

# Identity Disruption: Investigating *The Half Mother* in the Light of Trauma Theories

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## Abstract

The paper is associated with mapping trauma and structure of self in Bashir's (2014) novel, "The Half Mother." The trauma theory of Caruth (1996) is applied to the aforementioned novel with a view to gauging the intensity of trauma, especially keeping in mind the structuring and restructuring of identity formation. The study is in keeping with traumatic occurrences, particularly concerning state viciousness and enforced disappearances, which shape individual and collective identities in War-ridden zones like Kashmir. The central character of the novel, Haleema, personifies the trauma of loss and disruption, dislocation, and damage, piloting the psychosomatic aftereffects of the enforced abduction of her only son, Imran and the merciless massacring of her father, Ab Jaan on the behest of the Indian Armed Forces stationed in the occupied Kashmir. Caruth's (1996) premise interprets a shock as a delayed understanding that returns and haunts the survivor in the form of nightmares, flashbacks, and intrusive thoughts. It is always unassimilated and beyond the knowledge of the survivor. It also fractures the linear order of the narrative, thereby disrupting the selves of the survivors, and steering them to a state of traumatic neurosis. The paper examines the incoherence between the shock and its later understanding and depiction with a view to gauging identity disruption. The results highlight that traumatic shock disorders sequential steadiness of the narrative and fractures the sense of self. This state of affairs leaves the survivor in a state of deferred bereavement and quest for recovery. The paper proposes proposals for future exploration into trauma literature, which is in keeping with the issues of conflicting regions. It also highlights the recovery and healing mechanism that helps regain the disrupted identity.

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## Introduction

Bashir's (2014) "*The Half Mother*" is a true portrayal of traumatic sufferings. It is a distressing depiction of the Kashmir skirmish, which is narrated through the individual sufferings of Haleema, the protagonist with a view to highlighting the miseries of the collectivity. She is a divorcee, her father is mercilessly massacred before her very eyes, and above all her only son is abducted during a military coup d'etat. The narration is a reflection of traumatic occurrences which highlights psychological

trauma, recollection of the past, and crisis of identity, particularly in a war-waged zone. This search applies Caruth's (1996) seminal trauma theory to analyze how traumatic occurrences occur and how they fracture the identities of the survivors.

Caruth (1996) declares that the survivors who pass through terrifying events in a war zone, become psychic patients and consequently, this psychological state of affairs haunts them in the later part of their lives. As a result, their entire being is transformed. They act like abnormal beings,

and it takes an unending period to bring them back to normal condition. This situation is highly agonizing and painful for them. They repeatedly pass through this condition and the pain they have endured goes on haunting them like nightmares. They are unable to cope with this situation. Resultantly, their personality is badly shattered. Haleema, the protagonist in the novel, is one among such survivors as she passes through gruesome traumatic situations prevailing in Kashmir. Her physical as well as mental condition is deplorable soon after the enforced abduction of her son.

“After Imran had been taken away, she had fallen to the ground and helplessly looked up to the sky” (Bashir, 2014, p. 3).

Shakespeare (1992) declares in the same context in Hamlet:

When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions” (Act IV, Scene V, p. 256).

The condition of Haleema is in keeping with the above quoted lines. She is clutched in a series of misfortunes which haunt her like a specter. The troubles and worries go on haunting her one after the other. The successive traumas in her life jolt the very being of hers. The enforced kidnapping of her son is perhaps the most tragic scene in her life. She is unable to forget it in the rest of her life.

“Her hair had fallen loose about her face, as if it had been pulled in fight. She had continued staring at the sky, searching for God and hollowing with helplessness, but she could only find the moon in it—the moon: cold, still and silent, and indifferent in the halo of its glow. Haleema hated the moon since then—it was a reminder of the loss, nothing else” (Bashir, 2014, p. 3).

The gruesome massacring of Ab Jaan, the father of Haleema is another heartrending

tragedy in her life. After the enforced abduction of her son, the killing of her father takes a heavy toll on her. She is unable to bear the burden of such sadistic occurrences which have become the very part of her life.

“Haleema frantically slapped her face and her chest and pulled her hair. Blood began to gurgle out of Ab Jaan’s throat” (Bashir, 2014, p. 49).

The massacring scene of Ab Jaan’s body is highly heartrending. It proves to be a type of untold misery that Haleema is forced to endure. This horrible scene is unexpected for her to face in her life. The scene of her father’s merciless killing is sketched in such an atrocious manner that even the reader is jolted and shocked to visualize it. This is not an individual act of mercilessness, rather it is the collective destiny of the populace in a region where unending wars are lodged.

Caruth (1996) opines:

“In some cases, Freud points out, these repetitions are particularly striking because they seem not to be initiated by the individual’s own acts but rather appear as the possession of some people by a sort of fate, a series of painful events to which they are subjected, and which seem to be entirely outside their wish or control” (p. 1).

