan ruler Ahmad Shah Abdali. In the 18th century, Sikhs entered the valley as liberators from the brutal rule of Abdali. Soon, these helpless Kashmiri Muslims (once, Hindus) realized it was nothing but another kind of oppression in the name of religion. They were supported and assisted by Dogra community members of Jammu, under the leadership of Raja Gulab Singh to wage a war against these rulers. As a result, unjustifiable Genocide and Holocaust became the everyday reality in Kashmir. For these radical separatists, Congress became a ‘pressure cooker’ (2.01.18).

Two reasons to thwart peace in the valley are, butchery against Kashmiri Pandits perpetrated by Afghan Rule that murdered and forcibly converted almost all of them to Islam. Secondly, Kashmiri Muslims were forcefully converted to Islam from Hinduism by Afghans, and later they faced a religious divide and severe discrimination under the rule of the Dogra ruler disrupting the peace in the valley. Later, these converted Muslims faced discrimination for hundreds of years at the hands of the Dogra Hindu ruler, who failed to identify this problem. Moreover, Muslim leaders frowned upon the modern education system launched by British officials and remained formally uneducated, leaving them deprived of getting government jobs. As a matter of fact, they remained illiterate and deprived of getting good positions in jobs whereas Kashmiri Pandits, had supremacy being well educated. They weren’t ‘upper-class privileged Pandits’ (29.29); they earned these positions.

After India’s Independence in 1947 Junagarh’s Muslim ruler acceded to Pakistan. On Vallabh bhai Patel’s suggestion, a plebiscite was held in 1948, and the people of Junagarh chose to join India. A similar offer was made for Hyderabad, Kashmir, and Junagadh by Lord Mountbatten which Jinnah refused. He wanted Hyderabad to be excluded from it. Here in Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh lost control of a major part of his kingdom in, Kashmir by Pathan tribes whom Pakistan supported. He sought help from India with the agreement to accede to India. Kashmir Conflict on religious grounds finds its seeds sown in Imperial India. According to Lamb, an Indian scholar H. L. Saxena is quoted to have said, “At the heart of the Kashmir problem lay the nature of British Strategic interests in the region.” (Lamb, 17) And those interests would be safeguarded following the Transfer of Power in 1947. Albeit the fuel for this unrest rests in the ‘Gilgit Agency’, Lord Mountbatten neither pushed the Gilgit Agency to Pakistan nor was

involved in creating or inspiring disturbances in Srinagar. In 1957, a tiny western chunk was occupied and controlled by Pakistan, declaring it to be ‘Azad Kashmir.’ Later in 1953, Nehru suggested a plebiscite that he never meant to carry out. Thus, social turmoil and upheaval continued in the valley. Yasin Malik, a Kashmiri leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front along with Ashfaq Majid Wani and Farooq Ahmad Dar, started an insurgency in Kashmir in 1989. Since then, Kashmir is grappled with political unrest and armed insurgency till date. These historical truths of the Kashmir region made this Paradise on earth, a physical battleground in reel and real life.

For Bollywood, what is more important, is not whether the conflict is resolved within the parameters of a moral structure (Recall Thomas’ definition of Hindi Films), but the way in which these conflicts are presented. Vishal Bharadwaj’s Haider (2014), Hamid (2018), Shikara (2020), and The Kashmir Files (2022) are a few films to cite here.

The Kashmir Files: A Critique

More of a documentary, The Kashmir Files (2022) challenges what Dasgupta had quoted to be said, ‘Bollywood cinema has ‘ceased to be a critique of the system...’. In fact, TKF is the tragic extermination of Kashmiri Hindus triggered by the Kashmir insurgency in 1989. With no ‘Big Star Film’, it critiques the system and tries to resurrect the Truth; the truth that is pretty debated and contended upon ‘ethnic cleansing’ and Genocide. Agnihotri critiques the then Government’s policy of ‘double standard’ and ‘friendship before Nation’. (32.57) The deafening slogans, ‘Al safa, batte dafa’ (with god’s grace whole Kashmiri Pandit community will leave valley) (35.25), “Raliv, Galiv ya Chaliv” (convert (to Islam), leave or die) feel the atmosphere with terror and uncertainty. Of late, the director tries to offer psychological counseling and dares to explore trauma as a narrative throughout the movie. While exploring traumatic narrative as a genre, Peter Medway has quoted to be said,

