Bearing Witness: Representation of Communal Violence and Trauma in Select Twenty-first Century Indian Cinema

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English

By

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled **"Bearing Witness: Representation of Communal Violence and Trauma in Select Twenty-first Century Indian Cinema"** submitted by **Jouhar. K.** to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by him under my supervision, and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or similar titles.

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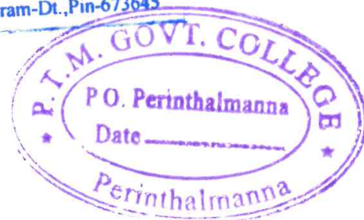

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis entitled **"Bearing Witness: Representation of Communal Violence and Trauma in Select Twenty-first Century Indian Cinema"** is based on the original work done by me under the guidance of Dr. Abida Farooqui and has not been included in any other thesis submitted previously for the award of any degree. The contents of the thesis have undergone a plagiarism check using iThenticate software at C.H.M.K. Library, University of Calicut, and the similarity index was found within the permissible limit. I also declare that the thesis is free from AI-generated content.

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Abstract

Bearing Witness: Representation of Communal Violence and Trauma in Select Twenty-first Century Indian Cinema

This thesis argues that select Indian films offer a nuanced portrayal of communal violence, trauma and posttraumatic growth by representing the trauma of victims, perpetrators, and communities through cinematic techniques and innovative narrative strategies. Drawing on postcolonial theoretical discourses on violence and trauma developed by scholars such as Stef Craps, Irene Visser, and Michael Rothberg, the study investigates how the select films engage with direct, structural and cultural forms of violence, and portray the trauma of victim perpetrators and communities. It offers a comparative analysis of the techniques and strategies used in feature and documentary films to engage with the themes of suffering, resilience and healing. The thesis adopts a qualitative approach to study how these films engage with violence and trauma. Content analysis is employed to trace the patterns of violence and trauma, and close textual analysis is used to analyse these films' techniques, themes, and narrative structures. The corpus of this study comprises four feature films, *Firaaq*, *Parzania, Amu*, and *Jogi*, and two documentaries, *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* and *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement*, which are set against the background of the Anti-Sikh Riots in Delhi in 1984 and the Gujarat Riots in 2002. The study addresses a gap in existing scholarship by examining trauma suffered by victims and perpetrators in a postcolonial locality. This study's focus on the social and material dynamics of trauma, in addition to the psychological and linguistic, underscores its relevance. The study highlights the role of rituals, faith-related practices and indigenous modes of healing, and contributes to a deeper understanding of ways of managing trauma in a postcolonial locality. In contrast to prior research, which focuses on mourning and stasis, this study

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foregrounds resilience, posttraumatic growth, and reconciliation. This thesis positions Indian cinema as a site for negotiation, witnessing and reconciliation.

Keywords: communal violence, trauma, Indian cinema, resilience, posttraumatic growth.

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സാക്ഷ്യം വഹിക്കൽ: ഇരുപത്തിയൊന്നാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ഇന്ത്യൻ സിനിമകളിൽ വർഗീയ അക്രമത്തിന്റെയും ട്രോമയുടെയും പ്രതിനിധാനം

സംഗ്രഹം

ഇരുപത്തിയൊന്നാം നൂറ്റാണ്ടിലെ തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ഇന്ത്യൻ സിനിമകൾ, സിനിമാറ്റിക് ടെക്നിക്കുകളിലൂടെയും നൂതനമായ ആഖ്യാന തന്ത്രങ്ങളിലൂടെയും വർഗീയ അക്രമം, മാനസിക ആഘാതം (ട്രോമ), പോസ്റ്റ് ട്രോമാറ്റിക് വളർച്ച എന്നിവയുടെ സൂക്ഷ്മമായ ചിത്രീകരണം വാഗ്ദാനം ചെയ്യുന്നുവെന്ന് ഈ പ്രബന്ധം വാദിക്കുന്നു. സ്റ്റെഫ് ക്രാപ്സ്, ഐറിൻ വിസർ, മൈക്കൽ റോത്ത്ബെർഗ് തുടങ്ങിയ പണ്ഡിതന്മാർ വികസിപ്പിച്ചെടുത്ത അക്രമത്തെയും ആഘാതത്തെയും കുറിച്ചുള്ള പോസ്റ്റ് കൊളോണിയൽ സൈദ്ധാന്തിക വ്യവഹാരങ്ങളെ അടിസ്ഥാനമാക്കി, തിരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത സിനിമകൾ നേരിട്ടുള്ള അക്രമത്തിനൊപ്പം ഘടനാപരവും സാംസ്കാരികവുമായ അക്രമങ്ങളുടെ വിവിധ തലങ്ങൾ എങ്ങിനെ സമീപിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു എന്നത് ഈ പഠനം ആഴത്തിൽ അന്വേഷിക്കുന്നു.

ഇരകളുടെയും അപരാധികളുടേയും സമൂഹങ്ങളുടെയും ട്രോമയെ ഈ സിനിമകൾ സമീപിച്ച വ്യത്യസ്തമായ രീതികൾ കണ്ടെത്താൻ ഈ പഠനം ശ്രമിക്കുന്നു. കഷ്ടപ്പാടുകൾ, പ്രതിരോധശേഷി, സുഖപ്പെടൽ എന്നീ വിഷയങ്ങളുമായി ഇടപഴകുന്നതിന് ഫീച്ചർ, ഡോക്യുമെന്ററി സിനിമകളിൽ ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്ന സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യകളുടെയും തന്ത്രങ്ങളുടെയും താരതമ്യ വിശകലനം ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ ഭാഗമാണ്. ഈ സിനിമകൾ അക്രമവും ട്രോമയും എങ്ങനെ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നു എന്ന് പഠിക്കുന്നതിനായ ഒരു ഗുണപരമായ സമീപനമാണ് ഈ ഗവേഷണ പഠനം സ്വീകരിച്ചിട്ടുള്ളത് . അക്രമത്തിന്റെയും ആഘാതത്തിന്റെയും പാറ്റേണുകൾ കണ്ടെത്തുന്നതിന് ഉള്ളടക്ക വിശകലനം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു, കൂടാതെ ഈ സിനിമകളുടെ സാങ്കേതിക വിദ്യകൾ, തീമുകൾ, ആഖ്യാന ഘടനകൾ എന്നിവ വിശകലനം ചെയ്യുന്നതിന് ഉള്ളടക്ക വിശകലത്തിന്റെ രീതിശാസ്ത്രം ഉപയോഗിക്കുന്നു. 1984-ൽ ഡൽഹിയിൽ നടന്ന സിഖ് വിരുദ്ധ കലാപത്തിന്റെയും 2002-ലെ ഗുജറാത്ത് കലാപത്തിന്റെയും പശ്ചാത്തലത്തിൽ ഒരുക്കിയിരിക്കുന്ന, *ഫിറാഖ്, പർസാനിയ, അമു, ജോഗി* എന്നീ നാല് ഫീച്ചർ ഫിലിമുകളും, *ഈവൻ ദ ക്രോസ്: എ ഡിവൈഡഡ് ഗുജറാത്ത്, ദി വിഡോ കോളനി: ഇന്ത്യാസ് അൺസെറ്റിൽഡ് സെറ്റിൽമെന്റ്* എന്നീ രണ്ട് ഡോക്യുമെന്ററികളും ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ കോർപ്പസിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുന്നു. കൊളോണിയൽാനന്തര പ്രദേശത്ത് ഇരകളും കുറ്റവാളികളും അനുഭവിക്കുന്ന ട്രോമ പരിശോധിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് നിലവിലുള്ള പഠനങ്ങളിലെ ഒരു വിടവ് ഈ പഠനം അഭിസംബോധന ചെയ്യുന്നു. മാനസികവും ഭാഷാപരവുമായ വശങ്ങൾക്ക് പുറമേ, ട്രോമയുടെ സാമൂഹികവും ഭൗതികവുമായ തലങ്ങളിലും ഉള്ള ഈ പഠനത്തിന്റെ ശ്രദ്ധ അതിന്റെ പ്രസക്തിയെ അടിവരയിടുന്നു. ആചാരങ്ങൾ, വിശ്വാസവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട സമ്പ്രദായങ്ങൾ , തദ്ദേശീയമായ രോഗശാന്തി രീതികൾ എന്നിവയുടെ പങ്ക് ഈ പഠനം എടുത്തുകാണിക്കുന്നു. വിലാപത്തിലും സ്തംഭനത്തിലും ശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്ന മുൻ ഗവേഷണങ്ങളിൽ നിന്ന് വ്യത്യസ്തമായി, ഈ പഠനം പ്രതിരോധശേഷി, പോസ്റ്റ്

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ട്രോമാറ്റിക് വളർച്ച, അനുരഞ്ജനം എന്നിവയിൽ ശ്രദ്ധ കേന്ദ്രീകരിക്കുന്നു . ചർച്ചകൾ, സാക്ഷ്യം വഹിക്കൽ, അനുരഞ്ജനം എന്നിവയ്ക്കുള്ള ഒരു ഭൂമികയായി ഇന്ത്യൻ സിനിമയെ ഈ പ്രബന്ധം സ്ഥാപിക്കുന്നു.

സൂചകപദങ്ങൾ- വർഗീയ അക്രമം, മാനസിക ആഘാതം (ട്രോമ), ഇന്ത്യൻ സിനിമ, പ്രതിരോധശേഷി, ആഘാതാനന്തര വളർച്ച.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Representing Communal Violence and Trauma in Cinema: Poetics, Politics and Ethics

Cinema dynamically interacts with social, political, and cultural spheres. On the one hand, cinema is shaped by socio-political changes in society; on the other, it influences how the public perceives and understands these changes. This thesis seeks to critically analyse the various ways in which select twenty-first-century Indian films engage with communal violence, trauma and post-traumatic growth. Four feature films, *Firaaq*, *Parzania, Amu*, and *Jogi*, and two documentary films, *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* and *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement,* have been chosen for detailed analysis in this thesis. The study focuses on how these films, which are set against the background of the Anti-Sikh Riots in Delhi following the assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984, and the Gujarat Riots following the Godhra train burning incident in 2002, address communal polarisation, the ensuing violence, and the traumatisation of individuals and groups.

The first part of this chapter provides a detailed overview of the historical and cultural background of communal polarisation and violence in India. It then proceeds to an analysis of the research objectives. Next, it critically examines the important theoretical discourses on violence and trauma. The chapter continues with a detailed literature review and an overview of the research methodology. It is

followed by a section on chapterisation. It concludes with a discussion on the significance of the area and topic of research.

1. Background of the Study

Numerous instances of communal violence were reported in India before and after independence (Engineer 1; Jairath 443). Communalism refers to "sectarian identity formations and hostile and violent relations between different communities often erupting in riots between them" (Jain 6). Gyanendra Pandey defines communalism as "a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different religious communities" in his book *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (6). Communal violence refers to "violence primarily perpetrated by civilian members of one ethnic community (in India often demarcated by religious denomination) against civilian members of another community" (Frøystad 443). Communal violence, which results in murder, loot, large-scale displacement and the creation of an atmosphere of fear, division and polarisation, was reported in India at regular intervals (Jain 4).

Communal violence and riots were recorded in India during the Pre-colonial period itself (Sarkar 1). The acuteness of the riots increased during colonial rule because of the divide-and-rule policy followed by Britain after the uprising of 1857 against the colonial rulers (Chandra 1). Some of the most intense episodes of communal violence erupted in India during the days of Partition. The partition of undivided India into India and Pakistan along religious lines in 1947 disrupted the social fabric and triggered riots in different parts of India. Men, women and children were attacked, robbed and killed on both sides of the border. Partition was a

"moment of lethal rupture" that led to the triggering of riots, especially in Northern India, leading to the death of over one million people and the displacement of eight to ten million Indians (Sarkar 194). Sarma argues that "the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947 created unprecedented communal violence which was responsible for killing and migration of millions of people" (85). Many families who suffered personal and material losses still carry the memories of violence and loss.

All the major communities in India were affected by Partition, albeit in different ways. Forced and, at times, voluntary displacement from one region to another and, in some cases, from one country to another changed the identity of the affected communities and individuals. These developments also had social and economic consequences. The partition of the land into two by the British in 1947 also resulted in the partition of the psyche of thousands of affected individuals. Recent studies on communal violence in post-independent India examine how the painful memories of the loss of life, property and identity caused by Partition continue to influence contemporary political, sociological, cultural, and cinematic discourses (Misri 8). Partition remains "a festering wound in the collective psyche of South Asia (Sarkar 1). It has also emerged as a "national trauma—an experience whose memory cast its long, disquieting shadow on public consciousness" (Sarkar 2). Even today, discussing Partition is a complex task because it may revive the painful and disturbing memories about "the corporeal, material, and psychic losses" (Sarkar 9).

Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims living in border states such as Punjab, Kashmir and Bengal were the most affected because of the communal violence during the

time of Partition. Many Sikhs living in those parts of Punjab, which became part of Pakistan, came under attack, and some were forced to cross the border to relocate to India. The forced displacement and relocation adversely affected the members of the community. The cultural memory of the loss of lives and properties during the days of Partition was transmitted across generations, which led to the formation of intergenerational trauma. The trauma of Partition continues to influence many survivors' cultural memories and collective identities. The rise of militancy in Punjab and the demand for a separate state for Sikhs caused a rift among communities after Partition. This rift deepened further after events like Operation Blue Star, the murder of the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, and the Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984. The Sikh community draws parallels between the violence of 1947 and that of 1984 as “both the cataclysmic events were surrounded with identical sufferings, violence and trauma of loss” (Kaur and Mohindra 3). The ethnographic study conducted by Veena Das on the suffering of Sikh women also makes a comparison between the violence in 1947 and that in 1984. She points out that “the way Sikh women dealt with the carnage in Delhi and the various ways in which loss and grief were exhibited is reminiscent of how women dealt with the violence during the 1947 Partition” (20). Sikh community carries “the spectral wounds” of these events, and “these haunting memories inform their identities” (Kaur and Mohindra 3).

The communal tension that arose during Partition had a lasting and profound impact on Muslims as well. In the post-Partition violence, many Muslims were attacked and killed, and their establishments and houses were targeted, especially in

states bordering Pakistan. Sachar Commission report states that Muslims, being a minority in India, face “issues related to identity, security and equity” which are “intricately linked in complex ways” (3). The report also points out that many Muslims in India have to “carry a double burden of being labelled as 'anti-national' and as being 'appeased' at the same time” (11). One reason for the othering of Muslims in certain parts of India is that some people hold Muslims responsible for Partition (Sarkar 34). They perceive Partition as “the ultimate instance of Muslim betrayal in the modern era” (Sarkar 34). Vested interest groups weaponise these sentiments against the community during the outbreak of communal riots. Muslims have suffered significantly because of the targeted attacks and communal riots in Post-independent India. Muslims in India occupy an ambivalent position, “simultaneously marking the triumph of secular national community and emerging as the locus of endless suspicion” (Sarkar 36).

The circulation of collective memories about the past violence associated with the Partition, along with the fear of “the imagined dangers of future partition,” creates an atmosphere leading to polarisation along sectarian lines (Brass 384). The polarisation along religious lines precipitates instances of violence, which sometimes result in the outbreak of full-blown riots. As Nishat Haider rightly argues, “the collective memory of Partition within the Subcontinent has, during the past century and more, been refracted through communal and state ideologies (“Genealogy of Violence” 90).

Political, economic and social factors also resulted in the triggering of communal unrest. Economic disparities and marginalisation of some communities

created distrust and enmity along communal lines. The rhetoric of communalism used by different political parties to further their political agenda aided the formation of the "institutionalized riot systems" (Brass 369). Paul Brass argues that the nexus of antisocial elements, political leaders, groups with vested interests, and communal outfits plays an important role in planning and executing riots. This nexus creates "an institutional riot system" and acts with impunity in areas where they receive active or passive support from some police officers and bureaucrats (Brass 369). He argues that communal amity can be restored only by dismantling such institutional riot systems. The role played by certain media houses that amplified messages of hate and violence in provoking communal unrest has also been well documented (N. Mehta 395). The failure of law-and-order machinery to restore peace by controlling the mob adds to the intensity of violence (Saxena 129). Steven Wilkinson, in his well-researched book *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India*, argues that on many occasions, riots were planned and executed by certain groups to reap electoral dividends (5). He holds that riots can be controlled quickly if the authorities are alert and active.

Ward Berenschot, in his book *Riot Politics: Hindu-Muslim Violence and the Indian State,* offers an ethnographic account of riots. He attempts to uncover the role played by different stakeholders in acts of violence. He argues that among the perpetrators, " a division of labour" exists: "Some actors were involved in spreading rumours and accusations, some occupied themselves with the logistics of the mobilisation, some instigated and led the mobs while others kept up morale and support by providing relief and by securing the release of those arrested" (7). He

reiterates that “inclusive economic growth and a more accessible and responsive state can lay the basis for a political arena that is less violent and more conducive to communal harmony” (201).

Ashutosh Varshney argues that riots can be triggered and sustained only in regions where civic engagement among members of various religions is limited. He holds that “local networks of civic engagement” between different communities play an important role in regulating and managing conflicts and preventing the eruption of riots (9). In regions where such networks are present, tensions can be “regulated and managed”, and “where they are missing, communal identities led to endemic and ghastly violence” because “a multi-ethnic society with few interconnections across ethnic boundaries is very vulnerable to ethnic disorders and violence” (Varshney 9, 12).

Since Independence, India has witnessed numerous outbreaks of communal violence, mainly in the Northern States, which were directly affected by Partition (Frøystad 443). The Jabalpur Riots of 1961, the Anti-Sikh Riots of 1984, the Bhagalpur Riots of 1989, the Kashmir Riots of 1990, the Bombay Riots of 1992-1993, the Gujarat Riots of 2002, the Muzaffarnagar Riots of 2013, and the Delhi Riots of 2020 are some of the crucial instances of communal riots in post-independent India. Numerous instances of direct, structural, and cultural violence characterise these communal riots.

The communal riots in Delhi in 1984 and in Gujarat in 2002 had lasting consequences. They resulted in the formation of cultural trauma, which in turn played a significant role in shaping the post-riot identities of the members of the

affected communities. The Anti-Sikh Riots in Delhi were triggered by the inter-communal polarisation caused by the mobilisation of people along communal lines after the murder of the then-Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, by her Sikh bodyguards (Devgan 207). The riot in 1984 wreaked considerable damage to the lives and property of people belonging to the Sikh community living in Delhi and other parts of North India. The situation was brought under control by the army, which was deployed in riot-hit areas. Nevertheless, many displaced victims could not return to their respective villages because of social, political, and financial reasons. Many widows were later shifted to a new settlement in the suburbs of Delhi, which later came to be known as Widow Colony. Even decades after the riots, victims of the riots continue their fight for justice. They point out that many perpetrators have yet to be brought to book, and the victims have not been adequately compensated.

A communal riot in the Indian State of Gujarat erupted in 2002 after the attack on coach S6 in the Sabarmati Express carrying *karsevaks* who were returning home after taking part in the political rally organised by a political outfit to mobilise support for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The spread of the reports that Muslims were behind the targeted attack created an atmosphere of distrust, hatred and polarisation, which groups with vested interest sought to exploit to mobilise mobs to target localities with large populations of minorities. The riot erupted, and the ensuing violence resulted in the large-scale destruction of persons and property and the displacement of many families (Priya 189). Muslim women of different age groups were sexually molested, and some of them were later killed.

The existing prejudice among certain sections about the Muslim community also increased the intensity of violence (Murthi 3).

Historical and cultural representations play a significant role in shaping the cultural memories of different groups and communities. Several historical narratives, such as *Communalism in Modern India* by Bipan Chandra and *The Anatomy of Hate* by Revati Laul, and literary narratives, such as *Riot: A Love Story* by Shashi Tharoor and *Delhi: A Novel* by Khushwant Singh, have recorded the modalities of communal violence and the suffering of the victims. Indian cinema has also addressed communal violence and its lasting legacy. Films on communal riots, such as *Firaaq* and *Amu*, have explored interrelated themes such as suffering, trauma, resilience, and post-traumatic growth. However, studies on how twenty-first-century Indian films explore and depict communal violence, trauma and post-traumatic growth are still limited. This study seeks to examine how the select films engage with violence, trauma and post-traumatic growth through the conceptual frameworks of postcolonial discourses on violence and trauma.

2. Research Objectives

This thesis attempts to explore how select films represent, mediate and process experiences of communal violence and the resulting trauma. It aims to analyse how these films engage with direct, structural and cultural forms of violence from an intersectional vantage point. It endeavours to investigate how the films depict individual, collective and insidious trauma from the perspective of postcolonial trauma studies. It attempts to critically examine the representations of the trauma experienced by various stakeholders, such as victims, perpetrators and

implicated subjects in these films. The study intends to explore how select films negotiate the themes of suffering, resilience, healing and posttraumatic growth. It seeks to explore how these films mediate the connection between memory and trauma, with added emphasis on the multidirectionality of memory and the ethics of witnessing. Furthermore, the study seeks to compare the different strategies used in feature and documentary films to depict violence, trauma and posttraumatic growth. Finally, the study aims to examine the aesthetic and formal strategies employed in these films to represent violence and trauma.

3. Theoretical Framework

In the twentieth century, different outbreaks of violence of varying intensities were reported in different parts of the world (Christian 1). In the much-discussed work *Reflections on Violence*, John Keane argues that the twentieth century may be described as “the long century of violence” (3). The concepts of victimisation and perpetration are placed against political, sociological, and cultural contexts in this section. This section on the theoretical discourses on violence provides a backdrop for the analysis of how select films engage with violence and its consequences.

3.1 Theories on Violence and Victimisation

The etymological origin of violence may be traced back to the Latin word *Violare*, which means infringement. Manfred Steger, in his book *Judging Violence: The Dispute Between Idealists and Realists*, argues that violence “comprises a range of meanings, including 'to force', 'to injure', 'to dishonour', and 'to violate” (12). In his book *After the Terror*, Ted Honderich conceptualises violence as the “use of physical force that injures, damages, violates or destroys people or things” (15).

Since many acts of violence involve violations of different types and kinds, the concept of violence can be studied and understood in terms of violation. Vittorio Bufacchi, in his article “Two Concepts of Violence”, attempts to further nuance the concept of violence by arguing that “while acts of physical force often entail some form of violations, there are times when a violation occurs without the need of any physical force, or, alternatively, acts of physical force may take place without anything or anyone being violated” (194).

Violence may be defined as the intentional use of force in an illegitimate, harmful, unethical and destructive manner. Thomas Pogge argues that “a person uses physical violence if he deliberately acts in a way that blocks another's exercise of her legitimate rights by physical means” (qtd. in Bufacchi 67). Steger holds that “violence is the intentional infliction of physical or psychological injury on a person or persons” (13). Violence is also understood as a “violation of rights” in three different ways (Bufacchi 196). It is conceptualised as a “violation of personal rights”, “as the violation of the right to ourselves” and as “the violation of human rights” (Bufacchi 196). These definitions and conceptualisations of violence in terms of force or violation are known as “minimalist conceptions of violence” (Bufacchi 197).

Unlike such conceptions of violence, the new frameworks and models introduced by scholars like Johan Galtung can account for the different layers and modalities of violence. Bufacchi argues that these new models may be theorised as more “Comprehensive Conceptions of Violence” (197). Galtung offers an expansive view of violence in his books. He holds that violence is “present when human beings

are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations (“Violence” 168). In his article “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research”, Galtung distinguishes between “direct violence” and “structural violence” (171). In the case of direct violence, a person or persons may be the instigator or the perpetrator of violence. Direct violence may involve the use of physical, emotional or psychological force with the intention to hurt or harm an individual or a group. It encompasses murder, rape, assault or any action or behaviour intended to cause harm, injury or suffering. Direct violence is easily identifiable owing to its concrete and visible nature. In the case of structural violence, violence is an integral part of the structural mechanism, and hence, this form of violence may be more dangerous than direct violence, and its consequences may also be long-lasting. It is an abstract form of violence caused by unequal political, social, and economic systems. It manifests as invisible forms of violence, such as systemic inequities. Galtung argues that structural violence “shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances (“Violence” 171). In his essay “Cultural Violence”, published in 1990, he introduced the concept of cultural violence. He defines cultural violence as those elements and aspects of a culture that “justify and legitimise” both physical violence and structural violence (291). Cultural violence creates an ecosystem in which different forms of direct and structural violence “look, even feel, right—or at least not wrong” (“Cultural Violence” 291). He posits that cultural violence can be seen in culture, arts, language and belief systems.

Slavoj Žižek, in his book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, classifies violence into subjective violence and objective violence. He theorises subjective violence as the evident and perceptible form of violence (2). It is perpetrated by an agent or agents who are easily recognisable. Such agents of violence violate the societal norm of non-violence. Objective violence is a form of violence that is not readily perceptible; it is often invisible and may operate even within a peaceful society (2). He further divides objective violence into symbolic violence, by which he means violence in language and other modes and means of communication, and systemic violence, by which he means the "often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (1). He argues that both subjective and objective violence are interrelated and interconnected since subjective violence is a visible manifestation of objective violence (2).

In his article "The Sociological Analysis of Violence: New Perspectives", Michael Wieviorka examines why specific individuals commit acts of violence, whereas others do not. He emphasises the need to analyse and investigate "subject, subjectivation and desubjectivation" in the context of violence (59). Concerning the perpetration of violence, he identified four significant subject positions, namely "the floating subject", "the hyper-subject", "the non-subject", and the "anti-subject" (60). The floating subject is an agent who opts for violence under conditions "which are particularly unfavourable" (60). His/her violence stems from his/her inability to find any other alternative responses to an otherwise unfavourable situation. The hyper-subject also has limited agency since circumstances beyond his/her control limit his/her choices. However, in this case, "the transition to violence is preceded, or

accompanied by a process of search for meaning, an overload of meaning which may take an ideological or religious turn", which creates an ecosystem conducive to the legitimisation of the acts of violence on some ideological grounds (60). The non-subjects are those who act violently, but they claim that they are not responsible for the violence (60). Their ground for denying responsibility may be claims such as they were only "obeying a legitimate authority" and had no or limited agency at the time of perpetration (60). The 'anti-subject' "acts violently for pleasure; they practise pure violence, violence for the sake of violence; they dehumanise their victims, acting out of cruelty or sadism" (61).

In the book *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*, Michael Rothberg used the term "implicated subjects" to refer to "those who have inherited or who have otherwise benefited from histories of perpetration" (83). He points out that "implicated subjects occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm; they contribute to, inhabit, inherit, or benefit from regimes of domination but do not originate or control such regimes" (*Implicated Subject* 1). An implicated subject is neither a perpetrator nor a victim. Yet, he/she is "a participant in histories and social formations that generate the positions of victim and perpetrator" (*Implicated Subject* 1).

In this thesis, the representation of violence in these films is viewed from an intersectional vantage point. Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the paradigm of intersectionality to map how various systems of oppression often intersect and shape the lived experiences of individuals. She introduced this concept in her article "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against

Women of Color" by Kimberle Crenshaw. She uses this paradigm "to denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions" of one's experiences ("Mapping the Margins" 1244). She argues that violence and victimisation do not take place "along a single categorical axis" ("Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex" 140). She holds that any attempt at "conceptualisation, identification and remediation" which is based on "a single access framework" may lead to the marginalisation of experiences of the more marginalised sections among the victims ("Demarginalizing the Intersection" 140). She points out that in addition to individual instances of violence suffered by the victims, "other multilayered and routinised forms of domination" may "converge in the lives of the most affected victims" ("Mapping the Margins" 1246).

Kimberle Crenshaw has illustrated how different factors, such as caste, religion, gender, class, region, and race, constitute each individual's identity. These multiple factors often converge, leading to divergent experiences of marginalisation, oppression and discrimination. The intersection of various factors creates a compounding effect that makes each individual's experiences unique. Her studies foreground "how patterns of subordination intersect" ("Mapping the Margins" 1249). She also emphasises that "intersectional subordination need not be intentionally produced; in fact, it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment" ("Mapping the Margins" 1249).

Kimberle Crenshaw has studied how structural intersectionality, political intersectionality, and representational intersectionality operate in society ("Mapping

the Margins" 1244). Structural intersectionality refers to the differential treatment of individuals by structures of power within a society. The different ways in which political and social institutions create, perpetuate, and legitimise unequal treatment may be theorised as structural intersectionality (Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins" 1250). The acknowledgement of structural intersectionality and its long-lasting consequences may expedite attempts to evolve better socio-political structures and institutions to improve the quality of life of the people who are on the margins. Political intersectionality places the concept of intersectionality against the backdrop of political frameworks. It refers to the complex ways in which political frameworks are shaped by the axes of gender, caste, race and class, and, in turn, the political frameworks shape the identities and subjectivities of people (Cresahw. "Mapping the Margins" 1251). Political institutions may inadvertently or deliberately create, perpetuate or legitimise violence of different kinds. Crenshaw emphasised the need for political institutions to adopt policies and plans which are more inclusive and sensitive. She used the concept of representational intersectionality to explore how the experiences of individuals mediated by their intersecting identities are "represented in the cultural imaginary" ("Mapping the Margins" 1280). She foregrounds the different ways in which the dominant discourses shape representations in media. She problematises the differential treatment of individuals and people by the media and culture industry. The stories of some are foregrounded, while those of others are overlooked in many mainstream narratives. Some individuals are reduced to stereotypes, and their experiences are misrepresented. Crenshaw advocates for the adoption of better representational strategies that are more inclusive and sensitive to diversity in society.

3.2 Trauma and Representation

This thesis examines the representation of the individual and collective trauma suffered by different stakeholders, ranging from victims to perpetrators, within the framework of Postcolonial Trauma Studies. The framework of trauma theory, as it is conceived and conceptualised by postcolonial trauma theorists, serves as the theoretical underpinning of this study. This section critically analyses various conceptualisations of trauma in different disciplinary frameworks.

The etymological origin of the word trauma can be traced back to the Greek word t*raumatikos,* which means a wound. Though the word may refer to physical and psychological wounds, scholars from different disciplines and epochs have often foregrounded either of the two possible meanings depending on their theoretical vantage points and critical orientations. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, trauma was primarily understood as a physical wound caused by an external agent. The new paradigm of psychological trauma emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century as a result of the drastic developments associated with the rise of modernity.

Trauma emerged as a significant concern in disciplines like law, history, literature and culture at the beginning of the twentieth century. Susannah Radstone points out that this theory emerged mainly due to the "'turn to memory' in history and the Humanities" (21). She holds that "postmodernism's problematisations of grand narratives, objectivity, universality and totality prompted a turn to memory's partial, local and subjective narratives" (21). The ethical turn in the humanities also facilitated the growth of this interdisciplinary paradigm. This sudden rise in

discourses on trauma was described as a "trauma boom" by Lucy Bond and Stef Craps, who rightly point out that the reason for such a boom may be primarily because of the emergence of the "new ways to categorise, represent, and exploit distressing experiences" (12).

Trauma has also emerged as "a big business" in certain parts of the world (Bond and Craps 12). The dark tourism industry attempts to commodify and commercialise sites of suffering, disregarding the ethical concerns of the stakeholders (Franko and Goyes 117). The fashion industry attempts to monetise trauma by selling clothes and other items that resemble those that were used by inmates in concentration camps. The publishing and cinema industries have also hugely benefitted from the growing interest in trauma among the public.

Numerous Scholars have studied the linkages between power, politics, and articulations of trauma. In the early stages, the trauma paradigm was mainly used by the oppressed and marginalised sections of society to conceptualise their physical and psychological wounds. Even then, the traumatic experiences of the people outside the First World did not receive the attention they deserved. In the recent past, "the narrative of victimhood has taken a surprising ideological turn as alt-right groups in Europe and America have sought to emphasise their sense of disenfranchisement" (Bond and Craps 13). In this new climate of "trauma economy", discourses concerning memory and trauma are mediated and influenced by "economic, cultural, discursive, and political structures that guide, enable and ultimately institutionalise the representation, travel and attention to certain traumas" (Tomsky 53). As Kaplan argues in her work *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, the contemporary culture, owing to its increased

preoccupation with grief and victimhood, may be aptly described as "trauma culture" (1).

Scholars have conceptualised trauma from multiple vantage points, and hence, the definitions of trauma they offer are varied. Richard Crownshaw's opinion is that most scholars in the West have come to view trauma as an experience that "defies witnessing, cognition, conscious recall and representation" (4). As Lucy Bond and Stef Craps argue, most scholars "position trauma as a belated response to an overwhelming event too shattering to be processed as it occurs" (14). The potential of transmissibility of trauma also adds to the complexity of trauma. Roger Luckhurst argues that trauma "appears worryingly transmissible: it leaks between mental and physical symptoms, between patients … between patients and doctors via the mysterious processes of transference or suggestion, and between victims and their listeners or viewers" (3). Trauma is a slippery domain since it "traverses the internal and the external, the private and the public, the individual and the collective" (Bond and Craps 14). Judith Herman argues that the history of the concept of trauma in itself is traumatised since it is characterised by "episodic amnesia" (*Trauma* 7). In contemporary political, social and cultural discourses, trauma is "periodically forgotten", and "periodically reclaimed" (Herman, *Trauma* 7).

Sigmund Freud played a pivotal role in the early conceptualisations of psychological trauma. Many of his concepts concerning trauma are slippery and controversial since he changed many of his initial arguments in his later works. The three significant texts by Freud that look at various facets of trauma are *Studies on*

Hysteria (co-authored with Breuer), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and *Moses and Monotheism*. *Studies on Hysteria* deals with trauma resulting mainly from the experiences caused by sexual violence. Freud argues that the belated reemergence of memories related to the repressed sexual experiences at a later stage triggers traumatic hysteria. Ruth Leys argues that "Freud problematised the originary status of the traumatic event by arguing that it was not the experience itself which acted traumatically, but its delayed retrieval as a memory after the individual had entered sexual maturity and could grasp its sexual meaning" (20). The initial Freudian hypothesis which traced the root of trauma in infantile sexual abuses turned out to be very controversial, and at a later stage Freud "moved away from understanding trauma as a belated response to an early sexual experience towards a prototype of the Oedipus complex" (Bond and Craps 34). Freud modified his initial argument and postulated that it is not sexual experience but repressed sexual desire and fantasy that trigger traumatic symptoms. As Lucy Bond and Stef Craps point out, Freud's revised postulations "marked the final transition from a physiological model of trauma, which saw mental neuroses as a psychological response to an external shock, to a theory of psychoanalysis, which posited the existence of repressed memories as fundamental to the structure of consciousness" (34).

Sigmund Freud further revised and reframed his libidinal model of trauma when many cases of soldiers suffering from traumatic symptoms were widely reported. In his work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he presented his new arguments and findings. The publication of this work signalled the next significant turn in his conceptualisation of trauma. In this work, he theorised the death drive and

argued that it is an aberration of the pleasure principle. He visualised the pleasure principle as a regulatory framework that "endeavours to keep the quantity of excitement … as low as possible, or at least to keep it constant" (4 –5). Freud postulated that the human mind has an inner and outer layer. The outer layer has a "protective shield", which guards it from threatening stimuli from the outside (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 35). However, in moments of fright, by which he means "the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it", external stimuli cause severe damage (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 32). He held that anxiety usually acts as a mechanism that protects the mind, but a lack of anxiety during moments of trauma makes the subject vulnerable. He points out, "we describe as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield … with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 33). Since the pleasure principle will be put out of action under such circumstances, there will be "no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of stimulus" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 46).

Freud shifted his attention to questions regarding historical trauma in his work, *Moses and Monotheism*, published posthumously in 1939. In this work, Freud tried to trace the underlying structures of trauma by attempting to place the experience of trauma at the individual level against the broader backdrop of historical developments. Though his primary concern was the historical trauma suffered by the Jewish people, this framework has broader applications. Freud attempts to theorise the history of the Jewish people in the context of the traumatic

rupture in the monotheistic tradition of that community, which was caused by the failure of the community to acknowledge the murder of Moses as part of their cultural and religious heritage. Because the members of the community repressed this murder, they could no longer consider themselves as chosen people. Freud assumed that the memories of the traumatic event may surface belatedly only after a period of latency. It is to be noted that Freud's theory about Moses is speculative since there is no historical evidence to support his claims.

Another significant event that led to further studies on trauma was the First World War. Societal attitudes towards the soldier who showed signs of nervous disorders varied from culture to culture. In the United States, the war veterans united under the organisation American Legion, and they were able to change the public perception of traumatised soldiers by depicting veterans as "ordinary men who had done their patriotic duty and suffered as a result" (Cox 291). The legion was able to reshape societal attitudes towards soldiers suffering from war trauma.

A "diagnostic metalanguage" for the treatment of individuals suffering from nervous disorders and psychological trauma came into being after the Vietnam War, and this metalanguage is referred to as post-traumatic stress disorder (Young 94). Allan Young points out that the "origins of the PTSD diagnosis are inextricably connected with the lives of American veterans of the Vietnam War, with their experiences as combatants, and later as patients of the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical System" (108). In 1973, the category of Post-Traumatic Disorder was added to the section on anxiety disorders in *DSM-III* by the American Psychological Association. The diagnostic criteria for PTSD established by the first version of

DSM-III were the following: It is a response or reaction to an event "that is outside the range of usual human experience", and it is "a recognisable stressor that would evoke significant symptoms of distress in almost anyone" (236). The traumatised individual may re-experience the traumatising event as "recurrent, intrusive, and distressful recollections of the event" (237). *DSM-III* lists "numbing of response to the external world", "hyperalertness", "sleep disturbance", "guilt about surviving", "memory impairment", and "avoidance of activities that arouse the recollection of the traumatic event" as some of the symptoms of trauma (236-38). The publication of *DSM-III* gave official status to trauma-related disorders for the first time in diagnostic history. Unlike earlier studies, which focused on the trauma suffered by specific groups like hysterical individuals, survivors of railway accidents and the like, PTSD came with a broader framework that conceptualises trauma suffered by every affected individual subject. Fassin and Rechtman argue that the conceptualisation of PTSD indicated a "major social shift" as a result of which "a system of knowledge and values was shaken" and "one truth was overturned and another produced" (7).

In the 1990s, discussions on trauma "moved from being an object of clinical inquiry to a preoccupation among literary and cultural scholars" (Bond and Craps 52). Cultural Trauma theory emerged out of the discussions and debates on the complex linkages between ethical and aesthetic concerns regarding the impossibility of representing experiences associated with the Holocaust. Cultural trauma theory is based on the assumption that there is an intricate link between trauma and culture. German Jewish critical theorist Theodor Adorno made one of the most discussed yet

controversial observations on literature after trauma. In his essay titled "Cultural Criticism and Society", which was published in 1951, he asserted that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (34). In the essay "Commitment", Adorno clarified his position by stating that he was objecting only to "the aesthetic principle of stylisation" (189). He vehemently objects to any attempt to derive aesthetic pleasure from pain. In the same essay, he complicated his much-quoted earlier statement by claiming that "literature must resist this verdict" since it is "now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it" (188).

Another notable thinker who addressed the paradoxical state of the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of artistic, literary and cultural productions after the Holocaust is the renowned French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, who argued that the grand narratives of modernity came to an end with the Holocaust. The world is left only with mini-narratives in the post-holocaust era. This cataclysmic and catastrophic instance of violence serves as a boundary separating the modern and the postmodern era. He likened the Holocaust to an earthquake that "destroys not only lives, buildings, and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes directly and indirectly" (56). He argued that Auschwitz is the best illustration of the *differend*. He later explained that it refers to something that must be but cannot be articulated (13). It is "what is not presentable under the rules of knowledge" (57).

The field of cultural trauma theory flourished due to paradigm shifts in literary theory in the 1990s. Bond and Craps point out that trauma theory was an

attempt to "reconcile the textualist and historicist approaches to the study of literary texts" (59). Classical trauma theorists hold that "aligning a psychoanalytic view of trauma with a deconstructive vigilance regarding the indeterminacies of representation in the analysis of texts that bear witness to trauma can grant us a paradoxical mode of access to extreme events and experiences that defy understanding and representation (Bond and Craps 59). Trauma Studies gained significant traction in cultural and literary circles in the 1990s due to the ethical turn in literary studies in the humanities. Simultaneously, moral philosophers like Martha Nussbaum, Charles Taylor, and Richard Rorty brought literature to their studies regarding morality and ethics. The books like *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* and *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life*, written by Nussbaum, deserve special mention.

Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Geoffrey Hartman, and Dori Laub are widely considered to be the pioneers of Literary Trauma Theory. In the introduction to her anthology *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* Caruth attempts to theorise trauma along the lines of the definition given in *DSM-III*. She defines PTSD as

> a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. ("Introduction" 4)

She adds that this pathology cannot be defined in terms of the event or the "distortion of the event" ("Introduction" 4). Trauma may be defined in terms of "the

structure of its experience or reception", by which she means " the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it" ("Introduction" 4). As per her postulation, trauma is an event that remains unassimilated, but its symptoms may reappear at a later stage, and the pathology may haunt the victim belatedly. The defining feature of trauma is "a gap that carries the force of the event and does so precisely at the expense of simple knowledge and memory" ("Introduction" 7). The paradoxical nature of trauma is delineated in her statement that "the greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it" ("Introduction" 6). She adds that after the traumatic event, there will be a period of latency during which no symptoms of the pathology will be apparent, and the symptoms of trauma may appear belatedly. She borrowed these two concepts of latency and belatedness from Freud. She holds that "to be traumatised is to be precisely possessed by an image or event" ("Introduction" 4-5). She points out that the victim does not and cannot assimilate the traumatic scene, and so it possesses the victim.