Haleema is one among such figures as she aligns with the above quoted observation of Caruth’s (1996) premise. She passes through series of painful occurrence throughout her life. Her memories are unending and go on reinforcing one another. She remains a victim of untold cares and worries which go on aggravating successively. The massacring of father is perhaps one of the most tragic occurrences in her life.

“A pool of blood gleamed in the dull sun near Ab Jaan’s body. His throat was scabbed. His eyes remained open and his

mouth agape. Blood had started to congeal around the charred bullet holes on his pheran” (Bashir, 2014, p. 50).

After passing through these successive tragic occurrences, she sells her household, cattle and even everything that belongs to her with a view to ensuring safe recovery of her only son, Imran. She passes through untold miseries, which prove to be unbearable burden for her.

“Haleem sold her cattle to Shafiq for ten thousand rupees, as well as her jewellery and more expensive copper utensils. Joo house wore an empty look now” (Bashir, 2014, p. 69).

In spite of her unending efforts, she is unable to regain her son. She goes on visiting Jails, courts, mortuaries, police stations, bus stations, public places, so much so, she even visits the high ups to fulfill a single mission of hers, but in vane.

“Her search for Imran had become her habit, a habit she couldn’t do without. Jails and courts became routine affairs, like going to school. Six days a week she locked the wooden gate at dawn and went to the court. Sundays were the official government holidays” (Bashir, 2014, p.127).

Her quest for the recovery of Imran continued despite unfavorable circumstances. She did not lose her hope even in the most dejected and gloomy hours in her life. Though her identity is badly shaken, as she is rendered a half mother after the abduction of Imran, yet she continues her sole mission in life. She explores every nook and corner of the region for the sake of safe recovery of her son.

“Army camps, tortures centers, police stations, jails, wetlands and mortuaries had been searched. Social leaders, journalists, politicians, bureaucrats, NGOs and courts had been approached. Clues after clues had

been traded but the truth remained lost in the shadow of war” (Bashir, 2014, p. 152).

The quest of Haleema highlights the true definition of trauma promulgated by Caruth (1996) in her seminal work. Haleema turns out to be a real traumatic figure. Her repeated quest is in keeping with the haunting spirit of trauma. The traumatic sufferings become the integral part of the memory and go on haunting the survivor like Haleema, in the rest of the life.

Caruth (1996) declares:

“Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright. (p. 61)

She acts out and works through this task of hers for the safe recovery of her son. She proves to be a resilient figure. She does not lose hope and continues her effort at every cost. Although her only purpose remains unfulfilled yet she joins the Kashmiri women league against the oppressors with a view to helping out the deprived and the downtrodden in the war zone.

### **Research Questions**

1. How does "The Half Mother" portray trauma through the persona of Haleema?
2. In what ways does Caruth's (1996) trauma theory help interpret Haleema's disrupted identity?
3. How does trauma intersect the narrative and disrupt identity in the novel?

### **Objectives of the Study**

To examine the fictional depiction of trauma in "The Half Mother."

To apply Caruth's (1996) trauma theory to construe the disrupted identity and

psychological state of mind of the protagonist.

To investigate how trauma forms and disrupts identity in a region where war is waged.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Kashmir has long remained a disputed region, replete with multifaceted crimes, troubles, and problems. It is usurped by the Indian Armed Forces over a long period of time. The history of Kashmir is an unending story of miseries and misfortunes. The indigenous literary trauma discourses have candidly and truthfully depicted the gruesome crises of the disputed territory of Kashmir. This study highlights the role of Kashmiri narratives in stressing how trauma theory promotes our consideration of literature evolving from war zones of tenacious skirmish. Investigating "The Half Mother" through Caruth's (1996) notion contributes to a larger perception of war zones' trauma and identity disruption.

### **Literature Review**

"In the third chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principal*, Freud describes a pattern of suffering that is inexplicably persistent in the lives of certain individuals" (Caruth, 1996, p. 1).

Literary trauma theory turned out to be a great source of attention for researchers, especially examining fictional creations around and after the 1990s, applying Caruth's (1996), LaCapra's (2001), and Felman & Luab's (1992) notions. Caruth (1996) highlights that trauma is not merely a wound of the past but an interruption that shatters the integration of a narrative structure. In her seminal work, Caruth (1996) argues that trauma occurs belatedly and always reappears in disjointed forms (p. 4). It also appears in the form of nightmares and flashbacks (p. 12). It is repetitious, and this

repeated behavior is a question of latency (p.18). It is unassimilated and incomprehensible (p. 6). It shatters the coherent flow of occurrences, paving the way to distorting identity or problem of survival (pp. 62-63).

The current literary analysis of "The Half Mother" (Caruth 1996; LaCapra 2001) emphasize primarily socio-political ferocity, gendered anguish, and human rights abuses. However, a few researchers have examined novel from a psychosomatic trauma literary theory notions. Scholars like Homi K. Bhabha (1994), Veena Das (2007), and Alexander et al. (2004) have written about identity in war zones. Still, a scarcity of intensive investigation directly attaches the researcher to Caruth's (1996) theory to examine the Kashmiri novel.