Genres have come to be seen as typical ways of engaging rhetorically with recurring situations...it is social motives...in response to social contexts that new theories of genre highlight. (UTAH, 1999:31)

Pandit narratives rest upon the loss of their Paradise (home) and homeland; that Paradise which is never to be regained. In fact, this loss gives birth to a trauma narrative. Well, ‘justice delayed is a justice denied.’ Above all, the movie is a tale of resistance as ‘an expression of - or insistence - on our Human Dignity’ in the words of Samah Jabr. It also aims at opening up new narratives. TKF Tries to define and re-create the trauma of normative threshold for recognition

of ‘moral shock’ by focusing on bringing an audience into the experience not as spectators but as participants to open up new possibilities of reconciliation and resolving ‘Kashmir Conflict’. The director ‘revisits’ reality through TKF, though a ‘belated experience.’ Often accused by intelligentsia (remember Radhika Menon) as ‘upper-class privileged Pandits’ (29.29), they became victims, survivors, and witnesses of traumatic experiences. They feel affected and implicated, have wanted to talk and be heard about it, and get involved in other cultural forms of remembrance and testimony. The collective memory of a group of people also becomes National memory that legitimizes that Nation’s policies and ‘social consumption.’ (Bell,20) But the feeling of the loss of ‘human dignity’ grapples the very psyche of Pushkar Nath, distorting his very being in the Jammu refugee camp. Well, truth is always bamboozling, mostly alarming, least accepted, and conveniently whitewashed. But when the truth is revealed, it changes the whole narrative that badly impacts social consciousness, shakes an individual’s innermost being, and threatens mental peace, a Barenaked truth! That must have been the prerequisite for such ‘selection’ on the part of the director. Colin Davis and Meretoja rightly pointed out:

Trauma discourse created a new vocabulary for explaining suffering and for approaching it both as an injury that requires treatment and as a resource that can be mobilized to claim rights (Davis, Colin & Hanna Meretoja 2020:3).

‘To claim rights’ must be the vital agenda of the TKF. Agnihotri clearly mentioned the agenda of the movie to claim a fundamental right; the ‘right to justice’ (Lallantop interview) and selected the tragic atrocities on Kashmiri Hindus to condemn. TKF is a kind of ‘double telling’ in the words of Cathy Caruth where she explains it as the oscillation between a ‘crisis of Death’ and the correlative ‘crisis of Life.’ For her, History itself becomes a trauma. Memory and Narrative play crucial roles in understanding the dynamics of traumatic experience. The reality of trauma is that the individual’s experience is socially and culturally mediated through individual and collective narratives that invest meaning in them. The movie captures collective memories of Kashmiri Pandits through the technique of flashbacks. For Pushkar Nath, the Hindu massacre back in the 1990s Kashmir is nothing but a ‘crisis of death’ that brings in a ‘crisis of life.’ For Agnihotri, ‘it is the survivor’s sincere attempt to ‘revisit’, and ‘recall’ the trauma by recovering the memory of the traumatic incursion’ to use the words of Caruth. The question of why the atrocities on Kashmiri Hindus were never historically noted, can be justified by George Gomori when he notes, “Each nation interprets its own history and the history of its neighbors in the manner most advantageous to itself” (Doctored History Books).