Caruth foregrounds the complex relationship between history and trauma. She argues that trauma is not a pathology of falsehood but that of history as the traumatised "carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess" ("Introduction" 5). Caruth points out that witnessing a traumatic event is paradoxical since the event cannot be fully witnessed as it occurs. The intensity and weight of traumatic experience may lead to "the collapse of its understanding" ("Introduction" 7). She argues that listening to another person is essential for the history of trauma to

emerge. Only through speaking and listening can trauma at the individual and collective levels be articulated. She points out that survivors of one catastrophe may bear witness to the survivors of another catastrophe. Hence, she argues that trauma "itself may provide the very link between cultures" in this "catastrophic age" ("Introduction" 10). According to her, the truth of trauma may be communicated through a medium like literature since literature, like trauma, is not based on direct referentiality. Caruth argues that Freud used examples from literature to conceptualise and explain traumatic experiences because literature is "interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing" (*Unclaimed Experience* 3).

In her monograph *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, she states that "the experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will" (2). Traumatic experiences may lead to "a breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). Trauma is "the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). Trauma is marked by a paradox since it "simultaneously defies and demands our witness" (*Unclaimed Experience* 5).

Another prominent trauma theorist is Geoffrey Harman. He compares trauma to figurative language since he holds that both are characterised by "the disjunction between experiencing … and understanding" ("On Traumatic Knowledge" 540). He assumes that traumatic knowledge can be shared and communicated only with a certain degree of distortion (537). He points out that a traumatic event "seems to

have bypassed perception and consciousness and fall[s] directly into the psyche" ("On Traumatic Knowledge" 537). In his book *The Fateful Question of Culture,* he argues that only literature can bear witness to trauma. He notes that England was saved from the influence of Nazi ideology mainly because the poems of Wordsworth prevented the traumatisation of the people when England moved from a traditional to a modern society. Hartman, being the co-founder of Yale's Fortunoff Video Archive, hoped that the video testimonies would play a role similar to the one played by the poems of Wordsworth (*Fateful Question* 35).

The publication of *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub marked a turning point in the evolution of trauma theory. In this work, they present the Holocaust as an instance of "a radical historical crisis of witnessing" because it is "'an event without a witness'—an event eliminating its own witness" (xvii). They postulate that only art and literature can bear witness to trauma. They clearly state that art bears testimony to "what we do not yet know of our lived historical relation to events of our times" (xx). They claim that literature and art are "a precocious mode of witnessing—of accessing reality —when all other modes of knowledge are precluded" (xx). They argue that the twentieth century may be aptly described as "the age of testimony", as this century has witnessed many traumatogenic events (5). The presence of an empathetic listener is an essential requisite for the production of testimony: "The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time" (Felman and Laub 57). Their book foregrounds the role of the listener who, on

account of having witnessed trauma, "comes to partially experience trauma in himself", and it might make him/her "a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event" (Felman and Laub 57).

A remarkable scholarly work by Shoshana Felman on trauma is *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*, published in 2002. In this work, she develops her theory regarding the complex relationship between trial and trauma in the light of the trial of the German Nazi Adolf Eichmann, who was accused of playing a pivotal role in the genocide of Jews, and that of O. J. Simpson, the famous footballer who murdered his ex-wife and her friend. She argues that the institution of law is unable to understand and deal with trauma. Judicial blindness may lead to the reenactment of trauma inside courtrooms. She narrates the fainting of the Holocaust survivor K-Zetnik inside the courtroom when asked to speak about his past traumatic experiences. She cites this instance to substantiate her claim that the structures of law are inadequate to address the ethical and political dimensions of trauma. She adds that such unintended reenactments of trauma constitute the juridical unconscious. Literature plays a vital role in her analysis of law and trauma. She draws a comparison between the acquittal of Simpson, accused of murdering his wife, and the acquittal of a character in Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer Sonata*, who was also accused of committing a similar crime. In this regard, she reiterates her claim that literature is the only mode that has access to trauma. She argues that the Eichmann and Simpson trials added a new dimension to jurisprudence by providing a unique and rare platform for the expression of "expressionless"—that is, "the silence of the persecuted, the unspeakability of the

trauma of oppression" (13). What was "expressionless" before "turns into storytelling", and such a change can be materialised when the legal language and its terminologies are replaced by literary language (14). She holds that the legal framework, with its focus on closure, often fails to resolve the issue, and the trial may create a situation in which the victims may reenact their trauma. Felman claims that in such a scenario, only literature can do justice to trauma. According to her, in this age of trauma, literature and literary language "do justice to the trauma in a way the law does not, or cannot" since "literature is a dimension of concrete embodiment and a language of infinitude that, in contrast to the language of the law, encapsulates not closure but precisely what in a given legal case refuses to be closed and cannot be closed. It is to this refusal of the trauma to be closed that literature does justice" (Felman 8). The contours of the first wave of literary trauma theory were drawn mainly from the texts mentioned above by Caruth, Hartman, Laub, and Felman.

Many theorists who came after them have tried to widen the scope of trauma theory further. They have foregrounded the thematic and structural limitations of the epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic positions taken by the frontrunners of trauma theory. Rather than isolating trauma, new paradigms place it against the broader backdrop of social, economic, political, and cultural practices. The alternative models reject a single conceptualisation and incorporate ideas from social psychology, cultural studies, and digital culture. Alternative approaches or the pluralistic Model of Trauma developed by critics such as Ruth Leys, Ann Cvetkovich, and Michelle Balaev challenged the homogenising and universal assumptions of Classical Trauma Theory. These new approaches have shifted the

focus from 'unrepresentability' to a focus on “the specificity of trauma that locates meaning through greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of the traumatic experience” (Balaev, “Literary Trauma Theory” 3). These scholars challenge the assumption that specific experiences always remain unclaimed and unrepresentable. These alternative models of trauma probe deeper into the linkages between psyche, language and culture without resorting to the homogenising assumptions of the classical model.

Michelle Balaev challenges Caruth's hypotheses that “trauma is never simply one's own” and that “we are implicated in each other's trauma” (*Unclaimed Experience* 24). He argues that “the attempts to include everyone as victims run the risk of including everyone as perpetrators” (Balaev, “Literary Trauma Theory” 7). Kali Tal revises the model of trauma proposed by Caruth in her work, *World of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma.* She insists that only the writings of victims and survivors qualify to be termed literature of trauma. According to her, “the work of the critic of the literature of trauma is both to identify and explicate literature by members of survivor groups and to deconstruct the process by which the dominant culture codifies their traumatic experience” (17-18).

Dominick LaCapra was one of the foremost theorists who challenged the fixation on acting out or melancholia by critics like Caruth and Felman. LaCapra focused initially on the Holocaust, but later, he also paid equal attention to the histories of violence and trauma in general. His works were able to bring conceptual clarity to the field of trauma studies. He held that “in trying to account for or evoke experience, history must turn to testimony, oral reports, inferences from documents

such as diaries and memoirs, and a carefully framed and qualified reading of fiction and art" (*History in Transit* 132).

Dominick LaCapra critically engaged with Freud's view regarding melancholia and mourning and adapted them for his corresponding paradigm of acting out and working through. He challenged Freud's claim that mourning and melancholia are two oppositional processes, and he highlighted "a variety of possibilities between the two … These intermediary possibilities include more or less pronounced forms of partial mourning, which is never free of the traumatic residues of the past" (*History and Memory* 196). Some form of acting out may be a part of working through. He objected to the attempt to portray trauma as "a founding or sublime event" (*History in Transit* 123). He held that working through is characterised by "the effort to articulate and rearticulate affect and representation in a manner that may never transcend, but may to some viable extent counteract … that disabling disassociation" triggered by trauma (*History in Transit* 42). Working through opens up the possibility of "gaining critical distance on [traumatic] experiences and re-contextualising them in ways that permit a reengagement with ongoing concerns and future possibilities" (*History in Transit* 45). He acknowledges that "working-through need not be understood to imply the integration or transformation of the past trauma into a seamless narrative memory or total meaning or knowledge" (*History in Transit* 121). He focused on healing and moving forward. He held that focus should be shifted to practices that "allow openings to possible futures" (*History in Transit* 118).

Dominick LaCapra, being a historian, highlighted the dangers of ahistorical tendencies in the trauma model proposed by Caruth. He argued that Caruth, due to her grounding in deconstruction, was unable or unwilling to foreground the distinction between absence and loss. Such a failure often creates a situation that causes "non-traumatised individuals to indulge in the confusion of imaginary or vicarious experiential identification with certain events and the belief that one actually lived through them" (*History in Transit* 118). Unlike Caruth, who failed to differentiate between absence, which is structural, and loss, which is historical, he came up with a clear distinction between historical loss and structural absence. An absence at "the foundational" level cannot simply be derived from particular historical losses (*History in Transit* 68). Loss is contextual and historical since specific events create it. He points out that "everyone is subject to structural trauma", but "with respect to historical trauma and its representation, the distinction between victims, perpetrators, and bystanders is crucial" (*Writing History* 79). He took a stand against creating a "wound culture" in which everyone might claim to be a victim (*Writing History* 77). He held that virtual and not vicarious relationships with the victim must be promoted since the former leads to empathy, whereas the latter leads to appropriation. The "empathic unsettlement" experienced by the listener will enable him or her to confront the trauma of the other without conflating the experience of the victim as his or her own (*Writing History* 102). It "involves a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognising the difference of that position, and hence not taking the other's place" (*History in Transit* 78).

Whether trauma can be transmitted from the victim to others and from one generation to the next is another area of critical investigation. Marianne Hirsch introduced the concept of postmemory in her work *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. She states that “Postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right” (1). She suggests that memories of pain, grief and the imprints of trauma may travel across generations. The main difference between Caruthian formulations and postmemory is that Caruth “emphasises the directness of traumatic recall” whereas “postmemory is a heavily mediated form of remembrance” (Bond and Craps 91). Alison Landsberg introduced a new paradigm of ‘prosthetic memory' in her book *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. She argues that “modernity makes possible and necessary a new form of public cultural memory” (2). She holds that direct experience is not the only way to acquire memory. Exposure to representations in media and different artistic and cultural avenues may also result in individuals acquiring memories. The memories acquired through such exposure to artistic and cultural representations are prosthetic since they are not part of the organic memories of the subjects. However, these acquired memories are so powerful that they can influence and alter the identity of the individuals. These memories may also influence their conceptualisation of history. Prosthetic memory “emerges at the interface of a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or a museum” (Landsberg 2). She argues that prosthetic memory “has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and

politics" (2). Novels, films and other facets of mass culture make it possible "for these memories to be acquired by anyone, regardless of skin colour, ethnic background, or biology" (Landsberg 2). Discussion on the possibility of getting traumatised via witnessing events on television assumed greater significance after the attack on the Twin Towers, whose live coverage resulted in the mass traumatisation of civilians in the United States. E. Ann Kaplan points out that in this age of the mass media, "most people encounter trauma through the media" (2). Though in the given circumstances, it is complicated to identify real trauma from vicarious trauma, Kaplan argues that "it is necessary to distinguish the different positions and contexts of encounters with trauma" (2). The overidentification of the spectators with the victims and their trauma via technologies of mass media might create what Gary Weissman aptly conceptualises as "fantasies of witnessing" (1).

Kai Erikson distinguished between individual and collective trauma. He defines individual trauma as "a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defences so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively" and collective trauma as "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people and impairs the prevailing sense of community" (*Everything in its Path* 153, 154). After a careful and critical analysis of the responses of communities affected by different types of disasters, he argues that "communal trauma can take two forms, either alone or in combination: damage to the tissues that hold human groups intact, and the creation of social climates, communal moods, that come to dominate a group's spirit" ("Notes on Trauma" 190). He also adds that as a result of these two forms of communal trauma, trauma can

bring people together and aid the creation of a community by evoking a shared feeling among the victims ("Notes on Trauma" 186). This feeling may lead to the formation of a collective.

Ron Eyerman and Jeffrey C. Alexander argue that multiple factors influence the formation of collective trauma. Alexander points out that "collective traumas are reflections neither of individual suffering nor actual events, but symbolic renderings that reconstruct and imagine them" (*Trauma* 4). Political, social, and cultural factors and media representations attribute traumatic status to an event ("Towards a Theory" 10). He holds that the creation of cultural trauma is "a matter of intense cultural and political work," and that "the spiral of signification is mediated by institutional structures and uneven distributions of wealth and power" (*Trauma* 2, 4). He contends that "events are not inherently traumatic" since "trauma is a socially mediated attribution" ("Toward a Theory" 8). He argues that cultural trauma occurs "when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks on their group consciousness" ("Toward a Theory" 1).

Collective trauma is an important factor that shapes and influences the group's collective identity in many significant ways. On the one hand, collective trauma may fragment the group's identity, resulting in conflict and polarisation; on the other, it may also result in cohesion and unity. The capacity of the affected community to make meaningful social interactions may also be affected by collective trauma. The attempts of the community to cope with its trauma through defence mechanisms such as repression, avoidance of stimuli, and repression may also influence patterns of the collective identity of the group. The group often make

attempts to revisit their shared narratives to rediscover the identity of the group, which might be damaged as a result of the exposure to trauma. The community may also explore the possibility of reformulating its shared values and presuppositions to reconstitute the group's identity.

The scholars associated with these alternative paradigms revisit, revise, and sometimes even reject concepts developed by earlier scholars. They hold that "amnesia, dissociation, or repression may be responses to trauma, but they are not exclusive responses" (Balaev, "Literary Trauma Theory" 8). They point out that the classic model refused to acknowledge the agency of the trauma victim. They assert that many of Cathy Caruth's basic assumptions are vague since she ignored and, at times, conflated the critical distinctions between the experiences of the victim, the bystander, and the perpetrator. The omissions and distortions of the classical model, which was based on a series of universal characteristics, were also brought to the fore by these new models. The pluralist paradigm contextualises trauma by placing it against a broader conceptual, epistemological, social and cultural background. By foregrounding "the range of contextual factors that specify the value of the experience", these models consider dubious the assertion of trauma's intrinsic dissociation" (Balaev, "Literary Trauma Theory" 3). These theories could be "generally referenced under the umbrella term of the pluralistic model of trauma due to the plurality of theories and approaches employed" (Balaev, "Literary Trauma Theory"). Michelle Balaev argues that "the history of the concept of trauma is filled with contradictory theories and contentious debates" ("Literary Trauma Theory" 2). Unlike the classical trauma theorists who viewed trauma as an unclaimed and,

hence, an unrepresentable event, the scholars associated with the new model of trauma focused on the exploration of the possibility of representations. These new models proposed by critics like Leys, Cvetkovich, and Balaev challenge and question the classical trauma paradigm according to which trauma is a timeless, atemporal and pre-linguistic phenomenon. They approach trauma "as a subject that invites the study of the relationship between language, the psyche, and behaviour without assuming the classic definition of trauma that asserts an unrepresentable and pathological universalism" (Balaev, "Literary Trauma Theory" 4).

Feminist groups argue that the trauma suffered by women must be acknowledged on their terms. Judith Herman rightly points out that "the most common post-traumatic disorders are not those of men in war but of women in civilian life" (*Trauma* 28). Feminist groups organised consciousness-raising programmes and demanded that the diagnostic framework of trauma be broadened. Herman points out that PTSD "fails to capture either the protean symptomatic manifestations of prolonged, repeated trauma or the profound deformations of personality that occur in captivity" (*Trauma* 119). She proposed an alternative framework, "Complex Post-traumatic stress disorder", which conceptualised responses to trauma as "a spectrum of conditions rather than as a single disorder" that ranges from "a brief stress reaction that gets better by itself and never qualifies for a diagnosis, to classic or simple post-traumatic stress disorder, to the complex syndrome of prolonged, repeated trauma" (119). Judith Herman's new trauma paradigm acknowledged the trauma of millions of women who were victims of different types of abuse. Laura Brown argues that all models of trauma must

acknowledge experiences of classism, racism, sexism and multiple other forms of discrimination that are systemic. She holds that "disability, immigration status, experiences of colonisation, and other social locations [that] have informed people's experiences of identity, and thus of trauma", but they have "largely gone unaddressed within the mental health discourse" (*Cultural Competence* 10).

These models nuance the conceptualisations of trauma by drawing insights from diverse disciplines like semiotics, anthropology, ethics, history, law, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. These new models try to "locate meaning through a greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience" (Balaev, "Literary Trauma Theory" 3).

3.3 Postcolonial Trauma Studies

One of the major offshoots of the pluralist model of trauma theory is Postcolonial Trauma Studies. Postcolonial Trauma theorists hold that trauma theory, in its classical formulations, has failed to situate and address trauma suffered by people living outside the West. This refusal to listen to the other betrays the Eurocentric orientation and biases of the classical model (Radstone 25). Judith Butler problematises the poetics and politics of grievability. In her work *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* She argues that the production of grievability is "at once a material and a perceptual issue" (25). She maintains that the systems which perpetuate violence must be exposed and critiqued (25). Stef Craps rightly argues that such "uncritical cross-cultural application of psychological concepts developed in the West amounts to a form of cultural imperialism" ("Beyond Eurocentrism" 49). Stef Craps, in his book *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*, has listed

some of the ethical and epistemological limitations of the classical trauma paradigms:

> They fail on at least four counts: they marginalise or ignore traumatic experiences of non-Western or minority cultures, they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity, they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma, and they generally disregard the connections between metropolitan and non-Western or minority traumas. (2)

He further states that, due to the narrow paradigm used by the classical trauma model, studies on trauma often promote "the very beliefs, practices, and structures that maintain existing injustices and inequalities" instead of "promoting cross-cultural solidarity" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 2).

Derek Summerfield articulates a strong critique against the uncritical imposition of the Western models of trauma and psychoanalysis in the rest of the world in his article "Cross-Cultural Perspectives on the Medicalization of Human Suffering". He strongly objects to "psychiatric universalism" since he holds that such a position "risks being imperialistic, reminding us of the colonial era when what was presented to indigenous peoples was that there were different types of knowledge, and theirs was second-rate" (238). The uncritical and uncalled-for application of Western models to deal with the trauma suffered by people in regions far away from the West might not yield positive results. Ethan Watters, in his book

Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche, presents a powerful critique against “the grand thesis of Americanizing the world’s understanding of the human mind” (1). He points out that the elision of cultural differences leads to a scenario in which “indigenous forms of mental illness and healing are being bulldozed” (3). The refusal to consider the cultural ceremonies and ethnic healing practices often results in the denial of the agency of the people outside the West.

Postcolonial trauma theorists argue that the definition of PTSD has many structural and epistemological limitations. The prescriptive notion that trauma is a belated response to an overwhelming event is too narrow and rigid since such conceptualisations fail to account for “the normative, quotidian aspects of trauma in the lives of many oppressed and disempowered persons” (Brown, *Cultural Competence* 18). Some of the alternative paradigms developed by postcolonial scholars are Judith Herman's model of complex PTSD or “disorders of extreme stress not otherwise specified”, Poussaint and Alexander's model of post-traumatic slavery syndrome, Duran et al.'s model of the postcolonial syndrome, Janoff - Bulman’s model of safe-world violations and Turia’s model of postcolonial traumatic stress disorder (qtd. in Bond and Craps 109). These new frameworks address trauma resulting from diverse situations and multiple triggers. They focus on different forms of trauma, such as ‘insidious trauma’, which refers to the trauma resulting from long-term exposure to disturbing experiences such as microaggression, othering and discrimination, that are often subtle and covert (Root 33). Insidious trauma is a covert form of trauma since the trigger of trauma is not a physical act of violence. The failure of the political, social and cultural systems to

create ethical institutions results in the perpetuation of insidious trauma. Everyday experiences of subtle forms of oppression and marginalisation have a cumulative impact, and the constant exposure to microaggressions often ends up traumatising the affected individuals. Unlike the model of PTSD, which addresses trauma triggered by one or a group of similar events, Complex PTSD addresses trauma caused by states and situations which are chronic, long-lasting, and, in many cases, ongoing. The symptoms of PTSD and C PTSD are mostly similar. Those who suffer from C PTSD might suffer from dissociation, difficulty in controlling and managing their emotional states, negative thoughts about themselves and their surroundings, and difficulty in maintaining interpersonal ties (Herman, "Complex PTSD" 380).

In the article "Decolonizing Trauma Studies: A Response", Michael Rothberg postulates that, unlike the classical trauma theory, which conceptualises trauma at the level of the linguistic, the individual and the temporal, a decolonised trauma paradigm would reconceptualise trauma as shared, physical and material (228). On a similar note, Visser argues that, unlike the Freudian model of trauma, which is "anti-historical, phylogenetic, and mythic", the postcolonial trauma model focuses on "the trauma of concrete historical factuality: of dispossession, of land loss, and of instances of racial discrimination" ("Decolonizing Trauma Studies" 254). She further adds that the new paradigm "theorise [s] not only melancholia, weakness, and stasis but also the completely opposite dynamics of life-affirming and activist processes" ("Decolonizing Trauma Studies" 255). Craps points out that postcolonial trauma theorists attempt to "make visible the creative and political" in various cultural artefacts about trauma. (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 127).

Classical Trauma models isolate the trauma suffered by individuals, and the political, cultural and social factors responsible for traumatisation often do not receive the rigorous critical attention they deserve. Postcolonial Trauma theorists problematise and critique the monocultural orientation of the Western Trauma canon, which has largely ignored the trauma suffered by the people in the non-West. The trauma suffered by people on account of instances like colonialism and racism, in which the West was the victimiser, was largely ignored. The interrogation of the politics of such exclusions and the broadening of the contours of the discipline are the two critical areas of concern taken up by postcolonial theorists who explore the possibility of decolonising trauma studies. They also explore the link between the traumatic histories of the West and the non-West.

In his book *Multidirectional Memory*, Michael Rothberg argues that traumatic memory is relational and multidirectional. By the term multidirectional, Rothberg means that memory is "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not private" (11). He argues that memory is dynamic and productive. He rejects the prevailing competitive memory model, which is based on the assumption that focusing on one historical tragedy may take away attention from another historical tragedy. He further states that the zero-sum logic concerning memory and remembrance is deeply flawed, and he presents an alternative paradigm that conceptualises memory as inherently multidirectional (*Multidirectional Memory* 3). This new paradigm of memory foregrounds the "dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance" (*Multidirectional Memory* 11). He asserts that multidirectional

memory and its varied dynamics would aid the formation of "new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice" (*Multidirectional Memory* 5).

Postcolonial Trauma Theorists reject the narrow poetics of the classical trauma model and attempt "to study texts that deviate from the modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and discontinuity, adherence to which has long been seen as a requirement for entry into the canon of valued trauma literature" (Bond and Craps 112). They problematise the assumption that "modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and discontinuity" as the only apt narrative strategy to represent trauma and explore alternate ways of representing trauma in diverse social and cultural contexts (Bond and Craps 112). Bennet and Kennedy argue that attempts should be made to acknowledge "the global scope of traumatic events and the myriad forms that bear witness to them" (10). Roger Luckhurst also makes a similar argument in his book *The Trauma Question.* He argues that too much preoccupation of scholars with anti-narrative texts is reductive, and the diverse modes of representing trauma must be acknowledged on their own terms. Challenging the hierarchy of narrative forms and styles also coincided with challenging the hierarchy of human suffering. Postcolonial Trauma theorists attempt to make this field more inclusive and open to diverse forms of representation and interpretation. Luckhurst points out that "a wide diversity of high, middle and low cultural forms have provided a repertoire of compelling ways to articulate that apparently paradoxical thing, the trauma narrative" (83). Unlike the classical trauma models that posit unsayability as the only ethical response to trauma, postcolonial trauma theorists subscribe to the alternate view proposed by Judith Herman in her work *Trauma and Recovery*,

according to which Trauma narratives that are "organised, detailed, verbal account, oriented in time and historical context" would aid the processes of healing and expedite the recovery of the affected individual and communities (82). Writers and artists from postcolonial localities acknowledge the therapeutic potential of narratives and attempt to explore the possibility of recuperation, integration, recovery and healing in their diverse narrative and artistic responses to trauma. The notion that some experiences always remain unclaimed, as suggested by the title of the monograph on trauma by Caruth, is rejected by postcolonial writers since they hold that their experiences of subjugation and marginalisation are claimable and representable, and making such attempts to reclaim their experiences is an integral part of the broader political thesis and activism aimed at restoring justice.

As Visser has pointed out, postcolonial writers have moved away from the prescriptive theoretical frameworks of Deconstruction and Freudian psychoanalysis and have tried to evolve a broader framework by drawing from insights from less prescriptive fields like anthropology and sociology ("Decolonizing Trauma Studies" 250). The attempts at the decolonisation of the field have "entailed a movement away from the original Eurocentric theory's foundation in Freudian psychoanalysis and its emphasis on melancholia and stasis" (Visser, Decolonizing Trauma Theory 258). Sonya Andermahr has clearly articulated the significant concerns of a decolonised trauma theory:

> Such a decolonised trauma theory would, firstly, redress the marginalisation of non-Western and minority traumas; secondly, it would challenge the supposed universal validity of Western definitions of trauma; thirdly, provide

> alternatives to dominant trauma aesthetics; and lastly, address the underexplored relationship between so-called First and Third World traumas. (501)

3.4 Perpetrator Trauma

Recent developments in the field of trauma studies have expanded the boundaries of the discipline, and many scholars have started focusing on hitherto under-explored concepts like perpetrator trauma. Erin McGlothlin, in his article titled “Perpetrator Trauma”, argues that “perpetrators of extreme violence might experience psychic repercussions as a result of the commission of their crimes” (100). Though the official definition of traumatic stressor, as discussed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual and its various editions prepared by the American Psychological Association, did not include perpetration as a potential trauma trigger, further researchers have come up with alternative paradigms to account for the complex symptomology seen in many perpetrators. MacNair came up with the model of “perpetrator-induced traumatic stress” to demarcate “any portions of symptomatology of PTSD, at clinical or subclinical levels, which result from situations that would be traumatic if someone were a victim, but situations for which the person in question was a causal participant” (7). It is to be noted that although “PITS largely aligns with PTSD in terms of its standard symptomatology, it diverges from it radically by its aetiology” (MacNair 105). Many symptoms of PTSD may be seen in both the victims and the perpetrators. Some of these most recurring symptoms, as listed by the American Psychiatric Association in 2013, are “recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event”, “recurrent

distressing dreams in which the content and affect of the dream are related to the traumatic event: “dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring”, “intense or prolonged psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event” and “marked physiological reactions to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event” (271). Those suffering from perpetrator trauma may experience depression and panic. Avoidance is another symptom of perpetrator trauma, and it may be manifested as “denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of the victim”, and these may be expressed as “verbalisations actors use to tell themselves that their actions are not in violation of the norms they are otherwise committed to” (Presser and Sandberg 6). Rationalisation is another symptom of perpetrator trauma. Perpetrators may attempt to “rationalise their acts – to justify them as the right thing to do or to excuse them as forgivable or understandable in light of the circumstances” (Mohamed 1185). McGlothlin also argued that perpetrators often use “strategies of rationalisation and neutralisation” (107). The concept of perpetrator trauma and its varied narrative representations in cinema in the Indian context have not yet received adequate critical attention. Those who work in the field of postcolonial trauma studies look at the divergent subject positions of individuals concerning traumatogenic states, conditions and events.

3.5 Recovery and Post-traumatic Growth

New models of trauma foreground the possibility of healing and recovery for the victims of trauma. In her book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of*

Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror, Judith Herman presented a detailed model of recovery, which has three significant stages: establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection (5). She points out that the first stage of recovery is establishing a safer social, physical, emotional and psychological environment conducive to positive changes. The second stage of recovery involves an attempt to evaluate and manage one's trauma by recollecting and expressing one's sorrows and grief. One important stage in the process of mourning is locating the roots and the reasons for one's trauma. The last stage in the recovery process is building new connections and forming new relationships to give survivors a renewed perception of themselves and their surroundings. These three stages facilitate the transition from being a victim to being a survivor. Herman acknowledges that the recovery process is complex and, in many cases, non-linear. The pace of recovery is influenced by personal, social, and political factors such as access to resources and support systems.

Postcolonial writers acknowledge and foreground the possibility of post-traumatic growth, a concept that is related to recuperation and resilience. Post-traumatic growth (PTG) may be defined as the “positive impact of negative events” (Tedeschi and Calhoun, “Post-traumatic Growth Inventory” 455). Its various manifestations are “changes in self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and a changed philosophy of life” (Tedeschi and Calhoun, “Post-traumatic Growth Inventory” 45). The experiences of traumatisation give some survivors the realisation that “they must make decisions in their own best interests, including protecting themselves from abuse in their relationships” (Tedeschi and Calhoun,

"Post-traumatic Growth Inventory" 457). Violence and trauma may give victims and survivors a platform to confront their vulnerabilities. This "recognition of one's vulnerability can lead to more emotional expressiveness, willingness to accept help, and therefore a utilisation of social supports that had previously been ignored" (Tedeschi and Calhoun, "Post-traumatic Growth Inventory" 457). A number of survivors may reevaluate their priorities and make attempts to rediscover the meaning of life, and such attempts may "lead to a new philosophy of life" (Tedeschi and Calhoun, "Post-traumatic Growth Inventory" 457).

3.6 Trauma in Cinema

Cinema can depict the subtle nuances of individual and collective trauma. Though the term 'trauma cinema' came into being only recently, films dealing with the modalities of trauma, like the 1978 film *The Deer Hunter*, were released four decades ago. The potential of the medium of cinema to represent trauma, as well as the challenges and limitations involved in the cinematic representation of trauma, are looked at in this section. Scholars like Janet Walker, E. Ann Kaplan, Ban Wang, Susannah Radstone, and Amit Pinchevski are some of the key scholars who have looked at the potential of the medium of cinema to represent trauma.

As Nishat Haider points out, films have "the opportunity to bear witness and testify, as well as interrogate the tensions and attempt to bridge the gaps between memory and history, and representation and remembrance" ("Genealogy of Violence" 85). 'Trauma Cinema' is a term used to refer to films and documentaries that have trauma and suffering as their subject matter (Walker 45). In *The Horrors of Trauma in Cinema: Violence Void Visualization*, the authors attempt to analyse the

narrative and diegetic functions of films that embody traumatic encodings. They point out that “film has been intrinsically tied to the sphere of traumatic wounds” since its invention (Köhne et al. 5). They argue that “film not only stores and replays traumatic energies in a sort of ‘cultural container’ viewed by the public, it oftentimes also processes and transforms these energies into even more complex cultural material” (10). Amit Pinchevski, in his article “Screen Trauma: Visual Media and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder”, argues that there is a conceptual relation between trauma and media-”trauma literature is replete with media metaphors: traumatic imprint, unprocessed memory, unconscious registration, flashbacks, intrusive images, and transmission of trauma” (4). Friedrich Kittler calls the film “psychotechnology” since it “relays psychology and media technology under the pretext that each psychic apparatus is also a technological one, and vice versa” (160).

Films employ various techniques such as “cyclical narrative, personality splitting, overwhelming sensual attack from external sources” to represent individual and collective trauma (Mai 42). Directors use camera angles, cuts, and editing techniques to portray trauma on screen. Some films also use technical features like “excessive long-takes, static camera, in-depth focus on character” and “use of minimal dialogue” (Mai 49). Köhne et al. argue that films make use of improvisations in “narration, dramaturgy, aesthetics, mise-en-scene, iconography, lighting, cinematography, editing, and sound” to capture “the shattering experiences of violence” and the ensuing traumatisation (2). The manipulation of sound and soundtrack is an important technique directors use to evoke trauma. Amit Pinchevski

argues that the soundtrack can alter “cognitive orientations toward the film” (8). In his article, he lists the results of an experiment conducted on the role of sound in capturing and evoking trauma. He found out that the different soundtracks produced different responses from the viewers. He holds that “'trauma track' accentuated the major sources of pain, danger and sadism in the film” (8). Lazarus points out that “the soundtrack acts as the corresponding evaluative process, an analogue of the process of cognitive appraisal” (211–12).

The impact of trauma cinema on the spectator has been well-researched and documented. In her book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag argues that the media can turn each spectator into a witness of an event from which one is both temporally and spatially distant. She says, “Being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience” (18). E. Kaplan and Ban Wang have identified four leading positions for the viewer depending on different cinematic strategies used in films. In the first case, cinema identifies trauma as a “discrete past event, locatable, representable and curable” and ends up as “a comforting cure” as far as the viewer is concerned (Kaplan and Wang 9). These films represent trauma “in an oblique form”, and such films “may reveal what it is that needs to be forgotten, thus betraying the remainders of trauma” (Kaplan and Wang 9). The critics must go beyond the literal interpretation to discover the “symptoms of deeper-lying, latent processes” in these films. Second is “the position of being vicariously traumatised” (Kaplan and Wang 9). Films of this type may end up traumatising the spectator. The third is “the position of being a voyeur” (Kaplan and Wang 10). This position is dangerous since the spectator might derive

subversive pleasure from the pain and suffering of others. The fourth is the position of being a witness. The films belonging to this category make the spectator bear witness to a traumatic event. Such films invite "the viewer to at once be there emotionally (and often powerfully moved) but also to keep a cognitive distance and awareness denied to the victim by the traumatic process" (Kaplan and Wang 10). The viewer here "reasserts continuity and humanity" (Kaplan and Wang 10).

Both feature films and documentary films deal with violence and trauma. Many of the articles in *The Horrors of Trauma in Cinema: Violence Void Visualization* look at how different genres of films, like documentary films and feature films, deal with violence and trauma. In her book *Reframing Trauma in Contemporary Fiction Film*, Tarja Laine examines the techniques fiction films use to process traumatic memories. In the book *Trauma Cinema*, Janet Walker explores the different ways in which documentary films bear witness to trauma.

Feature films are based on a fictional plot line, whereas documentary films are non-fictional. Erik Barnouw points out that documentary filmmakers "are interested in finding, selecting, and arranging instead of inventing" (348). In contrast, those who make feature films can invent and imaginatively recreate reality and hence enjoy greater artistic and aesthetic liberty. Bill Nichols holds that documentaries are those films that "address the world in which we live rather than a world imagined by the filmmaker" (*Introduction* XI). Frank Beaver argues that documentary films, unlike feature films, are "usually shot on location, use actual persons rather than actors, and focus thematically on historical, scientific, social, or environmental subjects. Their principal purpose is to enlighten, inform, educate,

persuade, and provide insight into the world in which we live" (119). David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, in their book *Film Art: An Introduction*, put forth a similar argument and point out that "a documentary film purports to present factual information about the world outside the film (42). Lewis Jacobs points out that a documentary film is "a special kind of picture with a clear social purpose, dealing with real people and real events, as opposed to staged scenes of imaginary characters and fictional stories of studio-made pictures" (2).

It is to be noted that documentary films may contain conflicting, contradictory and subjective elements and, hence, may not always offer an objective account of reality since "documentaries, like fictional texts, construct narratives and employ similar codes and conventions… to construct stories about the social world" (Roscoe and Hight 8). Stella Bruzzi has also studied objective and subjective elements in documentary films. She holds that "documentary film is traditionally perceived to be the hybrid offspring of a perennial struggle between the forces of objectivity (represented by the 'documents' or facts that underpin it) and the forces of subjectivity (that is, the translation of those facts into representational form)" (39).

When it comes to the question of representing historical episodes of violence and trauma, feature films and documentary films adopt different strategies. Feature films can incorporate fictional elements and characters, even in films dealing with historical events. They blend factual and fictional events in such a manner that they can evoke different emotional and intellectual responses from the viewers. They also address complex themes effectively because of the medium's flexibility. Such films

can incorporate songs, symbols, different patterns of colour, divergent styles of editing, and scenes of reenactment to depict violence and trauma.

Documentary films incorporate archival footage, oral testimonies, and interviews with victims, perpetrators and bystanders to develop their narrative about violence and trauma. Expert voices are also incorporated into the film to make the presentation compelling and factual. Such films look at the past and present conditions of the victims and the perpetrators. They often also attempt to juxtapose the present with the past to initiate critical deliberations on the topics of violence and trauma. Since documentary films deal with actual people and incidents, filmmakers often take measures to carefully navigate ethical considerations by getting informed consent from those individuals whose stories are incorporated in the films.

Both feature films and documentary films deal with political, ethical and psychological questions concerning violence and trauma, albeit they differ in their approaches and treatment of the subject. Feature films offer more compelling plot lines and narratives and create a more immersive visual experience for the viewer. Feature films can also manipulate sound, colour, video, and editing to recreate the experience of violence and trauma on screen. Documentary films bear witness to violence and trauma by offering first-hand accounts and a complex perspective on the issues under consideration. Both genres offer insights and perspectives on these critical issues, and their methods of treatment and presentation intersect at specific points. Together, they offer a deeper perspective on different individuals and communities that are traumatised by instances of direct, structural and cultural violence.

4. Literature Review

The poetics and politics of the representation of communal violence in Indian cinema have been important areas of critical investigation by scholars in the past couple of decades. This review offers a detailed and critical analysis of the studies on violence and trauma in cinema, with a special focus on their approaches and thematic preoccupations. The review focuses on existing scholarly deliberations on cinematic representations of the Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984 and the riots in Gujarat in 2002.

Many scholars have conducted studies on the treatment of communal violence and trauma in the Indian cinema. *The Persistence of Memory: Historical Trauma and Imagining the Community in Hindi Cinema* by Ira Bhaskar is a study that looks at films dealing with instances of communal violence during and after Partition. The author approaches cinema as a different mode of dealing with history and foregrounds the modalities filmmakers use to refract history within their films. She examines the question of violence, trauma and memory as depicted in films like *Padosi, Dharmputra, Bombay, Zakhm, Fiza* and *Hey Ram.* The study offers a diachronic perspective on these issues by critically analysing films released from the 1940s to the beginning of the twenty-first century. *Suffering and Spectatorship: Sectarian Violence in Indian Documentary Film and Media* by Anuja Jain is a critical study of the representation of sectarian violence in Indian media and Indian documentary films. The study looks at some of the Indian documentary films and stories published in video magazines dealing with instances of communal riots and sectarian violence in post-Partition India. The study addresses the questions

concerning the types of witnessing in the context of these documentary films on the suffering of the victims of different instances of sectarian violence.

Films about the 1984 riots have been studied from multiple vantage points. One notable paper on the representation of the trauma of the victims from the Sikh community in films is “Tur(Banned) Masculinities: Terrorists, Sikhs, and Trauma in Indian Cinema” by Harleen Singh. This paper examines the cinematic representation of religious divide, militancy, insurgency and terrorism. The researcher argues that violence of different kinds has played a significant role in the discursive construction of Sikh masculinity. The article also sheds light on the role of memory in constructing one's national identity. The study focuses mainly on how militancy influenced the construction of masculine identities. The paper does not offer a detailed analysis of the way these films deal with psychic wounds and the formation of traumatic subjectivity in the aftermath of violence and victimisation.

Another study that focuses on cinema and the politics of memory of pain and loss was conducted by Kumool Abbi. Her article “Sikh Middle Class, Panjabi Cinema and the Politics of Memory” illustrates how middle-class sensibility about Operation Blue Star and the 1984 riots has shaped Punjabi cinema. The article also describes how these films depict the use of torture by the establishment to tame the male Sikh body. The article critically analyses the strategies used by filmmakers to contest the dominant narrative constructions about Sikhs,

Kaur Chaudhry's article “Religious Intolerance and Cinematic Representations: A Study of Selected Short Films on the 1984 Anti- Sikh Pogrom in India” focuses on three short films and the way they represent the fragmented

society after the infamous riot in 1984. This article offers a detailed analysis of the representation of religious conflict and othering in *Kush* (2013), directed by Subhashish Bhutiani, *Jagjeet* (2010), directed by Kavanjit Singh and *Injustice 1984,* directed by Jarnail Singh. The paper clearly illustrates how these films portray the suffering of innocent men, women, and children during and after the riot.

Parvinder Mehta's paper “Repressive Silences and Shadows of 1984: Erasures, Omissions and Narrative Crisis” focuses on the politics of memory and memorialisation in the context of the 1984 riots. The paper also attempts to analyse the representation of violence in the film *Amu* using a Foucauldian approach.

Many scholars have attempted to analyse the representation of communal riots in Gujarat in films. Oishik Sircar, in her article “Bollywood's Law: Collective Memory and Cinematic Justice in the New India”, uses a juridisticiolnal approach to analyse the representation of violence in three feature films: *Dev*, *Parzania* and *Kai Po Che*. The paper critically analyses the techniques used by the directors to reconstruct the memories of the riots in these films. The article also looks at the mechanism used by the state machinery to regulate the spectator's choices. The paper provides significant perspectives on the question of justice in the context of varied articulations of trauma. In another article, “Hindutva, Human Rights and Bollywood Cinema in the New India: *Parzania*’s Memory of the Gujarat Pogrom”, Sircar explores how *Parzania* records multiple instances of human rights violations during the riots. The articles also explore how the film highlights the different ways in which individuals conceptualise and understand justice. The article posits that this

film offers a critical commentary on the social and political dynamics of communal violence.