### **Trauma and Identity**

Alexander (2004), highlights the construction of identity keeping in view cultural paradigm. He goes on emphasizing that the construction of self is intensely entangled with the background of cultural. The formation of self and cultural traditions reinforce each other. The sense of self of the people living in a particular region and their sense of belongings are not just the outcome of their particular traits; they are suggestively molded by the larger cultural narratives in the form of symbols, and practices they share with one another in a socio-cultural setup. The cultural fundamentals offer the background which is essential for the individuals as well as collectivities to realize their responsibilities and associations with in a particular social milieu.

Alexander (2004) declares:

"Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories

forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (p.1).

Alexander’s (2004) trauma notion regarding collective trauma is in keeping with Caruth’s (1996) premise as she observes that we are implicated in each other’s traumas (p. 25). Referring to the parable of Clorinda and Tancred, Caruth (1996) observes: “—the repetition of his own trauma as it shapes his life—the wound that speaks is not precisely Tancred’s own but the wound, the trauma, of another” (p. 8).

Alexander (2004) observes that shared sense of self is also molded or remolded as a result of collective occurrences. Communal manifestations, historical breakthroughs, and even upsetting trials become part of a shared pool of perceptions that tie the people to public forum. Consequently, they share collective identity which binds them and they adhere to it. The moment this collective identity is at stake, they ardently feel for it and try their utmost efforts to regain and uphold it. The loss of identity is the loss of their former self which they cannot afford at any cost. The literary narratives associated with Kashmiri traumatic occurrences make it clear that individual trauma reinforces collective trauma and proves to be highly agonizing as it fractures the self of the survivors. It proves fit in case of Haleema. Although she has been portrayed an individual sufferer, yet in the broader sense she represents the common lot. The sufferings of Haleema symbolize the miseries of the deprived ones.

### **Fracturing of Identity**

Caruth’s (1996) theory establishes the notion of acting out shocking experiences during recurring actions, nightmares, hallucinations, or flashbacks (pp. 61-66). Simultaneously, such recurrent events offer endeavors to comprehend and process the traumatic occurrences, they also contribute to a sense of

shattered identity. A clear-cut difference between the past traumatic occurrences and the present uncertainty prove to be a sort of struggle, creating perplexing and bewildering impacts on the identity of the survivor.

Caruth (1996) declares that unassimilated and chaotic distressing responses and discerning consideration as the outcome of trauma effect the very being of the survivors, rendering their identities fractured. The unassimilated narration of trauma on the part of the survivor is the clear proof of shattered self because the survivor seems incapable of regulating and streamlining his sentiments (p. 4). Consequently, chaotic temperament, recurring annoyance, excessive anxiety, and unjust delusion take place, rendering a lifelong impact on one’s self-aware judgement and expectedly this state of affairs is conducive to the disaster of the self because the survivor is permanently gripped in the web of past and present. When a survivor passes through traumatic occurrences, his identity is badly affected, and he goes on comparing his former self with the present one.

### **Identity Configuration**

LaCapra’s (2001) notion highlights how traumatic occurrences can upset the sense of self of an individual and proves to be a potent factor of identity crisis. The distractions may include distortion of memory, alienation, unusual emotional rejoinders, loss of trust, delusion, and recurrent fits of secondary traumatization. Consequently, it paves the way to (PTSD) post-traumatic stress disorder and the survivor goes on reckoning the impact of traumatic occurrences. As for the perception of the complex relationship between trauma and identity is concerned it proves to be vital in contributing the essential support and gears to survivors who steer through the intricate and stormy progression of integrating their past traumatic

occurrences with their present sense of the self, whereas the future is blocked.

LaCapra (2001) is of the view:

“I would argue, or at least suggest, that undecidability and unregulated difference, threatening to disarticulate relations, confuse self and other, and collapse all distinctions, including that between present and past, are related to transference and prevail in trauma and in post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes—scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop” (p. 21).

The vital point of this discussion is identity crises. It is in keeping with the concept of “identity configuration” highlighted by Schachter (2004) and it explores “coping mechanisms” strengthened by LaCapra (2001), which according to him is inevitable during and after traumatic occurrences in trauma stricken societies.

“As I have intimated, one may also raise doubt about an academic’s tendency to identify with a therapist in intimate contract with traumatized people as well as about the identification of a class with trauma victims and survivors—tendencies that may induce the reader’s identification with one of the other subject position” (LaCapra, 2001, pp. 101-102).

The research is associated with multidimensional themes, such as the implication of Kashmiri narratives as bearers of evocative remedial communication, the heritages, manifestations, and upshots of the overt traumas faced by the survivors, and their relationship to life within the regions hit by traumatic occurrences. In this paper, the multi-layered identity construction of the individual as well as collective characters (as an extension of Du Bois’ notion of “double

consciousness”), their investigation of “post-traumatic growth” (PTG) as theorized by Tedeschi et al. (2018), and its interaction with the investigative fundamentals of the narrative, are also emphasized.