There is a ‘conscious distortion of Historical truth’ to safeguard and ‘justify ideological or nationalistic claim’. Administration, intellectuals, historians, media, and professors had a blind eye to the Genocide of Kashmiri Hindus, says Krishna in TKF (28.36). But Radhika, being biased and ignorant of each of the chapters in History of Kashmir, criticizes this ethnic group as being ‘upper-class privileged Pandits’ and challenges Krishna that he doesn’t know 100% truth (29.07). It’s fine that her war is against ‘Sangh ideology and Manu Ideology’ but putting Burhan Wani equally with Shahid Bhagat Singh is an unforgivable offense she makes (24.52). ‘The Azadi campaign becomes her favorite slogan. But she supports anti-nationalist activities and accuses the country of not going anywhere. She even supports the students when they shout, ‘Afzal hum sharminda hai, tere katil jinda hai’, (Afzal we are sorry, your killers are still alive) (25.48). Healing starts if the truth is embraced which was missing in Kashmiri Hindus’ case. (Remember she doesn’t know ‘Batmajhar’ (26.58) Kashmiri Hindus’ mass graves (one lac Kashmiri Hindus were murdered by drowning in Dal Lake). Truth, if not recorded by historians (being biased) relies on the past, which reconstructs memories; individually or collectively. A chunk of truth also rests upon newspapers, television news, and news archives. But, that too is compromised, media is a ‘bomb’. (Remember, it’s ‘info-war’, says Vishnu, a reporter friend of Pushkar Nath). Radhika Menon refers world map that doesn’t show Kashmir as a part of India. For her ‘Kashmir has never been an integral part of India’ (a fusion of Arundhati Roy and Nivedita Menon) (24.10). For her, occidental approval is mandatory to establish oriental identity (Recall Edward Said). Another issue why there is no official data on such a heinous event is, there is an ‘absence of the Muslim community's collective guilt’ (Zubair Ahmad: 2016). Moreover, the refusal of the Muslim community to recognize Kashmir as a Nation-state of Kashmiri Hindus too, and has a legitimate ‘right to return’, makes the issue complex. It’s in fact, more of an idea than a real ambition, a highly idealized ambition!

Above all, the past is very much present in the present not as fond memory but as a traumatic one. Jenny Edkins in her ‘Trauma and the Memory of Politics says,

Past Events are not past but perpetually re-experienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present. (Edkins, 2003:43)

Trauma lies between the ‘originary event’ and the attempt to recapture that origin which can never be remembered exactly through memory. TKF is nothing but capturing that trauma through memories as a replica of the originary event and the space of ambiguity in the spectator’s cinematic experience allows for a different response to it. The film suggests that History can never be undebatably defined as mere events and the narratives about them. Rather

it results from trauma and its responses to it. Moreover, this film hits upon the grey areas between ‘knowing and not knowing’ in the words of Wendy F Hsu. Well, Judith Herman rightly says, “Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events (in the past) are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims.’ (Herman, 1) He adds that their plight is an ‘unspeakable secret’ that calls attention. This ‘new condition of victimhood’ gives birth to the moral genealogy of trauma. Traumatic experience, in the words of Duncan Bell, ‘shatters or disables the victim’s cognitive and perceptual capacities so that the experience never becomes part of the ordinary memory system’ (9). It often combats the limits of language and even ruptures meaning altogether setting the initial parameters of the field. The very concept of Trauma is a source of critique here. TKF captures the experiences in a unique symbolic language created by memories of sights, sounds, smells, and feelings during trauma. (The smell of Kashmiri Cuisine Nadru Yakhni takes all four friends down memory lane when Sharda used to prepare Kashmiri cuisine and they used to savor it in Pushkar Nath’s home, 32.16) But Krishna, a staunch believer in ‘equality and justice’(29.32), knows no cuisines thus knows nothing about Kashmir (Mira says, ‘One who doesn’t know Nadru, he doesn’t know Kashmir’, 32.16). He is ‘misguided, brainwashed, confused and a coward’(02.04.48).