Nishat Haider has attempted to study the politics of memorialisation of the stories of the victims of the Gujarat Riots in her article “Framing History, Precarity, and Trauma: A Study of Nandita Das's *Firaaq*”. She attempts to foreground the question of temporality and precarity in the context of the film. The paper also foregrounds the ethical question involved in making a cinema about trauma. The paper offers valuable insights into the dialectical engagement between history, memory and trauma in the context of visual culture.

In the article *Firaaq: Remembering Gujarat*, Syed Asif Haider explores why certain historical events have not yet become part of the nation's imagination. He argues that attempts at memorialising the victims of the riot have their politics and poetics. He points out that mainstream Bollywood films' engagement with the legacy of the riot is limited. He asserts that in these given circumstances, Nadita Das' decision to make a film on the riot and its victims is both ethically and aesthetically significant.

The article “Genealogy of Violence: Trauma, Memory and Identity in Nandita Das's *Firaaq*” by Nishat Haider attempts to analyse the different techniques used in the film to depict the different modalities of historical trauma. The paper also analyses to what extent visual culture, in general, and cinema, in particular, represent trauma and lists the techniques the director has used to depict trauma on screen.

Sunera Thobani, in her well-researched article “Performing Terror, Mediating Religion: Indian Cinema and the Politics of National Belonging”, looks at the

vectors of gender, religious and national identities in select Indian films. The article analyses the role of violence in the formation of fractured identities in post-riot scenarios. The article offers a detailed analysis of how the communal polarisation and communal conflicts in Gujarat are represented in the films *Dev*, *Parzania, Firaaq* and *Road to Sangam*. The paper probes how the Indian subjects negotiate their identity after exposure to instances of collective violence, such as the riot in Gujarat.

The different ways in which documentary films engage with violence and trauma in the context of the riots in 1984 and 2002 have received significant critical attention. In the article "Representations of Violence in the First-Person Documentary: Archival Footage and Documentary Consciousness", Veena Hariharan attempts to analyse the use of archival footage in documentary films like *The Final Solution*. She points out that using archival footage adds to the truth claim of such films. The article also explores the concept of ethical spectatorship and how watching a documentary film ethically implicates spectators in the textual discourses.

The article "Travails of the Nation: Some Notes on Indian Documentaries" by Vinay Lal explores the different ways in which institutions have used censorship laws to regulate the making and circulation of documentary films on sensitive matters like the riots in Gujarat. The film also touches upon the techniques used by documentary filmmakers in India to record political and communal violence.

The article "Spectral wounds of 1984: Sikh massacre in Harpreet Kaur's *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement*" by Jasleen Kaur and Vinita Mohindra

uses hauntology to analyse the representation of the repressed memory about violence and loss in select documentary films on the 1984 riot. The paper begins with a detailed account of the social and political contexts in Delhi in 1984. The article looks at trauma from a gendered perspective and highlights how the documentary film engages with the experiences of women during and after communal violence.

This review demonstrates that a body of work on the representation of violence and trauma in films on communal riots exists. However, many of these studies focus on the political dynamics of violence in the wake of polarisation along communal lines. Hence, the representation of the complex dynamics of violence and trauma in cinema requires further studies. This study aims to critically analyse how select films engage with both individual and collective trauma. As revealed by the review, most scholars have not attempted to study trauma suffered by perpetrators. This study aims to investigate how perpetrator trauma is depicted in films. Most researchers have used the classical trauma model as the theoretical backdrop of their analysis. This study intends to use the framework of postcolonial trauma studies, and this new theoretical paradigm facilitates the exploration of different layers of violence and trauma in a postcolonial context. Unlike many existing studies in this area, this study uses a relational framework to accommodate multiple voices and perspectives. This study attempts to further nuance the study on the representation of violence in cinema by using the triadic model of violence developed by Galtung. This research intends to add to the existing scholarship by examining how these films depict direct, structural, and cultural violence. Another aspect that adds to the

novelty of this study is that the researcher uses an intersectional prism to study violence and trauma. The use of the intersectional framework facilitates the analysis of the different ways in which the degree of victimisation and traumatisation is influenced by the overlapping of different systems of oppression, such as classism and casteism. This study also takes a closer look at the trauma suffered by women and children. The study seeks to explore how the existing condition of vulnerability has a compounding effect on the lives of the victims. Most of the earlier studies limit their analysis to the representation of trauma in select films. However, this study aims to study the representation of post-traumatic growth as well. The role of ritual and other faith-related practices in healing the victims of trauma is an area that previous researchers have not adequately addressed. This study looks closer at the role of spirituality in healing the victims of trauma as represented in these films.

The techniques used by filmmakers to represent trauma in these films have not yet received adequate attention. This study also looks at the various techniques used in these films to represent violence and trauma on screen. Studies on the treatment of communal violence and trauma in films made in the twenty-first century are limited. This study makes a valuable addition to this body of scholarship by offering a detailed analysis of how select twenty-first-century films address communal violence, trauma and post-traumatic growth.

5. Methodology

The thesis adopts a qualitative approach to study how the select films engage with violence and trauma. Content analysis is employed to discover and critically analyse the patterns of violence and trauma in select films. Close textual analysis is

employed to find out the techniques, themes, and narrative structures used by these films to depict violence and trauma on screen. The study uses comparative analysis to identify the similarities and differences in the ways different films deal with violence and trauma. The films are compared in terms of their themes, techniques, narrative and visual style, and character development. The study upholds ethical standards by attempting to maintain a neutral stance. It engages with sensitive issues such as violence and loss, and the research does not sensationalise the topics discussed in the study.

The primary texts chosen for this study are select twenty-first-century Indian feature and documentary films on communal violence and trauma. The researcher reviewed many films on this topic, and the primary texts were selected based on different criteria, such as the extent to which the film focuses on communal violence and trauma, the narrative techniques employed, and the ethical positions of the filmmakers. Filmmakers in India have tried to critically engage with social, political, and cultural issues in their films. Many films have attempted to portray the legacies of communal and political violence and its far-reaching implications at the individual and societal levels. The causes, consequences and legacy of events like Partition, the riots in 1984 in Delhi, and the riots in Gujarat in 2002 have been looked at from divergent vantage points by many filmmakers from different parts of the subcontinent.

Cinema is a medium that "archives injuries and calls back to the imperative to bear witness" (Jelača 9). An analysis of the cinematic representation of different layers of violence and the ensuing trauma is significant since cinema is a space

where "shared images of the past are actively produced and circulated" (Rigney 366). Rosenstone has highlighted the potential of cinema for "re-visioning" and reconstructing the historical world (199). Indian cinema is seen as the dominant media institution and "an integral component of national cultural and social process[es]" (Khan 85). Indian cinema is a record of "the repetition of the cultural wounds of historical loss" (N. Haider, "Genealogy of Violence" 84). Indian cinema has addressed historical developments in all their complexity, albeit from multiple and sometimes contrasting viewpoints. The interplay of violence and trauma related to Partition in 1947 and the Anti-Sikh Riots in Delhi was addressed by the filmmakers a few years after the event. One of the earlier films on Partition, *Chinnamul*, was released in 1950, thirteen years after Partition. In the case of the Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984, the first film to be made on the topic was *Maachis,* which was released in 1996, ten years after the riots. However, films on the Gujarat Riots were made within a year. Filmmakers continue to engage with the far-reaching consequences of these historical events. Films offer nuanced perspectives on the riots from diverse standpoints. The following section offers a detailed critical review of films on the 1984 riots and the 2002 riots.

The critically acclaimed film *Maachis,* directed by Gulzar and released in 1996, is a political period thriller focussing on Sikh disenchantment and the rise of militancy in Punjab. The film argues that corruption and discrimination may fill even an ordinary person with a vengeance. It depicts the destruction that disenchantment among the youth may cause. The film touches upon the social,

political and psychological impacts of events like Operation Blue Star and the 1984 riots.

Another notable film about the infamous riot is *Kaya Taran*, directed by Shashi Kumar and released in 2004. The film is based on the painful memories of Preet, a Sikh boy who witnessed many acts of brutal violence during the riots. The story vividly illustrates how riots affected women and children. In the flashback, we see a hapless Sikh woman with her eight-year-old son, who was being chased by an angry mob, seeking refuge in a convent. The rioters came to the convent looking for them, but the nuns could lead them to safety. The film focuses on the political and social implications of violence.

Amu is a critically acclaimed film set against the backfrop of the riot in Delhi in 1984. The plot of the film, based on tales of violence, trauma, and suffering, develops through the attempts of Kaju, a young Indian-American woman, to discover more about her childhood in India. Her enquiry eventually led to the discovery of specific disturbing facts about the suffering of her family and her community. The film bears witness to the struggles, loss, and trauma of hundreds of families who lost loved ones and property during the riot. The film posits that forgetting at the individual and societal level must be contested, and the reclamation of memories is a necessary prerequisite for healing and the reclamation of identities.

The film *31 October* portrays violence on 31 October 1984, a day on which the then Prime Minister of India was murdered, and subsequently, the riot erupted. The film, directed by Shivaji Lotan Patil, is based on an actual event. The plot of the film is based on the suffering of Devender Singh and his family when the riot

erupted. Unlike many other Sikhs who were attacked and killed by the rioting mob, Devender Singh, his wife and his kids were saved by his Hindu friends Pal, Tilak and Yogesh. The film asserts that communal amity and harmony are more potent than communal enmity and hatred.

Grahan is a much-debated 2021 web series on the riot and its victims and perpetrators. The film begins with an investigation into riot-related crimes by a young, vibrant police officer, Amrita Singh. She eventually discovers that some of the prominent individuals in her locality, including her father, are implicated in the violence in 1984. The film's primary focus is on the development of an affair between a Hindu boy, Rishi, and a Sikh girl, Manu. However, there are many direct and indirect references to the victims and perpetrators of the riot throughout the film.

There are some references to the Anti-Sikh Riots in the film *Laal Singh Chaddha,* which was released in 2002. One shocking episode in this film is a woman attempting to erase her cultural markers to save her life when the riot starts.

Jogi is a period drama about the 1984 riots and their consequences. It was released on Netflix in 2022. The film offers a detailed account of suffering, struggles, and survival. It asserts that humanity will eventually thrive over hatred. The plot suggests that building networks of solidarity to forge inter-communal alliances would prevent outbreaks of violence along communal lines.

Documentary filmmakers in India have responded to developments in the social, political, and cultural spheres through cinema. Many have attempted to record the stories of the victims and perpetrators of violence associated with the riots in Delhi in 1984 and the riots in Gujarat in 2012.

1984, When the Sun Didn't Rise is a documentary film directed by Teenaa Kaur that focuses on the riot's impact on women and children. The film offers an evocative portrayal of the struggles of the survivors of the riot. The film attempts to critique the impact of forced migration on individuals and communities. The film focuses on the trajectory of the lives of three women whose husbands were murdered by the rioters. The film blends personal and political narratives about suffering and loss. The film adopts an investigative approach and attempts to foreground the failures of the institutions to offer security to minorities at times of targeted violence.

1984: A Sikh Story is a documentary film on the 1984 riots. This film, directed by Sonia Deol, offers a detailed account of the historical context of the riot. The film explores issues such as Operation Blue Star, the murder of the then-Indian Prime Minister and the ensuing communal riot. This first-person documentary has a personal note as the director rediscovers her Sikh identity as she revisits Punjab and the Golden Temple as part of making this documentary. The film explores how the riot resulted in the marginalisation of Sikhs. It also focuses on how the social fabric was damaged by polarisation along communal lines.

The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement, directed by Harpreet Kaur, is a documentary film that incorporates testimonies of survivors, legal experts, journalists, and experts from various domains about the riot to offer a layered narrative about the legacy of violence. It offers an insider perspective of the lives of the survivors and their families in the colony to which these widows were relocated

after the riot. This film offers a gendered exploration of violence and trauma, and foregrounds the resilience of the survivors.

The riot in Gujarat in 2002 is one of the most debated instances of communal violence in the twenty-first century. Many films deal with this riot directly or indirectly. From 2013 to the present day, films have been made on the legacy of this riot. One of the first films on the issue, *Chand Bujh Gaya*, was made one year after the riot in 2003. Nevertheless, the film was released only in 2005 because of legal issues related to censorship. This film is a musical thriller focusing on a romantic affair between a Hindu boy and a Muslim girl. The film also features the Godhra train burning incident and the ensuing riots in Gujarat. The lovers, during their journey through Gujarat in the Sabarmati Express, had to bear witness to the burning of a compartment in the train and the ensuing death and destruction. The couple took refuge in a friend's house when a riot broke out in the city. These two lovers are united by their love at the end, and this film asserts that alliances across religions are possible. Though the film briefly addresses the social and political implications of the riot, its predominant focus is on the romantic elements. One major limitation of the film is that it does not offer detailed accounts of victims and perpetrators. The film does not give adequate attention to the trauma experienced by the victims of violence.

Parzania is a 2007 film directed by Rahul Dholakia that attempts to locate the riots against a broader socio-political background. It is partially based on the true story of a Parsi boy, Azhar Mody, who was separated from his parents during the

Gujarat Riots in 2002 and has been missing ever since. The rioters attacked the locality where the family of Cyrus Pithawala was living. In the mayhem, the son was separated from his mother. The film focuses on the attempts of the family to bring their son back and to restart their lives after the riot. The emotional trauma of the members of the Pithwala family is delineated in this film. The film proposes Gandhian ideals of non-violence as an alternative ideological and political framework that can bring communities together to share their stories and engage in meaningful dialogue. This film intermingles "fictional reconstructions of violence with realist narratives of the everyday" to further nuance discourses on historical violence (Sircar, "Hindutva" 220). What makes this film unique is that it explores not only the episodes of violence but also the ways of ending the cycles of violence and destruction.

Firaaq is a 2008 film that attempts to look at the 2002 riots and their consequences from the perspectives of various stakeholders. The film focuses on the ramifications of the riot on victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. It has a non-linear narrative format and explores different types of trauma, such as victim trauma and perpetrator trauma. The film also clearly delineates how various political, social, and economic factors create unique experiences of victimisation and marginalisation.

The romantic drama film *Mausam*, directed by Pankaj Kapur and released in 2011, is a love story, but the plot also provides insights into significant historical events in India between 1992 and 2002. The 2002 riots in Gujarat are featured at the end of the film. The film focuses on a young lover, Aayat, a Kashmiri Muslim who

happened to be in Sabarmati when the riot broke out in the city. The mob chased her, and she was eventually saved because of the timely intervention of her lover, Harry. Harry and Ayat tried to find a place to hide because the situation was tense. However, the rioters found them and attempted to attack them. The lovers struggled to escape but ended up in a blazing fire, but somehow managed to escape and save a child from the flames. The film offers novel perspectives on how the political and social realms intersect with the personal. Nevertheless, the film's engagement with the riot in Gujarat is limited.

T.V. Chandran, an acclaimed Malayalam film director, has created a trilogy on the long-term repercussions of the Gujarat Riots. These films are *Kathavasheshan*, *Vilapangalkkappuram*, and *Bhoomiyude Avakashikal.* The narrative of all three films commences on 28 February 2002, a day after the tragic Godhra train burning incident in the state of Gujarat. These films are predominantly set in Kerala, a state far from Gujarat, but they include plot lines that connect the story to the Gujarat Riots. The first film in this trilogy is *Kathavasheshan*, released in 2004, two years after the riot. The film develops through the perspective of Renuka, who was the fiancée of Gopinathan Menon, who committed suicide under mysterious circumstances. She decided to find out the reason for his death by interacting with those who were associated with him in different ways. Eventually, she found out that her husband was haunted by the memory of a tragic riot in Gujarat at a time when he was working there as an engineer. In 2002, when the riot broke out, the rioters mercilessly murdered a Muslim girl whom he treated as his

sister. The memory of violence continued to haunt him. One day, back in his home in Kerala, he happened to see the photograph of a Muslim girl who was subjected to brutal rape on the front page of a newspaper. The photograph triggered his memories, and in a moment of intense trauma, he decided to commit suicide by hanging. The intertitles shown at the end of the film state that he took his life because he was ashamed to live in such an inhuman world. The film offers a limited portrayal of vicarious trauma, but due to its complex plot line, its engagement with the stories of the riot victims is minimal.

This trilogy's second film is *Vilapangalkkappuram,* which was released in 2008. The film focuses on the different stages in the life of Zahira, who was residing in Gujarat with her Malayalee parents, who were running a tea shop there. The rioters killed her parents and burnt down her house. The criminals gang raped her and tried to set her ablaze to destroy evidence. When the rioters left the scene, she managed to hide in a lorry parked nearby. The lorry took her to Calicut, the home town of her father. She gradually recovered but was later embroiled in other conflicts along communal lines in her home state. This film traces the life of a survivor who, even after moving to a new state, continued to suffer because of the existing fault lines in society.

The last film in the trilogy is *Bhoomiyude Avakashikal*, released in 2012. The story centres on Mohanachandran Nair, a Keralite working in Gujarat in 2002. He was thrown out of the state because he attempted to save the life of a Muslim girl from the marauding rioters. Back in Kerala, without a job and identity, Beerna Ikka,

a gentle soul, gave him shelter. Nevertheless, later, in a communally charged incident, Beeran Ikka was murdered, and Nair relocated to a house in a remote location. He spent his time interacting with the animals and insects in the house and realised that the place belonged to them as much as to him. At the end of the film, he is again targeted by a vengeful mob, and he decides to leave the house for fear that his presence will endanger the lives of the other creatures residing in the same house. He left the house and walked forward even though he had no idea where to go.

Kai Po Che!: Brothers... For Life is a sports drama film released in 2012. The film is set from 2000 to 2012 in Ahmedabad. The film explores the impact of communal polarisation and the ensuing violence on the lives of three intimate friends. Their dreams to start a sports academy were shattered when the state was embroiled in the riot in 2002. They wanted to give training to a budding cricketing prodigy, Ali Hashmi. The film portrays Isha and Govind's attempt to save Ali when the riots break out. The film illustrates the mindlessness of violence and asserts that good friendship can withstand attempts at polarisation.

Accident or Conspiracy: Godhra is a film that was released in 2024. In the film, the director revisits the Nanavati-Mehta Commission report on the Godhra incident in an attempt to analyse the trigger and consequences of the act of violence. The film's key focus is on the atmosphere of rift and polarisation that led to the riot.

The Sabarmati Report is another film about the Godhra train burning incident. The plot of this film centres on a journalist who attempts to unravel the

truth behind the Godhra train carnage. The film attempts to problematise some media narratives about the riot and the events leading to it.

Many documentary films have also critically engaged with the stories of violence and trauma in the context of the riot in Gujarat. *Final Solution*, directed by Rakesh Sharma, offers a detailed overview of places and people affected by the riots. The film foregrounds the social and political climate that played a key role in creating an atmosphere of polarisation along religious lines. The film problematises the vested interest groups' attempts to weaponise communal hatred for political dividends. The director has endeavoured to make this film a repository of multiple voices by recording the historical memories of different stakeholders.

Another documentary film related to the violence in 2002 is *India: The Modi Question*. It is a BBC documentary that engages with the social and political realities during and after the riots in Gujarat. The film posits that the riot damaged the social fabric of the state, which in turn further alienated the victims of the riot. The film covers a broader canvas and discusses issues such as international relations and media freedom that are not directly related to the riots in the state.

Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat is a documentary film that focuses on the stories of two survivors of the riot- Nishrin and Imran. Nishrin's father, who was a member of the Indian Parliament, was killed by the rioters. Imran, with his relatives and friends, was on a holiday trip to Gujarat when the riot started. The rioters targeted them, and everyone except Imran was killed. The film offers an evocative

portrayal of their trauma. It also focuses on how these victims manage their memories of loss and continue their fight for justice.

The brief survey of the above films proves that many filmmakers have depicted the social, cultural, political, and psychological implications of communal riots on individuals and groups. However, their approach towards and treatment of violence and trauma are different. Since the primary focus of this study is the dialectics of violence and trauma, the researcher has selected only those films whose primary focus is on the modalities of violence and trauma. The films selected for detailed analysis are four feature films*, Amu, Jogi, Firaaq, and Parzania, and two documentary films, The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*.

The film *Amu* was selected for detailed analysis because it is one of the few films that examine how exposure to violence and trauma results in the formation of fractured identities. *Jogi*, released on Netflix, an OTT platform, in 2022, has reached a wider global audience. The film is remarkable in its portrayal of direct and structural violence and the impact of violence on individuals and communities; hence, it requires detailed analysis. *Firaaq* is selected as a primary text because it offers an intersectional analysis of violence. The innovative techniques used in the film, such as the intermingling of different narrative strands and the use of non-linear narration, also make this film a valuable addition to the genre of trauma cinema in the Indian context. *Parzania* is a critically acclaimed film that explores how members of the Parsi community, along with many others from other

communities, suffered significantly during the riots. The film illustrates the mindlessness of violence. The film posits that a return to Gandhi's idea of non-violence is a possible solution to the ongoing conflicts in the country and elsewhere. Such a novel way of conceptualising peace, harmony and healing presented in the film requires a detailed analysis.

Voices of women victims often go unheard and unrepresented in many mainstream and popular visual narratives. *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* is a documentary film that looks at violence and trauma from a gendered perspective. The film's use of testimonies of victims to record their trauma is highly effective. The documentary foregrounds the ongoing struggles of the widows for justice and survival. Since this film focuses on the resilience and strength of the survivors, it merits critical analysis. Similarly, the documentary film *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* offers a nuanced perspective of the trauma and suffering of two individuals who lost members of their families because of the violence during the riot. The film focuses on the resilience and willpower of these survivors who continue to fight for justice despite challenging circumstances.

The select films approach violence and trauma from critical perspectives. Unlike films such as *Chand Bujh Gaya* and *Mausam,* in which the riot is in the background, these films foreground the riot and its far-reaching implications. Unlike films like *The Sabarmathy Report*, which looks at the riot from one dominant perspective, these films look at acts of violence from different vantage points. Films like *Maachis* and *The Final Solution*, whose primary focus is on the political

implications of the riot, were not selected because the current study's primary focus is on psychological distress and traumatisation. The films *Accident or Conspiracy: Godhra* and *Sabarmati Report* adopt an investigative approach, and their plots focus on fixing accountability. Since their engagement with trauma is limited, they were not included as primary texts.

The six films selected for this study warrant their selection because they do not attempt to thin down their narratives to make them more appealing in the market. The style and approach of these films are varied. However, all the select films deal with relevant issues such as direct and structural violence, individual and collective trauma, and the interplay between memory and history. Their high aesthetic standards and thematic depth were also grounds for their selection. These films do not downplay the enormity of violence, nor do they resort to propaganda. These films stay away from the “aestheticisation of politics” and the “aestheticisation of trauma-ridden histories and cultures by the transnational culture industry and media” (Kaplan 10). The term “aestheticisation of politics” refers to the strategy of the modern state “to stage its self-representation and collective identification by borrowing narratives, myths, techniques, and the mise-en-scene from the cinema and the culture industry” (Kaplan 10). The term “aestheticisation of trauma-ridden histories and cultures by the transnational culture industry and media” refers to the attempt to market trauma cultures as exotic other (Kaplan 10). These films address the complex dynamics of violence and trauma without violating the ethics of representation.

This thesis uses various theoretical discourses on violence to examine how direct, structural and cultural violence are depicted in these films. The study relies on the paradigm of trauma studies to analyse the different ways in which these films depict trauma, healing, resilience and post-traumatic growth. Visual analysis is used to examine how filmmakers have used cinematographic and editing techniques to represent violence and trauma on screen.

The study adopts a relational approach to examine the intricate relationship between violence and trauma because this approach offers "a broader, interdisciplinary, comparative, and relational approach to trauma will open ways of accommodating not only culture-specific but also broader registers of trauma research for postcolonial studies" (Visser, "Entanglements of Trauma" 1). This approach makes it possible to imagine trauma as a "complicated network of concepts and approaches that coexist and mutually interact"(Visser, "Entanglements of Trauma" 1). Visser describes relationality as "an intricate knot, with the 'unsayable' nature of trauma at its center and connected to it, in a centripetal as well as centrifugal movement, to be envisaged as a multi- and interdisciplinary entanglement of strands of concepts, theories and therapies" ("Entanglements of Trauma" 3). This approach facilitates a move away from "unproductive and possibly contentious positing of 'either/or' views and indeed renders superfluous the oppositional debates about definitions of trauma as either event-based or phylogenetic, knowable or unknowable, curable or incurable, static or dynamic, and so on" (Visser, "Entanglements of Trauma" 4). This shift is very productive because

it takes focus away from "reductive tendencies, demonstrating complexity, the multifaceted web of identifications, ambivalences and negotiations" (Shohat 251). This approach focuses not on competition but on mutual connections and interrelations. Relationality provides a critical method for analysing how the select films represent the dialectics of violence and trauma.

A relational approach, informed by postcolonial discourses on violence and trauma, is used in this study to facilitate an in-depth, complex and culture-sensitive enquiry into the various modalities of victimisation and traumatisation.

6. Chapterisation

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter, titled "Representing Communal Violence and Trauma in Cinema: Poetics, Politics and Ethics," offers an overview of the study's objectives, methodology, and socio-political context. It also includes a critical review of postcolonial discourses on violence, trauma, and post-traumatic growth and a detailed review of relevant literature. The second chapter, "Patterns of Pain: Intersectional Perspectives on Communal Violence and Trauma in *Parzania* and *Firaaq",* attempts to map the patterns of violence and trauma against an intersectional framework. It explores how overlapping forms of identity create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. It also analyses the techniques used by these two films to represent violence and trauma on screen. The third chapter, titled "Layers of Grief: Tracing the Configurations of Memory, Identity and Trauma in *Jogi* and *Amu*", begins with a brief historical account of Operation Blue Star, the murder of the then Indian Prime

Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards and the ensuing communal riots in Delhi and other parts of Delhi in which members of Sikh religion were systematically targeted. Operation Blue Star and the subsequent violence during the riots became chosen traumas for the Sikh community. The chapter tries to analyse how the select films represent the different ways in which collective violence and collective trauma shape and alter the collective identities of the members of the affected community. The chapter also foregrounds the stories of strength, courage and sacrifice that these films acknowledge and celebrate. The fourth chapter, titled "Imprints of Violence: Representations of Collective Memory and Collective Trauma in *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*", focuses on the representation of communal violence and the ensuing trauma in two documentary films- *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement,* directed by Harpreet Kaur on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots and - *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat,* directed by Sheena Sumaria and Sonum Sumaria on the 2002 Gujarat Riots. The chapter looks at the different strategies used by these two documentary films to represent the collective memory of violence and trauma in the aftermath of the communal riots. This chapter also analyses how these documentary films address the ethics of representation while depicting loss, grief and trauma. The chapter highlights that these two documentaries have distinct social voices that testify to the films' ethical position. The concluding chapter, titled "Transcending Violence and Trauma: Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth in the Twenty-first Century Feature and Documentary Films on Communal Violence in India", succinctly summarises the study's findings. The study found that the select films

bear witness to violence and trauma. The study also reveals that the select films do not attempt to appropriate trauma and aestheticise violence. The study establishes that these films have placed violence and trauma against a broader socio-political background. Another finding is that these films focus less on melancholia and stasis and more on healing, resilience, and post-traumatic growth. The sixth chapter, titled “Recommendations,” identifies different areas that merit further scholarly attention. This study opens up new areas for critical enquiry in postcolonial trauma studies and film studies.

7. Significance of the Study

Most of the studies on trauma and its varied cultural, artistic and cinematic representation have focused on the trauma suffered by people in the First World War. Trauma and its varied cultural and artistic representations from other parts of the world, in general, and India in particular, have not yet received adequate critical attention. This study addresses the existing gap in trauma and trauma cinema scholarship by closely examining the cinematic representation of trauma experienced by victims, bystanders, and perpetrators in a postcolonial context. That this study employs the theoretical framework of postcolonial trauma studies further adds to its significance. The trauma suffered by the perpetrator was considered a taboo topic and has received scant critical attention. This study offers a critical look at trauma suffered by the perpetrators without violating or compromising the ethics of representation. Representation of post-traumatic growth in Indian cinema has not

been adequately explored. This thesis foregrounds healing, resilience, and post-traumatic growth, further enhancing its significance.

This thesis argues that select Indian films offer a detailed portrayal of communal violence, trauma and posttraumatic growth by representing the trauma of victims, perpetrators, and communities through cinematic techniques and innovative narrative strategies. Subsequent chapters of this thesis provide a critical and in-depth exploration of these topics in select feature films and documentaries.

Chapter II

Patterns of Pain: Intersectional Perspectives on Communal Violence and Trauma in *Parzania* and *Firaaq*

Cinema plays a significant role in shaping public discourse on subjectivity and identity. It influences and is influenced by the existing political, social, cultural, and ideological structures. This reciprocal relationship makes cinema a platform where diverse views and ideologies are discussed, debated, and synthesised. Many films produced in Bollywood have taken up historical events - both ancient and contemporary- as subject matter, and they often attempt to address the implications of these events on individuals and communities. In this context, it is significant to critically examine how Indian cinema depicts multiple instances of communal violence. Cinema can capture the dialectics of the intersectional dimensions of violence and the ensuing trauma, both at the individual and the collective levels. Many Indian films explore how different markers of one's identity, like class, caste, gender and location, influence and determine one's response to physical violence and psychological abuse during and after communal riots. This chapter attempts to analyse the representation of violence and trauma in *Parzania* and *Firaaq* from an intersectional vantage point.

Intersectionality refers to the subtle ways in which one's intersecting identities determine and structure one's experiences. Kimberlé Crenshaw points out that violence and victimisation do not take place "along a single categorical axis" ("Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" 140). The degree of victimisation and traumatisation is determined not just by the extent of violence but

also by the social, political, cultural and economic spaces that one inhabits. Preexisting conditions of marginality often have a compounding effect on the affected individual and community. The extent of one's access to legal recourse and clinical help varies from individual to individual. Hence, using the intersectional framework is apt to critically investigate and problematise different representations of communal violence and its impact at the individual and collective levels in the select films.

This chapter explores the representational dialectics of communal violence and trauma in *Parzania*, directed by Rahul Dholakia, and *Firaaq*, directed by Nandita Das, both of which address various consequences of the Gujarat Riots in 2002. It places the films within the postcolonial theoretical discourses on violence, trauma and intersectionality. The chapter tries to discover the cinematic techniques and strategies adopted by the directors to depict and imaginatively reconstruct and reconfigure the subtle layers of violence and psychological trauma. An attempt is also made to study the centrifugal and centripetal potential of violence and trauma in the context of the chosen films. The politics and poetics of memorialising traumatic legacies in the context of the select films are also put to rigorous critical scrutiny in this chapter. This chapter argues that the two films, *Parzani* and *Firaaq*, critique patterns of trauma and violence, and foreground the possibility of reconciliation and post-traumatic growth.

Parzania is one of the most well-made films on violence, victimisation and traumatisation. This film, which addresses the aftermath of the riots in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002, was released in 2007, five years after the riots. The film,

directed by Rahul Dholakia, is partly based on the disappearance of Azhar Mody, a Parsi boy, during the Gulbarg Society massacre in 2002. The critically acclaimed film harmoniously blends factual and fictional elements and raises significant questions about the modalities of violence. The plot line of the film mainly focuses on the search of the Pithwala family for their son, who went missing during the riots. Moreover, the film goes on to delineate stories of other victims and perpetrators and initiates a critical discourse on violence, non-violence, trauma, healing, and reconciliation. The film also explores how spatial, cultural, material and spiritual locations create intersectional identities that shape the different ways in which victims and perpetrators experience and address the legal, social and psychological consequences of violence. The film highlights how overlapping markers of identity, such as gender, class, and religion, create a spectrum of privilege and subordination.

In an interview published in the *Los Angeles Times,* Rahul Dholakia stated that the intensity of the mindless violence in his home state shook his conscience, and the graphic images of violence and torture disturbed and moved him (Chu). He decided to make a film on the consequences of violence, both at the individual and collective levels, to expose the mindlessness of violence and to assert the need to promote the messages of unity and amity. He was deeply pained when he came to know that the rioters had tortured members of the family of his friend, and making this film was part of his attempt to come to terms with the loss of others and himself. He wanted to initiate critical deliberations on the meaninglessness of violence through this film. In an interview, he stated that "sometimes it is necessary to reopen wounds because the solution to hate is to have a healthy debate and open debate

about it" (Chu). He added: "It is better to have it out in the open and discuss it. You cannot just avoid it" (Chu). He felt "responsible both morally and socially" to speak up, and this "pro-humanity" cinema was born out of his more profound political, social and aesthetic convictions (Sen).

The opening shots of the film introduce the state of Gujarat as the land of Gandhi, who is considered to be the champion of non-violence, communal amity, and peaceful coexistence. The film juxtaposes the violence that erupted in 2002 with the Gandhian philosophy, and suggests that a return to Gandhi's teachings could aid and expedite the reconciliation process. The film highlights the potential of Gandhian ideals to bring individuals, regardless of their political and religious identities, together.

The plot of the film unfolds through the various struggles of the Pithawala family, which consists of four members: Cyrus Pithawala, his wife, Shernaz Pithawala; his son, Parzan Pithawala; and his daughter, Dilshad. One technique used by the director to present a novel perspective on violence in this film is presenting many events through the perspective of a visiting American, Allan, who came to Gujarat, the land of Gandhi, searching for inner peace, yet got entangled in the orgy of communal violence. Allan, who carried traumatic wounds as a result of being at the receiving end of abuse and torture in his childhood, could understand the pain and grief of the victims of the riots, and his empathetic engagement with them allowed him to gain a deeper perspective on violence across various contexts and countries.

The film opens with a long-angle shot of a bridge and a nearby street in Gujarat. In the background, a lyric is played which speaks about the importance of kindness and love (*Parzania* 00:00:50–55). The lines from the lyrics introduce Gujarat as Gandhiji's country (*Parzania* 00:01:26–28). The film seems to suggest that large-scale violence erupted in Gujarat, the land of Gandhi, is all the more shocking. The film then cuts to a shot depicting a Muslim shopkeeper, visibly disturbed and panicked, hurriedly closing his shop from the inside. The director has used the technique of foreshadowing to suggest the eruption of violence along communal lines.

The next part of the film attempts to place violence in 2002 against the larger backdrop of the violence in 1947 after Partition. The scenes depict a classroom where a teacher gives history lessons on the struggles for independence in India. The teacher told the students that in the year that India became independent, the country was divided into two. The teacher added that as a result of the division of the country into two, "thousands of Hindu families were forced to leave Pakistan to avoid persecution" (*Parzania* 00:02:25–28). She also told them that the majority of Muslims decided to stay in India. Only a few Muslims shifted to Pakistan. The teacher asserted that India accepts everyone since it is a secular democracy (*Parzania* 00:02:35–38). The lesson given by the teachers reveals the lasting consequences of Partition. Even after decades, the trauma of the victims of Partition was passed down through generations, resulting in the formation of intergenerational trauma. As suggested in the film, these memories of violence and pain are exploited by vested interest groups to create polarisation along communal lines and to pit the

members of one community against the other. Religious affiliations were sometimes used to create division by vested interest groups, and as a result, even rumours could destabilise the communal fabric.

Indians are known for their passion for cricket, and after an India-Pakistan cricket match, emotions often run high. Allegations are often made that some individuals from certain communities celebrate the victory of Pakistan, and they often result in the outbreak of violence. In the film, a few individuals, presumably members of the minority community living in a gully, are shown celebrating the victory of Pakistan in a cricket match against India, and a few others expressing their anger and frustration at the celebration. The enraged members of the group issued a stern warning that if they want fireworks, “we will show them fireworks” (*Parzania* 00:03:08–10). This curt remark foreshadows the impending violence. The different pronouns “we” and “them” used by these people reveal the stratification of society along communal lines. The members in that group took a map of Ahmadabad and started demarcating areas where the members of the minority community lived, and it was suggested that those areas would be systematically targeted.

The film intersperses scenes of violence with those of peace and harmony, and this technique of juxtaposition is evocative and suggestive. Parzan and his younger sister are shown engaged in a deep conversation about Parzania, an imaginary land in which buildings are made of chocolates, the rooftops are made of halwa, and the mountains are made of ice cream. The film suggests that any place could become a Parzania where love, care, and warmth are the defining emotions,

and happiness is the prevailing mood. Parzan made Dilshad take a pledge before entering Parzania, and he told her that she had to obey the laws of Parzania. The film critiques the irony of inmates in the imagined land of Parzania following rules, whereas some individuals in the real world blatantly disregard them. Dilshad asked Parzan to tie a *rakhi* in her hand on the *rakhi* day and to protect her for the rest of her life. Parzan said that this was a cultural practice foreign to their faith, yet assured her that he would do whatever she asked of him (*Parzania* 00:10:18–22). This is one instance in the film that vividly illustrates the existence of syncretic culture in Gujarat.

In the film, the character of Jayaraman is a follower of Gandhi who assists those who want to study about Gandhi and his teachings. Allan, an American researcher who was doing his research on Gandhi, came to his *ashram* to meet him and to collect some books from him. The film depicts the impact of Gandhian views on Allan and records how those views transformed him, altered his worldview, and aided in healing his inner wounds. The film foregrounds the irony that messages of non-violence reached people in far-off countries, yet some in the home state of Gandhi failed to follow the path of peace and non-violence. Jayaraman advised Allan to read Gandhi's books whenever he felt that life was too much to bear. He told Allan that if one wanted to break the law, it should not be for selfish reasons. He added that reactions out of anger ought to be controlled. Allan believed that a healthy dose of rage was good at times, and his logic was that to block a punch, one would have to throw a punch (*Parzania* 00:17:09–22). In this film, these deliberations on violence and different responses to violence assume added

significance when, at a later stage, the riots erupted, and many men, women and kids fell prey to mindless violence.

Allan was deeply traumatised as a result of the bitter experiences in his childhood. Allan explained to Cyrus that he was raised a Protestant and that his father was extremely violent. He decided to run away from the house at the age of thirteen, but his father followed him, and he tripped, fell, and his head was injured. It was later revealed that his father had a brain tumour, and after the surgery, his anger had gone away. Allan thought that it was the anger that created the tumour and not the other way round. He discovered Gandhi as he was looking for ways to heal himself.

Allan became a close friend of Cyrus Pithawala, who was working as a projectionist at a film theatre in the nearby town. Allan was always seen smoking cigarettes and drinking liquor, and he seemed to use them as a means to manage his grief. Cyrus told Allan that drinking was not legal in Gandhi's land. He introduced himself as a Parsi, and being a member of a minority community, he suggested that "we are like the Jews of India" (*Parzania* 00:05:53–55). Cyrus asked Allan how he was treated in India. He replied that everybody was friendly to him. When Cyrus commented that in the United States, "at least you have no people killing each other for no reason", Allan replied that the homicide rate in the United States is higher than that of India (*Parzania* 00:07:48–55). By making a comparison between violence in India and the United States, the film attempts to look at violence from a multidirectional vantage point.

Parents impart their cultural legacy to their children through stories. Shernaz

Pithawala told her children the stories of her ancestors. Parsis came to India in a big ship thousands of years ago from the holy land of Persia. She told them that, as sugar could blend in the milk, Parsis could blend into society (*Parzania* 00:20:16–23). The Parsis and Indians have lived in peace and harmony ever since.

The film suggests that communal harmony was the norm in that area, and members of different communities coexisted peacefully. Within one gated community in Behrampura, a suburb of Gujarat, Muslims, Hindus, and Parsis lived harmoniously. A mundane interaction between Sheela, a Hindu, and Shernaz, a Parsi, assumes added significance as the plot progresses and fault lines in the society are revealed. Their relationship was so close that they exchanged vegetables and fruits and prepared food for one another. Another instance of communal harmony was seen in the interaction between Shernaz and her Muslim neighbour, Khan Saheb, who shared with her the happy news that his granddaughter, Nazneen, was getting married to a nice Hindu boy. She told Khan Saheb that she was planning to give him a nice new bedsheet as a birthday gift.

In the meantime, members of one fringe organisation were busy making plans for targeted violence. They were seen collecting and distributing weapons with impunity. The distrust among sections of the communities was further exacerbated by the actions of some reckless youth who teased girls from the other community. The rioters had identified the shops owned by Muslims to be targeted, and those shops were demarcated using small flags. The film seems to suggest that the rioters were jealous of the others' economic prosperity and used violence as a cover to destroy their economic prospects.

The film lays bare the modalities of direct and structural violence. The film depicts the complicity of some police officers who refused to help the victims. The police officers and the rioters searched every autorickshaw taking kids to school. They asked the driver whether he was taking any Muslim kids. The driver told them that they were all Hindus. They asked him what faith Parzan belonged to (*Parzania* 00:26:28–34). Parzan was traumatised to listen to this conversation about his faith, which made him feel very vulnerable. The experience of being singled out is a form of microaggression; the constant exposure to it can trigger trauma.