Tapping into trauma theory, the researcher has employed an exploratory lens to examine the progression of identity integration and disintegration with a view to mapping trauma. On a wider gamut, the research also discovers how the chosen novels acknowledge to and place themselves within the debate associated with post-memory, the intensification of traumatic paraphernalia, particularly the notion of (PTSD) post-traumatic stress disorder, and the adaptive responses. Through the examination of fictional narratives composed by Kashmiri authors, the researcher aims to theorize, in relation to MacLeod’s (2002) outlook, “an account of how ‘Otherness’ is constructed and experienced” side by side the perception of hybridity that tests cultural nationalism (p. 58).

It is an admitted fact that trauma is associated with producing reorientation and cataclysm therefore, the researcher claims that the consequence accredited to traumatic familiarity is, as portrayed by Balaev (2014), “influenced by a variety of individuals and cultural factors that change over time” (p. 4). Vickroy (2002), akin to Balaev (2014), opines:

“[t]he fact that trauma, especially in a colonial and post-colonial context, is often created out of cultural conflicts and attempts to efface certain cultures (and by extinction the identities of individuals therein) makes it especially important to understand the nature of these conflicts and the mistakes of the past” (p. 221).

The selected narrative vibrantly illustrates the devastated lives and repercussion of trauma, establishing the

underpinning of this paper, highlighting Kurtz (2014), who quotes African authors and critics such as Chinua Achebe, Frantz Fanon, and William E.

B. Du Bois (1999), it is obvious that he “characterized their experience as fragmented” and “Fully aware of and focused on, the fragmenting effect of trauma” (p. 425). The individual as well as collective trauma faced by the Kashmiri people is an intensely painful condition. It brings to light the misfortunes the deprived Kashmiris experience and reveals the cruelties and adversities at a large scale lodged by the unlawful occupying forces stationed at the homeland of the miserable Kashmiri populace.

In the opinion of Vickroy (2002), narratives which highlight trauma don’t aspire to reproduce straight forward witnessing to the readers but relatively communicate and illustrate the unheard voices of disregarded folks. These narratives involve readers in a method “... experience emotional intimacy and immediacy, individual voices and memories, and the sensory responses of characters” (p. xvi). This research extensively analyzes trauma, a structural and temporal phenomenon that outlines narrative and characters’ identity.

The selected Kashmiri narratives while highlighting trauma, disrupting and regaining of the lost identities, carry remarkable importance for two main reasons. First and foremost, prejudice based on nationality, racial discrimination, and gender difference continue to exist within our present-day world. Craps (2013) highlights this aspect, contending that deprived societies exist all over the world within race prejudiced regions, showing the way to traumatic occurrences in their daily lives (p. 28). Second, localities where chauvinistic and bigoted prejudice exists, brings to light some of the highly demanding environs,

ensuing in the cross-sectional know-how of trauma.

The examination of Whitehead (2004) highlights the importance of memories in the form of nightmares and flashbacks which go on haunting the survivors over a long period of time. These haunting memories serves as an integral part of trauma fiction. Whitehead (2004) favors a non-conventional narrative structure in trauma novel with a view to communicating the bases of trauma accurately. In her investigation, she examines the observations of her predecessors as well as contemporaries with regard to this groundbreaking narrative approach in fiction. In the opinion of LaCapra’s (2001), the most important aspect of a traumatic narrative is its complex plot structure, diverging from the typical beginning, middle, and ending.

### **Research Methodology**

This research implements a qualitative, interpretive approach. It applies trauma theory on the textual analysis of *The Half Mother*, a traumatic narrative. Caruth's (1996) notional insight helps as the prime investigative lens—the interdisciplinary method drawn from literary trauma theory, psychology, and postcolonial studies is applied to the present research.

### **Data Sources:**

Primary text: *The Half Mother* by Bashir (2014).

Secondary sources: Scholarly articles on trauma theory, Kashmir conflict literature, and Caruth's (1996) seminal work.

### **Analytical Tools:**

- Close reading
- Thematic analysis
- Psychoanalytic literary interpretation

Research is in keeping with the methods used by the scholar in steering the proposed study. The present part of the paper elaborates on the notional basics of the existing research. The works of celebrated academics in the arena, such as Caruth (1996), Freud (1975), LaCapra (2001), Alexander et al. (2004), Craps (2008), and Whitehead (2004), have been scrutinized in the preceding section of the paper. Beginning with a detailed examination of the models advocated by the researchers mentioned above, the present section explains, enlarges, and analyzes complex and thorny academic foundations of trauma, and judgmentally measures and expresses the outline of the research. The notional emphasis chiefly is associated with the works of Caruth (1996) for she has established notions of trauma that have unified the preceding study projected by Freud (1975) and other experimental psychologists in the field.