Well, Benazir Bhutto’s video reflects the happenings of 1990s Kashmir wherein she says, “har masjid se Buland hogi ek hi aawaj, Azadi” (Every Masjid will have only voice, Azadi). For these perpetrators, Indian Army is a villain. (2.05.12) Two faces of Azadi narrative are brilliantly showcased by the filmmaker; one shown by Pushkar Nath and the other by the radical separatists. For Radhika, Azadi is a ‘Mantra’, one needs to chase the dream to fulfill it, she advises. (1.42.37) “Azadi awakens the innermost revolutionary” (1.42.24), she adds. For her, it is an ‘Anthem of free Kashmir’ in sheer contrast with Jana, Gana, Mana of India whereas according to Pushkar Nath, this Azadi is from Bharat (freedom from India)(1.42.16), it’s a ‘song of terrorism’.(1.42.18)

Memory and the terror of history are the backbones of all literary creations (Recall Wordsworth). Though memory is never even and keeps changing due to local concerns and issues, members of the society and their individual, as well as collective memories make that society very particular and special. Memory is reconstructed collectively. For Omar Bartov, it’s often ‘elusive and ambiguous,’ vectors of memory influence, diffuse multiple mediums, and influence the whole of humanity irrespective of caste, creed, nationality, and ethnicity.

Mourning memories facilitate reconciliation with the past when the community loses their home and homeland in utter brutality that converts into melancholia and results in age-old trauma. Kashmiri Hindus' memories and terror of history are such that don't let them sleep even after thirty years. (Remember Pushkar Nath's psychological state of mind in a refugee camp and the small house he owns later in Jammu after fleeing from the Valley). Duncan Bell rightly says, "Memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but its theatre" (Bell, 1) In fact it's merely a medium with which the community revisits the past, recollects it, and preserves it. It helps in constructing personal and collective identity in which self and society are formed, reproduced, and shaped. Being a medium, it's dynamic, open to all, and home to diverse stories, ideas, and perspectives. It is blended with artistic recreation through which communication is set that is bound to be individualistic in expression. That may be the sole reason why Duncan Bell calls it a theatre. It's an essential but mostly underrated aspect of World Politics. Through this medium, the stories of perpetration get unfolded in TKF. The memories of these Kashmiri pandits in the 1990s become an umbilical cord that connects them to their motherland Kashmir which seems missing in Krishna as he was too young to have bitter memories of 1989's Kashmir. Later the flurry of questions by Radhika, the professor, baffles him and he loses his connection with the valley (remember Pushkar Nath starts shivering and feels the snowfall in Jammu, 52.01)

There is a major difference between memory and history. History merely happens before; whereas memory shapes world politics, and national and ethnic identities through "the story that the groups of people tell about themselves linking past, present and future in a simplified Narrative" (Bell, 2) Well, Anthony Smith also believes that (if) no memory, (there is) no identity and no identity, no nation. It's a sense of belonging that matters which is missing in history (Recall John Stuart Mill7). Pushkar Nath feels lost and is forced to live a condemned life of anonymity; his craving for 'Kashmiriyat' and a sense of belonging is continually revisited through his memories. In his memoir, *Night*, Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor of Nazi death camp wrote, "For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead and for the living...To forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time." (Wiesel, XV) The Nobel Peace laureate Wiesel adds, "For in the end, it is all about memory, its sources and its magnitude, and, of course, its consequences." (op. cit, XV)

According to Oaths, "I think the memory is always serving us. Sometimes we think it is merely imagination when it's really a memory. You think you are inventing something and it turns out

you're really remembering something from your past" (UTAH, 15). In this regard, Levy Daniel and Natan Sznaider say, "The memory is not uniform, it varies according to local concerns." (Levy & Natan Sznaider, 522) For Bell, 'Memory is an individual psychological phenomenon separable from other modes of representing the past. Too much is lost in collapsing them' (Bell, 26). And the terror of history leads to a melancholic paranoia in which anxiety is a permanent condition (Remember Pushkar Nath).