The members of the rioting mob conducted a census to find out the houses belonging to the minority community. At night, they knocked on the doors of Cyrus's house, and when Allan opened the door, they told him they had come to conduct a census and asked him the details of his religion and caste. Allan realised somebody was planning violence, and the survey was conducted at this odd hour to prepare a detailed plan for the riots. This encounter rattled Allan so much that he started typing his thesis about Gandhi’s teachings to regain his composure. He wrote that Gandhi was a man who could unite Hindus and Muslims and rally them for the shared cause of freedom and independence, until some criminals killed him (*Parzania* 00:28:25–31).

Allan saw on television the news report about the large number of *karsevaks* who were killed when a train compartment carrying them was set ablaze in the railway station at Godhra. He listened to the comments of a few leaders who stated that those who were responsible for the murder would get full punishment for their sins. Khan Saheb and others in the area were shocked when they heard the news

report about the violence because the terrible incident occurred in Godhra, only three hours away from their locality. The police came to the Muslim locality and asked them to stay in their houses. They were told that if they came out, they would be forced to fire them. The police also assured them that their security would be ensured, and their properties would be protected. As the mob carrying weapons had taken over the streets, Muslims decided to close the gate of the gated colony. Asif, Nikhat's husband, told Shernaz that they were only taking precautions and that there was nothing to worry about.

Nikhat phoned Cyrus, who was at the movie theatre, to inform him that the situation was going out of control and asked him to return home as soon as possible. In the meantime, the violent mob started attacking the gate of the colony. Certain members of the majority community living there felt relieved by the fact that it was a Hindu mob outside their gate, and hence, they would not be harmed. Certain individuals from other houses called the police for help and informed the police that there was an armed mob at the gate. The law-and-order situation worsened eventually as the police did not turn up.

Cyrus, as he was returning home, saw the streets burning. Allan also saw the armed groups roaming the streets. He saw a group of men attempting to molest a woman, but he was not in a position to intervene. It is to be noted in this context that the weaponisation of rape during the riots is widely reported; women and children suffer the most during and after a riot (Khanna and Shah 1). Allan was shocked when he saw some police personnel sitting idly, watching the outbreak of violence. The apathy and complicity of some officers who were part of the law enforcement

agency are revealed in this scene. The crowd was hurling crude kerosene bombs at the houses of Muslims. One bomb fell inside the house of Shernaz, and her children ran out in panic. Eventually, the mob forced open the doors and charged inside. Shernaz ran out of her house with her children to escape the fire. In these scenes, the director uses parallel editing. The scenes depicting Cyrus's attempts to reach his house are interspersed with scenes depicting Shernaz's attempts to save her children. The film uses rapid cuts to depict the intensity of violence. The trauma of Shernaz is conveyed using close-up shots.

The police barricaded the street, and as a result, Cyrus could not reach his house on time. The police stopped him, and he sought their help to save the members of his family who were under attack. Cyrus saw a wounded man with his daughter, pleading to a police officer for help, but his requests were ignored. Then, Cyrus requested the officer to let him go to his house in Behrampura because his wife and children were alone there.

Shernaz went to the house of Sheela, their Hindu neighbour, with whom she was on good terms. Shernaz had noticed that the rioters were hurling bombs only at certain houses, revealing a deliberate pattern of violence. Shernaz knocked at the door of Sheela's house, begging her to save her children's lives. Even though Sheela wanted to help her, she was prevented from doing so by her father, whose logic was that if they let them in, their house would also be targeted by the rioters. Sheela did want to help because of her sisterly relationship with her neighbour, and their religious identities did not affect their relationship. It was the man in the house who did not let her act the way she wanted, and in the case of patriarchal households,

women often have to obey the men in the house. Sheela's father's unwillingness to save the lives of his neighbour makes him complicit, and his action is one of the powerful illustrations of passive violence in this film. He is a typical implicated subject without empathy and compassion.

As the members of the mob were climbing up the stairs, Khan Saheb went out and implored the crowd to stop the destruction spree, but he was stabbed to death. The members of the mob rushed to the houses they had already identified as potential targets. Shernaz could hear the cries of men, women and children, and out of sheer desperation, she ran out of her house. She appealed to the crowd to spare them since they were Parsis and not Muslims. Hearing these words, one rioter hurled a petrol bomb at her, saying Parsis could make a fire temple using this fire. The mob's sheer apathy and lack of humanity are revealed by this incident. Another rioter gave the order to catch her, and she held the hands of her daughter, ran away in panic and asked Parzan Pithawala to follow them. When Parzan, unable to run out of fear, cried out for help, Shernaz turned back, but a rioter with a sword stood in between, blocking her way. When the rioters came from both sides to kill her, she jumped out of the first floor. Her daughter Dilshad ran away, and Shernaz followed her. Eventually, she got separated from her son. The mob chased Shernaz, but she was saved by Chottu, who gave her a saffron shawl and told the violent mob that she was his sister. He distracted them by saying that a violent mob was attacking his house, and he needed them to help his family. Shernaz and Dilshad hid behind the bushes and were forced to witness murder and rape. Shernaz wanted to go back looking for Parzan and asked Dilshad to be a brave girl and stay quiet until she

returned. Dilshad, who was scared after witnessing horrendous violence, told her mother that she was terrified and begged her to stay with her. She also told her mother that Parzan might have escaped, and she would not be able to come back alive because they would kill her if given an opportunity. Her voice was breaking because of her intense trauma. Her body language and the inflexions in her voice reveal her intense psychological distress.

After a few hours, Chottu returned to the spot with Cyrus, and the members of the family were reunited. Shernaz wept bitterly when she saw Cyrus. They returned to their scorched and destroyed house, looking for Parzan, but even after searching the entire house, they did not find him anywhere. Dilshad prayed to God to bring Parzan back. Spirituality can give a healing touch, and prayers often have a cathartic effect. While searching for Parzan, Shernaz saw the dead body of Khan Saheb lying on the steps. She had earlier promised him a new blanket as a birthday gift, and she, with tears welling up in her eyes, covered his body with a blanket.

Different episodes in the film illustrate how the rioters systematically determined their targets. The rioters categorised people based on their religious identities. Chagan was a local miscreant who sold illicit liquor and movie tickets on the black market. He lived with his nephew, Mr Chottu, who was his assistant. The rioters surrounded Chagan as he was returning home from the cinema on the day of the riots, but he was spared because the locket that he wore revealed his religious identity. Out of fear, he asked the rioters to spare him, a Hindu, and go and kill the Muslims in the locality. On the day of the riots, markers of faith were bane and boon in different contexts depending on the nature and affiliations of the mob that was out

on the street. In a polarised environment, some people would be forced to choose sides and join the mob to ensure their safety. Chottu joined the rioting mob, searching houses and looking for people hiding inside. He happened to spot Nikhat hiding behind a curtain. She silently pleaded to him for help, and Chottu gave her his saffron shawl. When other members of the group saw her, he assured them that she was a Hindu, and he felt so relieved since he could save a life. The intense trauma of Nikhat is portrayed in the film using close-up shots.

The film then records the events seven days after the riots. The victims and survivors were shifted to makeshift refugee camps set up by the government and non-government agencies. Shernaz and Nikhat ended up in the same camp. They hugged each other and wept, but they were unable to speak because of their intense trauma. Their silence is evocative since it encapsulates their grief and sorrow. Nikhat told Shernaz that she had not seen her husband, Asif, after the riots. She added that her relatives, Sulaiman, Imtiaz and Khan Saheb, were murdered by the rioters. Shernaz prayed to God to keep her son safe wherever he was.

Shernaz knew that those associated with one Parishad were among the rioters, and she approached them with a request to help her find her son. They offered to help her only if she signed an affidavit, according to which their workers took control when the riots broke out, and they rescued her and her family. They also asked her to sign a document which authorised them to look for her son. This episode reveals how certain powerful groups created false narratives legitimising their actions. The creation of such a climate of impunity is one instance of cultural violence in the film. Violence is normalised and made invisible with the forced

consent of the victims. Being forced to lie about the violence reveals the lack of agency of the survivors. Even days after the end of the riots, the victims felt weak and helpless, mainly because of the failure of the establishment to ensure safety and justice.

Shernaz went to the press office of a prominent newspaper, *the Gujarat Chronicle*, seeking help locating her missing son. The journalist there was willing to help her, and he asked her to give him a detailed account of the violence on that day, but she confessed that she was too emotionally overwhelmed to talk about it. She also added that she was not looking for retaliation and retribution and only wanted to get her son back. The next day, the newspaper printed Parzan's photo on the front page. Chottu, who was working as a newspaper boy, felt very sad and disturbed because he was the one who saved the life of Shernaz by helping her disguise her identity with a saffron shawl. He rushed to his uncle's house, showed him the news report about the Parsi boy who went missing during the riots, shouted at him, and urged him to act morally and responsibly.

Asif told Nikhat that they had arranged separate accommodation for them. She insisted that Cyrus and his family would also move with them, but to her shock, Asif replied that only Muslims would be shifted. However, she insisted that Cyrus and Shernaz were also part of the community (*Parzania* 01:06:17–21). This scene reveals how violence often creates division and distrust along communal lines. It is worth noting that even in times of polarisation and conflict, many ordinary individuals like Nikhat uphold communal amity and harmony. The film suggests that such individuals play a crucial role in strengthening the secular fabric of society.

Asif and a few others were collecting swords and weapons and preparing a plan to attack Hindu-dominated areas. Nikhat tried to convince Asif that what he was doing was not right. Asif told her that the rioters had butchered his peace-loving father, and he needed to take vengeance on his behalf. This incident in the film shows how some victims become perpetrators. Nikhat eventually was able to convince Asif to back off from his plan by reminding him that it was a Hindu man who saved her life. She convinced him to go after the perpetrators, but not with a sword. They decided to take the legal route in their fight for justice.

The inmates in the camp, including Cyrus, often visited the police station seeking help to find out their loved ones who went missing after the riots. Cyrus was not able to control his emotions upon witnessing the apathy of the police officers, and he prayed to God to help him manage his feelings and to give him the strength to survive this crisis. He saw another man at the police station who was seeking the help of the officers to locate his wife, and another woman who begged the officers to find out her husband, who had gone missing seven days before. Because of his intense trauma, Cyrus had some strange hallucinations. He felt that Parzan was at the station, but to his dismay, he later realised that it was some other boy. Cyrus continued pleading for help and assistance from the police officer, whose refusal to take his attention away from the food he was having betrayed his apathy. When Cyrus repeatedly said that he had lost his son, the police officer said that such things might happen at times and that it was not a big deal. When Cyrus showed the police officer the photograph of Parzan, which was kept in his purse, the police officer took all the money from the purse. Cyrus observed that this officer, who demanded bribes

from these helpless men and women, was not human but an animal. When Cyrus looked at Parzan's photograph, memories from his past began to resurface. The images of his son flickered in his mind, leaving him with mixed emotions. The police officer then threw him out of the station. Cyrus felt numb and paralysed as he walked out of the police station. Out on the streets, he saw dead bodies rotting, and he started looking for the dead body of his son, whom he feared might be dead. The photograph of Gandhi, which was hanging in the police station, is zoomed in, and the film suggests the irony of violence taking place in the land of Gandhi, who stood for non-violence all his life.

Different individuals have different ways of managing their trauma. Some may turn to spirituality, whereas others may seek refuge in substance abuse. Allan started suffering from vicarious trauma after witnessing instances of rape and murder from close quarters. Unable to cope with his trauma, he started drinking liquor profusely. Because of his empathy, he felt attached to the victims and started closely following the updates about the riots. From the television news telecast, he came to know that over a thousand people were killed in the riots, and over a hundred thousand people had been displaced since their houses were destroyed partially or totally. Allan could not manage his anger and frustration, so he threw his shoes at the radio. He became so angry when he saw the photograph of some leaders, who had abetted the violence, pasted on the walls, that he started tearing them down. The mob caught Allan as he was burning the posters and severely beat him. Allan lay in the street in a semi-conscious state, and the memories of the sad faces of the victims and survivors haunted him. As he was lying unconscious on the

street, the Gandhian, Jayaraman, approached him. When Allan started weeping profusely, Jayaraman gave him books by Gandhi and told him that these books would heal him. He also added that Allan should respond and fight back using the typewriter; by doing so, he could become a part of the peace initiative. He told Allan the way Gandhi responded to the mindless violence after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919. Gandhi did not resort to violence to respond to violence. He returned the gold coins given to him by the British for his meritorious work in South Africa with a letter in which he had written that he could not respect a government that was committing one wrong deed after another. Returning the coin was a powerful but non-violent method of resistance. Jayaraman reminded Allan that violence, on the one hand, and self-destruction and self-isolation, on the other hand, are not the ways to deal with violence and loss (*Parzania* 01:03:05–28).

Allan went to the refugee camp to spend time with his friend Cyrus, and they overheard a conversation between a few inmates there scheming retaliatory attacks. Asif and his friends were hatching a plot to make targeted attacks on the houses and establishments of the members of the majority community. Asif held that nobody had the right to be evicted from their homes, and they had lost everything. They had to watch helplessly when their loved ones were being murdered. The rioters did not even spare his old father, the most peaceful man he had ever seen. He reasoned that they had to do something to restore their dignity and pride. Allan realised that there are two mutually exclusive ways to respond to violence: one based on non-violence and the other based on violence.

Allan had repaired Cyrus's house and went to the relief camp to bring Cyrus

and his family back home. Cyrus hugged Allan, and the intensity of his emotional turmoil was communicated nonverbally. Allan got many copies of the notice prepared to get some information about Parzan printed. The man who ran the photostat shop refused to take money, and he took one poster and pasted it on the wall of his shop. The film celebrates such acts of kindness and conveys that peace is the norm and violence is only an exception.

Allan did his best to help Cyrus, Shernaz, and Dilshad. He asked Dilsahd to help him paint the walls of the house. Art is cathartic and can expedite the healing process. When Dilshad brought him his liquor bottle, Allan put it in the dustbin and said he would not drink any more. Gandhi's vision, as expressed in his books, transformed Allan's thought processes, giving him a new vision and a new purpose in his life.

After carefully analysing the pattern of the riots, Allan concluded that the riots were more than a backlash. He reasoned that it would have been impossible to mobilise such a large mob within a short period without prior planning. He also held that there were many instances of structural violence during the riots. The rioters had accessed official documents like the electoral roll and knew which houses and establishments to target. He was convinced that the failure of the law and order machinery to curb violence was partly due to the complicity of some of the officers at the top. Allan started writing articles and sharing his findings with the world, and one day, he received a threatening phone call. He was warned that if he spoke or wrote about the riots, he would be cut to pieces.

After a few days, the police found a boy and informed the parents that they had found Parzan. The close-up shot of the faces and hands as they were having this conversation via phone reveals the trauma of the parents. The parents rushed to the police station, but to their dismay, the boy was not Parzan. Shernaz told the police officer they did not find Parzan because they did not care, and she refused to leave the station until they brought Parzan back. She was frustrated because she felt that nobody cared about her suffering. Trauma often leads to the collapse of trust. Overwhelmed by sorrow, she could not manage her grief, and she went to the bathroom and wept bitterly.

Since no information about Parzan was forthcoming, Cyrus became emotionally distraught and turned to spirituality for succour. The spiritual guru advised Cyrus to repose his faith in Ahura Mazda, the creator deity in their religion, and to seek help from him. He also asked Cyrus to follow a path of complete purification to receive spiritual guidance. He instructed Cyrus to wear the sacred girdle, *kushti*, to follow the sacred path, and to cleanse himself of all impurities by avoiding bad words, deeds and thoughts. He also insisted that Cyrus must undergo complete seclusion for nine days and nine nights. He assured Cyrus that he would get all his answers on the ninth day.

Cyrus assured Dilshad that Parzan would come home on the ninth day. Shernaz felt helpless as she knew that giving her daughter false hopes would only further worsen her mental condition. Since Cyrus had immersed himself in a world of spirituality and left home to lead a secluded life, Shernaz and Dilshad felt all the more alienated. Parzan had promised to tie a *rakhi* on Dilshad's hand and to protect

her for the rest of his life, but she started weeping because Parzan was not at home on the *rakhi* day. Dilshad started marking each day behind the curtain and prayed to God to save Parzan from the evil eye. Shernaz had a quick flashback when she took the rice to prepare food. The memory of a day the family spent happily in the kitchen returned to her. This scene is shown in black and white, and this colour scheme helps the director suggest that those days of happiness and togetherness will never return. Shernaz feared her daughter would be devastated when Parzan would not return, as her father had promised her. She sought Allan's help to face this crisis. Allan told her she was the most determined woman he had ever met, and he assured her that God would give her strength to carry her burden. Allan realised that spirituality was very empowering. He was puzzled by the fact that, in one case, religion was used as a tool to polarise people, and on the other hand, religion was a tool to empower people in crisis.

Cyrus started his life of seclusion, and he did not eat anything. He could not sleep because he had terrible nightmares. Having such nightmares is a symptom of psychological trauma. He became so tired that somebody offered him a cup of water, but he washed his face using the water and refused to drink it. He went to the now-closed movie theatre and made a phone call home. Shernaz insisted that he should come home immediately because Dilshad needed his company, but he told her that he would return after he ended his fast. He prayed to God to give him strength and to fulfil his needs. While sitting in the theatre, he had a strange hallucination. He felt that somebody was operating the projector, and he was watching a video about his own life. He saw images of Parzan on the screen. Images of those happy family

moments flickered on the screen. All these images are in black and white, and this colour tone suggests the impending tragedy. The last image on the screen was Parzan's body, which was covered in a shroud. He also saw vultures hovering around the dead body. He started weeping as he saw the images of vultures swooping down and Dilshad crying loudly. This scene ends with a montage. The shots depicting the swooping down of the vultures are interspersed with the rioters chasing innocent men and women on the streets.

The film highlights the fact-finding mission undertaken by the National Human Rights Agency. The agency tried to document instances of human rights violations during the riots. Many victims and survivors, including Shernaz and Allan, came to depose before the commission. The commission assured the victims that it would study the events on 28 February 2002. After recording the statements of the survivors and the officers in charge of law and order, a detailed report would be submitted to the government. The members of the commission asked a man who was wearing a skull cap to present his testimony. He said that when the riots started, there were no policemen in the locality, but soon after, the police came and took charge of the situation. The camera zooms in on the smug smiles on the faces of the police officers. Then, a Muslim woman came forward and testified that the police and the Parishad workers saved her life. Allan realised that these victims were threatened and coerced into presenting fake testimonies before the commission. Since high-ranking officers and the leaders of the Parishad were present in the hall, the victims felt intimidated. Shernaz and Allan were profoundly shocked and troubled by these developments.

In the second hearing of NHRC, Chagan came forward and confessed that he decided to testify because his nephew convinced him to stand up for justice. Chagan testified that on 28 February 2002, he saw an armed crowd carrying swords and fire bottles roaming the street. The commission asked him about the role played by the police when violence erupted. He replied that he saw many people pleading with the police for help, but the officers refused to help them. He later added that he could not do anything because the crowd was huge. The mob also surrounded him, but he was spared because he revealed his religious and cultural identity. He confessed that he was complicit in the crimes committed because, under duress, he gave the rioters the address of the Muslims in the neighbourhood. He was overcome with remorse since he held himself responsible for the deaths of the Muslims in his locality. He suffered from guilt consciousness, which resulted in the formation of trauma. He confessed that he did not deserve to be alive and wept bitterly.

Asif also decided to shun violence under the influence of his wife. He opted to take the legal route to justice and came to attend the NHRC hearing. He told the commission that he informed the police when the riots broke out. Even though he received assurances that they would be protected, they received no help when violence erupted. He had to stand and watch as men and women in his family were attacked and killed.

Emboldened and reassured by these new developments, a Muslim woman stood up and testified that she received no help from the police personnel when the crowd went on a destruction spree. The police officer showed her the newspaper report about the Godhra train carnage and told her that if her people had not done

this, her people would not have suffered like this (*Parzania* 01:40:28–31). She was also threatened that everyone in her family would be killed if she dared to take the legal route. She added that when she begged for help again and again, the police officers started laughing, which betrayed their complicity and lack of empathy. A doctor also came forward and testified that the rioters had even blocked the ambulances. One woman told the commission that she witnessed her daughter being raped. She saw truckloads of dead bodies being carried away. She also added that she saw them pushing hundreds of men into wells. Later, kerosene was poured in, and these men were burnt to death.

Shernaz also gave a detailed testimony before the commission. She told them that on the fateful day, the police announced via loudspeaker that everything was under control and everyone was safe. However, immediately after the police left, a vast crowd assembled in the street and broke into their housing society. She saw thousands of men coming from all directions. They could not defend themselves because they had no weapons. She could identify Shankar, a police constable who was the best friend of her husband, in the crowd, and he even tried to attack them only because they practised a different religion. Even the neighbours' houses, whose doors were always kept open for them, remained closed, and nobody came to help them. They feigned deafness and ignored her repeated pleas to save at least the lives of her children. Shernaz stated that it was because of the failure of the institutions that they had to endure so much suffering. When it was stated that she and other victims had already been compensated, she asked them how death and loss could ever be compensated. She reminded them that money could bring back chairs and

furniture, but not resurrect the dead. Their life had become meaningless, and because of their trauma, members of the family could not communicate with each other. Her husband behaved like a madman, and whenever he was asked to identify a dead body, he went with the hope that it would not be that of his missing son. Her daughter was waiting for the return of her brother, and she had to fake happiness because otherwise, her daughter would be devastated. She added that she would not forget what she had witnessed. She would have to live with those demons for the rest of her life. As an ordinary housewife, she only wanted to live happily with her children, but her only son was fading away. He told the commission that she did not want to live with his memories; she wanted him. She wanted to hold him, feed him and scold him. She said that she would wait for his return.

The film ends with Allan's commentary on the riots and their aftermath. He was sad to see Cyrus's predicament, as even after two years, he was still searching for Parzan. He decided to convert his thesis to a book with the title Parzania, and in that book, he decided to write about buildings made of chocolate, mountains made of ice cream, and a world where no one would kill one another. The film ends with an intertitle in which it is written that the film is based on the true story of Ahar Mody, a Parsi boy who went missing after the 2002 riots.

Firaaq, a political thriller released in 2008, attempts to probe into the intersectional dynamics of communal violence and trauma. The title of the film signifies both quest and separation. The film's title encapsulates its thematic concerns in that it showcases the separation among communities and classes, which triggered and fueled a series of communal skirmishes. The film emphasises the need

for a collective quest to restore communal harmony. Though the film is fictional, the plot unravels against the background of the terrible communal violence during the post-Godhra riots in Gujarat in 2002. The director claims that the film is based on “a thousand true stories” (N. Das, “Direction”). Through the film, the director tries to understand “the complex and violent world we inhabit” and emphasises “a palpable need for peace” (N. Das, “Direction”). The film's plot is set on a day one month after the riots. It focuses on the different ways in which riots affect victims, bystanders and perpetrators. The film illustrates “how people negotiate a barbed journey to acknowledge and recover from the trauma of communal violence, construct a sense of collective belonging, and engage with ethical introspection at the cusp of the individual and the collective” (N. Haider, “Framing History” 149). The film sheds light on the interplay of class, caste, and communal identities and how they structure ordinary individuals’ experiences during, before, and after the riots.

Firaaq narrates five independent yet interrelated stories of victims, perpetrators and spectators of the horrid instances of communal violence in Gujarat in 2002. Its storyline is “fragmented, jagged, and therefore unsettling” (N. Haider, “Framing History” 149). The film starts with the shocking and traumatising images of a graveyard and a truckload of dead bodies of men, women and children in civilian clothes. The opening images of this grave and gravediggers standing amid piles of dead bodies may evoke in a spectator multiple emotions ranging from extreme disgust to intense trauma. The physical and emotional burden associated with death is reflected in the face of the middle-aged man, who is shown as lifting and, at times, even dragging dead bodies into the mass grave dug by his nephew.

The skull caps worn by the gravediggers and the long beards sported by some among the dead are two prominent religious markers which assume added significance as the plot unfolds and the multiple layers of communal violence are gradually unravelled. The slow pace of the opening scenes, both literally and figuratively, communicates the numbness associated with death and decay caused by the riots. The silence of the two helpless and hapless gravediggers communicates the intensity of their traumatisation. The arrival of more trucks carrying dead bodies intensifies the gloom which pervades the scene. That the dignity that a human being deserves is denied to these hundreds of dead men, women, and children is apparent. That many of these bodies were mutilated and burnt was to be seen as a part of a larger design to deny the victims their religious and cultural identity even after death. The images of death and destruction presented in the opening scenes are so horrid and ghastly that they may trigger "vicarious trauma" in an empathetic spectator (McCann and Pearlman 133). Individuals who have been indirectly exposed to trauma through their relationship with the traumatised individuals may also show deep emotional distress and complex psychological crises. McCann and Pearlman argue that empathy and empathetic engagement with the suffering of others may lead to the formation of secondary traumatic stress (133). They developed the paradigm of vicarious trauma to refer to this condition. Those suffering from vicarious trauma may suffer from severe emotional distress.

The young gravedigger who was searching for the dead body of his sister Saina happened to see the dead body of a woman who carried the symbolic markings of a Hindu woman. The uncle, in a fit of frenzy, tried to attack the dead

body, assuming that it was that of a person from another faith. Such a reaction by this middle-aged man clearly illustrates the severe damage caused by the riots to the relationships between various communities. One significant outcome of trauma is the increased possibility of a victim turning out to be a victimiser (Ryan 325). This scene is also relevant since it highlights the fact that members belonging to various communities lost their lives during the riots.

The uncle and the nephew constantly pray to God, and they try to assuage their pain by seeking help from God. As Visser has argued in her article “Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects”, in many postcolonial societies, trauma victims turn to religion and spirituality when confronted with traumatogenic events in their lives (261). In the film, the characters feel relieved after offering prayers to God for the power to grapple with their loss and the energy to continue their lives.

The first story narrated in the film focuses on Munira and her family, whose house was looted and later burnt by the rioters. The couple, like many others belonging to the socially and financially marginalised sections within the minority communities, fled to a neighbouring town when the riots broke out. While on their journey back home, one month after the riots, Munira was concerned about the damage caused to her house by the rioters. When she saw the charred belongings in her house, she could not control her tears and collapsed on the floor. The victims of trauma are often plagued by self-doubt and start blaming themselves (Germer and Neff 45). Munira blamed her husband for not buying a new lock and holds him responsible for their loss. The husband also started weeping and complaining. The

charred currency notes in Munira's house serve as a metaphor for the adverse economic impact of the riots. Severe trauma may adversely affect human relationships (Germer and Neff 46). Munira and her husband started blaming each other, and her husband physically assaulted Munira. After confronting the loss of livelihood and proper accommodation, Munira and her husband experienced a range of conflicting emotions, such as anger, fear, despair, and helplessness. They lost their sense of security because of the disruption caused by the communal unrest.

The riots and the destruction strained the relationship between Munira and her Hindu neighbour, Jyothi. Jyothi brought Munira some food, yet her confession that she had to hide it from her mother points to the emotional gap between the communities. Munira suspected that Jyothi was somehow complicit in looting her house and looked suspiciously at Jyothi's actions. She also supposed that her gold pendant might be in Jyothi's custody. Jyothi tried to console her and offered to take her along for a mehendi job.

Munira had to wear a *bindi* at the wedding house to conceal her religious identity. This erasure of one's religious markers is a traumatic experience. The victims were forced to wear the markers of another faith, hoping that the appearance of a different kind might save them from further physical and emotional torture. While Munira and Jyothi were returning after *mehndi* work, they were stopped by the police for checking and interrogation. Jyothi looked at Munira's face and consoled her, saying, "Do not worry" (01:12:50–52). She assured Munira that they would be safe since there was a *bindi* on her forehead. When Jyothi and Munira reached their locality, they saw many policemen searching for weapons in Munira's

house. Out of desperation, Munira blurted out that the police had failed to arrest the culprits who had vandalised her house (*Firaaq* 01:21:56–58). The failure of various government institutions, including the police, to contain the riots has significantly eroded public trust in these structures of power. The above observation of Munira bears testimony to the erosion of public trust in state-run institutions. Jyothi's willingness to reach out and help Munira proves that many ordinary men and women see violence as an exception and not as the norm. Munira and Jyothi regain their trust, and in the next scene, Munira is seen weeping, and she regrets having suspected Jyothi. Letting out one's intense emotions has cathartic effects, and Munira feels relieved after weeping bitterly.

Hanifa, Munira’s embittered husband and his friends decided to get a gun and take revenge against those who were responsible for destroying their properties and murdering their friends and relatives. The young gravedigger confessed that his wife accompanied their child even to the toilet since she was terrified after the riots. Hanifa saw some policemen emptying the cans filled with water. He felt that the officers were adding to their woes through such actions (*Firaaq* 00:49:15–22). This incident serves as another illustration of structural violence in this film.

The shop of Sulaiman, who was with Hanif, was looted and destroyed by the rioters. Almost all of Hanif's friends were affected by the riots in one way or another. All of them thought that they needed a pistol to defend themselves since they felt insecure. They managed to get a pistol. A young man with them, who was mentally ill, accidentally pulled the trigger, and in a matter of a few seconds, the entire area was surrounded and cordoned off by the police. Hanifa started running with Mohsin

to avoid being caught, but the police chased them. When the policeman returned, Hanif hid beside a house in an area that looked like a part of the town where middle-class families lived. A middle-aged man living on the house's first floor came out and saw this man standing below the first floor, hiding from the police. He went inside, came back with a massive brick and dropped it on his head, killing him. The mutual distrust and the atmosphere of fear created this ecosystem that paved the way for the eruption of such instances of spontaneous and uncalled-for violence. Mohsin, the young orphan boy whose father was murdered by the rioters one month before, was a mute spectator to this orgy of violence unfolding before his eyes. The constant exposure to instances of multiple violence took its toll on the young boy.

The film suddenly cuts to a different storyline. The camera zooms in on an extreme close-up of a man from the majority community eating his meal and complaining that his wife had once again forgotten to add salt to the curry (*Firaaq* 00:09:13–15). Riots impacted every family and every individual in the affected areas, albeit in different ways depending on their political, religious, and caste affiliations. In the case of many families belonging to the minority community, the quantum of loss was severe since many families lost people, property, and livelihood. The riots indirectly affected the victims, the perpetrators and the bystanders. For instance, the imposition of the curfew and the destruction of the shops led to a steep rise in the prices of commodities. Aarti's father-in-law, who was bedridden, complained that he no longer gets delicious food because of these riots.

Aarti is seen as disturbed and deeply frustrated since she had terrible hallucinations. She often heard the knocking sound, and when she opened the door,

to her dismay, she found no one standing outside. Her husband's condescending remarks that his wife had gone "crazy" betray his lack of empathy (*Firaaq* 00:09:40). Sanjay, Aarti's husband, while watching television reports about the riots, observed that the journalists on English language Channels were "bloody liars" (*Firaaq* 00:10:00–04). It turns out that Sanjay's friend was directly involved in the riots. He had raped women belonging to the minority community during the riots, and he was perturbed by the fear that a police case might be registered against him. Sanjay said the issue could be easily settled by bribing the authorities with a liquor bottle. Aarti was unable to articulate her ideas, having been overwhelmed by a host of emotions. In a quick flashback, it is revealed that the trigger of Aarti's trauma is her sense of guilt. On the day of the riots, her Muslim neighbour pleaded with her to open the door, but she could not help her on that day since she had little agency within her house. Aarti punishes herself for the inaction on her part on that eventful day by pouring heated oil on her wrist. Inflicting injury on oneself and other self-destructive behaviours are symptoms of intense psychological trauma (Saxe et al. 313). Aarti is always seen watching those channels covering the riots, which attests to her deep empathy for the victims. Watching the reports about the suffering of the survivors intensified her trauma that was triggered by her sense of guilt, which was caused by her action of not saving the lives of her Muslim neighbours on the day of the riots. One day, a report she saw on television served as a trigger for the eruption of trauma, and she slipped into a quick flashback. When she was about to open the door of her house, she hallucinated and saw a woman with folded hands seeking help.

Aarti decided to heal herself by bringing to her house an orphaned Muslim boy, Mohsin, whom she accidentally met in the street when she went out to buy some vegetables. She lied to her father-in-law, saying the new servant was a Hindu boy named Mohan. Mohsin later narrated his story to Aarti. A group attacked his house and killed and burnt his mother, his brother, his sister and his uncle. He witnessed brutal rape and murder. He told her that the rioters did not take off men's clothes. He escaped by hiding in a garbage bag, and after the riots, he was taken to the rehabilitation camp set up in the town to resettle the victims. Mohsin is searching for his father, who was away at the markets when the rioters barged into their house.

Sanjay's friend was one among the many who used the riots as a pretext to satisfy their libidinal desires by raping the helpless women during the riots. He commented that these women might not lose their honour since they had no honour in the first place (*Firaaq* 00:44:24–27). He thrashed Aarti, who listened to their conversation when she blurted out that her husband and his friend had no sense of honour (*Firaaq* 00:44:29–31). Mohsin witnessed this instance of domestic abuse, and he was so terribly frightened that he ran out of the house into the street. A shocking episode in the film is one in which poor Mohsin is physically harassed by a group of youngsters. They humiliated him and forcefully grabbed his berries. This lack of empathy, even for the helpless orphans, bears testimony to the inner rift present in some individuals, even one month after the end of the riots. That Aarti regains her agency later, as is made evident by her decision to go out in an auto, looking for Mohsin, is relevant since it points to the possibility of post-traumatic growth.

Another story narrated in the film is that of a Muslim music maestro named Khan Saheb, who lived with his servant in a predominantly Hindu locality. He taught music to music lovers irrespective of their religion. After the riots, he asked his servant to prepare the *baithak* for music lessons since he was optimistic that things would improve and people would eventually turn up for his sessions. Khan Saheb seemed to be entirely oblivious to the gravity of the riots since he was living in Mirabagh society, which was not directly affected by the riots. Khan Saheb was deeply disturbed when he realised that the rioters had destroyed the shrine of Wali Gujarati, a renowned Sufi saint who was loved and respected by all. The destruction of this shrine symbolically stands for the destruction of communal amity and harmony. This act also lays bare the design of the rioters to erase history by destroying the cultural markers of the other community. Sites such as this shrine stood as a testimony to the syncretic culture of the state because they were visited and revered by members of different religions. The attempt to desecrate and destroy it may be interpreted as an attempt to challenge the syncretic culture and the legacy of communal harmony of Gujarat. Khan Saheb's traumatisation emanating from this sad realisation is symbolically represented by the scene in which a speeding motorcyclist almost hits Khan Saheb, who was standing on the road beside the shrine.

Khan Saheb watched television news reports about the riots and was deeply moved by the suffering of the victims. He came to know that many affected families were left with only one surviving member after the riots. His servant cut his fingers while watching the news telecast about the riots. This shedding of a drop of blood

alludes to the large-scale spilling of blood during the riots. The music maestro was so shocked and dismayed by these developments that he cancelled the music sessions. Even Khan Saheb, who espoused the cause of universal humanity, seemed to run out of hope after witnessing the large-scale destruction of persons and property. He started doubting the power of music in times of unrest and decided to cancel his music sessions (*Firaaq* 01:20:13–16).

Over time, the situation improved, and some music lovers returned to the *baithak*. Khan Saheb started giving music lessons to his Hindu neighbour's daughter. The director seems to argue that music and art can bring communities together. The resumption of the music classes also carries symbolic overtones. It suggests that normalcy and harmony will be restored eventually.

The film then transitions to the story of an interreligious couple, Sameer Shaikh and Anuradha Desai. Sameer is a non-practising Muslim who is married to a Hindu girl. He uses his wife's surname, Desai, and lives with his wife's family. After the riots, he decided to relocate to Delhi with his wife, hoping that such a relocation to a new area would bring some sense of closure to his physical and emotional insecurity. The fact that his wife’s brother’s shop was targeted by rioters solely because he, a Muslim, was his silent partner deeply hurt him. Sameer's insecurity, owing to his religious identity, came to the fore when he gave a few currency notes to the motorcycle driver after his bike hit their car. After the riots, whereas his wife's family preferred to watch entertainment programmes on television, as though everything continued as usual, Sameer changed the channels. He tuned into English channels covering the riots. The apathy of the middle class towards the suffering of

the victims is made evident by this scene. He was further traumatised when he listened to the reports about the torture the victims suffered during the riots. Though Sameer was not a practising Muslim, he started identifying with the plight of the Muslims after the riots. He confessed, “I don’t know when me became we” (*Firaaq* 00:27:26–30). Cultural identity defines individuals in more ways than one, whether they acknowledge it or not. He was perturbed by the fact that mainstream society held him responsible and treated him like a terrorist when someone from his community hurled a bomb at someone somewhere. “Collectively blaming groups for the actions of individuals” leads to the formation of negative attitudes towards the members of that community (Bruneau et al. 430). Such negative attitudes increase the possibility of the members of that community getting targeted.

One's religious and political affiliations may influence one's opinions and views. Sameer’s wife’s sister attempts to rationalise violence: “There are always two sides to a coin” and “if those people had not started this violence, things would not have been this bad” (*Firaaq* 00:38:36–40). The film seems to suggest that passive acceptance of violence often lends legitimacy to heinous crimes.

Erasing one's religious and cultural markers gives individuals living in a polarised society a false sense of security. Sameer hides his Muslim identity by using his wife’s surname, Desai. He confessed to his wife that he stayed quiet on the day of the riots since he was too scared to open his mouth. Sameer told his brother-in-law that he paid eight hundred rupees to a motorcyclist who rammed into his car on account of his insecurity and fear. He started addressing his deep-rooted worries. He realised that his religious affiliation made him vulnerable, and it was out of fear

that he had changed his surname from Shaikh to Desai. He feared that someone would strip-search him and his true religious and cultural identity would be revealed.

Sameer realised that many ordinary men in society were deeply prejudiced against the members of the other faith after his brief conversation with a shopkeeper selling tea. The shopkeeper, a Hindu, lamented that his assistant Chottiya went missing after the riots, and he held Muslims accountable for the violence. He also added that all Muslims were violent because violence was in their blood. He considered all Muslims to be "*jihadists"* and inherently violent (*Firaaq* 01:08:17–20). The shopkeeper's views were shared by many others in that society at that time. Holding everyone in a community responsible decreases the possibility of empathetic engagement. Many others at that shop at that time endorsed the shopkeeper's view. This incident, in which some odd individuals express unsubstantiated claims about the members of another community, is one instance of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence, unlike direct violence, is not a physical form of violence, yet its impact could be far-reaching. Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as a "gentle invisible form of violence, which is never recognised as such" (*Outline of a Theory* 192). Symbolic violence is expressed as 'doxa', the "shared beliefs which constitute fields that explain which beliefs, truths, practices and relations are considered 'natural' and 'appropriate' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 108).

The deep-rooted prejudice of many members of society comes to the fore in the next scene, in which Sameer is confronted by a police officer in a public space. Anuradha Desai introduced her husband, Sameer Desai, to the policeman patrolling

the streets. She did not introduce him as Sameer Arshad Shaikh for fear that it would reveal his real religious identity. She feared that the revelation of her husband's Muslim identity could cause problems in the given circumstances. However, Sameer told the policeman that his surname was not Desai but Shaikh. Then the policeman asked him to go to Pakistan. Anuradha was shocked by this encounter, but Sameer told her how revealing his identity felt "bloody good" (*Firaaq* 01:10:18–20). This episode illustrates the deep chasm that existed between communities.

The way the film deals with violence is commendable. The director of the film, Nandita Das, points out that "most films about riots are full of violence that they set out to critique" (N. Das, "Synopsis"). She argues that too much exposure to violence at the factual or fictional level may have a numbing effect on people. Hence, the prime focus of her film is "the unsettling normalcy of the aftermath. The exploration of the fierce and delicate emotions of fear, anxiety, prejudice and ambivalence in human relationships during such times is what *Firaaq* is all about" ("Synopsis"). The film succeeds in portraying the nuances and layers of violence and depicting individual and collective trauma without incorporating scenes of graphic violence.