The researcher has adopted a qualitative bearing, trusting on secondary foundations to reconnoiter the vital kernel of trauma and its complicated interaction with disrupted identity formation. The research brings into line the acumens of Caruth (1996), whose models have led the researcher in reconnoitering the multi-layered magnitudes of trauma schema. The study chiefly undertakes a qualitative stance.

The study espouses the expressive method of textual analysis in the framework of trauma theory. The technique evidences a vigorous tool as it empowers the hands-on use of the numerous methods intrinsic in the theory. At the fundamental level of the study there lies the attempt to make use of trauma theory in narratives, largely in its interface with disruption of identities and history. The accurate scrutiny technique has been adopted in this research to analyze the data with a view to examining themes, background, portrayal of characters, symbols and imagery

employed in the narrative. The employment of psychoanalytical examination of characters and their identities is an accurate technique indispensable in piercing the traumatic personalities that outline literary narratives. It is associated with the examination of the lives of narrators narrating Kashmiri narratology. As Conrad (1899) fittingly declares that every novelist constantly infuses himself into his narratives. Therefore, the study based on facts looks as an influential means to explain individual as well as collective personages, their idiosyncrasies, and socio-cultural eccentricities. This method fosterages an elusive and subtle consideration of the dynamic and dialogic interchange between the narrator and the narration. The personages portrayed in the narratives are discursively entwined with the lives of their narrators. The represented occurrences chiefly reverberate the individual experiences of the creators, engraving themselves as remembrances that discover their way straight into their narratives. Henceforth, it can be assuredly proclaimed that the central figures portrayed within these novels bring before us a robust resemblance to their creators. Accordingly, the autobiographical method encapsulated in these narrations is highlighted in the most befitting manner to analyze the characters.

The portrayal of the themes such as ferocity, manipulation, mass-scale exterminations, gang-rapes, assassinations, slaughter, socio-cultural and corporeal exploitations, and extraneous intrusions found within these narratives reverberates in the present-day social and political countryside of the region. The scholar has made use of the interpretive method to analyze these upsetting occurrences and incidents within the selected narratives to uphold the fundamental canons of trauma illustrated by Caruth 1996) in her seminal work.



## Interpretive Approaches

Central to the interpretive approach lies the appreciation of the distinguishing outlooks and individual understandings fundamental to man to man, which are certainly formed by their socio-cultural and historical milieus. The study purposes to unravel and construe these distinctive connotations, unravelling the intricate tapestry of their consequence on the policymaking procedure and demeanor. Vivacious to explanatory study is the indebtedness of the context, in which scholars indeed dissect the cultural and social backdrop in which the phenomenon is formulated, thus untying its effect on personal perception and involvements.

Researchers unfolded various methods of interpretation interlaced within pictorial artifacts, papers, or writings, discerning thematic relations that suggest clues into contributors' perceptions. They scrutinize individual side by side collective narratives, recounting how people communicate and regain their lost identities. It offers scholars to make a voyage into the lived experiences, compromising contact to reflective and subtle acumens that might escape the grip of quantitative practices.

## Sample Data

The scholar has chosen "The Half Mother" by Bashir (2014) to analyze the socio-cultural backdrop of the region with a view to gauging the disruption of identity of the populace. Kashmiri narrator has narrated this narration to highlight cultural, political, and historical milieu. The narrative pattern and the thematic features of the selected narrative have been analyzed with the help of trauma notions promulgated by Caruth (1996), a renowned theorist in the field of trauma.

## Theoretical Framework for the Study

The research employs notion of trauma projected by Caruth (1996) for the

documented examination of the above mentioned narrative. The perceptions and theory of trauma offer the vital outline for this study. The theory explores how individuals as well as collective characters act and react to traumatic occurrences such as violence, skirmish, exploitation, or personal calamities.

The extracts from the selected narrative have been chosen carefully and evaluated keeping in view the theoretical foundations projected by Caruth (1996). In this respect, the researcher has thoroughly observed how Caruth (1996) theorizes trauma in her seminal work.

## Data Analysis

Data is analyzed keeping in view the preceding section titled research methodology. The researcher has carefully chosen the extracts from the selected text with a view to meeting the requirement of the themes investigated in this section. The major themes examined in this section are trauma as a disruption of identity, trauma as inescapable repetition, identity fragmentation, temporal distraction and narrative form, and silence and inexpressibility. All these themes have been explored in the light of trauma theory and they have been proved by the help of the selected textual extracts. The correlation of the textual extracts and application of the trauma theory highlights the authenticity of the proposed themes. The extracts have been explained in detail to perceive the major concern i.e, identity crises. All these themes reinforce the issue of identity in a war zone.

## Trauma as a Disruption of identity

"That night, the Joo house resounded with wails underneath the dark starry sky. The whole orchard was full of mourners. The men moved Ab Jaan's shroud-draped body from the brier and lowered it into the vault dug into the right side of the rectangular pit.

Shafiqah held Haleema's head, while Haleema was crooning a dirge like a wedding madrigal, refusing to believe what had happened" (Bashir, 2014, p. 52).