At the very beginning, praising Sachin Tendulkar in a match is a crime for Shiva, (remember 'Shaivism' of Kashmir Land symbolically refers to 'oneness'), the ten-year-old elder grandson of Pushkar Nath who is saved from the wrath of Islamic extremists by Abdul, his childhood friend. Shiva's father (Hindustani Mukhbir, an Indian Spy), the son of Pushkar Nath, gets killed by Bitta due to the treachery of Abdul's father, his Muslim neighbor and informer in front of his daughter-in-law. Later, she is forced to eat her husband's blood-soaked rice. Then the whole Kashmir Valley is shown burning with radical Islamic terrorist activities with the Boycott campaigning and persecution against the numbered Hindus asking them to leave the valley or else be ready to die. For them, this is the war waged against India; 'Al Jihad'. It was no Jihad in any way back because Jihad, for Samah Jabr is, a rich concept which includes struggling against one's lesser self, the effort to do good deeds, actively opposing injustice and being patient in times of hardships.

Symbolically, Pushkar Nath is shown wearing blue color on the face notably representing 'Shaivism' and at the end of the movie, Shiva gets brutally and symbolically killed by Bitta reflecting genocide and the end of 'Shaivism'. On the contrary, the other grandson Krishna, a month-old baby then, and a survivor, becomes the central character of TKF, who comes to know about the truth of his mother and elder brother's deaths through Brahma Datta's archived 'Kashmir Files'. Krishna was under the wrong impression of his mother and brother's deaths and remained unknown about the atrocities. Later he becomes a part of the mainstream 'Azadi' Campaign of Kashmiri Muslims from the prestigious metropolitan university VNU (reflecting JNU). But at heart, he wants to know what happened to Shiva. To fulfill the last wish of Pushkar Nath by spreading his ashes in his ancestral home in Kashmir, Krishna meets his four best friends, visits Bitta in Kashmir, hears Abdul in Shikara and for the first time, the truth is unfolded that is pretty devastating.

Somjyoti Mridha was right when he rightly observed in his research paper, "Genocide is always been the 'negative apotheosis of Nation's history". To John Cooper, we are living in a century

of Genocide. The catastrophic events and back-to-back killings of Kashmiri Hindus, are nothing but a well-structured and planned execution of ‘ethnic cleansing’, genocide (Recall Article 2 of Genocide Convention 1948). Brahma Dutta rightly says, ‘Exodus nahi, Genocide hua’, (It was not exodus but Genocide). In fact, Krishna, in his presidential speech explains what Genocide means. He blames all for the Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits by removing them from our minds and hearts, he adds (02.24.24). Theatre, art, music, and literature were all destroyed (02.26.12). Destroying temples, architectural heritage, and sculptures is cultural genocide (02.26.40). (Remember how the 850-year-old world heritage Notre Dame caught fire and the challenge of its reconstruction in Paris) Inviting terrorists into the top Government office is administrative genocide for him. Ranajit Guha opines, Skilful application of the ‘art of politics’ was missing in the 1990s valley’ (Guha, 36). A. Dirk Moses says, “People from different places deal with it in the most diverse ways.” Such chronic and psychic sufferings need to be addressed in a disciplined manner as “it is the fear of collective destruction: apocalypse of Genocide” (91). It is the history of the ‘evil’ in the words of Mercia Eliade wherein he argues that it’s not about the man’s condition but his behaviour that makes some historical chapters black. Of late, in almost all cases, what is understood as an intelligent defense by one agent is experienced as genocidal aggression by the other who is attacked (Recall Hitler’s Boycott campaign, “The Jews are our misfortune”).