Both *Parzania* and *Firaaq* have engaged with communal violence and its legacy. These films depict three different yet closely interrelated and intertwined facets of violence -direct, structural, and cultural violence. Direct violence refers to behaviours and actions that pose a threat to life and may adversely affect the affected individuals' capacity to fulfil their basic needs (Galtung, "Violence" 170). In *Parzania,* the director has included many scenes that portray direct violence. There

are multiple references to the Godhra train carnage, which resulted in the loss of lives of many *karsevaks*. The film also records the use of swords and kerosene bombs by the rioters. The patterns of violence aimed at the destruction of life, honour and means of livelihood are well delineated in the film. The scene that shows Shernaz jumping down from the first floor when armed men chase her is a powerful illustration of the helplessness of the victims when confronted with direct violence. Before the enquiry commission, women survivors testified about several instances of rape and molestation. The scene of the crowd physically torturing Allan when he attempted to burn down the posters of some leaders also reveals the intensity of direct violence. In the film *Firaaq*, there are numerous instances of direct violence. The truckload of dead bodies, which was dumped in the graveyard, as seen in the opening scenes, is a case in point. This synecdochic representation of violence sets the tempo of the entire film. The burning and destruction of Munira's house by the rioters is another instance of direct violence. During riots, houses and buildings owned by the other community are often targeted to destabilise their social and economic status. The looting of shops owned by Sameer Desai attests to the sinister communal design. Though there is no explicit depiction of rapes during the riots in these films, there are many direct and oblique references to them. Aarti's husband's friend confessed that he had raped many women during the riots, and he feared that action might be initiated against him. Sameer Desai was shocked as he watched testimonies of victims on television that revealed the physical and sexual violence that they experienced. Mohsin, the young boy, became an orphan because the rioting mob murdered his father. His testimony that they burnt men but took off the clothes of women testifies to the different modalities of direct violence. A group of young

men bullied young Mohsin, and they snatched the fruits from his hands. The bullying and the continuing emotional manipulation of the victims are well delineated in the film. Both films depict the different modalities of direct violence by representing the words, actions and behaviours of the victimisers that pose a threat to the peaceful life, social security and economic stability of the victims. The film problematises the weaponisation of hatred by some vested interest groups to prevent some individuals and communities from fulfilling their fundamental needs.

Galtung used the term structural violence to refer to the systematic ways in which individuals were denied equal access to services and resources ("Violence" 171). These may be injustice and ill-treatment from the authorities, with or without a legal mandate. The marginalisation by political, cultural, and social structures creates an ecosystem that perpetuates victimisation. *Parzania* illustrates the modalities of structural violence. Allan was shocked to see the rioters misusing government documents like electoral rolls to identify the houses and other properties owned by individuals in a particular community. He also suspected the complicity of some of the officers who might have illegally shared the census data and other vital information with the rioters. This incident is a typical case of structural violence. When Cyrus Pithawalla sought help from a police officer, the officer ignored his pleas even after taking money from his purse. Many other victims who were at the police station demanding justice were denied access to services and resources. In the film *Firaaq*, there are a couple of clear instances of structural violence. Sameer Desai used the surname of his Hindu wife to hide his real identity owing to his apprehension about structural violence. Some police personnel abused Sameer when

he revealed his religious identity. Munira was forced to use costumes which would erase her religious identity to escape from structural violence. Munira had to wear a *bindi* to conceal her religious identity. The film shows the apathy of the police personnel, which adds to the suffering of the victims. The police are seen emptying water cans in front of the houses of members of the minority community.

Galtung used the concept of cultural violence to refer to the prevailing norms, which may create the impression that both structural violence and direct violence are normal and acceptable. Cultural violence serves to "justify or legitimise structural or cultural violence" ("Cultural Violence" 291). Deep-rooted prejudices in society may prevent critical and detached analysis and empathetic engagement. In the film *Parzania*, after hurling a petrol bomb at Shernaz and Dilshad, the rioters smugly remarked that they could build a fire temple using the fire. The statement reveals their apathy, deep-rooted prejudice and contempt for the cultural and religious practices of others. These words of abuse reveal the existence of certain social norms which create polarisation and division in society. That both Nikhat, a Muslim woman, and Shernaz, a Parsi woman, had to drape themselves in saffron shawls in order to ensure their safety also attests to the existence of cultural violence. In the film *Firaaq*, the director attempts to critique the logic of cultural violence. A powerful illustration of cultural violence in the films is the apathy of the members of the middle-class family of Aarti towards the plight of the riot victims. Her bedridden father-in-law's only concern was that, because of these riots, he did not get fresh vegetables. The family members of Sameer Desai's in-laws did not even watch the television news footage of the riots. They felt so detached that they

continued to watch the television serials. For them, violence seemed so normal and natural that they did not even acknowledge it. It is such a cultural ecosystem that prevents a critical engagement with the violence happening around them. The entire community is often held responsible for crimes some odd individuals commit. Sameer Arshad Shaikh shares his apprehension about such a social setting with his Hindu brother-in-law: “It is easy for you to say, if some crazy Hindu fundamentalist kills someone, you don't have to hide, but if some fanatic *jihadi* detonates a bomb anywhere, we all have to hang our heads in shame” (*Firaaq* 00:27:03–14). The use of different yardsticks and frameworks to address violence committed by members of different communities is another telling instance of cultural violence in this film.

Parzania and Firaaq problematise the complex ways in which the institutional machinery is subverted, coerced, and sometimes even made complicit during riots. Paul Brass has vividly examined the “institutionalised riot system”, which enables the outbreak of violence (369). The fact that the rioters were able to locate the shops and houses belonging to a particular community so quickly sheds light on the larger conspiracy behind the orgy of violence. Allan was shocked to learn that the rioters had electoral rolls, which helped them identify their targets. Cyrus’ repeated pleas for help were ignored by the police officer, even after taking money from him. The family members of Anuradha wonder how the rioters were able to locate the shop in which Sameer was only a silent partner. Munira also noted the unequal treatment given to the members of her community by the law establishment. When she saw the police officers raiding her house, she wondered when the police would take action against those who looted and burnt her house.

Both films also depict symbolic violence. Symbolic violence is a form of violence which is “imperceptible and invisible even to its victims” (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 2). It is a kind of violence exerted “for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication” (Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* 3). Violence of this kind is manifested in mutually shared political and cultural assumptions. The film *Parzania* portrays the existing power differentials in society. These power differentials often determine how those with political, social and cultural capital manipulate and distort thinking processes. In the film, the scene in which the police make enquiries about the religious affiliations of students in the vehicle is one instance of symbolic violence. The identification and the subsequent compartmentalisation along communal lines become a means to impose control over certain social groups. The film also problematises the acceptance of structural violence as the norm by the victims, as illustrated by the scene in which some survivors do not acknowledge the failure of the systems to protect them. The subordinate groups also do not raise any complaints about the lack of facilities in the rehabilitation centres to which they were shifted. The naturalisation of suffering is also a feature of symbolic violence. In *Firaaq*, symbolic violence is manifested in many episodes of communal violence. The fact that the victims who live primarily in ghettos and far away from gated colonies receive little to no attention from the agencies is highlighted in the film. The pre-existing structures of marginalisation worsen the traumatic experiences of the affected parties. Munira and Jyothi seem to accept that the differential treatment in the hands of the police is routine. The victims were forced to erase markers of their cultural identity, being victims of “symbolic domination” (Bourdieu, *Language* 72). Bourdieu argues that “symbolic

domination preempts counter-organisation by weakening the weak victims (*Language* 72). He further argues that symbolic power is inextricably linked to symbolic violence. In *Parzania,* Shernaz and Nikhat could save themselves only because they could disguise their religious identity by using the cultural markers associated with a different faith. The film *Firaaq* sheds light on the nuances of the operations of symbolic violence through the stories of Munira, who was forced to conceal her religious identity by wearing a *bindi* on her forehead, and also through that of Sameer, who used his wife's surname Desai instead of his own Shaikh for fear of disclosing his religious and cultural identity. Bourdieu points out that through such symbolic domination, evidence is suppressed, and the identity of surviving victims is weakened (*Language* 72). Through symbolic domination, hegemonic power relations are maintained and strengthened. Both these films include many scenes in which the victims fail to recognise the different ways in which they have been subjugated and mistreated because they think that such social and political inequalities are normal. Both these films take an ethical position by unravelling the modalities of symbolic ways and the different ways in which they make violence look normal and acceptable.

One remarkable feature of these films is their treatment of intersectional modalities of violence and victimisation. The framework of intersectionality is rarely used to study the cinematic and fictional delineation of the social, economic, physical and emotional consequences of political and communal riots in the Indian context. The interconnected and overlapping structures of community, class and gender often influence and, at times, compound the impacts of violence on

individuals and groups. Those with economic and cultural capital often find means to somehow survive and, at times, start their lives again weeks or months after the riots. Those who are at the penumbra of society because of economic, political and social reasons continue to face the debilitating and crippling impacts of violence for years. In the film *Parzania*, most victims belong to the middle or lower-middle class. Their socio-economic condition, along with their religious identities, limits their mobility and restricts their choices when a riot breaks out, as is seen in this film. As revealed from the testimonies of victims before the commission, women suffered more than men because of their disadvantaged gender position in a patriarchal society. Rape is used as a weapon only against women. Another section that becomes vulnerable when violence breaks out is children. The stories of Parzan and Dilshad illustrate the vulnerability of children during communal violence. When Allan told Cyrus that India had treated him well, Cyrus remarked that it was a privilege given to him on account of the colour of his skin. The film *Firaaq* tells a thousand true stories, which are mostly not interrelated, even though they are all connected by the common thread of violence and victimisation caused by the riots. Munira and her husband lost their place of residence because the rioters burnt it down. The striking image of a shocked and dismayed Munira, holding partially burnt currency notes, encapsulates the economic devastation of the riots on this lower-middle-class family. Helplessness, coupled with a thirst for revenge, made her husband a part of events which eventually ended up in his murder. Munira was forced to erase her religious and cultural markers to continue her job as a mehndi wallah. Mohsin is another character who suffers the most since his possibility of survival is restricted by multiple factors: His father was murdered, and his house

was destroyed. He was forced to witness the rape and murder of his family members. Mohsin is only one among many other children who became victims of the riots. Even Mohsin was forced to erase his religious identity to live in Aarti's house. He was renamed Mohan, which probably significantly increased his chances of survival in a highly polarised society. In a disturbing scene in the film, some young men snatch the fruit he was eating. The film ends with the image of Mohsin running along the street looking for his father, and this stark image encapsulates the quintessence of violence. The musical maestro Khan Saheb was initially unaware of the intensity of the riots since he stayed in a predominantly Hindu neighbourhood. It was only when he came to know about the destruction of the shrine of Wali Gujarati that he realised the impact of violence. His social and cultural capital as a musician and teacher of many music lovers of the majority community saved him from physical losses. Sameer Desai's shop was burnt, but it was insured. Since he belonged to an upper-middle-class family and lived with his Hindu wife's family, his house was unaffected during the riots.

Violence has a gender angle as well. While men were physically assaulted and killed, women were raped, as is made evident both from the testimony of Mohsin and from the many televised footage of riots depicted in both films. The physical locality is also a deciding factor during riots, as pointed out by Jyoti Punani in her article “My Area, Your Area: How Riots Changed the City”. The family of Shernaz and Cyrus came under attack because they were residing in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood. At a later stage, Asif was reluctant to take Cyrus' family to a new accommodation because he belonged to a different religion. Munira in *Firaaq*

was the worst affected by the riots since she lived in a marginalised urban area. Muslim maestro Khan Saheb and Sameer Desai were the least affected because they lived in a predominantly Hindu neighbourhood. Hence, looked at from an intersectional vantage point, different characters suffer differently because specific identities and positionalities often compound the impact of violence.

Crenshaw has classified intersectionality into structural intersectionality, political intersectionality and representational intersectionality. Structural intersectionality refers to the different ways in which social structure, institutions, and practices create and perpetuate different forms of oppression and inequalities (Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins" 1250). The films *Parzania* and *Firaaq* represent the linkages between social structures and their power dynamics, which empower some and marginalise others. The survivors in these two films were oppressed because of the power differentials that existed in society. Political intersectionality looks at violence, power and oppression from a political prism (Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins" 1251). Political structures often mediate intersecting modes and forms of oppression. In the film *Parzania*, the director critiques the attempts of certain political outfits to abet violence and polarise society along communal lines, which resulted in death and destruction. Allan's burning down the posters of some political leaders is an act of resistance against political subversion. In *Firaaq,* Sameer Desai thought about shifting to a different state because he hoped a different political climate would empower him. Children like Parzan in *Parzania* and Mohsin in *Firaaq* had to endure pain and loss because of the failure and complicity of the political institutions. Representational intersectionality looks at the representation of

the issues caused by the intersecting social identities in cultural texts ("Mapping the Margins" 1280). The lack of inclusive representation often leads to the erasure of the experiences of socially and politically disempowered groups. These two films depict the subtle layers of characters' identities, shaped by intersecting social factors such as region, religion, class and gender. They present the characters as multilayered individuals. The shades of grey in characters are highlighted.

Concerning violence, characters in the two films may be broadly categorised into victims, perpetrators and implicated subjects. The film *Parzania* offers an analysis of the physical and psychological impact of violence on victims like Shernaz, Cyrus, Parzan, Dilshad, Asif, Nikhat and Allan. *Firaaq* also mainly focuses on the trauma of the victims like Munira, Sameer, Aarti and Mohsin. The film *Parzania* does not offer a detailed analysis of the psychological motifs of the perpetrators. The multilayered identities of individual perpetrators are not put to rigorous critical scrutiny, even though the film does portray the patterns of mob violence. In the film, the character of Shankar, a close friend of Cyrus, turned against Shernaz and her children during the riots. A friend's sudden and unexpected transformation into a foe under political compulsion is an alarming development. Chagan became a part of the violent mob under compulsion, but at a later stage, he made amends by giving detailed testimony about the riots before the commission. The film *Firaaq* also features some perpetrators, like the husband of Aarti and his friend, who raped Muslim women during the riots. Most of the perpetrators are not named, and the film does not adequately address perpetrator trauma. Michael Rothberg introduced and theorised the concept of "implicated subject" in his much-

debated and discussed book titled *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators*. The implicated subjects may not participate in acts of violence, yet are silent about it. Their situatedness within specific political and social categories gives them privileges and power. He defines implicated subjects as "those who have inherited or otherwise benefited from histories of perpetration" (*Implicated Subject* 83). Sheela's husband in *Parzania*, who refused to help Shernaz when the riots broke out, may be described as an implicated subject. He refused to sympathise even with the children in his neighbourhood, only because they belonged to a different faith. Sameer Desai's wife's relatives in *Firaaq* may also be classified as implicated subjects. They enjoyed all the privileges accorded to members of the upper caste. Their continuous watching of soap operas illustrates their refusal to acknowledge the violence and their inability to sympathise with the victims at a time when English news channels were telecasting the stories of victims. They continue to live their everyday lives as though nothing untoward has happened. That they have not taken part in any acts of violence, unlike the husband of Aarti, is obvious. Nevertheless, their silence and their refusal to acknowledge the pain of others make them implicated subjects. As Rothberg points out, being an implicated subject makes one a part of the problem since "socially constituted ignorance and denial are essential components of implication" (*Implicated Subject* 200).

The two films offer a detailed account of individual and collective trauma. Many symptoms of trauma, as listed in the fifth edition *of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual,* prepared and published by the American Psychological Association, can be seen in many characters in the two films. As per *DSM-5*, Post-

Traumatic Stress Disorder may be caused by “exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence” (271). The manual adds that traumatisation may result from direct exposure and experience of witnessing or learning about the traumatic events (271). Traumatised individuals may suffer from intrusive and recurrent memories about the traumatogenic event, shocking dreams and hallucinations, and dissociative reactions such as flashbacks. Trauma, in Balaev’s analysis, “refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society” (“Trends” 150). Both films portray the emotional responses of the victims, survivors and even some perpetrators to the riots, which was an overwhelming event of high magnitude. They also record and critically interrogate how such a traumatogenic event radically altered the affected individuals’ identities and disrupted their ways of thinking and living. These two films also demonstrate how individual trauma is connected to “larger social factors and cultural values” (Balaev, “Trends” 155). The film *Parzania* offers a comprehensive account of the traumatisation of characters like Cyrus, Shernaz, Nikhat and Allan on account of their unexpected and sudden exposure to violence, death and decay. These individuals also confronted threats of death and were forced to bear witness to sexual violence. These experiences were so intense that they triggered trauma in them. Cyrus often had intrusive memories. While sitting at the theatre, he hallucinated that images of Parzan were displayed on the screen. This is one instance in the film in which the trauma of Cyrus is expressed through recurrent and intrusive memories. Michelle Balaev points out that trauma creates a “speechless fright that divides or destroys identity” (“Trends” 149). Both Cyrus and Shernaz were unable to

speak when they met after the riots because of their intense trauma. Their sense of security was destroyed by their traumatic experience. Allan also suffered from a similar state because of his mental trauma, as exemplified by the scene in which he was unable to explain to Jayaraman what the rioters had done to him. Listening to the stories of trauma may also cause trauma. Allan started suffering from vicarious trauma after learning about the stories of the suffering and loss of thousands of victims. Shernaz suffered from severe psychological distress, which was intense and prolonged after the disappearance of her son. Such mental states are created by traumatic experiences. Cyrus skipped food for many days after the disappearance of his son, and such self-destructive behaviour is a symptom of trauma. Allan sought refuge in liquor after bearing witness to the pain and suffering of others, and as Jayaraman pointed out, such self-destructive behaviour was his way of dealing with trauma. In the case of many victims like Asif, the riot, as a traumatogenic event, disrupted "the attachment between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships" (Balaev, "Trends" 149-150). As a result of such a disruption, Asif, who had a friendly relationship with his neighbours irrespective of their religious affiliations, started considering Cyrus as the other and went to the extent of planning retaliatory violence.

Many characters in *Firaaq* show different symptoms of trauma. Most of the victims were traumatised because they had experienced and directly or indirectly witnessed the violence unleashed during communal riots. Munira feels detached and distrusts her neighbour after the riots, and this feeling of estrangement is a powerful symptom of trauma (American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5,* 271). She is

persistently haunted by negative psychological states like fear, shame, horror and guilt. She blames herself and her husband for failing to ensure the house's safety by buying a new lock. She also constantly holds her husband responsible for the loss. Blaming oneself and those who are dear and near to us is another symptom of trauma. She has "persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world", which is listed by *DSM-5* as a significant symptom of trauma (American Psychiatric Association 272). Mohsin is traumatised because of his direct exposure to violence. He witnessed rape and murder at a very young age. His trauma is manifested mainly in his behaviour. He appears to be lost and struggles to interact with others. It is to be noted that his trauma is "a self-altering, even self-shattering, the experience of violence, injury, and harm" (Gilmore 131-32). Aarti suffers from "invasive memory", which is another symptom of trauma (Turim 210). The unprocessed memory of trauma is often continuously and repeatedly reenacted and reexperienced in the present. She shows dissociative reactions and behaves as though the shocking events were recurring in the present. Caruth's postulation about trauma is that it is "the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" and it is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" aptly illustrate some of Aarati's traumatic symptoms (*Unclaimed Expereince* 4). This encounter with trauma may be understood as "a break in the mind's experience of time" as seen in the case of Aarti (Caruth, *Unclaimed Expereince* 61). She constantly feels that a hapless mother and her son are knocking at her door, and she has this strong urge to open the door. This repetitive behaviour stems from her sense of guilt

emanating from her inability to save a woman and child by giving them shelter in her house. She punishes herself for her inability to help her neighbour during the riots by burning her own hands. This infliction of self-injury is an attempt to grapple with the psychological pain, and it may be seen as an attempt on the part of the trauma victim for "self-preservation" (Herman, *Trauma* 109). She feels detached from others and is unable to live her everyday life as a result of her being traumatised.

Characters like Sameer and Munira suffer from insidious trauma. Their exposure to subtle and often unrecognised experiences such as micro-aggression, discrimination and othering emotionally drains them. Their everyday experiences of subtle forms of oppression and marginalisation have a cumulative impact, and the constant exposure to microaggressions acts as a trauma trigger. These films have addressed insidious trauma in depth. Sameer Arshad Shaikh was traumatised mainly on account of his constant exposure to television news footage about the many men, women, and children who were maimed, injured and killed. Empathetic engagement with the suffering of others may lead to the creation of vicarious trauma. Like Allan in *Parzania*, Sameer also suffered from vicarious traumatisation. The pain that he feels at the victims' suffering makes him identify with them and share their trauma. That he feels threatened owing to his Muslim identity adds to his trauma. His intense feeling of detachment from members of his wife's family who were not affected by the riots is also a response seen in a victim of psychological trauma. The revealing of his Muslim identity to an otherwise hostile policeman may be seen in the context

of the film as a "reckless or self-destructive behaviour" (American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5,* 272).

The two films shed light on cultural trauma as well. "As opposed to psychological or physical trauma, which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion" (Alexander, "Toward a Theory" 2). In these two films, the directors portray the rift brought out by the riots within different communities. Many members of the two communities developed mutual enmity and distrust, which is a symptom of cultural trauma. The two films also look at how the group consciousness of the communities was altered and disrupted as a result of the horrendous violence. This tear in the social fabric is acknowledged by Khan Saheb when he said that there would be no more musical gatherings since his music was not powerful enough to bring people together. Even Sameer Desai feels alienated because cultural trauma affects members of the entire community.

Postcolonial critics argue that traumatic events are "collective, spatial, and material" in addition to the psychological impact on the individual (Graham 128). Traumatic events are collective because they adversely affect the family and community. The films *Parzania* and *Firaaq* illustrate how the riots damaged the social fabric and destabilised families. Traumatic events are spatial since "memorialisation is contained or inhibited by particular configurations of space and place and particular uses of the land" (Graham 128). The films clearly show the spatial dimension of trauma. The destruction of the ghettos and the housing colonies

where the minority communities predominantly reside is depicted in this film. The rioters destroyed a sacred place, the mausoleum of Wali Dakhani, and desecrated places of worship because violence was also designed to destroy cultural sites. As Kakar has rightly argued, communal violence is characterised by “the planned attack on the human body, material property and places of worship” (25). Traumatic events are also material because they involve “the loss of not just language but also land, houses, shops and stocks; breadwinners lost their able-bodiedness and ability to earn their living” (Graham 128). The film showcases the material loss of the victims vividly: the houses of Munira and Cyrus were burnt, their properties were destroyed, and the shop of Sameer was robbed. The films reveal the systematic ways used by the rioters to identify the houses and business establishments owned by the members of the other community. The rioters wanted to destroy the material condition of the victims to decrease the possibility of the victims regaining their rights.

Postcolonial trauma theorists hold that trauma has centrifugal and centripetal dimensions (Silvia 846). Centrifugal impulse manifests as “isolation, loneliness, the individual and the focus on open wounds” (Silvia 846). In *Parzania* and *Firaaq*, this pole of trauma is delineated well. The centrifugal concerns, such as isolation, can be seen in the case of Allan and Cyrus, and loneliness can be seen in the case of Shernaz. The film *Firaaq* comprehensively addresses this centrifugal pole of trauma by depicting the isolation, helplessness, hopelessness, and alienation of victims like Munira and Mohsin. The final scene of *Parzania* shows a hapless Mohsin wandering across the street looking for his father, who was killed during the riots. Trauma may also engender an apparently contradictory yet mutually occurring “centripetal

movement towards healing, connection, the community and its chorus of voices" (Silvia 846). Many stories narrated in these films focus on healing and the possibility of reconnecting the dots and rebuilding relationships. Allan in *Parzania* finds a healing touch in the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. He heals himself by establishing deep connections with survivors like Shernaz and Cyrus. Nikhat and Shernaz also healed themselves by restoring their mutual connection. The film foregrounds the cathartic potential of love and empathy. The decision taken by Khan Saheb to restart the musical gathering illustrates the centripetal movement engendered by trauma, which makes the connection between communities possible. The films suggest that the agency of the victims can be restored, and the victim may reemerge as an individual with self-confidence and life-affirming values. The film illustrates post-traumatic growth through the story of Sameer Arshad Shaikh. He embraced his cultural identity, and his newfound strength enabled him to empathise with the victims.

In these films, different techniques are used to depict trauma. In *Parzania*, the director has effectively used close-up shots to depict the trauma of the victims. The close-up shot of Shernaz, which vividly depicts her inner turmoil as she is surrounded by the rioters, is a case in point. Cyrus had a strange vision, and he saw vultures swooping down on the dead body of his son. The director used the technique of projecting complex visuals on the screen to depict Cyrus' inner trauma. In these scenes, the director used rapid editing. He has used the technique of parallel editing to contextualise the trauma of Allan. The scenes of the vulture swooping down are interspersed with the scenes of the rioters chasing innocent men, women

and children. The effective use of music to evoke trauma is another technique used in the film.

Nandita Das has used the technique of non-linearity in *Firaaq*. The narrative of the film intersperses six different stories whose plot lines intersect. This intermingling of stories creates a fragmented and cyclical narrative, and these techniques are very apt to represent the traumatic rupture. Repetition is another technique used in the film. The scene of Aarti hearing the knocking sound and burning her hands is repeated many times. The theme of violence and the ensuing victimisation is repeatedly touched upon throughout the film. The film uses rapid editing in the opening scenes, which depict two men burying dead bodies. The shots of these two men are interspersed with shots of dead bodies and fast-approaching trucks carrying dead bodies. Flashbacks are another method used to convey the traumatic disruption of linearity. Aarti is often seen reliving her past in her sudden flashbacks. Her trauma is conveyed non-verbally, and such use of minimal dialogue is an effective strategy to convey the state of numbness associated with trauma. The film uses close-up shots to capture individual trauma. Close-up shots of Munira and Mohsin are very evocative.

Another technique the director deploys to convey the complex modality of trauma is the use of characters who adopt different subject positions in relation to the traumatogenic event. Characters like Mohsin and Munira are direct victims of violence. Aarti, on the other hand, is traumatised since she witnessed the trauma of the family who sought asylum in her house during the riots. Anuradha was deeply traumatised when she came to know that the property of her husband had been

ransacked and robbed. Her conception of trauma has a spatial dimension, and she assumes that shifting to a different physical location may help her reinvent her life. Sameer Shaikh was shocked when he was constantly exposed to the details of the gruesome riots through the media. He experiences vicarious traumatisation since he starts empathising with the victims.

The use of oral testimony to depict trauma is also a method used in both films. The testimonies presented by the victims before the NHRC commission at the end of the film *Parzania* bear witness to the trauma of the victims. Chagan, while giving his testimony, broke down because of the intensity of his emotion. The testimonies given by Shernaz and Asif offer a complex and multifaceted account of violence and the ensuing traumatisation. In the film *Firaaq*, the boy Mohsin directly witnessed the orgy of violence unfolding before his eyes. He escaped only because he was able to hide when rioters rushed into the house. He shared this story with Aarti through a detailed oral testimony. He said that on the day of the riots, the members of the mob took off women's clothes, and then they were burnt. Men, he added, were only burnt alive. The integration of testimony as a part of the cinematic narrative allows the spectator to bear witness to trauma. Many characters like Allan in *Parzania* and Sameer in *Firaaq* are seen watching live telecasts about the victims of the riots. Integrating such news footage into the narrative of these fictional films adds to their depth.

E. Kaplan and Ban Wang, in their book *Trauma and Cinema*, argue that some films have the potential to turn the spectator into a witness. Such films create an “anti-narrative process of the narration that is itself transformative in inviting the

viewer to at once be there emotionally (and often powerfully moved) but also to keep a cognitive distance and awareness denied to the victim by the traumatic process" (10). The films *Parzania* and *Firaaq* are two such films that elicit "empathic unsettlement" in viewers (LaCapra, *Writing History* 41). These films evoke empathy for the victims and, by doing so, make viewers witness their trauma.

Parzania and *Firaaq* record the pain, suffering, and trauma of the victims of communal riots from an intersectional vantage point. They foreground the possibility of recovery and growth both at the individual and collective levels. These two films hold cultural and ethical significance as they bear witness to the suffering of victims in a postcolonial context. Moreover, these films can aid the formation of the collective memory of violence and victimisation. These films emerge as sites of resistance and reconciliation, which adds to their significance.

Chapter III

Layers of Grief: Tracing the Configurations of Memory, Identity and Trauma in *Jogi* and *Amu*

Cinema is a popular art form that plays a significant role in shaping public perception and imagination. In the context of India, "cinema is a crucial, and perhaps also the most prolific, contributor to a construction of the public imaginary in India" (H. Singh 116). Filmmakers creatively engage with the legacy of violence and trauma, as illustrated by the number of films on the Holocaust and 9/11. Indian filmmakers have also critically engaged with the legacy of political and communal violence in their works (Viswanath and Salma 61).

This chapter examines the films *Jogi* and *Amu*, which engage with the Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984, against the theoretical backdrop of critical discourses on violence and trauma to determine how these films represent the various modalities of psychological trauma. The chapter critically investigates the diverse ways in which these two films deal with the role played by violence and trauma in the formation of individual and collective identities. The techniques used by the directors to visualise violence and trauma on screens are also discussed in this chapter.

In the history of Independent India, some of the most painful instances of violence were triggered by communal polarisation (Kausar 355; Upadhyay and Rowena 37). Individuals and societies struggle to cope with the disturbing and lasting consequences of communal violence and the ensuing individual and collective trauma. The Sikh community in India suffered greatly in the aftermath of

Partition, during the Punjab insurgency and the military operation in the vicinity of the Golden Temple, and during and after the infamous Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984 following the assassination of the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. Operation Blue Star was a military operation launched by the Indian army to capture Sikh militants associated with the Khalistan movement. The military operation, which started on 1 June 1984, lasted for ten days. The Indian army's operation near and inside the Golden Temple, the holiest place for the Sikh Community, to capture Jarnail Bhindranwale and his followers who were inside that holy place, resulted in damaging certain parts of the temple. During the operation, the place was full of pilgrims who had gathered there to celebrate the anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, and some of those Pilgrims incurred significant losses since they were caught in the crossfire. This incident is considered one of the most painful instances in the history of the community. The traumatic memory of this event continues to shape the collective identity of the Sikh community in India and elsewhere to this date (Abbi 91). Many Sikhs hold that the military action inside the holy temple desecrated it, and hence, this incident is entrenched as an "irreparable hurt" in their shared collective memory (Chopra 123). The army operation and the ensuing violence near the holy sites left deep scars on the psyche of the Sikh community. These traumatic instances of violence have played a significant role in the shaping of Sikh identity and imagination (Abbi 91). There was widespread anger towards the establishment after Operation Blue Star. Her bodyguards, who were followers of Sikhism, assassinated Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984. The assassination triggered widespread communal riots targeting members of the Sikh community across India in general and Delhi in particular. The

1984 Anti-Sikh Riots refer to a series of targeted attacks against Sikhs in and around Delhi after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The riots erupted on 31 October 1984, and violence continued unabated for the next three days, causing large-scale destruction of people and property. As per the Justice Nanavati Commission Report on these riots, 2733 Sikhs were killed by the rioters in Delhi alone. During the riots, Sikh colonies and Sikh establishments were targeted, resulting in the death of 3550 Sikhs nationwide. Victims of violence who survived to tell the tales of pain, grief and loss continue to live with the memory of violence and trauma even today. Many alleged perpetrators were never brought to book, partly because of the lack of conclusive evidence and partly because of the negligence, incompetence and complicity of those at the helm of affairs. The community is still grappling with the memory and consequences of the riots. Even four decades after the infamous riots, the wounds have not yet been healed completely, and the community's fight for justice has not yet reached its logical conclusion.

Violence of different types may have complex and long-lasting impacts on the affected individuals, communities, and localities. The emotional reactions and psychological responses of different individuals confronting violence and its consequences are diverse and varied since the impact of traumatisation on individuals and groups is influenced and determined by multiple social, political and cultural factors. A pluralistic model of trauma is used to analyse, interpret, critique and problematise different representations of victim and perpetrator trauma in these films. These models are suitable for a detailed exploration of the psychological, cultural, political and social factors that influence the degree of traumatisation.

Despite its disruptive nature, these models posit that traumatic memory can still be integrated and assimilated (Balaev, "Literary Trauma Theory" 3). The theoretical lens of postcolonial trauma studies is also employed in this chapter.

Several filmmakers in India have tried to engage with the riots in 1984 and their consequences. However, considering the gravity of the event, "the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots continue to be absent from the narrative and imaginary of Indian cinema"(H. Singh 116). Harleen Singh argues that the number of films dealing with these issues is still limited (116). The absence of "carrier groups" or groups engaged in the making of meaning and the process of interpretation is one reason why the cultural, fictional and cinematic representation of the event was limited in the first decade after the riots. After a period of latency, many filmmakers have attempted to address the riots and their various consequences.

The shared experiences of violence, pain and trauma have influenced the formation of the individual and collective identities of the members of the Sikh community in India. Films on these issues have played the dual role of reflecting this new identity on the one hand and, on the other, further strengthening this collective identity. The wide circulation of these images was "constitutive of community" (Shani 181). Many filmmakers try to place these episodes of violence against the background of the violence that the community faced during Partition. Violence in the immediate past revived the suppressed memories about the violence in the distant past. In this context, it may be argued that "films and reportage that deal with the 1984 massacre of the Sikhs often evoke Partition and reflect a general feeling of a nation ill at ease and haunted by a spectre of unresolved historical

tension. Many filmmakers clearly articulate or explicitly make that link" (Chanda 190). As John Clammer Points out in his *book Culture, Development and Social Theory: Towards an Integrated Social Development*, cinema dealing with these events influenced the "ways in which societies memorialise or suppress and inevitably edit, collective memories of their own violence or the suffering of the violence of others" (191). The medium of cinema provided the aggrieved community a platform for "a reenactment of the event with all kinds of complexities with regard to the matter of representation" (Clammer 70).

Two notable films dealing with the Anti-Sikh Riots and the ensuing violence are *Jogi*, a Netflix drama directed by Ali Abbas Zafar, and *Amu*, a drama film directed by Shonali Bose. This chapter offers a critical analysis of how these two films represent violence, victimisation, traumatisation, and the ensuing formation of fractured selves. The different ways in which these films transform and adapt the stories of loss, grief, and pain are looked at closely. The postcolonial discourses on violence and trauma serve as a backdrop against which the politics and poetics of the representations of violence and trauma in these two films are put to rigorous critical scrutiny.

Jogi is a critically acclaimed period drama centring on the infamous Anti-Sikh Riots in India in 1984. The film, directed by Ali Abbas Zafar, was released in 2002 on Netflix. As one of the most recent films on a sensitive topic, the film has made significant contributions to the ongoing discussions of how different forms of violence traumatise the victims in complex ways and how the same trauma may be passed on down the generations, creating intergenerational trauma. Though the film

is fictional, as the makers of the film claim at the beginning of the film, the background of the film is the Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984. There are many instances in the film in which the boundary between fiction and history becomes so blurred that one becomes a mirror image of the other, though in a complex and oblique fashion. The director's skilful use of mise-en-scène, editing techniques and the innovative use of sound and light to capture the subtle layers of the psychological and collective trauma deserves special mention.

The film is set in Trilokpuri, on the east side of Delhi, which is an area with a significant Sikh presence and hence was targeted by the rioters during the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots in Delhi. The film attempts to engage with the violence, pain and ensuing traumatisation in the aftermath of a gruesome riot in 1984, which caused significant damage to persons and property. This attempt by the director to tell a story about this riot is significant in the context, in which the extent of victimisation and loss has not yet been fully accounted for.

As the title suggests, this is a film primarily featuring the family of Jogi, a Sikh middle-class youth who lived in Delhi with his grandparents and children quietly and peacefully before the eruption of targeted violence. The daily routine of this family, like that of the hundreds of others belonging to the Sikh community, was disrupted moments after the assassination of the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, by her Sikh bodyguards. The anger and frustration of the general public in the aftermath of this dastardly act were exploited by vested groups, and concerted attempts were made to direct the anger towards the Sikhs living in Delhi. These

groups created a perception that the entire Sikh community is responsible for a dastardly act committed by a few belonging to the community.

The film engages with the widespread violence that erupted in Delhi on 31 October after the news report regarding the assassination of Indira Gandhi was telecast. During the next three days, individuals having the cultural markers of the Sikh faith were systematically targeted. The official documents meant to safeguard the constitutional rights to life and property were misused, as the scene in the film, which shows the rioters using the electoral roll and other government documents for locating Sikh households, clearly illustrates. The role played by some politicians, who used their political clout to ensure that the police personnel did not carry out their duties, is problematised in the film. The film highlights the importance of fostering inter-communal relationships to facilitate the healing of wounds and the creation of an atmosphere of communal amity and harmony.

The director of this film was a student pursuing higher education in Delhi in 1984, and he witnessed the outbreak of violence from close quarters. This film is his response to the mindless violence. The script's co-author was Sukhmani Sadana, a Sikh writer from Punjab. So, she was able to incorporate many stories about the riots, which were shared among the members of the Sikh community, into the script. As the director commented in an interview: “My co-writer, Sukhmani Sadana, is a Sikh, so she had many stories from her family and close associates. That is how we began writing the story” (Mathur). He later added that he wanted to make a film about human emotions: “When you pick up subjects like this, you have to bring forward your sensitive side” (Mathur). In this film, he attempted “to create an

atmosphere where people understand what happened to a community" (Mathur). He claims that this film is "very psychological" and "visual", and hence, it has the potential to "hit you deep in your gut, and you feel within those fifteen minutes how drastically the situation has changed. The storytelling is for the emotion and not voyeuristic" (Mathur).

The film opens with a brief commentary on Operation Blue Star, an event that changed the political, cultural, and spiritual landscapes of the Sikh community in India and outside (Chopra 122). Owing to umpteen references to this event in literary, cultural and political discourses produced by Sikhs in India and by the members of the Sikh diaspora, this historical event may be considered the chosen trauma of this group (Kinnvall 79). Violent events like the Anti-Sikh Riots of 1984 are seen as a violation which, in many respects, reopened past wounds that remained unhealed. That is why many films like *Jogi*, dealing with the 1984 riots, contain direct or oblique references to Operation Blue Star.

The film opens on 31 October 1984, which is significant because Operation Blue Star occurred only four months ago. The director juxtaposes the city before and during the riots throughout the film. The opening scenes of the film present members of the Sikh community in Trilokpuri leading a happy, carefree life. The film's opening shots offer a panoramic aerial view of Delhi. The panning shot, which provides a comprehensive view of the street and the surrounding areas, establishes the tone of the film since spatial location plays a significant role in developing the plot line of this film.

A powerful technique the director uses to offer commentary on the violence depicted in the film and to put the events in perspective is incorporating recorded footage of radio news telecasts. This technique blurs the boundary between fact and fiction. Another technique the director employs to offer a comprehensive analysis of violence in this film is arranging the plot into three sections. The opening part of the film, demarcated as Day 1, begins at 9 a.m. on 31 October. The preparations made by the members of Jogi's family to celebrate his nephew's birthday are depicted in detail. This scene indicates that prior to the eruption of the riots, Sikh families in Trilokpuri lived peacefully and happily. Trilokpuri is an area in Delhi where middle-class Sikhs were settled, and as a result, it turned out to be one of the areas which the rioters targeted and hence came under organised attack on 31 October. The opening shots also present scenes depicting members of the various communities living together peacefully and children belonging to various communities playing happily.

The director has used metaphors and symbols to foreshadow the eruption of violence and the destruction of harmony. The scene in the film depicting children playing a traditional Indian game, seven stones, has clear symbolic overtones. Seven Stones is a game in which many stones, usually seven in number, are piled on top of one another, and the player tries to hit them using a ball, and the one who knocks over the most stones wins the game. The seven stones stacked beautifully together may refer to the cohesion and harmony in the society prior to the riots. A boy is seen knocking over these stones, and this scene may suggest the impending riots. The director uses another metaphor in the next scene to suggest the transition from peace to violence. This scene shows a flight of pigeons flying away in panic as three

gunshots are heard in the distance. Pigeons are birds that symbolise peace, and their flight symbolises the end of peace and suggests impending violence. The background narration announces the news regarding the assassination of Indian Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards.

The director pays close attention to details while depicting individuals and situations. The scene depicting a Sikh man standing in front of a mirror arranging his turban is a case in point. This scene is very significant since the coming scenes in the film highlight the different ways in which cultural markers like turbans were used to identify and target the Sikhs during the communal flare-up. The image of the happy Sikh household in which members are shown having food together at the table conveys the calmness and tranquillity that prevailed in the Sikh households before the riots. The family members were in a jovial mood because they were about to celebrate the grandfather's retirement party and the grandson's birthday party together. The film seems to suggest that violence was unexpected and, hence, shocking as far as the victims were concerned.

The reports about violence in different parts of India following the spread of the news about the assassination found their echo in Dhaula Kuan as well. The protagonist of the film, Jogi, a Sikh youth and his father continued their daily routine since they were not informed about the assassination. They were shocked at how they were treated by others because they did not understand why their fellow bus passengers treated them with hostility. The angry stares on the faces of their fellow passengers betrayed their sense of anger at the assassins, which was also directed towards all the Sikhs simply because both groups shared the same religious beliefs

and cultural practices. The refusal of the conductor even to take money from Jogi and to issue him tickets is one among the many instances of structural violence in the film. Jogi's refusal to bow down under pressure when his fellow passengers attempted to throw him off the bus indicates his community's refusal to surrender their agency even under adverse circumstances. The fact that the crowd did not hesitate to brand an innocent Sikh a terrorist exposes the workings of mob psychology. A violent mob pays little attention to the nuances and creates a reductive binary of victims and perpetrators. During the outbreaks of communal violence, the anger and resentment towards a few individuals are transferred to the members of the entire community who bear the cultural markers of their faith. Some among the mob, along with their verbal assault, also started hitting them, shouting. They alleged that his people had killed their mother (*Jogi* 00:05:15–17).