The extract highlights the horrific tragedy that took place at Joo house, the house of Haleema. It heralds the massacring of Ab Jaan, the father of Haleema. The merciless killing of Ab Jaan is horrible example set in the backdrop of war-ridden Kashmir, a devastated place usurped by the Indian armed forces. After the heartrending demise and burial of Ab Jaan, Shafiqah, a friend holds the head of Haleema in both hands to console her in miseries and misfortunes. The scene of killing of her father before her very eyes is agonizing and heart wrenching. This traumatic condition fractures her very being. In the opinion of Caruth (1996) the agonizing state of affairs as a result of traumatic outcome, disrupts the personal self of the survivors. Haleema is unable to sustain herself and consequently, she is rendered helpless in coping with the tragic situation. She croons a dirge like wailing for the sake of uttering her personal grief. This horrific incident has shattered herself once for all. She cries out her internal strife and suffering. She passes through the worst order of anguish. Her wailing manifests her internal agony. The massacring of Ab Jaan, a member of muslim community, is not only an individual instance of self-disruption, but it is also a collective loss manifested in the region. Same is the case with Haleema who represents the common lot. Her miseries and worries symbolize the crisis of the whole populace in the region. Such horrific individual losses reinforce the collective losses of a particular community. These losses disrupt the whole pattern of the society and thereby fracture the identity of that group. According to Caruth (1996) individual trauma reinforces the collective trauma in trauma stricken society.

Caruth (1996) quoting Freud, observes:

"—Freud's central insight, in Moses and Monotheism that history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (p. 25).

### **Trauma as Inescapable Repetition**

"The absurdity of her loneliness was difficult to express in words. Her head was filled with flashing visions and buzzing memories. She slipped into a reverie, a surreal reverie, almost like a voice, and not yet a vision--- something little more than the slightly vague dream.....(Bashir, 2014, pp. 4-5).

Caruth's (1996) observation that trauma returns and haunts the survivor in the form of nightmares and flash backs, and disrupts the leaner order of the narrative. It is indirectly associated with the disruption of identity. The survivors are unable to come out of the traumatic reveries which go on haunting them in dreams in the form of flashbacks and nightmares. These dream like situations become a permanent part of their psychological state of affairs. In spite of their all efforts they are unable to come out of the psychic disorder. Gradually, this state of affairs overwhelm the whole of their being and consequently they fall a victim to intrusive thoughts.

It is very difficult for the survivors to come out of the above mentioned condition which demands very delicate handling such as psycho-therapy. Haleema, the protagonist, also passes through this state of affair. The cruel massacring of father and enforced abduction of son render her a mentally deranged figure. She is unable to cope with this situation. These heart rending incidents take heavy toll upon her and she has to pay a heavy price for them. Her lonesome condition is difficult to be expressed in words. Most of the time she is keeping to

herself and does not utter even a word. She just goes on memorizing what has happened. In a state of confusion and chaos, she is compelled to lead her life. There is no one except a few neighbours in this world to console or sought out a solution of her problems. Therefore, Haleema in a state of psychic disorder goes on leading her lonesome life. Her life has become a series of miseries and misfortunes which have turned into unending flashbacks. The very state of affairs has overwhelmed the self of Haleema. The memories of the heart wrenching incidents follow her like a phantom. The premise of Caruth (1996) is the clear proof of Haleema's repetitive activities as she falls a victim to intrusive thoughts. These activities of hers show Caruth's (1996) notion of the "belatedness" of trauma as well and the unassimilated nature of trauma to grasp it fully.

### **Identity Fragmentation**

"Haleema sold her cattle to Shafiq for ten thousand rupees, as well as her jewellery and more expensive copper utensils. The Joo house wore an empty look now. Each day, consoling neighbours would drop by, and once they left she would find herself entirely alone" (Bashir, 2014, p. 69).

Haleema's sense of self suffers disruption to a great extent at the enforced abduction of her son. A Kashmiri traditional mother is rendered a half mother after facing this tragic occurrence. This new role of hers (from a traditional mother to a half mother) alters her former self. This changing role of hers is in keeping with Caruth's (1996) notion of trauma that disrupts the linear order of narrative. When trauma distorts the linearity of life, naturally, it distorts the self of the survivors and in this way it becomes an issue of identity distortion. Haleema becomes a symbol of spectral like figure, whose identity is at stake. Her ultimate efforts to recover her lost loved one is in fact a struggle to regain

her former self. She does every effort of her to regain what she has lost. She sells every item of the household for the safe recover of her son, Imran. She is a prototype of Caruth's (1996) premise that when a survivor tries to regain his former self, he passes through hallucination or intrusive thoughts. Therefore, his memories return and haunt him in the form of flashbacks.

### **Temporal Distraction and Narrative Form**

"Haleema looked weary and tired. Her hair was loose, her dupatta was wound carelessly around her head, and her eyes were swollen and moist. Her face was pale and dry, like a corpse's" (Bashir, 2014, p. 61).