Trauma impacts Pushkar Nath tragically in a refugee camp in Jammu as a patient of Glaucoma and dementia. The terror of history has led to a melancholic paranoia in which anxiety is a permanent condition that is embodied in Pushkar Nath. This Trauma was never attended to in time, thus taking a severe toll on his psychology. (Recall PTSD8). Nobody takes collective responsibility for his psychic injury orchestrated through structural violence resulting in causing repression, and fragmentation and he is seen unhealed and just ‘acting out’ and dies unheard. Trauma implies a breakdown of meaning and trust, says Duncan Bell. (Bell, 7)

Krishna, in his presidential address opens up the true face of Kashmir and a true story of the Kashmir insurgency in 1990. He fondly rewinds India’s ancient history of Rishi Kashyap, Shankaracharya, Abhinav Gupta, Utpal Dev Charak and Waghbhatt, being real pandits (Knowledgeable)(02.18.54). Music, and drama science of Bharat Muni was written in Kashmir. Being the cradle of civilization, Kashmir was attacked by the persecutors. But they failed to rule these intelligent people's minds, so they started killing or converting them. Kashmir is a tale of these innocent Kashmiri Hindus who were killed. Children were killed. Women were

raped. Krishna's mother, Sharda (Girija Tickoo, a teacher), is raped and put on a sawmill alive. The movie ends with a gloomy flashback of the 24 Hindus Genocide in the village of Nadimarg at the hands of Bitta Karate. (The Guardian covered the news confirming Islamist terrorists disguised in Indian Army)

To sum up, Brahma Dutta (Mithun Chakraborty) says these are the 'tortured people', and 'broken souls don't tell, they must be heard' (59.22) The movie is a tragic tale of Kashmiri Hindus' trauma to be heard than to be told. All his life, Pushkar Nath struggled to understand the meaning of Justice when Kashmir was burning. (01.07.33) The whole Nation had a blind eye and a deaf ear to the atrocities inflicted upon Kashmiri Hindus. Justice is an illusion to Pushkar Nath and Politics has only one end; destruction and death (51.32). He dies hopelessly in the hands of a corrupt administration, a corrupt Government. The tragic untold tales of Girija Tickoo, Tikalal Taploo, Neelakanth Ganjoo, Sarawanand Kaul Premi, and thousand faceless Hindus who were drowned in Dal Lake, and the unnamed 24 Hindus in Nadimarg now need to be heard. That was what The Kashmir Files did. The filmmaker successfully tried to posit Trauma Narrative as the genre through the movie.

Notes and references:

1. Terror of History is the phrase coined by Mircea Eliade in the book, *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Archetypes and Repetition*, for the memory of group suffering, endured without recourse to consoling myths.
2. Crying Wound is the term coined by Cathy Caruth in her *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* suggest the moving and sorrowful voice that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released through the wound. The psychological wound needs immediate attention and remedy.
3. Raphael Lemkin coined the term Genocide in 1944 and soon it became the offshoot of Holocaust Studies. Academic attention was sought by the term with the signing of the Genocide

Convention in the year 1948. Genocide studies have Historical Dimensions. A researcher can identify and explore physical, biological, and cultural Genocide in a given time of History. Genocide studies often explore its effects upon society through loss of life and destruction of economic resources and cultural values. The present century is known as the Genocide century.

4. Sigmund Freud developed the theory of Traumatic Neurosis borrowing the term from Hermann Oppenheimer who introduced it in 1889. In his book *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Freud uses the term 'Traumatic Neurosis' to develop the theory of Trauma and explains how Jews underwent repressed and ages-old collective guilt and trauma of murdering Moses. The return of Moses as the savior of the Israelites is merely a hope that introduces the concept of the Messiah.

5. Kashmiri Pandits were Kashmiri Hindus and a part of India's large Saraswat Brahmin community living a harmonious life along with their Muslim brothers.

6. Joseph Nye coined the word soft power in 2006 as a country's ability to achieve global influence through attraction rather than coercion. In other words, the power of attractiveness involves intangible power resources, such as culture.

7. Romila Thapar, in the book *Cultural Past* (2000), chapter seven "Society and Historical Consciousness: The Itihasa-Purana Tradition", says historical consciousness takes the form of historical writing reflecting the kind of society from which it emanates. It also is defined as the understanding of the temporality of historical experience or how past, present, and future are thought to be connected.

8. PTSD stands for post-traumatic stress disorder. It is a mental health condition that is triggered by a catastrophic event. American Psychiatric Association describes PTSD as a psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event.

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