The film also depicts how some politicians with vested interests attempt to polarise society along communal lines. A local councillor, Mr Tejpal Arora, is seen talking over the phone, assuring the other person that he would take care of Trilokpuri and the Sikh inmates there. He was seen organising local leaders to orchestrate targeted violence in other streets. The local leader demanding a copy of the electoral roll to identify the Sikh households is one instance of structural violence in the film (*Jogi* 00:06:07–08). The fact that he assures others that no one will face the consequences of their actions is another indicator of the failure of the law-and-order machinery.

One shocking instance of direct violence shown in the film is the one in which Jogi's friend, Mr Bhatt, came under attack when he was about to open his

store. The rioters barged into the shop with weapons and started breaking the glass and other things, and ignored the pleadings of Mr Bhatt. The mob poured kerosene, locked Mr Bhatt inside the shop and burnt the shop along with the shopkeeper. The film presents fire as a symbol of violence and destruction. The fire was a significant tool in the hands of the rioters since it also destroyed evidence of the crimes committed.

Violence is indicated in many parts of the films. The smoke slowly engulfing the city is an index of the violence unfolding on the ground. The pan shot of the cityscape vividly depicts the scene of the crime. Many shops owned by Sikhs were seen burning. Many of the lower-middle-class Sikhs worked as taxi drivers, and the film shows the rioters burning down their cars as well. The violent mob used crude petrol bombs to destroy areas where Sikh households were situated. Targeting the shops and cars was done to disturb the economic stability of the affected community.

The film presents most of the violence through the perspective of a Sikh youth, Jogi. He saw many Sikh men surrendering to death after getting stabbed, but he was not in a position to help them since saving the life of his father, who was accompanying him, was his foremost priority. The director has used close-up shots to depict the trauma of Jogi and his father. The scene, which shows a Sikh man being slowly engulfed by fire, is so shocking that it might vicariously traumatise the spectators.

Learned helplessness is “a psychological state characterised by reduced motivation, difficulty in determining causality, and depression” (Sullivan et al. 1440). Many victims of trauma suffer from this condition. After already losing

persons and property during the riots, many Sikh youths were unable to defend themselves. Helpless victims crying for help were not attended to since the atmosphere was so tense that everyone was struggling to survive somehow. Many of them felt weak and paralysed, which are also symptoms of trauma. Jogi tried to bolster the morale of the Sikh youth and encouraged them to take proactive measures to ensure the safety of their families. Jogi's strength, determination, and willingness to take risks are conveyed in different scenes in the film, notably the one in which he drives a truck along the burning streets in Delhi, transporting fellow Sikhs to safer locations near the Punjab border.

One of the most shocking instances of direct violence in the film is the one that shows a car carrying Sikhs on fire, with the passengers trapped inside. It might be argued that the car may symbolise Sikh households, and the inmates in the car may represent ordinary Sikhs who were at the receiving end of mindless violence. The director uses the bird's eye view shot to capture different acts of violence unfolding at different places simultaneously.

Jogi risked his life to save a wounded man and carried him to the safety of a nearby house. The film suggests that empathy is the best defence to protect oneself and one's community, even during the worst times when violence, albeit temporarily, might appear to be the new normal. As Kai Erikson has argued, trauma has centrifugal and centripetal poles. "Trauma is not coherent in cause and effect but may affect individuals and communities negatively, forcing open pre-existing fault lines" (*New Species of Trouble* 236). At the same time, trauma may create situations conducive to "affirming a sense of belonging, kinship, and mutual trust" (Erikson,

New Species of Trouble 237). The events portrayed in the film reveal the centripetal tendency that causes division and rift among members of a society, which eventually increases the intensity of violence. On the other hand, the Sikhs coming together to help their friends in need, forming a new bond and finding alternative forms of cohesion, exemplifies the centrifugal tendency exhibited by victims suffering from trauma.

Uncut hair is a symbol of the Sikh faith (B. Singh 5). As a matter of faith, “Sikh men tie their hair in a topknot and enclose it with a turban worn in a particular style (B. Singh 5). Removing hair is a traumatic experience for Sikhs because of the importance of *kesh*, or uncut hair, in Sikhism. In the film, many characters are forced to cut their hair to save themselves and their loved ones. The kids were seen protesting when their parents tried to cut their hair, but the parents did cut their hair with their eyes filled with tears and their hands shaking. Being forced to erase the markers of one's faith is an instance of cultural violence. The film depicts cultural violence and its various manifestations through scenes like this. Jogi was vicariously traumatised when he watched helplessly a mother cutting the hair of her son. Jogi's psychic trauma emanating from his experiences is encapsulated in his observation that Delhi was in shambles (*Jogi* 00:11:00–02). The auditory images, like the cries and wails, and the visual images, like tears and cut hair, are disconcerting and hence traumatising. The director has used close-up shots to convey the trauma of this mother and her daughter.

Jogi tried to locate his family, but his attempts were in vain since his family, out of fear, had moved to a safer location. The Sikhs were given food and shelter by

one of their neighbours. The ladies in that home shared with Jogi the details of the rioters who had burnt alive Tejindar, the husband of Jogi's sister, Heer. The trauma of the members of the family is communicated through their silence or their inability or incapacity to articulate their pain. As Ritter has rightly argued, "Silence is the voice of trauma" (176). The traumatised members of this family felt numb and were unable to mourn their losses. Heer was stitching a shirt for her husband before his death, and she continued stitching it even after his death. She behaved as though her husband were still alive and would wear the new shirt to the party as per his plan. This dissociation is a significant symptom of trauma. As Nijenhuis and Hart note, "dissociation in trauma entails a division of an individual's personality, that is, of the dynamic, biopsychosocial system as a whole that determines his or her characteristic mental and behavioural actions" (418). Dissociation "evolves when the individual cannot integrate adverse experiences in part or in full" (Nijenhuis and Hart 418). Heer shows symptoms of dissociation as she is unable to integrate her overwhelming, traumatogenic experiences.

The film criticises the failure of the law-and-order machinery to contain violence and to book the culprits. The police were conspicuous by their absence when the entire city was engulfed in violence. The film portrays some police personnel as being complicit in violence. A policeman was seen having a light-hearted conversation about the riots while having mutton biriyani. The sheer apathy of the police and the administration was a reason why the violence continued unabated for three days. The film also features another scene in which rioters were having a field day inside the police station, having food while enjoying their brief

break amidst the acts of perpetration. The local politician, Tejpal, was dismayed when he learned that the number of rioters was only about twenty. He encouraged the rioters to inflict more damage since he held that for every action, there should be an equal and opposite reaction (*Jogi* 00:15:00–08). He encouraged the rioters to increase the magnitude of violence by offering a thousand rupees reward for each Sikh killed. He told them that for killing eminent Sikhs, they would be paid five thousand rupees. He convinced them that the whole thing was like a lottery jackpot, and they could earn as much as they wanted (*Jogi* 00:15:34–38). That this conversation was taking place inside the police station in the presence of the police personnel is a clear pointer to the dereliction of duty on the part of some in the establishment. Tejpal directed the police officers to supply the rioters with weapons and kerosene, and the police officers readily obliged. He further reminded the police that the order came from the top, and they must execute it. The rioters, who were hardened criminals in the city, were guided out of the police station through the rear door by a policeman named Ram Manohar. The rioters were directed to mask their real identity. The politician asked the police not to respond to any call for help from Sikhs. The politician asked the police to discharge their duties diligently, by which he meant that they must join the mob and be a part of the destruction spree. He assured them of a reward for executing these orders from the top and for their cooperation. Many police officers decided to join the violent mob under duress.

The film seems to suggest that friendship has the potential to thrive even amidst the outbreak of the worst kinds and forms of violence. The power of friendship is illustrated by the sacrifice that one police officer, Rawinder Chautala,

makes to save the life of his Sikh friend Jogi. This officer was instructed to target the Sikhs in lane number six of Trilokpuri, and the political leader handed him a list of his potential targets. Rawinder was shocked when he saw the name of his best Sikh friend Jogi in that list on which all names of Sikhs were marked with the letter S. At a time when everyone and every movement was closely monitored, it was difficult to save Jogi's life, yet Rawinder decided to rush to Jogi's house to shift him to a place of safety and security.

Throughout the film, the director records the streets and the suburbs using bird's-eye view shots. Such vertical shots of the city give viewers a panoramic view of the space, and they can witness the unfolding of violence of significant magnitude. In the film, fire and smoke have a literal and symbolic significance. The Sikh houses and shops were burning, and the entire area was shrouded in smoke, creating an eerie atmosphere. Fire and smoke are also symbolic of violence and hatred, which triggered the riots in the first place. The director presents the Sikh area from the perspective of Rawinder, who was on his way to Jogi's house in his official vehicle.

Rawinder found the Sikh households empty since the inmates had already fled for fear of being targeted by the rioters. During times of insecurity, people tend to huddle together in places of worship. The film pans the faces of men, women and children sitting inside the gurudwara, and on their faces, there are markers of psychological distress and the ensuing trauma. The members of that group were so shocked and petrified that none of them were speaking to each other, and they were not even able to weep. The “speechless fright of trauma” was writ large on their

faces (Balaev “Trends” 149). Jogi tried to instil confidence in them, telling them they must defend themselves. Many of them were apprehensive about the proposal since they held that such a small group of unarmed civilians might not be able to stand their ground if a violent and angry mob attacked them with weapons. Jogi further told them that waiting to be killed was the only other alternative unless, as a group, they mobilised and defended themselves. However, many among the group who were physically distraught and emotionally traumatised were so weak that they were not even able to flee to safer locations. They did not know the reason why they were targeted. However, some youths volunteered to protect their locality and decided to appoint men in different places on the street. The spiritual ambience of the Gurudwara had a calming effect, and they equipped themselves to face any eventuality.

Rawinder came to the gurudwara looking for Jogi, but the inmates were reluctant to open the door. Previous instances of violence amplify fear and distrust. Jogi opened the door, but he did not trust anyone. He asked Rawinder whether he was accompanied by someone else. Trauma creates an ecosystem in which mutual trust is eroded, and the responses become mechanical (Hammock et al. 1751). That Jogi could be suspicious of his intentions shocked Rawinder, and he asked him how he could harbour such thoughts about his best friend. Jogi explained to him that the rioters had killed his brother-in-law, and it was the emotional shock and the ensuing trauma which made him behave in such a manner. Rawinder told Jogi that the whole of Delhi would be destroyed and asked him to pack his belongings. He assured Jogi that he would take him and his family in his official vehicle to a safer location. He

planned to take Jogi's family to Mohali, a town closer to Punjab, from where they could escape to Punjab. He also told Jogi that the law-and-order machinery might not come to their rescue because orders came from the top, and all the names who were identified as Sikhs and marked on the list with the letter S would be targeted in the next three days.

What makes this film unique is that it is not just a film about communal violence and helplessness of the victims, but also a film about communal amity and sacrifice. Jogi's refusal to escape with his family reflects his willingness to sacrifice his personal needs for the sake of the greater good of the community. Jogi told Rawinder that he could not and would not leave behind the likes of Gurvinder, who had taken the painful decision of cutting his son's hair and making him wear the clothes of a girl to disguise his gender identity to save their loved ones (*Jog*i 00:22:52–58).

Flashbulb memory is a symptom of trauma (Hirst et al. 591). Unlike narrative memory, traumatic memory is static and literal. Jogi, despite his bravery, also suffered from trauma, and it manifested in the symptoms mentioned above. The painful sights he witnessed while on the bus continued to surface in his memory. That he was called a terrorist and some people's argument that he had wronged them by being a Sikh were two experiences which were deeply disturbing for him. The modalities of physical violence and psychological torture might be different. However, the impact of both could be disturbing and unsettling, albeit in different ways, as is seen in the case of Jogi.

In many countries with a rich religious heritage, people turn to spirituality in times of crisis. Prayer may have a cathartic effect as far as these traumatised individuals are concerned. Postcolonial trauma theorists like Visser have systematically recorded the role of spirituality and spiritual practices in aiding the process of healing ("Decolonizing Trauma Theory" 250). Jogi felt relieved after offering his prayers, and he and Rawinder prepared a detailed plan to save all the Sikhs in the locality. They decided to arrange a truck to transport these people safely. Nevertheless, Jogi knew that with his turban and other markers of his religious identity, he might not be safe even in a police vehicle driven by a policeman. He decided to remove his turban and cut his hair, but these decisions were harrowing because, as a Sikh, he knew the importance of the turban and *kesh* in his religion. When he cut the first lock of his hair, he was flooded with memories of the religious initiation ceremony in his childhood. On that day, he wore the turban for the first time in the presence of his elders. In due course, the turban and other markers of faith became an integral part of his identity. As a devout Sikh, erasing markers of faith and culture was a traumatising experience for him. In these scenes, the director uses cross-cutting and parallel editing to juxtapose the peace and tranquillity in the past with the violence and trauma of the present. In Jogi's mind, the colourful memories of childhood and the desaturated images of the present flickered simultaneously, and this intensified his grief. The director uses music with a slow tempo, low pitch, and slow tone to suggest the intensity of Jogi's trauma. The slow pace of this scene is another technique that the director uses to convey the deep sorrow and melancholy of the victims. The women who saw Jogi without his turban were shocked and traumatised, and the director uses close-up shots to convey their

emotional states. Jogi's father tried to console the woman, saying that Jogi's act did not constitute a sin since he did what he did to save the lives of others, and hence, it was an act of bravery and sacrifice.

Rawinder and Jogi went out at night to meet their mutual friend, Kaleem Ansari, who had many trucks. Even at night, the street was burning, and the wreckage and debris were seen everywhere. The eerie silence pervading the whole street at night reflects the prevailing sombre mood. Kaleem Ansari, though not a Sikh himself, knew about the importance of *kesh* and turban in the Sikh religion. He could not believe Jogi did what he did and struggled to identify Jogi without the markers of his faith. He rebuked Rawinder for failing to stop Jogi from taking such drastic steps. However, Kaleem Ansari later realised that concealing the markers of one's religious identity was a prerequisite for survival at a time of religious polarisation. After listening to the detailed testimony of Jogi about the violence and victimisation, Kaleem Ansari and his sister were also traumatised. Trauma has horizontal mobility, and listening to the trauma of someone may vicariously traumatise an empathetic listener, as illustrated by this scene. Kaleem Ansari gave them a truck to transport Sikhs to the safety of Punjab. However, using a truck was very risky since the rioters who had already burnt three trucks might target their truck as well. The only way to ensure the safety of the truck was to make it look like a truck used by the rioters to transport weapons and ammunition. Kaleem Ansari arranged for some mechanics to partition the truck's compartment into two halves. The plan was that the people would be carried in the lower compartment, and the upper compartment would be filled with weapons. If the rioters inspect the truck,

they could argue that they were also rioters carrying weapons and inflammable substances. There was also a tiny window through which Jogi could communicate with those in the truck.

A different kind of community was formed in the truck. The passengers were selected based on their gender, age and physical condition. On the first trip, they permitted only the elders and kids to enter the truck. Rioters did not spare even women, children and the elderly. They were easy targets for the rioters. The urgency of the Sikhs when asked to enter the truck betrays their fear and insecurity. Elders did not want to part with their young children, and the pain of separation from the rest of the family was reflected on their faces. This is a scene which captures intense emotions. The intensity of their grief is depicted in the film through close-up shots. Jogi volunteered to drive the truck, and Rawinder Chautala asked him to drive the truck behind his police car, hoping no rioter would dare to stop a police vehicle. Women and kids panicked when the truck started moving since those in the lower compartment were not able to see what was happening outside the truck. Whenever the truck halted for one reason or another, they were shocked since they suspected that the rioters would find them and kill them.

Foucault introduced the concept of *heterotopia* to describe those spaces with an added meaning in addition to the apparent meaning (12). These spaces may be social, institutional, cultural or discursive. They are also enormous, deranging and sometimes transforming. They could constitute a space within a space or a sphere within a sphere. He defined crisis heterotopia as a space occupied by individuals and communities facing a severe crisis. In the film, this specially designed truck

functions like a space that may be described as a crisis heterotopia. Unlike the outside world, it was a different kind of space with different rules. It was a space between life and death in the sense that the inmates, though alive, would face death at any time. Occupying such an in-between space was a traumatic experience. While inside the truck, it was as though they were taken to a new space where time and space felt frozen and needed to be reimagined. The truck was always on the move, but since there was no window, the inmates did not know whether the truck was moving in the right direction, since human beings could understand movement only in relational terms. Time was also frozen within the compartment since light did not enter the cabin, so they could not guess the time. The heterotopic space of the truck also serves as a metaphor for the predicament of the Sikh community, who felt trapped and suffocated while living in Delhi during the riots.

The state of frailty that the Sikhs in the truck were in might be considered a microcosmic representation of the precarious condition of Sikhs in the streets of Delhi, where the Sikhs were systematically targeted in October 1984. The director has paid attention even to minute details while attempting to depict the subtle layers of trauma. One incident worth mentioning in this regard is the one in which an infant inside the truck started crying, and all the passengers panicked since they all knew they were traversing a narrow line between life and death. Death felt so close, and they were clinging to life as hard as they could. The mood of uncertainty that prevailed in the truck was physically and emotionally draining and, hence, traumatising. The director uses a bird's-eye view shot to depict the violence in the street and then uses mid-shot and close-up shots to depict the angst of the passengers

inside the truck. This juxtaposition is suggestive since there is a direct correlation between what was happening outside and what was happening inside.

The film depicts the systematic ways in which the riots were planned and executed. The rioters had bought all the fuel from the petrol pumps to burn down houses and buildings on the one hand, and on the other, it was done to foil the attempts of the Sikhs to flee in some random vehicles. The workers at the petrol pump told Jogi that all the fuel was transported to a nearby warehouse, which the rioters used as a base camp. It was also reported that Tejpal Arora, the local political leader with considerable political clout, was in charge of the base camp. It was from this camp that weapons were distributed to all the rioters in East Delhi. Running out of options, Rawinder and Jogi drove the truck to the base camp in Geeta Nagar.

The film offers a detailed overview of the base camp of the rioters. Jogi and Rawinder were able to enter the camp, and what they saw there terrified them. There were swords, kerosene, bombs and other weapons, which were enough to destroy Delhi. That the police officer's presence did not unsettle the rioters is a clear indication of the complicity of some police personnel who joined hands with the rioters. When Rawinder introduced himself as an officer from Trilokpuri police station, he was asked how many weapons he needed. Rawinder told them they had already loaded their truck with weapons and only needed fuel. The people at the camp offered them ten canisters of diesel even though they demanded only eight, since they wanted to ensure that there would not be any shortages.

The fact that even the babies on the truck were left to starve serves as a stark reminder of the harrowing predicament of this group. Getting a cup of milk from

that camp for an infant was more difficult than getting diesel. Jogi's willingness to risk his life to help that baby is a testimony to his humanity, and this film makes a clear statement that even though violence may make ordinary men and women victims, some of them might still emerge as heroes. Jogi handed the milk bottle to the mother in the lower compartment of the truck. The love, warmth and care inside the truck are juxtaposed with violence, fear and hatred inside the camp. The scene symbolically shows that humanity thrives despite all the challenges. This scene illustrates the lasting impact of violence on infants. Children are the most vulnerable group during the outbreak of violence owing to their lack of agency and limited mobility.

Tejpal Arora is the councillor of the Trilokpuri constituency in Delhi, and he is one of the villains whose story is depicted in detail in the film. It is to be noted that this political leader has two faces. The first one is shown in his interaction with his granddaughter, where he appears to be loving and caring. The other face is shown in his avatar as a political leader, where he appears as an unscrupulous leader hungry for power. In his interactions with the police officer via phone, he appears as a megalomaniac thirsty for blood and vengeance. He was the one who gave instructions to the police to ignore the pleas of the victims and to assist the perpetrators. He used the riot to consolidate his power and position within the organisation. He hoped that for his service, he would be duly rewarded and might be given a ticket to contest the upcoming assembly polls. The film does not portray perpetrators as one-dimensional figures devoid of any humanity. What is shocking is that even Tejpal was otherwise an ordinary person leading a happy family life with

his grandchildren. Tejpal Arora asked Rawinder why the Sikhs in the areas of the streets allotted to him had not been killed already. Tejpal later grew suspicious of Rawinder after another police officer from the same police station, Lali Katiyal, reported that lane number six, under Rawinder's charge, might not be affected by the riot. Arora gave Rawinder the coordinates of lane number six, asked him to raze it to the ground, and assured him that he would be duly rewarded. It was almost as if he was inviting Rawinder to be a part of the game played by other police officers for the reward that Tejpal offered in return for each Silh killed. He was also reminded that their time was limited since the army would be called upon at any time. The implication was that the army as a professional unit might not be partisan, and it would be impossible to act with impunity after the army took charge of the situation. The offer was that the more Sikhs one killed, the more bounty and rewards one would get. Amassing easy money was one of the core motivations of some of the rioters.

Rawinder had to execute the orders from the politician, or else he would grow suspicious, and their plan of saving the Sikhs might be thwarted. Rawinder realised that he had to burn down lane number six entirely to create an impression that he was also part of the plot. When he asked Jogi to assist him in burning the street, Jogi felt agitated and suspected that even Rawinder might be working for Tejpal. It was because of his intense emotional trauma that Jogi grew suspicious of Rawinder. Many trauma victims suffer from a lack of trust, and this often strains relationships (Hammock et al. 1751). It was after the Sikh elders convinced him that there were no other options before them that Jogi decided to assist Rawinder in

burning down the street. When the elders instructed them to go and burn down all their houses, women who overheard this conversation could not control their emotions (*Jogi* 00:50:22–24). Riots adversely affect the material security of the targeted groups. All the more alarming for these women was that there would not be a home or street to which they could return later. Despite all these developments, the elders held that Sikhs would rise from the ashes again (*Jogi* 00:50:35–37). The elders are here referring to the violence during Partition. The Sikh community suffered greatly in the violence during and after Partition, yet they never gave up. Violence in the present reawakens memory about the violence in the past, and the members of the community experience trauma as a repetition or as a re-emergence of pain and grief.

Song sequences serve as an effective tool for conveying trauma in cinema (Waterhouse-Watson and Brow 1). The song in *Jogi* captures the intensity of the victims' emotions. It is highly suggestive and evocative. The melancholy tempo makes the spectator experience trauma. The background visuals of this song consist of charred dead bodies, debris, and embers still burning. The lyrics of this song are in the form of a prayer, encapsulating hope and celebrating the spirit of resilience (*Jogi* 00:51:35–47).

Jogi and Rawinder burnt the street down with a heavy heart. When Jogi saw the name board of the house of Harpal Singh, he felt numb since the traumatic memory of seeing his dead body kept haunting him, and the memories of pain were interwoven with the older recollections of shared happiness and warmth. The uncalled-for flashback and the reexperiencing of the past as though the events were

occurring in the present are significant symptoms of trauma. The extreme close-up shot of his eyes captures the intensity of his trauma.

The film demonstrates the gross misuse of different institutions by the rioters. Their truck was stopped at a toll booth at Karnal. The man at the booth insisted that the truck would be allowed to pass only if they produced a challan signed by his boss sitting inside the room. The identity of this officer is not revealed. In the film, there are many instances in which the high-ranking officers' power is felt, but their identity is withheld. They were again stopped at another checkpoint, and the man in charge told Rawinder that only he could pass, and the truck might be allowed to pass only if they produced a challan. Only his boss inside had the authority to sign the challan. When Rawinder demanded an explanation, he told him that on the last day, they caught a truck with a specially designed cabin in which they were carrying Sikhs. Jogi opened the trunk, showed them the weapons and tried to convince them that they were rioters, but the men checking the truck grew suspicious when they saw the canisters containing diesel. The passengers found themselves in a space between life and death, and this uncertainty over their survival was a traumatic experience for them. The rioters eventually discovered the men and women hiding inside, and they were almost caught. It was Rawinder's courage and intervention that saved their lives. The news that some Sikhs were escaping to Punjab spread, and Inspector Lali Katiyal reported this to Tejpal. Despite all these developments, Jogi was able to drive them to the Delhi-Punjab border. Many officers of the Punjab Police welcomed them to the state and took them to the newly set-up refugee camp. When they saw the predicament of the inmates in that camp,

their shared intergenerational memory of Partition and the mindless violence on that day resurfaced.

One technique the director uses to provide the story's context is incorporating news footage. In the news telecast shown in the film, it is reported that violence had erupted all over the country after the assassination of the then-Prime Minister of India. The reports also mentioned the attack on taxi drivers in Delhi since many of them were Sikhs. The film stresses that the media bears witness to violence, and this archival footage could vividly tell the riot's story.

The Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984 lasted for three days, although violence erupted in certain regions beyond that period. Riots erupted on the evening of 31 October 1984 and continued unabated until 3 November. The army eventually took control of the situation, and the riot came to an end. The riot in its most intense form was reported on the first three days of November. The director has divided the film into three parts named after these days to present a diachronic picture of the riot. This technique is very effective because the spectator can compare and contrast the different modalities of violence on different days. This technique also helps the director to communicate the repetitive nature of the cycle of violence.

At the beginning of the second part, the local councillor Arora, who was in charge of orchestrating and coordinating the riots in the Trilokpuri area, was seen playing with his granddaughter. The way he conducts his daily routine, as though everything were normal at a time when his men are burning the city down, reveals his apathy and deep complicity. However, despite his role in the violence, he appears to be a man leading a happy family life. The film does not caricature the victims or

the perpetrators; instead, it showcases the shades of grey in both. Tejpal is seen playing with his daughter at home and instructing his foot soldiers. The implication is that for Tejpal, riots seem to be a game by other means. That he can switch the two roles so easily supports this assumption.

The police officers came to his house to update him about the riots. Lali presented a detailed report to him about violence and destruction, and proudly handed over the list of the Sikhs who were murdered. Rawinder, who accompanied Lali, was asked questions about the area allotted to him, and he replied that he had already burnt down lane number six. Unsatisfied with the extent of violence, Tejpal asked him to explain the reason why only three dead bodies were found there. Rawinder tried to cook up a story as he knew that he could not complete his mission of saving the remaining Sikhs if he could not win Arora's trust. He told him that though some Sikhs escaped, he was able to burn the Sikhs he found there alive. Lali rebutted these claims, telling Arora that even the three dead bodies found in lane number six were actually from lane number twenty-two. Arora told them that those who tried to block his way would face severe consequences. He told Rawinder that his only mission was to kill Joginder, also known as Jogi, a leader of the Sikhs in lane number six. He threatened Rawinder that if he did not comply, the rioters would target his house as well (*Jogi* 01:07:57–59).

The irony of the situation is that Jogi, Rawinder and Lali were childhood friends. The reason why Lali turned from a friend to a foe is presented in a brief subplot in the film. While returning to the police jeep after meeting Arora, Rawinder told Lali that Jogi was his best friend and that he would not spare anyone who dared

to lay a hand on Jogi (01:09:04–06). The fact that there were many morally upright policemen like Rawinder who risked their lives to save human lives is highlighted in the film. Lali considered it a challenge to catch and kill Jogi, and it is suggested that Lali also had a personal motive for targeting Jogi. He ordered his deputies to cordon off lane number six and the entire Trilokpuri area to ensure that the remaining Sikhs did not escape. The smug smile on his face while planning genocidal violence betrays his deep-felt anger and hatred towards Sikhs in general and Jogi in particular.

As a result of these new developments, transporting the remaining Sikhs to Mohali safely became very challenging. Jogi, Kaleem Ansari, and Rawinder brainstormed to find a way out, and they reached the conclusion that using the same truck might be risky since the truck's registration number was already known. Jogi suspected that Lali was using the pretext of the riot to settle his personal scores with him. He decided to meet Lali in person, but he was stopped by the other two for fear that he would be targeted and killed. Rawinder told him that the situation was so tense that Arora threatened him that his family would be targeted if he did not comply. Jogi asked Rawinder to go and save his family, and he, with Kaleem Ansari, would make arrangements to save the remaining Sikhs. Both were emotionally drained, and their frustration boiled over, leading to disagreements. Trauma often leads to the disturbance of one's emotional equilibrium, as illustrated by the responses of Jogi and Rawinder. Both of them were unable to speak and share what they felt, owing to the intensity of their trauma. Their helplessness and hopelessness were visible on their faces.

Rawinder came up with a strategy to mislead the police and the leader. He told Tejpal Arora that all the Sikhs were in the nearby gurudwara, and he also added that he had decided to reveal this information for fear that his family would come under attack if he did not comply with the orders. He requested all the police personnel in the area to be sent there, and Arora instructed Lali and the police officers to act according to the new plan. The police team surrounded the gurudwara and saw many shoes and slippers outside, but soon they realised they were fooled because no one was inside. Lali suspected Rawinder had planned the entire operation so that the Sikhs could escape using a different route. He warned Rawinder that he would have to pay a heavy price, and his action had put his life and the lives of the members of his family at risk.

It is later revealed that the Sikhs were shifted to the safety of a nearby mosque, where they were given food and water. There was a nearby *dargah*, which gave them added cover. Nevertheless, Lali, being the childhood friend of both Rawinder and Kaleem Ansari, suspected that the Sikhs might be hiding there and came to the place looking for them. Just before the arrival of the police, Kaleem Ansari was able to shift the Sikhs to a new location. They escaped through the back door but were chased by the police. They had a narrow escape when a burning transformer and an electric post fell, blocking the way of the police officers.

After the most significant events, the director has incorporated radio news footage to offer detailed commentary on violence. The news on the radio covered the violence in different parts of Delhi. It was also revealed that there were people in the higher-ups who gave orders to Tejpal Arora, who was only in charge of a small area

in Delhi. Tejpal was informed that the job must be completed quickly because the decision had already been taken to send the army to the riot-hit areas. He threatened all the police officers with severe consequences if all the Sikhs in lane number six were not found and killed immediately. The police started patrolling the area with search dogs. Jogi commented that many rioters and some officers were full of hatred and vendetta (*Jogi* 01:22:51–54). He also wondered why some people suddenly turned out to be enemies. He observed that the same thing happened in 1947 (*Jogi* 01:22:55–58). This is just one of many instances in which memories about violence in 1947 merge with the recent memory about the violence in the present. Memory in general and traumatic memory in particular have a multidirectional nature, as pointed out by Michele Rothberg in his book *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization.* The memory of the past violence is painful, but the fact that the community has survived and thrived despite such experiences also gives them hope. Such an optimistic spirit about a better, brighter future gives the community the spirit of resilience.

Lali Katiyal could locate a wounded, bleeding Daler hiding in a room. When he was about to pull the trigger, Jogi stood in between and asked Lali to kill him instead. The film then incorporates a flashback, and the sub-plot is presented. For three years, Rawinder, Lali, Jogi and Kaleem Ansari were good friends, and at that time, Jogi fell in love with Lali's sister, Kamaljeet Kaur. She got pregnant and, out of shame, committed suicide. After this incident, Lali held a grudge against Jogi. The plot returns to the present. Lali told Jogi that his sister died because of him. Jogi said to him that when she died, he lost his beloved and his child. Jogi asked Lali to kill

him and to let the other Sikhs leave. After the conversation, Lali felt remorseful and started shedding tears. Tears had a cathartic effect on him, and he felt relieved. It is revealed that it was his past trauma, emanating from the loss of his sister, that made him violent. Trauma, in some instances, may turn the victim into a victimiser. The violence that they display might be part of their attempts to reclaim the agency that they felt they had lost because of the traumatogenic event.

The final part of the film is titled Day 3. In this part, the Sikhs struggled to find a place to hide safely. Since the rioters and the police were searching the entire area, there was no place for the Sikhs to hide. It was at this point that they decided to take these Sikhs to the underground lock-up in the police station, which was empty since all the criminals had been sent out with weapons to take part in the riot. The place was safe because there was a separate secret entrance through which they could enter and exit. Kaleem Ansari was left in charge of the Sikhs inside the lock-up, and Rawinder and Jogi rushed out to save the mortally wounded Daler. Heer, his widowed sister, pleaded with Jogi not to leave (*Jogi* 01:40:32–35). Because of her trauma, she felt vulnerable, and a sense of insecurity haunted her. Unable to verbalise her emotion, she expressed her trauma through visceral responses. She hugged Jogi and clung to him with tears in her eyes.

The film celebrates human willpower and the willingness to sacrifice one's life for the common good. Daler, who was severely injured, asked the rest of the group to leave him behind because he held that there was no point in endangering the lives of all the others for the sake of saving his life. The rioters spotted Daler lying on the floor, and they showed him no mercy and stuck a towel inside his

mouth. The bleeding body of Daler, who was both unable to move and to speak, stands as a metaphor for the predicament of the Sikh community during the riots. It is significant that the attackers' identities are not revealed, and their faces are hidden. A violent mob often consists of a nameless, faceless group whose identity is concealed, and this anonymity saves them from punishment when the courts later take up the matter.

The Sikhs inside the lock-up felt disturbed since Jogi did not return after many hours. The uncertainty and the ensuing anxiety, together with the fear of violence and victimisation, were traumatising for these people. That they were occupying a space between life and death unsettled them. The lock-up might be considered a different kind of heterotopia. The rioters carried Jogi and Rawinder with them, and they were pushed out of the truck. The Sikhs inside the lock-up could hear the sound of these two writhing in pain. They were surrounded by Tejpal Arora and many police officers, and Tejpal tried to tempt Jogi by saying that the lives of Jogi and the members of his family would be spared if he shared the details of the hiding place of the other Sikhs. Tejpal revealed his motive for orchestrating violence. He hoped that if he could impress the leaders with his work, he would be given a ticket to compete in the next election. He also added that his success would be measured in violence and destruction. When Jogi refused to disclose the details about the Sikhs who were in hiding, he was tortured further. Then, they tried to psychologically manipulate Rawinder, telling him he should prioritise his life since his friendship would last only if Jogi stayed alive. It was a veiled threat that they would not hesitate to kill him after killing Jogi. When they were unable to get any

response from these two, Tejpal grabbed a police gun, shot at and instantly killed Daler, who was already injured. When an enraged Jogi tried to attack Tejpal, two rioters whose faces were covered with a towel caught him and held him. Jogi received a bullet in his chest and collapsed on the floor. Seeing this, his sister, Heer, cried out loudly, and her cries gave away the location of the hiding place. Tejpal had a smug smile on his face when he realised that the remaining Sikhs could be dealt with in no time, and he ordered his foot soldiers to do their job with their bombs and cans of petrol. Then, he drove away in a car with a beacon light. The use of a vehicle with a beacon light by a rioter indicates the gross misuse of power by many criminals who orchestrated the riot.

The climax of the film contains many tense scenes of violence. The rioters locked the basement from outside and poured petrol. When they lit the fire, somebody extinguished it. It is later revealed that the army had been deployed in riot-hit areas, and it was Lali who brought the military to this spot to save Jogi. The offscreen narration in this scene consists of a radio news telecast, according to which, since the magnitude of the riot overburdened the police force, the army was assigned the law-and-order duty. The military escorted the Sikhs out of the lock-up. Rawinder told Jogi that they were able to save everybody's life, but Jogi, since he was mortally wounded, fell on the floor unconscious.

The film's last scene is a celebration of the spirit of resilience. In the background, lines from a Sikh prayer are chanted. Kaleem Ansari handed over the turban to Heer, and she placed it on Jogi’s head. This is a scene of cultural assertion, and it emphasises the refusal of the community to erase their religious identity and

cultural memory. Close-up shots and non-diegetic music are techniques used in this scene to depict trauma. The film ends with a message that "in the toughest of times, it is the spirit of friendship, togetherness and hope that lives on" (*Jogi* 01:52:37–44).

Another noted film on the Anti-Sikh Riots in Delhi in 1984 is *Amu*, which won critical acclaim for its bold portrayal of the various shades and dimensions of one of the gruesome and bloody riots in the history of independent India. In 2005, the film was featured at the Berlin Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival. It was awarded the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in English.

The film looks at riots from multiple vantage points, such as those of the victims, perpetrators and bystanders. It visually depicts the role of violence and the ensuing trauma in the shaping of individual and collective identities. The film revisits a past episode and demonstrates the multiple ways in which the legacy of the past structures the realities of the present. The film argues that attempts to repress the memories of the wounds of the past may not aid the healing process.

The plot of the film revolves around Kajori Roy, also known as Kaju, who migrated to the United States with her adopted mother at an early age. After her graduation, at age twenty-one, she returned to her native town, Delhi, to explore India. As she learns more about her roots, she is forced to confront the bitter episodes in the history of a community she was a part of. Her role eventually changes from that of a critical outsider to that of an affected insider.

At the beginning of the film, the camera pans scenes of Delhi in detail. The physical location is an integral part of this film's plot and design. The capital of Delhi has many contradictions and differences, yet people living in Delhi have

largely co-existed peacefully. Nevertheless, during the outbreak of riots, which Delhi witnessed during and after Partition, the fault lines along communal and cultural lines came to the foreground, and the dark underbelly of the city came to the limelight. The city of Delhi is presented as a mute spectator to the different outbreaks of violence.

The town is presented through Kaju's perspective. She could offer a detached perspective because she is an outsider. Sitting in the car, Kaju looks curiously at the people and places. What is remarkable about the opening scenes is the use of jump cuts. This editing technique creates a jarring effect and prevents the spectator's identification with these scenes. The director expects the viewer to approach the film from a critical point of view, and techniques like jump cuts serve this end. The jump cuts also serve as a metaphor for the discontinuous and disjointed memory of the protagonist, on which the film is mainly based.

Kaju's preoccupation with recording everything on camera is significant. The camera and the recordings serve as a prosthetic memory for Kaju, who is troubled by her past but is unable to recollect and process it. It is her childhood trauma that makes her preoccupied with her memory. Remembering and forgetting may influence how one imagines and conceptualises one's identity. In the case of Kaju, she cannot remember her childhood days, which created a profound identity crisis. She attempts to reconstruct her lost memory and reclaim her identity by recording the places and people around her with her video camera. She hopes that these recordings will function as a prosthetic surrogate.

When placed against the backdrop of the thematic preoccupations of the entire film, some of the events in the opening scene assume added significance. The filmmaker leaves many subtle hints of Kaju's troubled past and her trauma at the beginning of the film itself. One such instance was the mixed emotions on Kaju's face when a hawker in the street said that he had solutions for everything (*Amu* 00:02:10–12). She had contradictory feelings after reaching India, and she describes things in India as “crazy and real” at the same time (*Amu* 00:02:56–58). Having such contradictory emotions is a symptom of trauma. Kaju acknowledged her inner turmoil when she said, “Something tugs at me deep inside” (*Amu* 00:03:13–15). Kaju struggled to identify the source of her trauma and was perplexed by her deep psychological distress despite having a stable support system. This predicament can be best understood in the light of the observations presented by Cathy Caruth in her book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. She argues that “the traumatised, we might say, carry an impossible history within them. Or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess and thus which possesses them” (“Introduction” 5). The identity of Kaju and the people around her was shaped by a history she had not yet accessed and understood. However, the legacy of that historical event continues to shape the modalities of her everyday interactions, and her state of uncertainty and rootlessness is a symptom of the deep fissures in history.

The fact that she paid a visit to the Golden Temple as part of her trip to discover India is very significant. The army operation on the premises of this holy site is an episode that is etched in the memory of the Sikh community. The

disturbing and troubling memories of Operation Blue Star serve as the chosen trauma for many of the members of the Sikh community in India and elsewhere. Since her trauma is linked to religious polarisation and the ensuing violence, the film seems to suggest that turning to religion and its values may expedite her healing. Within postcolonial countries like India, the potential of religion and spirituality in healing individuals and communities is high. Postcolonial trauma theorists hold that faith gives victims resilience and hope. In her article "Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects", Irene Visser argues that "a respectful and nuanced conceptualisation of religious and spiritual modes of addressing trauma is needed" within the context of postcolonial societies (260). Kaju's visit to the Golden Temple has immense significance. Kaju, as an expatriate living in the West, did not know much about the conventions and rituals associated with the temple. The scene in which the seer in the temple asks her to cover her hair is the first instance in which she embraces the rituals of the faith to which she belonged, yet was unaware of it, owing to her early adoption by an upper-class Hindu woman who took her to the United States at an early age. The image of Kaju covering her hair and, by doing so, embracing her Sikh roots, assumes added significance as the plot unfolds. During the riots, the members of the community were forced to hide or erase the visible markers of their faith and culture.

The theme of the relationship between memory and identity is delineated in the opening scenes of the film. Amu felt that she was walking down memory lane as she returned to her village. However, owing to the unintegrated nature of traumatic memory, she was unable to process her memories. Her contention that "I wish I

could remember something" illustrates her predicament (*Amu* 00:05:56–59). Michelle Balaev's postulation that "traumatic memory is abnormal and lacks the narrative necessary to integrate it into the psyche" best explains Kaju's predicament (360).

Kaju was more comfortable with children, and through the games she played with them, she tried connecting the dots to reimagine her childhood and to relive her childhood joys, which she had lost owing to the riot. Some of her innocuous choices have profound significance. A case in point is Kaju buying a *gulaaak* or a money box from the street vendor. Like the cameras she always carries, the *gulaaak* also serves as a container. She cannot contain or store her memories within herself; she is constantly looking for an external container that can hold her memories.