"The Half Mother" follows the pattern of a scrappy narrative structure which is aligned with Caruth's (1996) premise that trauma twists the personality of the survivor temporality. This unassimilated nature of trauma is a clear proof of nonlinear narrative form. This distortion of the narrative is indirectly associated with the disruption of the self of the survivor. Therefore, the repeated hunting of flashback, nightmares, dream like situation, nonlinear pattern, and odd images all pave the way to a situation of perplexity. This perplexing condition bestows a confusing state of affairs upon the survivor. Resultantly, the survivor passes through post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) asserts:

"As such, PTSD seems to provide the most direct link between the psyche and external violence and to be the most destructive psychic disorder. I will argue in what follows that trauma is not simply an act of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (pp. 59-60).

This state of affairs is very pain full for the survivor, because it changes his whole being. His former sense of self suffers a lot. Haleema, the protagonist, passes through a lot of dilemma. She is divorced, her father is mercilessly killed, and above all her only son

is kidnaped. Her apparent condition is very deplorable. She passes through the worst order of her life. She is utterly tired, her hair is falling loose, and dupatta is woven carelessly around the head. Her eyes are swollen and she has turned pale like a corpse. She looks like a ghost. But in spite of all these miseries and misfortunes, she does not lose heart. All of the successive tragedies in her life make her resilient and ready to face every obstacle of life. She turns out to be a new woman. Now she is not a traditional housewife, rather, proves to be determined and resolute type of figure. After passing through a series of misfortunes and troubles, she emerges as a towering figure. First, her identity is distorted, later she struggles hard and does her utmost effort to regain the lost former self.

Not only trauma is a past experience, but also it is associated with present and future. Therefore, the heartrending story of Haleema is universal one. She is a symbol of every woman in a war zone. Although Haleema is an individual figure, but she also reinforces the collective humanity in a world of crime and suffering. The story of Haleema's suffering is the story of everyone.

She is not a single minded individual. She aligns with Caruth's (1996) notion that we are implicated in each other's trauma.

Trauma to Caruth (1996) is not a private act, rather, it reinforces the actions of collectivity.

Caruth (1996) observes:

"But we can also read the address of the voice here, not as the story of individual in relation to the events of his or her own past, but as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of

listening to another's wound" (p.8) 4.5  
Silence and Inexpressibility

"As night invaded the house, Haleema sat on the broad ledge of her kitchen window and looked out into the moonlit darkness. She hated the moon now. After Imran had been taken away, she had fallen to the ground and helplessly looked up at the sky. Her hair had fallen loose about her face, as if it had been pulled in a fight" (Bashir, 2014, p. 3).

The selected lines are in keeping with the notion of Caruth (1996) that trauma is unclaimed/unassimilated experience. It can not be assimilated and it remains inexpressible. The indescribability of traumatic situations haunt the survivor over a long period of time. The survivor tries to act out and work through this state of affairs but it is not an easy task. The condition of Haleema after the enforced abduction by the ruthless armed forces is highly excruciating and painful. She is keeping to herself, and she is unable to share her grief with anyone else. It is unbelievable for her to witness the abduction of the son before her very eyes. She was found silent and sitting on the kitchen window in a state of vacant stare that was revealing her internal discord. She was in a miserable condition and helplessly looking at the sky while her hair had fallen loose about the face. This condition of a sonless mother, especially at the sight of his enforced abduction is inexpressible. Wearer knows where the shoe pinches, no one else can perceive it.

Assimilation of trauma is always doubtful. According to Caruth (1996) it is an unclaimed experience. Trauma is not an expressible phenomenon, is a vital part of Caruth's (1996) trauma notion, and it is candidly manifested in Haleema's failing capacity to express it, so it remains unassimilated.

Caruth (1996) declares:

“So trauma is not located in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature---the way it was precisely not known in the first instance---returns to haunt the survivor later on” (p. 4).

This inexpressibility of trauma is the very part of Haleema’s life. The grief stricken life renders her speechless in the beginning. She feels herself entirely a changed human-being. She does not believe what is happening before her very eyes, when father is mercilessly massacred and son is abducted by force by the Indian Armed Forces. This state of affair confirms Caruth's (1996) theory that trauma is an occurrence that is not experienced at the spur of the moment and it is not fully known, rather it is a delayed and belated perception.

## Conclusion

The various themes regarding trauma have been investigated in the light of trauma theory with a view to mapping intensity of trauma. All these themes reinforce traumatic occurrences and formulate the issue of identity. Caruth (1996) maintains that trauma fractures the linear order of a narratives, which is the clear proof of disrupted sense of self of the survivors.