Kaju's exploration of the physical space coincides with her attempts to explore her inner self. The development of her relationship with Kabir Sehgal helps her find answers to many questions that had lingered in her mind. Later in the plot, it is revealed that both the families of Kaju and Kabir were affected by the anti-Sikh riots, albeit in different contexts and degrees. Although Kaju and Kabir were initially unaware of the gravity of the historical event and its role in their lives, they gradually discovered how they were part of the disturbing episodes in the country's history. Kabir initially mistook Kaju for just another tourist from Los Angeles who was in India for sightseeing. He asked her whether she was "exploring the ancient India, the exotic India, the spiritual India (*Amu* 00:10:26–28). She replied that she "wanted to know all of India, the real India" (*Amu* 00:10:29–30). She further explained to Kabir, "I just want to know all of India because it is a part of who I am"

(*Amu* 00:10:47–50). As someone experiencing deep psychological distress, Kaju felt compelled to reconstruct and reimagine her identity by reconnecting and restabilising ties to her native land. She hoped that her explorations of the land of her birth would help her discover her true identity.

The film leaves subtle hints throughout the narrative. The technique of foreshadowing is used to evoke specific memories and states. For instance, when Kaju tried to catch a bus to visit her foster mother’s old college, she could not enter it because it was crowded. This was one of the many instances in her life in which she experienced exclusion both physically and psychologically. This episode evocatively symbolises Kaju's difficult predicament.

It is significant that Kaju feels more at home in the company of the poor and the oppressed. One day, she paid a visit to a local tea shop and met a *dabbawala*, Mr Balbir. Her visit to Balbir's house and eventual mingling with his wife and kids brought back memories of the place she had left at a young age.

The director sheds light on the complex socio-political landscape of Delhi throughout the film. On her way to Balbir's house, Kaju saw some people protesting against what they perceived as a police state. This scene alludes to the failure of the state establishment and the apathy of many of those who were in charge, which added to the intensity of the suffering of the people, including the victims of the 1984 riots.

Kaju saw the photograph of a Sikh man hanging on the wall inside Balbir’s house. As this photograph suggests, most men and women from all communities preferred peace and harmony. Communal violence and communal riots were

designed and executed by vested interest groups. While on their way home, Kaju and Kabir lost their way, and they wandered along the narrow lanes. The narrow streets in the gully are likened to the complex layers of Kaju's memory. She lost her way and found it challenging to find the path leading to her house. This incident carries symbolic significance as it alludes to her struggle to discover her true identity. As she stood near a small house in the gully, some of her memories resurfaced. As a result of the resurfacing of the traumatic memory, she became emotionally distraught. However, she could neither understand her emotional state nor describe it to Kabir, with whom she had developed an emotional connection.

The shot selection and the shaking of visuals on screen are techniques used in these scenes to convey the protagonist's mental stress and strain. The brilliant lighting depicts her loneliness and alienation. The front light highlights her face to communicate her deep-felt anguish. The dark background symbolises her inaccessible, repressed memories.

Kaju shivered in her sleep since she had strange, disturbing dreams. Frequent nightmares and the inability to sleep are two symptoms of her psychological trauma. The background score in the film also evokes the trauma of the protagonist. The use of silence is also suggestive of psychological distress in the film. Kaju also showed withdrawal symptoms, as illustrated by her unwillingness and unpreparedness to join the exercise session with her cousin Tuki. As Tuki observed, after her trip to the slum, Kaju was withdrawn and disturbed mentally. Kaju made many references to Chandan Hola in her conversation with Tuki, and her preoccupation with that place

suggests that her last trip to the colony functioned as a trigger that brought back some of her repressed memories.

The role of Kabir keeps changing throughout the plot. Kabir's acting career and his interest in reading made him a person who is willing to listen to the stories of others. His initial apathy towards Kaju, stemming from his assumption that she was a privileged Westerner, changed when he learned that Kaju was an orphan. He eventually became Kaju's empathetic companion. Kaju told Kabir that she was born poorer than the children in the slum and grew up in a village without electricity and tap water. She went on to explain to him that she was told that her birth parents died in a malaria epidemic, which resulted in the death of everyone in that village. She added that she was adopted later, and her adoptive mother took her to the United States at a very young age. After listening to Kaju's narration about her traumatic past, Kabir was emotionally moved. He offered her a heartfelt apology for the way he had previously treated her. His deep regret was conveyed through the inflexions in his voice and his body language. The empathy that he felt for Kaju further deepened his bond with her.

The plot of the film takes an unexpected turn when her adoptive mother, Keya Roy, arrives from the United States. After her five-year-long stay in a foreign country, she returned to India to be back with her family. It is also suggested that Keya was apprehensive of the possibility of Kaju's visit to Delhi reawakening some of her suppressed memories about her traumatic childhood. Keya had already noticed in Kaju some of the symptoms of trauma, such as her inability to form lasting relationships. She thought that Kaju might feel better if she developed her

relationship with Kabir further. When she asked Kaju whether she liked Kabir, she replied that she did not want to meet him again (*Amu* 00:30:11–15). Distraught and disillusioned, Keya observed that “every time a guy gets close to you, you just back off” (*Amu* 00:30:14–16). Moreover, she advised her not to be scared. Her inability to form lasting relationships may be attributed to her childhood trauma. Keya tried to give her confidence, telling Amu, “Darling, do not be scared” (*Amu* 00:30:17–18). Keya had withheld some information from Kaju to protect her from the shock of confronting reality about some episodes in her childhood. Keya was worried that Kaju's visit to the slums and the suburbs of Delhi might bring back painful memories. Keya's apprehensions turned out to be accurate, as illustrated by a later scene in which Kaju confessed to Kabir that her earlier impression of New York as her place of birth might not be accurate. She sought his help to find out the details about her birth parents. Kabir accompanied her to the railway station nearby, and the place brought back some of her repressed memories. She had strange flashbacks, which is a symptom of being traumatised. The way she stares at the railway tracks betrays her intense trauma, which remains in her psyche as an unaligned and unclaimed experience.

The passing of the train compartment serves as a metaphor for her exploration of the past. She was often seen struggling to recollect something, yet she was unable to retrieve it. Standing at the railway station, she told Kabir that she knew that place, yet she could not locate her memories spatially. Kaju and Kabir went to the house of Balbir's uncle, who was very old, to learn more about the people living in the nearby colony. He told them that his family moved to this new

slum after the *basti* or their colony was attacked during the riot, and the houses there were set on fire by the rioters in 1984. This is the first reference to the infamous Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984 in this film. Balbir's uncle described the terrible screams of the victims of the riots in 1984 in detail. He pointed out that after Indira Gandhi's assassination, Sikhs in their locality were systematically targeted. He added that before the riots, Sikhs comprised more than half of that colony. However, on the days of rioting in 1984, anyone who had a turban or beard was targeted. He recollected that during the riots, the whole city of Delhi was burning, and many Sikhs were attacked, and some were killed. Kaju asked Kabir why the Sikhs were killed since she, given her status as an expatriate living in New York, had only limited awareness about the history of the political, ethnic and communal violence in India.

Kaju's attitude and approach towards her life changed after she learned about the riots and the stories about the riot victims. She became tense and disturbed, so she refused to dance with her mother at their residence. She had a disturbing physical and mental sensation, and she told her mother that she was not feeling well. This psychological state is another symptom of trauma. Kaju later told her mother that she felt so sad and depressed after she came to know about the horrible riots in which the slums in Triloknagar were attacked and set on fire. When Keya realised that Kaju was trying to find out more about the riots and that it might lead to the disclosure of some uncomfortable truths, she collapsed on the floor since she could not handle the pressure.

Kabir was a student with strong political and social commitment, and hence he wanted to know more about the riots. He asked his father, a senior civil servant, whether they were in Delhi during the 1984 riots. He also wanted his father to get him data about the malaria epidemic in Chandan Hola in 1985 because Kaju told him that her parents died in the malaria epidemic there.

Kaju met Kabir at his residence on the day of a party. It was through her interaction with other guests that she came to know about the details of the riots. Kaju expressed her shock at the fact that thousands of people were killed in a riot in a single city within three days. Then, she added that “not that many people were killed in 9/11” (*Amu* 00:42:44–48). Another guest argued that “it is better that they not know about it. Why project this ugly part of India” (*Amu* 00:42:48–52). He also added that “we must have a good image abroad” (*Amu* 00:42:53–54). When Kaju persisted with her questions, another lady commented that all these incidents were part of a very complex history, and one must try to connect the dots to get a deeper understanding of the historical incidents. However, Kaju was still profoundly perturbed by the question, “No matter what the deeper causes of this event, or provocation, how come the cops could not stop the riot for three days” (*Amu* 00:43:05–07). They replied to her that the Indian police system was not as efficient as the American police system. Another person disputed this claim, stating that the police were efficient when they arrested 5000 persons under TADA (*Amu* 00:43:22–27). The professor told Kaju not to listen to him because he was an artist. Through these questions, the film foregrounds instances of structural violence, which added to the suffering of the riot victims.

Stef Crap has argued that discourses on trauma have paid little to no attention to traumatogenic events outside the West (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 2). In their book *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood,* Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman point out that “trauma—or rather the social process of the recognition of persons as traumatised—effectively chooses its victims. Although those who promote the concept assert that it is universal since it is the mark left by an event, a study reveals tragic disparities in its use” (282). These two observations best explain the reason for the lack of attention paid to the 1984 tragedy, which, in terms of the number of casualties, has a greater magnitude than the tragedy in the United States on 9/11. Postcolonial trauma studies problematise this differential treatment of tragedies based on their physical and cultural locations.

The professor in this film represents the bystanders who, despite knowing the facts, refused to intervene for fear of losing their privileges. Maintaining the appearance of normalcy seemed more important to people like him than making an actual intervention to help the affected community. Another episode that illustrates the mainstream society's lack of interest in the 1984 riot is the one in which Kabir searched for a book on the riots in a bookstore, and he could not find a single book on the subject. When he asked the shopkeeper for a book on the riot, he told him that no book on the topic was available, and the tone of his voice betrayed the fear the word riot evoked in him. It is to be noted in this context that many books and films on the riot came out only after a period of latency.

When Kaju asked the professor further about the riot, he told her that a bureaucrat here, Mr. Sehgal, was in charge of the city during the riots, and that

officer might be able to answer her queries. The expression on the face of the wife of that bureaucrat when she hears the word riot reveals her sense of guilt. The shocked expression on the faces of many others at the party when they hear the phrase ‘1984 Riots’ is revealing. They were shocked, yet they were unwilling to acknowledge the legacy of the riots. They tried to take the attention away from the riots by talking about the lunch that was getting cold. Kaju confronted Mr Sehgal, Kabir's father, regarding his role as a civil servant in 1984. He evaded her question by asking her whether she was the one who was born in Chandan Hola, and later added that it was because of her that his son had become curious about the city's past. He told her that after checking official documents, in the period mentioned by her, no epidemic was reported in Chandan Hola, and his reply contradicted Keya’s narrative that Kaju’s parents died in an epidemic in that locality.

Kaju’s angst about her identity resulting from her partial recollection of her childhood days unsettled her to such an extent that she lost her interest in the finer things of life, as illustrated by the interaction between Kaju and Keya in the jewellery shop to which she was taken by her mother to boost her morale by buying a few ornaments for her. Keya was disturbed since she could not comprehend why her daughter was distraught. When Keya asked her the reason for her being upset, she asked her, “Why did you tell me that my parents died in an epidemic in Chandan Hola?” (*Amu* 00:45:16–20). Keya repeated the lie and asserted that she said what she said because it was the truth. Kaju retorted that there was no such epidemic in 1985. Keya explained that she got the information about the epidemic from the adoption agency. Kaju was very much preoccupied with finding her true identity, so she asked

her about the details of the agency, to which Keya replied that it had been shut down long ago. Kaju wanted to go through the documents given by the agency, but Keya told her that all the records were with her grandfather. Returning home, Kaju searched for the documents and found them in Keya Roy's trunk. She found out that her mother had died in Trilok Nagar, and she confronted Keya with this fact. She also asked her about the death certificate, on which certain portions were smudged, even though she could make out some letters in the names of her biological parents. Kaju hoped that the death certificate might be fake, and in that case, her biological parents might still be alive. Kaju became so traumatised that she was unable to mingle with the members of her family. She refused to have food, stating that she was not hungry. Such psychosomatic changes reveal the intensity of her trauma.

Trauma has horizontal mobility, and it may get transferred from a traumatic subject to an empathetic listener, leading to the formation of "vicarious trauma" (McCann and Pearlman 131). Kaju's predicament traumatised Keya, who confessed to her brother that she could not carry the burden of truth further and could not cope anymore. She also confessed that she withheld the vital information from Kaju partly because of her fear that Kaju might not be able to comprehend the truth and partly because of her possessiveness towards Kaju. Keya was feeling scared and was unable to process her thoughts, which is an indication of her trauma. She felt relieved after her brother consoled her, stating that she had not committed any mistake. The presence of a sympathetic listener can alleviate one's psychological distress. Keya felt relieved after her interactions with her brother.

Kabir and Kaju knew that in 1984, there was a riot in Trilok Nagar, and hoping to find some information about Kaju's parents, they closely examined some photographs of the riot on the computer of Kabir's father. They became extremely shocked and deeply pained when they saw the photographs of the riot. They saw images of charred bodies, burnt houses, destroyed streets and weeping women. This scene in this film powerfully illustrates the violence during the riot in its full magnitude. These photographs bear witness to trauma and function as an archival repository of the past.

Kabir and Kaju tried to find out the names of the parents on the birth certificate by looking at the initial and final letters, which were not smudged. They returned to the colony to meet Balbir. He told them that if the initial letter was S, the name might be Shanta or Shanti. The second name started with K and ended with R, and they guessed that the full name could be Kanwar, Kakkar or Kumar. They learned that there was a lady named Shanti Kumar who had a daughter. They were also told that the lady left the village after the riot in 1984. They assured them that Durga Aunty could help them with more details. Kaju asked her whether Shanti Kumar was a Sikh and whether she had left after the riot.

Durga was visibly shocked when she heard the word riot. She could recollect and vividly describe the violence on those days that she had witnessed. Flashbulb memory or vivid recollection is one feature of traumatic memory. Her memory is depicted in black and white visuals and through off-screen narration in the film. Durga could recollect the murder of the then-Prime Minister and the riots that

followed. Shre recollected that on that day in 1984, she was travelling in a train, and in her compartment, there were two Sikhs whose lives were in danger. Her fellow passengers asked them to cut their hair to save their lives. The Sikh man cried when their hair was cut.

After listening to the stories about the terrible riot, Kabir tried to persuade Kaju to leave the past behind. He asked her not to dig up her past and attempted to convince her that "It is OK not to find out" (*Amu* 01:00:10–106). Kaju replied to him, "I do not want to find out. However, I cannot stop myself" (*Amu* 01:00:17–19). Traumatic memory is so powerful that it is difficult to let go of it. Kabir and Kaju tried to locate Shanti's house. They were told that she had relocated to the Widow Colony after the riot. Their visit to the colony intensified their trauma. Many photographs of the husbands whom the rioters killed were hung on the walls in the houses of the widows. They listened to the detailed testimonies of these widows. One widow told them that on the day of the riot, it was Shanti who saved her family, but the rioters burnt down her house. She added that she tried to save her son by concealing his gender identity. However, some of the rioters were her neighbours, and they knew that Kulbir Singh had no daughters, so they caught her son and killed him. She also revealed that it was a politician who was responsible for the death of her son. Kaju and Kabir were shocked when they realised that some politicians played pivotal roles in planning, abetting and executing the riot. Kabir tried to convince Shanti that not all politicians and officers were involved, but she disagreed and categorically stated that many police officers and bureaucrats were complicit

(*Amu* 01:03:26–28). Kabir, being the son of a civil servant, further enquired whether there were not some good individuals in the given administration and the police. She replied in the negative. She added that the victims would continue their fight for justice (*Amu* 01:03:58–60). While speaking, her voice was breaking because of her intense trauma. The inmates expressed their hopelessness and helplessness. Kabir realised that his father might also have been complicit, and this realisation unsettled him. The director uses close-up shots to capture the complex emotions on his face.

Kabir returned home and confronted his father regarding his involvement in the riot. As a mark of his protest, Kabir told his father that he would never pursue an MBA as his father wished and would instead write a play called *1984: The Dark Night*. He wanted to expose the influential people by portraying what they did and did not do when the city burnt in 1984. His mother overheard this conversation between her son and her husband and was shocked, and the expression on her face revealed her conviction that her husband was indeed complicit in the crimes committed in 1984.

Kabir and Kaju went out looking for Kumar, suspecting that he might be Kaju's father. Balbir told them that there was a local thug named Kishan Kumar who killed Balbir Singh, a Sikh, who was his former employer. They tried to hide him in their house, but somehow the criminal located and killed him. KK drenched Balbir in kerosene and then lit the fire. His uncle stated that he took him to the hospital, but within a few hours, he died. At this juncture, a visibly shaken Balbir confessed that it was not KK but he who killed Mr Singh. He further explained that KK threatened to

kill him if he did not reveal the details of Balbir Singh's whereabouts. Under pressure, he gave away the information, which eventually resulted in the murder of Balbir Singh. He could not control his tears and broke down. His uncle hugged him and tried to convince him that he was only a child then and was not responsible for the death of Balbir Singh. This scene clearly illustrates that remembering trauma is often akin to reliving it.

Kaju felt that her father, whoever he was, might also have participated in the riot. She wondered, while the entire city was targeted on such a massive scale, "What did my birth parents do? What did we all do"? (*Amu* 01:08:58–60). It was because of her identification with the victims that she blamed herself, and she was preoccupied with her shared guilt. The uncle tried to assuage Kaju's feelings, stating that not everyone was a perpetrator, which was why the number of casualties remained limited. The director uses low-key lighting in this emotionally charged scene.

Kaju's encounter with KK, who was working as an autorickshaw driver, is an emotionally charged scene because she was convinced that he was her biological father. Notably, those at the top who planned and orchestrated the riot reaped political dividends and suffered negligible consequences. In contrast, many foot soldiers had to face the consequences of their actions. Kabir confronted KK with questions about the 1984 riots and his involvement in them. KK feigned ignorance and innocence, stating that he was not part of any riot (*Amu* 01:11:18–20). He later added that no one wanted to investigate the role of the individuals who gave the

rioters kerosene to burn the Sikhs alive (*Amu* 01:11:24–26). He asked Kabir why no one wanted to find out about those who gave the rioters the electoral rolls on which each house of Sikhs was marked (*Amu* 01:11:28–30). Later, he came up with the answers to his own queries. No one wanted to talk about those who pulled the strings because they lived in grand government bungalows (*Amu* 01:11:38–38). KK tried to justify his actions, stating that he was only acting according to the orders from the top (*Amu* 01:11:42–45). The confessions of KK in no way exonerate him or decrease the gravity of his crime. Still, they reveal that many leaders have not been brought before the law for their alleged crimes. The perpetrators, with influence and money, were able to destroy evidence and continue their daily lives as usual. The intersecting identities shaped how individuals were treated, irrespective of their role as victims or perpetrators.

Kaju developed a liking for KK, assuming that he was her father, but she hated him for his role in the riot. The conflicting emotions strained her both physically and mentally. Kabir tried to convince her that she was so beautiful that she could never be his daughter. Kaju replied to him, “You think killers don't have families. We just learned about those politicians who go around in fancy cars and live in big mansions. If he had been like the guys in your living room, you would have been okay with them” (*Amu* 01:13:07–17). Kabir consoled her, saying, “What your father or my father did or did not do has nothing to do with us” (*Amu* 01:11:27–29). The prolonged silence that followed conveys the intensity of their trauma. The realisation dawned on them that they were implicated in the orgy of violence: Kabir

could be the son of a bureaucrat who abetted violence, and Kaju could be the daughter of a street thug who murdered many innocent Sikhs.

Kaju went to the children's park when others in the house left to attend the cultural function. She was looking for her parents because she was convinced that she would meet them sooner rather than later, and this feeling of anxiety overwhelmed her. The director has used the technique of parallel editing to juxtapose the events in the park and the events in the venue where the cultural function took place. The song "You are Mum and Oblivious" at the cultural function offers a commentary on violence. The opening line, "You witness the downfall of humanity", is perhaps an observation about the brutality unleashed during riots (*Amu* 01:16:51–53). The director problematises and critiques the general public's apathy. The song exhorts people not to be egocentric and to be more dynamic (*Amu* 01:17:38–01:18:15).

When Keya enquired why Kaju was missing at the function, Tuki told her that she had gone out to meet someone whom she thought was her biological father. The director has used low-key lighting to convey the deep trauma of Kaju, who was feeling lonely and depressed, sitting all alone. Keya rushed into her car to meet Kaju and saw her slowly walking towards KK. Keya tried to stop Kaju, but Kaju, convinced that KK was her father, told Keya, "Don't try to shield me from the truth" (*Amu* 01:19:03–05). Keya promised Kaju that she would tell her everything since she was mature enough to hear the truth. Keya explained to Kaju that she was born

into a Sikh family and her real name is not Kaju, but Amu Singh. Keya told her that her father was a good man named Gurbachan Singh.

The following scenes in the film offer the viewers a flashback of the capital city before the riot erupted. Keya told Kaju that she was part of a happy Sikh family living in a Sikh neighbourhood. She added that Kaju's mother's name is Shanoo Kaur, and she also had an infant brother, Arjun. Keya told her that her parents called her Amrit, and her brother named her Amu. She narrated the whole story of the riot and clearly explained how Amu lost her parents and her brother. This narration is interspersed with visuals showing Amu’s family.

Keya explained that, in 1984, when Amu’s parents were having a meal together on a fine day, they heard a commotion outside their house. Her mother enquired why some men were roaming and running along the street. The kids started crying as though they sensed the impending danger. Their cries foreshadow the coming of gloom. Then, they heard the sound of glass breaking, which also serves as a metaphor for the disturbance caused by the disruption of communal harmony. Seeing the commotion outside, Amu's father took his *Kripan* and went out to defend his family from the marauding rioters. He asked his wife to protect her kids. She tried to hide them behind the curtain, asked them to be quiet, and went out looking for her husband. Amu saw the members of the mob dragging her father. Witnessing the scene of one’s father being murdered is profoundly troubling and traumatising. Amu was so overwhelmed with fear and sorrow that she could not even cry out for help. She heard her father pleading for help and confessing that he had not done

anything wrong. The mob was shouting that each Sikh was a traitor (*Amu* 01:22:15–17). Amu was traumatised when she came to know about the suffering of her parents during the riots. Her trauma was writ large on her face, and she was not even able to weep and share her grief. The director uses extreme close-up shots of her face to convey her predicament and her mental state. Young Amu ran towards the nearby railway station where police officers were on duty. The police officers refused to help them. This scene lays bare the modalities of structural violence. It was the failure of the institutions which resulted in the violence spiralling out of control. Amu's mother also sought help from a politician, but he feigned deafness and ignored her pleas for help. Amu ran out of the house, looking for her mother, who was nowhere to be seen. She saw the crowd running towards her home and tried to stop them by telling them that her brother was alone. Amu saw her mother standing on the other side of the railway tracks, but then her vision was blocked by a moving train. It was this traumatic memory which continued to visit her in her troubling flashbacks. She often had strange dreams about a railway station. Still, she could not decode its meaning, and only after listening to her foster mother's detailed narration she could understand her complex situation.

In the next few shots, the camera pans through the different rooms in Amu Singh's house. Everything in the place has been burnt to ashes. The camera moves so slowly as though time has been frozen. The director uses this slow pace to evoke trauma. The close-up shots of Shanno and Amu capture their state of trauma.

After these scenes, Amu is seen weeping bitterly, and she tells Keya that, as a sister, she ought to have saved her brother, but she failed. Keya tried to console her, telling her that, at that time, she was only an infant and she might not have been able to do much. Keya added that no one could have done much because it was “so organised” (*Amu* 01:24:41–42). She explained that she had met her mother at a relief station set up by the gurudwaras. The film then cuts to a scene depicting the relief camp, whose inmates were predominantly women and children. Keya was a social activist, and she visited the camp regularly. Keya saw Amu at the camp, developed an emotional bond with her and gave her sketch pens as gifts. Keya also tried to create a bond with Amu’s mother, who was always quiet and sat alone. Shanno told Keya that a politician wearing dark glasses came to the camp on the last day to distribute blankets. She refused to receive the blanket from him because he was the same politician who had ignored all her pleas for help when she came across him at the railway station on the day of the riot. This incident exposes the double game played by some crooked politicians who tried to secure the support of both the victims and the victimisers by playing some dirty games. The rest of the inmates in the camp failed to understand what was going on, and they thought that she had lost her sanity as a result of witnessing so much violence. Keya offered her legal help, but Shanno had lost her faith in the system. Shanno also felt that justice could never be delivered, as no one could bring her husband back to life. However, when she went to the police station to register a complaint, her concerns were ignored. Keya added that though her mother was courageous, the authorities were able to break her

spirit, and out of frustration, she committed suicide by hanging, leaving a note for Keya. It was written that she decided to take her life on that day, which was also the birthday of her son, because her pain had become unbearable. She also requested Keya to take care of her daughter, Amrith. After listening to Keya's detailed narration about her childhood days, Amu hugged Keya and wept bitterly. The weight of the revelation was so heavy that she felt overwhelmed with complex emotions ranging from sorrow to gratitude.

In the film's final scene, Kaju and Kabir sit at the same railway station. Revelations about their past have traumatised Kabir and Kaju in different ways. Kaju is pained by her realisation that she will never be able to meet her parents, and Kabir is shocked by the revelation that his father was complicit in the crime. Though triggered by different circumstances, their trauma results in the formation of a deeper bond, as illustrated by the visual of Kaju holding Kabir's hands.

One of the most shocking scenes in the film is the last one, in which the people in a cafe at the railway station are watching a news report about violence on a train in Gujarat. As per the news report, as many as fifty-seven *karasevaks* returning from Ayodhya in the Sabarmati Express were killed in a fire. It is also suggested that the cycle of violence in the form of communal riots is about to be repeated, albeit in a different social, political, and cultural setting. The director's attempt to commemorate a different riot in a film about the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots is remarkable. It conveys his convictions regarding the politics behind the anatomy of violence and hatred. The film demonstrates that memory is not a zero-sum game. The film

appears to reject the assumption that one memory is a threat to another, and each competes for recognition at the expense of the other. The film reflects the director's conviction that commemorating the losses of one community does not lead to the erasure of the memory of the losses of another community. The film deconstructs the myth of competitive memory and acknowledges and explores the possibility of non-competitive memory. Michel Rothberg's argument, presented in his book *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization,* supports the assumption that collective memory is based more on inclusion than on exclusion (176). Cross-referencing and cultural negotiations strengthen memory rather than weaken it. Circulation of collective memories about one riot does not crowd out collective memories about another riot because collective memories about distinct historical events and incidents emerge dialogically.

The films *Jogi* and *Amu* demonstrate how the identities of affected individuals and communities are shaped by violence and trauma. In the case of characters like Kaju and Heer, encounters with trauma have fractured their identities. Kaju lived with self-doubt and was unable to form any lasting relationships. The widows that Kaju met at the colony faced challenges and struggles daily after their husbands were murdered by the rioters. Their sense of security was destroyed by the riots. Heer in *Jogi* carried survivor's guilt because the rioters killed her husband, whereas she survived to suffer the consequences. Heer and other Sikhs felt that violence had limited their agency, and many victims internalised their helplessness.

The films also illustrate how the intersectional identities of the victims shape the extent of their trauma. The suffering of the victims is compounded by overlapping factors such as caste, class, and gender. It is to be noted that both Jogi and Amu have a middle-class background. The Sikh widows suffered more because their husbands were the earning members of the family. Amu's mother, after the death of her husband, committed suicide, unable to cope with her trauma. Similarly, the films also look at the predicament of children during the riots. They suffer more on account of their limited agency.

Both films also explore insidious trauma. The films demonstrate how everyday experiences of marginalisation trigger trauma. Jogi confesses that the way the passengers on the bus ignored him and the conductor refused to take money from him traumatised him. He was also deeply pained because some passengers on the bus called him a traitor on account of his religious faith and cultural identity. The constant exposure to microaggressions can be a potential trigger of trauma.

These films also examine how the riots traumatised communities and offer a detailed analysis of collective trauma. The memories of past trauma triggered by Partition violence resurfaced as a result of the riot. Jogi hoped that his community would emerge stronger like a phoenix, as they had done in 1947. The Sikhs, as they were hiding in the gurudwara and as they were travelling in a truck, suffered from severe depression and increased levels of anxiety. These are two symptoms of collective trauma. During the riot, the Sikh community was victimised by the social and political structures. This victimisation at the systemic level and the

discrimination by political institutions resulted in the formation of social trauma. Both *Jogi* and *Amu* contain instances of the members of the community suffering from social trauma because they were on the receiving end of structural inequality. In the film *Jogi*, the victims do not receive support from the police. Instead, some police officers joined hands with the rioters and assisted them in burning down areas where Sikhs were living. Similarly, in *Amu*, Mr Sehgal, Kabir's father, a senior government officer, did not attempt to reach out to the riot victims. Many political leaders, like Arora, ensured that the entire community was subjected to systemic oppression. As a result, the members of the Sikh community felt depressed and hopeless. In *Amu* and *Jogi*, many Sikhs' trust in the law and order system had been eroded as a result of their collective trauma. These films have also explored intergenerational trauma. Different scenes indicate that many Sikhs carried the memories of violence on the days of Partition. The memories of the violence on the days of Partition continue to traumatise members of the present generation. The multiple references to Partition in *Jogi* and *Amu* illustrate this point. The past resurfaces in the moment of crisis, eventually traumatising the community further.

The evocative treatment of the topics of violence and trauma in these two films may encourage the spectator to address the issues discussed in these films with "empathic unsettlement" (LaCapra, *Writing History* 78). In other words, these two films treat the issue of individual and collective trauma in such a manner that it could make the spectator bear witness to trauma. These films put him or her in "the other's position while recognising the difference of that position" (LaCapra, *Writing*

History 78). The spectator can analyse and understand the victims' pain from this position. At the same time, the possibility of over-identification leading to appropriation of the trauma of the other is also limited in this situation. The maintenance of such a position may help the spectator avoid the possibility of an "empathy [that] gives way to vicarious victimhood" (LaCapra, *Writing History* 47).

To conclude, both *Jogi* and *Amu* offer a detailed and critical analysis of the role played by individual, collective, and intergenerational trauma in shaping the individual and collective identities of the members of the affected groups. These films place trauma against broader social, cultural and political backdrops. In a postcolonial locality, in which communities continue to suffer on account of historical wounds, this exploration of the role played by social and political structures in triggering and healing trauma assumes added significance.

Chapter IV

Imprints of Violence: Representations of Collective Memory and Collective Trauma in *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*

This chapter critically analyses the modalities of the representation of communal violence and cultural trauma in select twenty-first-century Indian documentary films. The films selected for detailed analysis are *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement,* directed by Harpreet Kaur and released in 2006, which focuses on the suffering of the victims of the Anti-Sikh Riots in Delhi in 1984, and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*, directed by Sheena Sumaria and Sonum Sumaria and released in 2014, which is based on the legacy of the Gujarat Riots in 2002. This chapter explores how these documentaries address the complex questions concerning collective memory and cultural trauma. The different ways these films bear witness to trauma and the ethics of bearing witness to suffering and grief are looked at closely. This chapter explores how the select documentary films address the politics of perpetration and othering through the framework of postcolonial trauma studies. The chapter also offers a detailed analysis of the various techniques used in these films to depict the episodes of violence, suffering and resilience in the wake of the outbreak of communal riots.

Art and culture play a significant role in the creation, validation, and transmission of shared memories, which is conceptualised as "collective memory" by Maurice Halbwachs, who emphasises the role played by society in the generation of memories. Schuman and Scott define collective memory as "recollections of a

shared past “that are retained by members of a group, large or small, that experienced it” (361–62). Such recollections are “retained and passed on either as part of an ongoing process of what might be called public commemoration, in which officially sanctioned rituals are engaged to establish a shared past or through discourses more specific to a particular group or collective (Eyerman, “Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity” 61). Halbwachs and Coser argue that “it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognise, and localise their memories” (38). Maurice Halbwach argues that “memory is collective in that it is supra-individual, and individual memory is always conceived in relation to a group, be this geographical, positional, ideological, political, or generationally based” (qtd. in Eyerman, “Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity” 61).

The question of power and agency is also crucial in the creation and dissemination of memories. The memories of groups with greater power and influence may be circulated faster than those with limited agency and resources. Groups and communities often use images of the past “as vehicles for establishing their power or, perversely, lack of power” (Olick and Robbins 127). Artistic texts may enable a community to reexamine, reconceptualise, and reimagine their shared memories about deeply painful and traumatic episodes in the past. They could influence and, at times, even alter the way the past is perceived in the present.

Kai Erikson, in his book *Everything in Its Path,* has juxtaposed individual and collective trauma to develop a complex theoretical framework that can address

the nuances of different types of interrelated facets of trauma. He points out that collective trauma “works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it” (*Everything in Its Path* 54). Individual trauma and collective trauma are intricately connected. As Jeffrey Alexander argues, “Individual security is anchored in structures of emotional and cultural expectations that provide a sense of security and capability. These expectations and capabilities, in turn, are rooted in the sturdiness of the collectivities of which individuals are a part” (“Toward a Theory” 1). When these expectations about security are violated, the possibility of traumatisation of the members of the affected group is high.

Collective memory and cultural trauma are closely related concepts since collective memory is one of the prerequisites to forming cultural trauma. Neil J. Smelser points out that an event “must be remembered, or made to be remembered,” to become cultural trauma (36). In the article “Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma”, Smelser defines cultural trauma as “a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is (a) laden with negative affect, (b) represented as indelible, and (c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions” (44). Jeffrey Alexander argues that “it is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilisations… cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering “ (“Toward a Theory” 1).

A prerequisite for the formation of cultural trauma is an “invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several

essential ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole" (Smelser 38). Ron Eyerman has identified some of the essential factors that create a condition conducive to the formation of cultural trauma. These are "1) the timing of the incident, (2) the surrounding political context, (3) how authority performed, (4) the content of mass media representations, and (5) the presence, power, and performance of carrier groups" ("Cultural Trauma" 39). Jeffrey Alexander, in his article "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma", has listed some factors influencing cultural trauma formation. They are "nature of the pain", "nature of the victim", "relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience", and "attribution of responsibility" (13-15). Along with these interrelated factors, he argues that the creation of narratives through different modes of representational strategies also plays a significant role in "the process by which a collectivity becomes traumatised" ("Toward a Theory" 15).

The concepts of collective trauma and cultural trauma are closely related. Nevertheless, there are specific subtle differences between the two theoretical formulations. Collective trauma is the direct consequence of a group experiencing a traumatic event. Collective trauma becomes cultural trauma when different narratives and cultural representations frame that shared trauma as a core component of the group's identity. Collective trauma is triggered by the traumatic event itself. However, in the formation of cultural trauma, along with the experiences of the community, the framing of the event in different narratives also plays a role. Symbolic representation plays an important role in the formation of cultural trauma.

Cultural trauma may be transmitted across generations through novels, films, rituals, historical accounts and other cultural representations.

In forming collective memory and cultural trauma, carrier groups may play an important role. According to Jeffrey Alexander, “Carrier groups are the collective agents of the trauma process” (Toward a Theory” 1). He adds that carrier groups “have both ideal and material interests, they are situated in particular places in the social structure, and they have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims—for what might be called ‘meaning making’—in the public sphere” (Toward a Theory” 1).

Many writers, artists and filmmakers revisit the episodes of violence in their works to tell the stories of victims and perpetrators. It is to be noted that these stories of violence, torture and the ensuing victimisation and traumatisation demand and require “witnessing, listening and telling” because in the absence of such concerted attempts at ethical documentation, traumatic memory, owing to its volatile nature, may be appropriated and exploited by certain fringe elements with “destructive political agendas in the future” (Bhaskar 65). Narrativising traumatic events poses ethical, epistemological and narrative challenges. However, narrativisation is to be attempted since it has the potential to accentuate “assimilation and “integration”, which will accentuate the processes of healing (Elsaesser 195). Ira Bhaskar holds that art in general, and cinema, in particular, have the potential to address such complex issues by refracting “history through the prism of representation” (viii). Cinema can transmit these stories among the members of various communities, and

by doing so "forms a collective memory of the momentous events and mobilises memory for an imagining of a community – both national and local" (Bhaskar viii).

Bill Nichols, one of the most important scholars in the field of documentary studies, is of the view that documentaries "show us situations and events that are recognisable as part of a realm of shared experience: the historical world as we know and encounter it, or as we believe others to encounter it" (*Representing Reality* ix-x). He argues that documentary cinema can potentially transport the viewer or the spectator "beyond itself, toward that historical arena of which it is a part" (*Representing Reality* xvi). He reasons that documentaries have a mass appeal because they "show us situations and events that are a recognisable part of a realm of shared experience: the historical world as we know and encounter it, or as we believe others to encounter it" (*Representing Reality* ix).

In the article "Voice of Documentary", Bill Nichols classified documentary films into four types based on their formal qualities, distinctive styles and ideological positions (17). The first significant style to emerge was "the direct-address style of the Griersonian tradition", which "employed a supposedly authoritative yet often presumptuous off-screen narration" ("Voice of Documentary" 17). The second primary type was cinema verité, which focused on capturing reality "with its directness, immediacy, and impression of capturing untampered events in the everyday lives of particular people" ("Voice of Documentary" 17). In such films, the audience is expected to understand and interpret the film "unaided by any implicit or explicit commentary" ("Voice of Documentary" 17). The new techniques and approaches increased the effect of reality, but they "seldom offered the sense of

history, context or perspective that viewers seek" ("Voice of Documentary" 17). A new style of documentary emerged later, "which incorporates direct address (characters or narrator speaking directly to the viewer), usually in the form of the interview" ("Voice of Documentary" 17). Many recent documentary films have moved toward "more complex forms where epistemological and aesthetic assumptions become more visible" ("Voice of Documentary" 17). These "self-reflexive documentaries mix observational passages with interviews, the voice-over of the film-maker with intertitles" and by doing so, illustrate that "documentaries always were forms of representation, never clear windows onto "reality" ("Voice of Documentary" 17). He further argues in the same article that the most important aspect of a documentary is its voice, by which he means that "which conveys to us a sense of a text's social point of view" ("Voice of Documentary" 17). According to him, the film-maker is "a participant-witness and an active fabricator of meaning, a producer of cinematic discourse rather than a neutral or all-knowing reporter of the way things truly are " ("Voice of Documentary" 17). He also holds that a documentary has the potential to lead the spectator to affective engagement. Documentary films have the potential to "move the viewer away from the status of observer to that of participant" (*Representing Reality* 194).

Many Indian documentary filmmakers have attempted to tell multi-layered stories about communal violence and the complex ways in which communal riots result in the formation of individual and cultural trauma. This chapter attempts to analyse the representation of violence and trauma in two documentaries, *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*. Since

this chapter foregrounds questions concerning the representation of communal violence, individual and collective trauma, and the ethics of witnessing, the choice of these two films is apt because these films address questions concerning memory, violence and trauma. The narratives of these films are compelling as they have incorporated testimonies of victims, archival footage, interviews with experts, and detailed off-screen narration on the political and social climate before, during and after the riot. These two documentaries are selected for analysis because they offer a wide variety of content and treatment, and approach the topics comprehensively from multiple viewpoints. The film *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* foregrounds the impact of violence on women by adopting an intersectional framework to present the different ways in which one's identity and positionality determine one's response to and predicament after violence. The film *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* offers an intimate perspective on the legacy of violence in the lives of the victims. The film focuses on the experiences of two survivors who suffered the loss of their lives and property because of communal violence. The film has also incorporated the voices of experts, media persons, advocates, and lay persons. Even the perpetrators are given a space to express their views. These two documentaries are well-made. Their aesthetic appeal also deserves special mention. The voices of both documentaries express their makers' commitment towards non-violence and peace.

One of the most compelling documentary films on the 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots is *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement,* directed by Harpreet Kaur and released in 2006. As the title suggests, the film critically analyses the legacy of

violence in the lives of the widows of the Sikh men who were killed in the riot. The film engages with the modalities of the politics of violence and the poetics of grief. The subtitle of the film, “India's Unsettled Settlement”, encapsulates the themes of this documentary. It is significant that the director has tried to tell the stories mainly through the testimonies of the victims.

Violence takes its toll on people irrespective of their gender identity, yet the forms of violence directed at men and women vary enormously in many cases. Men are attacked, wounded, and killed, but women, in addition to these modes of violence, are also sexually violated. Rape is a tool used by some rioters to demoralise the surviving members of the family and to destabilise the affected community. The murder of the husbands by the rioters adversely affects the everyday lives of the widows in different ways. Rioters systematically target the houses and other material properties of the targeted group, and hence, the women who survive the violence are often forced to relocate to safer localities after the riots. After the 1984 riots, government agencies took measures to relocate the socially and economically disempowered widows and their families to a suburb in West Delhi known as Tilak Vihar. This locality later came to be known as the Widow Colony.