First research question of the present paper is associated with the depiction of trauma in the gruesome tale of Haleema. Trauma in *The Half Mother* is not depicted simply as sorrows but as a psychological fracture that transmutes identity. No doubt Haleema, the protagonist, like many others in her position, passes through the unforeseen troubles and worries of life. She has to pay a heavy penalty of life in this world of miseries and misfortunes. The cares and worries reinforce each other and go on aggravating day by day. Haleema like the whole of her lot is fighting the war of survival to uphold the

dignity of the Kashmiri folk. It will be unjust to examine this narrative solely in the backdrop of a miserable story of a deprived woman in war ridden region, rather it is much more than that. It is not the woeful tale of a single individual rather it is the story of collective sufferings. It also brings before us resilient figures like Haleema, who know how to make the best bargain of life. She does her every effort to uphold the identity of the whole populace in the region. The identity of the nation is at stake, and she emerges to regain the disrupted identity. It is the psychological study of a heartrending tale of a miserable woman who represents the whole lot. She teaches us a lesson of resilience in case of troubles and worries on the way towards life. The more suffering in our lives make us more appreciative of the world around us.

“The greatest sufferings bring the greatest hopes, the greatest miseries greatest patience, and the greatest uncertainties lead to the greatest quests.....” (Bashir, 2014, p. 3).

The heart-wrenching tale of Haleema exemplifies the Caruthian trauma notion. Caruth (1996) proclaims that trauma always occurs belatedly and latently in the form of fragments which go on haunting the survivors in dreams in shape of flashbacks and nightmares, thus reinforcing a tragic tale.

Caruth (1996) states:

“Perplexed by terrifying literal nightmares of battlefield survivors and the repetitive reenactment of people who have experienced painful events, Freud wonders at the peculiar and sometimes uncanny way in which catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves for those who have passed through them” (p. 1).

Second research question of the paper is in keeping with Caruth’s (1996) notion of delayed impact of trauma which disrupts the

identity of a survivor. The impact of trauma on the survivors is never immediate rather it is always delayed and belated. The survivor feels the fits of trauma later in life when he memorizes the catastrophic happening later on. Consequently, these memories return in the form of flashbacks or nightmares, and go on haunting the survivor over a long period of time. At the time of happening the survivor is not so much terrified, as he observes its shocks afterward. Therefore, the concept of latency in a traumatic occurrence cannot be ruled out. Thus the real traumatic impact is always latent.

Caruth (1996) opines:

“This truth in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language” (p. 4).

The delayed and belated aspect of trauma goes on aggravating with the passage of time and consequently, become a source of nuisance for the sense of self of the survivor. This state of affairs badly shatters his identity. The rapturing of the identity of the survivor remains irreparable. He is unable to come out of the intrusive impact of trauma. This intrusion of trauma proves to be a major factor in disrupting the self of the survivor, which needs to be coped with to lead a normal life. During this intrusive period he remains in a state of hallucination and neurotic condition which demands a very delicate handling.

“It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave psychical and motor symptoms, which can be described only to his shock or whatever else happened at the

time of the accident. He has developed a “traumatic neurosis” (p. 17).

Third research question of the paper is associated with form and structure of the novel especially with the fragmented narrative, recurrences, and episodes after episodes with a view to architecturally represent trauma. The story of the novel is by no means chronologically woven and interwoven. It is just in the form of episodic unity. It is narrated in parts taken from the life of Haleema, in the beginning it revolves round the Joo house, soon afterward it sketches the heroic life of Haleema, the protagonist. She is incarnation of patience, courage, and loyalty. Though in the beginning she has been shown a homely lady who is highly familial and sincere to her household duties. She has been sketched a simpleton type but soon after the heartrending massacring of her father Ab Jaan, and enforced abduction of her son Imran, she emerges as a stalwart figure. After selling each and every thing of her household she voyages the hardest path of her life. She turns out to be a resilient type, and the reader witnesses a lot of development in her character. There is a hell of difference in the early part played by Haleema and her later role in the novel. In the early part of the narrative she is dejected type of figure, but in the later part of her life she is a resilient one. She is ready to sacrifice everything of her life to regain the lost dignity of the Joo house. Recurrently, she moves from place to place to fight her war of survival, she has only one motive to regain what she has lost. She is not a single woman, she is the epitome of Kashmiri womanhood, a brilliant, brave, courageous, and forthright type. She like the others in her shoes would never let down her cultural traditions. She is there to uphold and mend the fractured identities.

No doubt the tapestry of the narration is loosely woven and interwoven, just in the

form of episodes after episodes but the way these episodes have been crafted by the narrator, the reader forgets all about their disjoint and rambling coherency. The events and occurrences are not logically connected, but the cohesiveness of the themes make it a single entity. The Half Mother is by and large in keeping with the “unassimilated” notion of trauma highlighted by Caruth (1996). A traumatic narration remains out of easy comprehension, therefore, disjoint actions suit this type of narration.

Caruth (1996) observes:

“At the heart of these stories is thus an enigmatic testimony not only to the nature of violent events but to what, in trauma, resist simple comprehension. And it is in this way that we can also read one of the central lesson in Freud’s recurrent attempts to grapple with the description and conceptualization of trauma” (p. 6).

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