Divergent identities and positionalities often have a compounding effect on the victims and survivors. Those who are socially and economically less privileged often find it more challenging to start their life again since the riots often result in the large-scale destruction of persons and property. In all the houses in this colony, some families had lost one or more members in the riot. Since the financial condition of these families was not stable, they could not find better accommodation

elsewhere. Children's education also suffered greatly due to this forced geographical displacement. Many of their children dropped out of school and started doing menial jobs to support their families. The director of the film, Harpreet Kaur, went to the Widow Colony to document the lives of the victims and survivors, and she realised that even after twenty years, the widows were still struggling for survival. In the documentary titled *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement,* the director tries to record the stories of pain, grief and trauma of the women victims. After their displacement into a new locality, these women victims had to begin their lives again despite all the social and economic challenges they had to face daily. They are still looking for closure, and they feel that justice has not yet been delivered.

Most of the events in this film happen in the Widow Colony. The director also attempts to tell stories about many localities where the riots broke out. Areas like Trilokpuri, Mongolpuri, Sultanpuri and Kalyanpuri, which had significant Sikh populations, were targeted by the rioters in 1984, and many members of the Sikh families were either killed, mutilated, or displaced. The documentary revisits these places to tell the stories of loss, survival, and the continuing quest for justice. The director has skilfully incorporated photographs of riots and archival footage, which, along with the recorded testimonies of the widows, evocatively recreate the anatomy of hatred and violence, which was on full display in Delhi in 1984.

The film begins with an intertitle referring to the insurgency in Punjab and the deployment of troops in the region, known as Operation Blue Star. Operation Blue Star was a military operation in the vicinity of the Golden Temple, in which many pilgrims were wounded and killed as they were caught in the crossfire. This

incident left an indelible mark on the Sikh psyche and serves as “the chosen trauma” of Sikhs in India and elsewhere (Volkan 79). Chosen trauma refers to a painful and disturbing event that inflicted a wound on the collective psyche of the entire community (Volkan 79). The feeling of helplessness engenders a shared feeling of humiliation and grief. The inability of a community to mourn its losses properly is another factor leading to the formation of chosen trauma (Volkan 80). As the film points out, many Sikhs consider the Bluestar Operation as an event which wounded the Sikh psyche deeply, and the memory of this incident continues to shape the identity of Sikhs. At the film's beginning, the director attempts to place the riots against a larger social and political framework.

The film then turns its attention directly to the murder of Indira Gandhi and the use of this pretext by vested interest groups to target innocent Sikh men and women and their properties in Delhi and other parts of India. The film compares the painful and shocking events in 1984 to the violence unleashed against Jews in Germany and describes the riots as the Sikh holocaust. The director might have attempted this comparison to convey the magnitude of violence to a global audience. In the current global context in which trauma and traumatic incidents in the non-Western world have not yet been fully acknowledged, studied, and theorised on their own terms, directors are compelled to rely on the dominant ideological and cultural frameworks to reach a wider global audience.

The documentary records the stories of the victims and survivors, and their voices bear witness to the multiple instances of murder, rape, loot, and destruction during the riots. The film is dedicated to the victims of the 1984 riots, and this

dedication reflects the ethical and political choices the director has made. The documentary opens with a series of disturbing yet pertinent questions, like who gave the rioters the data and official records about Sikh homes in Delhi. It problematises the failure of law enforcement agencies to keep the assurances given to the Sikhs regarding the protection of their lives and livelihood. The film documents the disastrous consequences of some law enforcement and administration officers' failure, apathy, and complicity.

The film evocatively depicts the sense of alienation and the feeling of exclusion which permeated the members of the Sikh community after the riot. The Sikh community, consisting of about two per cent of the Indian population, felt marginalised after the riots. The film opens with a few snippets of Sikh voices of resentment and anger, and they set the tone of the film. The names of the Sikhs murdered by the rioters are slowly scrolled down across the frame, and these visuals, along with their melancholic background score, create a sombre mood. Many Sikhs who have been interviewed in the film hold that the sudden upsurge of violence and the systematic ways in which the attacks were orchestrated support their assumption that the riots were orchestrated with the help of many who wielded considerable clout in politics and administration. The film problematises the complicity of the officers who facilitated the acts of violence and destruction.

The technique of incorporating visuals in black and white at the beginning of the film plays an important role in setting the tone of the film. The director has used visuals and soundtrack to capture the subtle shades of violence and the intricate layers of the ensuing individual and collective trauma. Blending off-screen and on-

screen narration is another effective strategy used in the film to offer a detailed commentary and a broader perspective on the matters discussed and debated. At the outset, the Widow Colony is introduced as a place in Delhi that houses a large settlement of hundreds of tiny houses demarcated with yellow paint. Compared with the other parts of the city, which are buzzing with life and constantly changing and growing, this area remains stagnant and is devoid of vigour and energy. Stories of loss, grief, isolation, and abandonment mainly define the lives of the inmates in this colony. The widows occupying these houses continue to suffer from the consequences of violence and carry physical and mental scars. The director uses a long shot sequence to give the viewer an overview of the place. These visuals present this locality as an area marked by decay and dilapidation. The mid shots offer a closer view of these houses. The decay of these houses serves as a symbolic representation of the emotional states of the widows and their families. This locality in Tilak Vihar is perhaps the only area in the country where each house has a widowed woman.

The identity of the believers is intricately linked to the faith systems they are part of. Hence, the director has included in this film a section that offers a brief commentary on Sikhism. Along with the off-screen narration about the belief systems and practices, the frames present a closer look at the holy places and sites in Sikhism. An image of the holiest Sikh temple, the Golden Temple, is shown along with a brief oral account of its desecration during the military operation as part of Operation Blue Star. It is stated that Sikhism is a religion that gives utmost importance to the concepts of justice, freedom and equality. Sikhs are encouraged to

engage in selfless voluntary services for the community. Keeping the hair and covering it with a turban or a veil is an integral part of their religious and cultural identity. These rituals are considered "an externalisation of their faith and sovereignty" (*Widow Colony* 00:04:16–18). The desecration of the holy places and holy scriptures by some rioters hurt the believers, and the memory of these incidents was very distressing and, at times, even traumatic. The archival footage of the funeral procession of Indira Gandhi, whom her Sikh bodyguards murdered to avenge the desecration of their holy temple, is included in the film. The film then depicts the communal violence that unfolded in the following three days, and the devastation caused by the rioters is described in the documentary as "unimaginable" (*Widow Colony* 00:04:52).

The most important part of the film is the one that records the different oral testimonies given by the widows. The film adopts an ethical stance by recording the voices of the victims who continue to grapple with the consequences of violence. The identities and names of some widows are revealed, but those of many others are not mentioned. One widow stated that most of the perpetrators were men, and they acted as if they were given orders to target every individual wearing a turban or having any markers of the cultural identity of Sikhs. Many Sikhs removed their turbans and cut their hair to escape persecution. She stated that she could recollect the incidents vividly since she and other victims "remember everything" (*Widow Colony* 00:05:32–34). Traumatic memory, unlike narrative memory, remains unassimilated and at times may manifest as a flashbulb memory, which is a very vivid and everlasting memory about a very shocking incident (Brown and Kulik 79).

She went on to state that the cries of children as they were being burnt alive still echoed in her ears. Despite these agonising losses, these women decided to move on and continued their struggle for survival for the sake of their daughters. A survivor stated that she was fortunate that the rioters did not rape her daughters, and their honour was kept intact. In a conservative rural setting, rape victims have to face different consequences of the act of violation, such as marginalisation by the community and ostracisation from their own families, which further isolates them (Shrivastava 23). The intersecting identity of gender and class further worsened the predicament of the female survivors. The director has used close-up shots to depict the intensity of their emotion. The fear and angst of the widows are reflected in the inflexions of their voices, which constantly break. The director intersperses these shots with archival footage of the riots, which show hapless women wailing loudly. The film stresses that even after decades, the widows are still mourning since their situation has not significantly improved, as concerted measures have not been taken to address their concerns and to deliver them justice. One widow's confession that she could not describe everything she had gone through is very revealing. As per the testimony of this widow, another shocking development after the riots was the refusal of some mothers to accept their daughters who were sexually violated. Some of the rape survivors were further ostracised by members of their own families, even though they had not committed any immoral or unlawful act. She further stated that about three hundred Sikh girls went missing after the riots, and their mothers were still desperately waiting for their return. The uncertainty and anxiety resulting from such a long wait further increased their psychological turmoil. She was also disturbed by the apathy of the public. She thought that only those who had gone

through similar situations and experiences could understand her pain. She clarified that her story was not unique, and other women living in the neighbouring houses had more painful stories to tell (*Widow Colony* 00:06:38–50). That she refers to other women who originally belonged to different places and different families as sisters deserves special mention. One widow in the Widow Colony used the word sisters to refer to other widows who were not her biological relatives. However, shared trauma has cultivated a sisterly bond among the various inmates in the colony. Trauma may engender a feeling of shared solidarity. This centripetal pole of trauma enabled her to consider all the other widows as her sisters.

A testimony given by another lady survivor lays bare the strategy of deception used by the rioters. The violent mob assured the women that they would not inflict any damage. They directed the women to leave their residences. When these women came down, they were attacked brutally, and even the children and babies among them were not spared. She stated that on that day, she endured extreme cruelty (*Widow Colony* 00:06:50–52). She carried survivor's guilt since she could not save the life of her child, who cried out for her help. Another widow's testimony conveys the extent of structural violence. She stated that the police personnel asked them to stay indoors and offered them protection, but they did not respond to their calls for help when the rioters started their destruction spree. The negligence and, at times, the complicity of some of the officers who were part of the establishment and the state machinery were partly responsible for the increased magnitude of violence. Another widow, whose name is not disclosed in the film, emphasises that the riot was planned and executed with precision, and it was not just a random act

committed by some enraged youth. She recollected that there were three teams of rioters. She remembered that the first team burnt the homes, the second one engaged in looting, and the third one killed people (*Widow Colony* 00:08:30–32).

Trauma trigger refers to a stimulus that may trigger memories of traumatic events and experiences in the past (Bryce et al. 2882). Studies about trauma triggers indicate that victims with a traumatic past may suffer from fear, panic and anxiety when questions related to past instances of violence and victimisation are put to them (Shrivastava 23). A widow in the colony confessed to the director that his questions had reopened her wounds after twenty years (*Widow Colony* 00:55:21–25). She argued that until justice was delivered and the killers were brought to book, their struggle would continue. She confessed that she could never lead a normal life since she would never be able to forget the murder of her husband and other relatives. As a woman who was forced to witness her husband as he was slowly engulfed in flame, she carried survivor’s guilt since she could not do anything to save him. Survivor’s guilt is a feeling carried by the survivors of a tragic event, which might have resulted in the death of their loved ones (Murray et al. 28). Survivor's guilt is a symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder. Survivor's guilt often leads to “emotional distress and negative self-appraisal” (Murray et al. 28). Many of the widows suffered from such negative self-appraisal, which added to the intensity of their trauma.

Believers seek refuge in spirituality in moments of crisis. The widows found solace in their prayers. Their constant prayer that no one else is made to go through such an ordeal reveals the intensity of their deep psychological distress. Despite all

the losses, they did not end their fight for justice. Their refusal to forget is a mark of their protest. They claimed that they would not be able to forget the episodes of violence in 1984 till their death (*Widow Colony* 00:57:54–58). A technique used by the director to corroborate the oral testimonies given by these survivors is the inclusion of archival footage, which shows the multiple instances of violence in 1984. The footage shows dead bodies lying across the street, which were set on fire. The cultural markers, such as the turban and long beard, demarcate the religious identity of the victims whose dead bodies were strewn along the street.

The film also uses off-screen narration to provide the viewers with a comprehensive picture of the underlying socio-political background of the unfolding events. It is stated that the number of women who became widows after the riots exceeded the number of inmates who were shifted to this colony. Many other widows settled in another settlement on the south side of Delhi. These widows still carry the memory of violence and are traumatised by it. It is also stated that the stories regarding the suffering of over four thousand children who became orphans after the riot have not received the attention they deserve and have gone mostly unacknowledged and unnoticed.

Sabine Marschall conceptualises "memory objects" as "special personal belongings that elicit deliberate or involuntary memories" (253). Memory objects "can play an important role in remembrance, emotional dynamics and processes of identity formation for individuals, families and communities" because they "represent links with home, loved ones and the autobiographical past, providing a sense of identity continuity" (Marschall 253). It is also noted that "photographs and

small sentimental objects help people remember family and friends" (Marschall 254). These objects "evoke feelings, induce spiritual engagement, prompt bodily (re)actions, ritualistic behaviour or social interactions, stimulate thought and fuel the imagination" (Marschall 254). One memory object that the widows in this colony value is the photographs of their deceased relatives. Their engagement with the pictures triggers different emotions ranging from sorrow to anger. The photographs evoke the memory of violence and the ensuing loss, as illustrated by the statement of a woman holding the photographs of her dead husband. She recollected that the rioters thrashed her husband and her children with large iron rods. She confessed that she could never forget what she had endured. This inability to forget and let go is an essential feature of being traumatised (Catarino et al. 604). Victims of trauma find it difficult to process their traumatic memories.

Photographs and other media objects play an essential role in the "production and dissemination of memory" to groups which have not directly experienced the event. Such transmission of memories aided by different types of media may be termed "prosthetic memory" (Landsberg 1). The constant exposure to these photographs in the possession of the widows leads to the formation of prosthetic memories in their children born after the riot. The children acquire the memory of the riot and the violence through their exposure to these images. Certain Sikh women were pregnant at the time of the riots, and their children born after the riots did not get a chance to see their fathers even once. These kids who were born as orphans were forced to carry the burden of the weight of history and turned out to be physical embodiments of victimisation. One widow stated that her son called his

uncle his father, and she added that she had to fill the vacuum created by the absence of a father figure in his life. The blank expression on the face of her son indicates the emptiness and desolation associated with his life as an orphan. This episode in the film emphasises that, as far as the victim-survivors are concerned, the past is not past since the events in the past structure their present and define their future in complex ways.

The economic and social positionality of the widows is another reason why they remained in the colony even after a decade. The intersecting social, political, cultural, and gendered identities of these widows in this colony compounded their losses and prevented the possibility of their returning to their former places of residence. Poverty and illiteracy were other important factors limiting their social and economic mobility. Some of their children, owing to their growing up in an unsafe social environment, were forced to drop out of school and take up some odd, menial, low-paid jobs. Some of these boys got addicted to drugs, drank alcohol, and played cards since many of them felt alienated and excluded (*Widow Colony* 00:09:23–26).

The widows did not have adequate social and economic capital to rebuild their houses in their respective villages. The members of the Sikh community with social and financial capital shifted to much safer and better locations after the violence was brought under control by the army. One widow rightly observes that she would have sent her children to good schools if she were financially secure. She also would have supported her children financially in starting a new business if she could have afforded it. She felt disheartened because her children did not get good

jobs due to her adverse financial circumstances (*Widow Colony* 00:09:31–33). These mothers regret their inability to cater to the economic, educational and social needs of their children on account of their poverty. This guilty conscience adds to their psychological trauma (Reich et al. 287).

In traditional Indian households, men are the primary breadwinners. Some households practised a form of division of labour according to which men occupied public spaces, and women occupied private spaces. Each focused on the delivery of their responsibilities in the respective fields. The widows were doubly burdened after the murder of their husbands since they were forced to earn a living to support their families. Many of these women were emotionally drained and physically tired. Very few job openings were available, and they were primarily employed in semi-skilled jobs like cooking and stitching. Since they could not generate enough income to support their families, many mothers were forced to send their young children to work. As a result of these developments, in post-riot Delhi, child labour became rampant. For these families, survival became a daily struggle; hence, education became a luxury they could not afford under the given circumstances. There were many mechanical shops in the Tilak Vihar area, and many of these children got jobs as mechanics. The visuals that show young children working under inhuman conditions in a filthy environment are so painful and shocking that they might result in the formation of "vicarious trauma" in an empathetic viewer. Vicarious trauma refers to the triggering of some of the symptoms of trauma in a person because of his or her exposure, direct or otherwise, to the trauma of another person (McCann and Pearlman 131).

Photographs can recreate historical events. Hunt and Schwartz argue that "images are … resolutely historical since they incorporate within their very material a history of their making" (259). This documentary incorporates many pictures which capture the magnitude of the violence and the intensity of trauma of the victims. The images of men, women and children who are terrified, injured and distraught are very evocative. The photograph of the temporary refugee camps set up after the riot also bears testimony to the inhuman conditions in which the victims had to survive even after the riot. One room in a gurudwara in this region annually conducts a memorial service for those who lost their lives during the riot. Family members of the deceased would assemble in the hall in the basement, and the photographs of the dead would be hung on the wall. They shared their stories and offered prayers for those who were killed by the rioters. Sharing these stories enabled them to manage their grief and created a shared feeling of solidarity. One young man pointed to two photographs and introduced them as his father and mother. He told them that after his father's murder, his mother died of grief. He confessed that living the life of an orphan was very difficult and, hence, traumatic. After the function, the family members took these photographs home since they considered them their invaluable possessions. In this scene inside the gurudwara, the director uses a zoom-in shot to draw attention to these photographs and, by doing so, makes the viewers a participant witness without compromising the ethics of witnessing. The film also includes close-up shots of the borewell and the gutter, around which many of the victims' bodies were recovered. These images, suggestive of destruction, bear witness to the suffering of the victims of violence. They also corroborate the oral testimonies given by the survivors.

The director has incorporated testimonies from eminent journalists who had covered the riot and had seen the riots from close quarters in this film. The incorporation of views and perspectives of experts from different fields makes the arguments presented in the film more convincing. These testimonies provide a unique and comprehensive perspective on the riots. Excerpts from an interview with Madhu Kishwar, the editor of the news magazine *Manushi*, are included in the film. Kishwar shared her experiences while working with the victims of the riots. She recollected the experiences she had when she visited the victims in the refugee camp to prepare a report about violence and its consequences. She pointed out that the inmates in the camp felt relieved when someone from outside came to listen to their stories (*Widow Colony* 00:11:25–28). Kishwar published their stories in her magazine *Manushi*, and some of those pages from the magazine are displayed on the screen. The director has also used many newspaper reports on the riots in the film. The director has successfully used the technique of the convergence of media in her film to tell this complex story. The magazine reports and the photographs, which are incorporated into the film, corroborate the testimonies given by the victims.

Madhu Kishwar, in her interview, told the director that one of the most painful stories she wrote for her magazine focussed on the life story of the riot victim Gurdeep Kaur, whose photograph was on the cover page of one of the magazine's issues, which included various articles about the riot's social, political and economic consequences. In the documentary, Kishwar recounts the life story of Gurdeep Kaur, whose photograph encapsulates the sad plight of the riot victims. The cover photo is so intense that it could reveal Kaur’s grief, pain and trauma. Kaur

witnessed the orgy of violence from close quarters, and it took a heavy toll on her personal life. She was forced to witness brutal massacres of the male members and brutal rapes of the female members of her family. Those memories traumatised her. As Caruth has argued, "to be traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). She was also devastated by the fact that, despite her being a staunch member of the ruling party, the state machinery did not come to her rescue when violence erupted. The irony of this case is that the family targeted by the vengeful mob was engaged in fasting and did not prepare any food because they were mourning the death of their beloved leader, whom they considered to be their mother. The photo of the Prime Minister was hanging in every second Sikh home (*Widow Colony* 00:12:00–02). Kishwar adds that this story powerfully illustrates "the mindlessness of the violence" (*Widow Colony* 00:13:26–29). Kaur, in her testimony, stated that the rioters even raped minors and the elderly. The weaponisation of rape as a tool of oppression is widely reported and documented in literature about the riot (Jeffery and Hall 995; Shruti 209). She testified that the rioters forcefully removed her clothes, and the memory of standing naked in the street in front of her son and many others was profoundly troubling and traumatising. Her rapists were so young that she addressed them as her children (*Widow Colony* 00:14:10-12).

The director has also attempted to include a legal angle to this documentary. An interview with Harvinder Singh Phoolka, a senior advocate in the Indian apex court who has been fighting for justice for victims for over a decade, is included in the film. The legal team also addressed the questions concerning the meagre

compensation given to the widows. The compensation offered by the state was inadequate for the victims to restart their everyday lives. In 1985, the government declared a compensation of ten thousand rupees for each person killed; an additional ten thousand rupees was given as per the recommendations of the Mishra Commission. The compensation was increased to 350000 rupees in 1996, as per the order passed by the Delhi High Court. However, some widows did not receive the amount because of legal complications. The widows in the Widow Colony argued that the money offered as compensation was insufficient to meet their basic needs. Without more financial help, they would never be able to rebuild their destroyed and burnt houses, and that was the reason why many widows were never able to return to their villages.

The documentary film also celebrates the determination and resilience of these widows. Despite all these challenges, they never gave up and tried to reconstruct their lives by taking up some odd jobs. Niksham Sewing TRG was a collective run by local agencies that gave these widows employment as tailors. The close-up shot of these women stitching clothes captures their fatigue. They worked even at night to make ends meet and refused to live by charity. These women became financially independent and reclaimed their voice. This development is a clear illustration of the possibility of posttraumatic growth. Posttraumatic growth refers to “the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises” (Tedeschi and Calhoun, “Posttraumatic Growth” 1). Some significant manifestations of posttraumatic growth are “an increased appreciation for life in general, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, an

increased sense of personal strength, changed priorities, and a richer existential and spiritual life" (Tedeschi and Calhoun, "Posttraumatic Growth" 1). The widows in the colony changed positively and started earning money to feed their families. The struggle for survival eventually empowered them and made them self-reliant. Though they had lost many of their family members, they started forging sisterly relationships with the other widows in the colony. They also increasingly turned to their faith practices to empower them spiritually. Despite these positive changes, they still carried the memory of the riots, whose gravity was beyond their comprehension and continued to be a source of pain and grief. They wept even while working because their memory was still fresh. Since they continued their fight for justice and felt that justice had not been delivered, it was almost impossible for them to leave the past behind and move on.

The film also documents how some perpetrators threatened and coerced the witnesses to scuttle legal proceedings. Darshana Kaur was a witness in riot-related cases, and she was threatened and physically attacked to force her to change her deposition before the court, but she refused to alter her testimony. The perpetrators offered her substantial financial aid, but she insisted that she would withdraw her case only if they could bring back to life at least one of her relatives. The message that this incident conveys is that the loss of a person, unlike the loss of property, can never be compensated. The memory of the desecration of holy spaces and holy scriptures was another incident which continued to be a source of their pain. Kaur had witnessed the crowd burning down gurudwaras and disrespecting Guru Granth Saheb. Her most disturbing memory was that of a man urinating on the Guru Granth

Saheb. The widows arranged many memorial services at their residences to keep the memory of their relatives alive and to offer prayers for them.

The documentary also focuses on the different modalities and diverse manifestations of violence. The husband of Kaur was beaten up with sticks and then had a burning tyre put around his neck, and he eventually died. She could also recollect vividly another instance in which the crowd attacked, wounded, and took out the internal organs of her husband's brother. Women victims were raped and robbed before being killed. The widows, despite their courage and resilience, wept as they recollected these stories, since recollecting traumatic events often leads to reliving them. Kaur told the director that when they went to the police station seeking protection, they were not given help or shelter. They managed to escape from the rioters because they could hide in a gurudwara for three days. Because of hunger and thirst, they were even forced to drink water from the sewage gutters.

Patwant Singh, a famous Sikh author whose interview is included in the film, states that there was only chaos in the capital of India for four days. His position is that the well-trained officers would have been able to bring the riot under control if they had the political will. He argued that the longer duration of the riot illustrated the complicity of some officers at the helm of affairs. He suspected that some in the political establishment would have decided to hold the entire community to ransom and make them pay for a dastardly act committed by a few individuals from one particular community. The director has included some archival footage of the riots in the film, in which some police officers state that everything is normal and that the

matter is under control. The following footage, which shows mayhem and destruction, contradicts the claims made by the police personnel.

The film also records the testimonies given by some teenagers who were infants at the time of the riot. One Sikh girl stated that although she could not remember the details, she could recollect the names of her neighbours who helped the rioters in looting her house. Mahindra Singh was very young in 1984, yet he still remembered the politician coming in a white ambassador car. His family felt relieved when they saw the politician, hoping he would control the mob, but instead, he mobilised the crowd and assisted the rioters. Singh eventually escaped by removing his turban and braiding his hair. He was shocked when he saw a doctor in the locality, Mr Ashok, leading the mob. The memory of the sight of stray dogs eating the body parts of the dead Sikhs still haunts him. Because of the intensity of his trauma, he breaks down and weeps while recollecting these events.

An old Sikh man testified that on the day of the riot, the entire street was littered with corpses. He added that these bodies were in terrible shape since members of the angry mob had disfigured them. He told them that no person with a shred of humanity could look at those corpses. He claimed that he saw many trucks carrying dead bodies going to the riverbank to dump them in the Jammu River. He was so sad that he could not even perform the funeral rites for the dead. He said that he alone had lost thirty-six members of his family, and in the entire village, only sixteen Sikhs survived after the riot.

Paintings can be “mnemonic devices” (Nay 1). Paintings can evoke the collective memory and shared trauma of communities. The film includes a visual

analysis of a painting that records the community's collective memory of the ravages and destruction. The painter has depicted the rioters pouring flammable substances on the Sikhs and their properties. He had featured the rioters as young men carrying weapons and kerosene. The painting also features images of the dead bodies of men, women and children. This painting, like many other cultural artefacts on the riot and its lasting and continuing legacy, assists in forming cultural memory and collective trauma, which is why it has been included in this documentary film.

Many of the widows had not visited their villages after their resettlement to this new colony because they feared that such a visit would reawaken memories of violence and loss, and such painful flashbacks were unbearable for them. One Sikh man offered to accompany the filmmaker to his house in Mongolpuri, where he lived before the riot, only because he wanted to share his trauma with the outside world. The expressions on his face and the inflexions in his voice as he interacted with the director convey the intensity of his trauma. When a few people assembled to meet him, he became nervous because he suddenly remembered the rioting mob. The place and the mob served as a trigger which awakened his traumatic memory. This is one reason why many victims avoid people and places associated with the traumatogenic event, and it is to be noted that avoidance of people and places is a symptom of trauma (Sheynin et al. 285). The director intersperses visuals of his face with visuals of the riots, and the use of jump cuts conveys the discontinuity and rupture that a traumatic memory causes. The director has also used the technique of slow pace and blurred visuals to visually depict the mental state associated with trauma.

In moments of crisis and sorrow, believers turn to spirituality, and these Sikhs convened prayer meetings and offered prayers for the dead. Their refusal to forget their dead relatives is both a mark of protest against the violence and an attempt to keep their memory alive by passing it down as cultural memory to the next generation. The coming together of many Sikhs in one place brought back the memory of the good times before the riots, and the film juxtaposes the street in Delhi throbbing with life before the riot with the same street strewn with debris in 1984. The detailed and slow pan shots, which capture the street and the people vividly, also serve as a metaphorical depiction of the still raw and unprocessed traumatic memories that the victims and survivors still carry. The footages also show many Sikhs removing or being forced to remove their religious and cultural markers under duress. One of the most shocking instances in the film is the one in which the rioters use a turban to tie the hands of a Sikh before burning him alive. Many rioters cut the long hair of Sikhs to harass them emotionally and to take away their self-esteem. The camera zooms in on the pile of hair among the rubble, and this physical object bears testimony to the modalities of violence and the processes of victimisation. An elderly man told the director stories about the different young men assembled there. He pointed to one youth and told them that he had lost his brother, and then pointed to another child and added that he had lost his father. He also told the director that many dead bodies were dumped inside a septic tank since the angry mob did not respect even the dead bodies. He remarked that some dead bodies were thrown into gutters by the rioters to desecrate them. Outside the gurudwara, there was a borewell without a handle and, hence, dysfunctional. A Sikh man pointed out that the rioters had removed the handle to prevent Sikh women from giving water to

their injured husbands, and these women were then forced to collect water from the sewers to quench the thirst of the mortally injured and the dying. The camera zooms in on a painting of this incident, and the pan shot gives the spectator a comprehensive understanding of the extent of violence. Objects and places keep the memories of violence alive (Marschall 253). In this instance, the borewell and the gutter bear witness to the violence and trauma of the victims, lending credibility to the testimonies of the victims.

The film has also incorporated interviews with members belonging to other religions, many of whom reached out to Sikhs in their moment of crisis. One tea seller named Kanshi saved the lives of many. It was because of the generosity of their neighbours who gave them shelter and food that many Sikhs survived the riot. The widows stated that Kanshi, a Hindu tea maker, immensely helped Sikhs. There was another Hindu family that helped Kakam Singh's family. Muhammad Ali, another man from the same locality, said that on the days of the riots, many men, women, and children came to his house seeking protection, and they stayed with him until the situation improved. He risked his life to help the Sikhs, and he ignored the warning issued by the rioters that those who helped Sikhs also would be targeted. The statement of a Sikh lady that she would never blame any religion for acts of violence committed by a few deserves special mention. There are also references to members of other communities, like Prakash Jan, who sacrificed their lives to save the Sikhs. Thus, this documentary becomes a record of communal amity and communal harmony.

Towards the end of the documentary, the director has included footage of demonstrations and protest marches organised by the members of the Sikh community demanding that the perpetrators be brought to book. The protestors held that they came across their perpetrators across the street now and then, and these perpetrators, despite their role in orchestrating and abetting violence, go about their daily lives. The protestors held the establishment accountable for its failure to deliver justice to the victims, even a decade after the riot. H.S. Phoolka, an advocate, argued that corruption in the system was partly responsible for the sorry state of affairs. He also added that the same pattern was repeated in the case of the victims of the 2002 riots in the state of Gujarat. This reference to the riot in Gujarat is very significant because there are many common factors in both riots. Human memory is multidirectional, and one story about a particular riot may reawaken memories of all the other riots in different localities at different times (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 1). The placards held by the demonstrators marching for justice convey the message that in the absence of proper preventive measures, “these fires can start anywhere” (*Widow Colony* 00:40:13–16). The irony is that their apprehensions about the fire of hatred taking its toll elsewhere turned out to be a reality in the Indian state of Gujarat in 2002. The off-screen narration emphasises that riots of high magnitude, if they go unpunished and unaccounted for, would eventually dent the public's trust in the state machinery and public institutions. H.S. Phoolke held that each citizen must ensure that justice is delivered and the due process of law is followed, which is the only way to end “the conspiracy of silence” (*Widow Colony* 00:41:13–16). He emphasised that his fight was not just to bring a few perpetrators to book, but to

ensure that a functional system was put in place to ensure that violence of this magnitude did not go unpunished and unaccounted for.

One widow in the colony shared her apprehension that the impunity enjoyed by the rioters might embolden these criminals to start another riot in future. She was deeply disturbed seeing some of the perpetrators enjoying positions of power. She asked why the same speed and alacrity which was shown in prosecuting the murderers of the Prime Minister was not shown in arresting and prosecuting the murderers of the members of her community. She argued that the differential treatment of citizens was against the spirit of the Constitution, which guarantees everyone equality before the law. She complained that even after two decades, no one had approached her to record her testimonies (*Widow Colony* 00:42:15–18). She asserted that many in positions of power feigned ignorance (00:42:58–60). The testimony given by another Sikh man concerning the refusal of an officer to record his statement corroborates the statement issued by this widow.

The victims were asked to prove their claims by producing conclusive evidence. The film problematises the attempts made by some officers to place the burden of proof on the victims. The widows held that there should be open public hearings of the perpetrators, and a message that no act of violence would go unpunished must be given to the public. A widow pointed out that she and other widows would never give up on their fight and stop their struggle for justice. There were attempts to intimidate and coerce the victims to make them change their testimonies, but these women refused to budge and continued their legal battle. The film is a celebration of the power and resilience of these widows.

The film ends with the images of the widows weeping, and in the background, the names of the Sikhs who lost their lives during the riot are scrolled down. This documentary holds profound significance as it bears witness to the legacy of violence and the trauma of the victims. It is also to be noted that the film expresses solidarity with the survivors' ongoing fight for justice. The film takes an ethical stand by foregrounding the resilience of the victims who refuse to give up despite their challenging circumstances. This documentary is unique because, unlike many other documentaries that focus primarily on recording the past, this film juxtaposes the past with the present. The trauma of the survivors and their ongoing struggle for justice are well delineated in this film. The film successfully portrays collective memory and collective trauma and demonstrates how they shape and reshape the identities of the victims of collective violence.

Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat is a critically acclaimed 2014 documentary on the victims and perpetrators of the infamous riot in Gujarat in 2002. The documentary attempts to critically analyse the anatomy of violence and the politics of hatred, and by doing so, ethically bears witness to the stories of loss, grief and helplessness of the hundreds of men, women and children who lost their lives, property, and sense of security in the riots. This documentary was directed by Sheena Sumaria and Sonum Sumaria. In the film, they attempt to revisit one of the darkest episodes in the history of Gujarat. One common feature of their works is their commitment to issues related to the weak and the oppressed; this ethical spirit is also reflected in this documentary. The circulation of the news report and the telecasting of the footage of the riot on various television channels resulted in the

initiation of discussions among these two directors about the politics of hate and the anatomy of violence. Their exploration of the violence, its causes and results forms the crux of this documentary. The directors have used metaphors, symbols, images, and suitable background music to make the spectators critically engage with the episodes of violence as empathetic insiders rather than critical outsiders. This documentary was released in 2014, twelve years after the horrific communal riots in different parts of Gujarat in 2002. This is a multilingual documentary since the directors wanted to present the versions of all stakeholders in their respective languages. The off-screen narrations and the conversations with the educated are in English; the victims, bystanders, and the perpetrators of the riots speak mostly in Gujarati, and some politicians speak in Hindi. The directors shot this documentary in three different countries, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, because some of the victims of the riot had moved to foreign countries. The film mainly focuses on the life stories of two riot victims living in different countries. The first story is that of Nishrin Hussain, a middle-aged Muslim woman currently settled in the United States, whose father, Ehsan Jafri, a prominent member of the Indian Parliament, was murdered by the rioters. The second story focuses on the trauma of Imran Dawood, a Gujarati Muslim settled in the United Kingdom, whose two uncles and a friend were killed by the rioters when they were on a trip to the State of Gujarat in 2002. The directors attempt to tell the stories of victims and victimisers through their testimonials. The directors travelled extensively through Gujarat to meet different stakeholders associated with the riot and to record their stories and their interpretations of the riot. They also travelled to the United States to meet Nishrin and to the United Kingdom to meet Imran.

The documentary presents a graphic representation of the map of India on which the state of Gujarat is highlighted. This scene is particularly significant in this documentary about the riots and their consequences because the story of the violence would be incomplete without situating its spatial and temporal dimensions. The film highlights the irony of a riot breaking out in Gujarat, the land of Gandhi, who spread the message of peace and communal amity. The directors were unsettled by the fact that the land of peace-loving farmers witnessed one of the most horrifying riots in independent India. As the daughters of a Gujarati Jain family living in London, the directors wanted to discover the social, cultural, and political reasons that created an environment susceptible to large-scale violence, and to problematise the politics of hatred and vengeance. Making this documentary was also a process of soul-searching for them because they were emotionally burdened by the fact that their home state witnessed such brutal instances of murder, rape, and loot. Before making this film, they travelled from the United Kingdom to India and from India to the United States because they wanted to meet the relatives of victims living in different parts of the globe. This is the reason why the film uses first-person narration. The directors personally deliver the off-screen narration.

The documentary opens with interviews with Nishrin Jafri and Imran Dawud. Through these conversations, the documentary presents a vivid overview of their present life, which is shaped by their memories of the violence in the Indian State of Gujarat in 2002. Imran is a member of a Gujarati diasporic community who was in India with his two uncles and a friend when the riot broke out. Owing to their visible markers of religious identity, the group came under attack, and everyone

except Imran was killed. Nishrin carries the trauma of losing her father, Ehsan Jafri, whom the rioters killed. The death of Ehsan Jafri, who was then a serving Member of the Indian Parliament, shocked and traumatised members of the affected community and the family since he was a towering figure everybody looked up to in times of crisis. The directors have also incorporated the stories of the perpetrators, without which the history of the riot will remain incomplete. The film is also an attempt to study and problematise the anatomy of hatred and the politics of violence from the perspective of the perpetrators.

Nishrin testified that nobody came to her father's rescue when he was chased down the street by the armed rioters. His house, in which many members of the targeted group had taken refuge, was surrounded by the mob, and his call for help went unanswered. Later, her father was killed in cold blood. She is still profoundly pained by the fact that even his dead body was desecrated, and it was left to rot on the street. The line written by Jafri that even crows were better than men turned out to be prophetic in the context of the riot, in which the baser instincts like vengeance and anger were fully displayed. The audio of the recitation of the lines from a poem by Jafri serves as a critique of the politics of vendetta and the anatomy of hatred.

Nishrin is seen flipping through the pages of a photo album, which contains many of her father's photographs. The trauma of a survivor who has to live with the memory of the loss of her father, to whom she was deeply attached, is reflected on her face as she flips the pages of the album. Photographs, being a compelling mnemonic device, can renew human memory. She wondered how someone could inflict pain on someone like her father, who had the most beautiful and disarming

smile. She also added that her father was a trade union leader who worked for the poor and the downtrodden. However, the angry mob targeted him without any remorse since the atmosphere of polarisation had already divided sections of the society along communal lines. She could not hold back her tears when she looked at the photo of her with her father because, in the present, she was all alone, and she would never be reunited with the person who was very dear to her.

The second person who is interviewed in the film is Imran Dawud, a member of a Gujarati diasporic family settled in Yorkshire in the United Kingdom whose brief visit to Gujarat in 2002 turned out to be a tragic experience since he and his relatives came under attack as the rioters could identify their religious identity from their appearance and attire. Their excitement at the prospect of visiting their home state soon waned, and they could not escape from the mob. Imran was the sole survivor, and his two uncles, Sakil and Saeed Dawud, and a friend, Muhammad Aswet, were murdered on 28 February 2002. The whole experience took a heavy emotional toll on Imran, who continued to fight the legal battle for justice. In the interview, while recollecting the episodes of violence on those days, he broke down as he could not manage his grief since the memory of those traumatic experiences was still fresh. He stated that he would continue his fight until the dead bodies of the deceased were returned to the family and the culprits were brought to book.

The opening visuals present Gujarat as a state where most people are religious, as clearly illustrated by the visuals showing a religious procession. As illustrated by these visuals, religion is a factor that unites individuals and communities. The film then explores how different vested interest groups

weaponised religious sentiments to reap political dividends. The detailed testimony of Nisrin sheds light on the different modalities of violence. Nishrin Jafri recollects her story while sitting on a swing in her residence in the United States, where she lives with her husband. The to-and-fro motion of the swing on which she is sitting while she is sharing her stories may be a symbolic depiction of the inability of the victim to move forward, as the painful memories trapped her in the past. Memories of loss continue to haunt the victims until political and psychological measures are taken to address the underlying issues. Traumatic memories sometimes function as flashbulb memories and, unlike narrative memories, remain as they are. “Flashbulb memories are often associated with traumatising emotional incidents” (Brown and Kulik 73). The memory of these events may be preserved for a longer duration. In the case of flashbulb memory, the subject may be able to recall “the circumstances … the informant, the location, the time, the nature of any ongoing activity, the subject's own clothing, the subject's own affect, and so forth” (Christianson 435).

Nishrin is seen constantly looking out of the window while speaking, and this gesture betrays her struggle to manage her memory. Nishrin tells the directors that she has lived in Gujarat's Gulbarg society since childhood. She later shifted to the United States and lived there with her husband and two children. Her nostalgia for her home state is reflected in her statement that whenever she saw a crow in her courtyard, she thought a crow from India had come to meet her. She shifted to a new geographical location with the hope that such a physical displacement would help her manage her grief and trauma. Nevertheless, she carries a deep yearning to return to her home state and be reunited with her friends and relatives. However, she

continues to live in the United States for fear that a trip to her home state would revive the memories of loss and pain. Human memory is associated with spaces, and traumatic memory may be triggered by specific spaces and objects, and the traumatic subjects have a compelling urge to avoid them. Such avoidance, as is seen in the case of Nishrin, is a symptom of psychological trauma (Sheynin et al. 285).

Nishrin describes her father as someone loved by everyone because he understood the pain of others. The tone and the inflexions in her voice as she speaks about her father reveal her trauma. Her father was warned about the danger of living in an area where his family could be susceptible to attack in the event of a communal flare-up. However, he refused to shift to a new location because he had faith and trust in the people and the institutions in the state. He also wanted his influence and connectivity with people to unite different communities and foster communal harmony. Nishrin states that on that eventful day, she received a phone call from India and was asked to go through the newspaper. She was shocked to find an article which reported the news that Jafri and his wife were burnt alive. She did not believe the news and hoped it would be false. She started weeping when she realised that the news was accurate and her parents, along with many others, were indeed murdered. Still, she hoped against hope that her father would have somehow escaped for the sake of her daughter, whom he loved deeply and passionately. As she was describing those days, her voice broke down because remembering traumatic experiences is often akin to reliving them. She confessed that she had not shared these stories with anybody. At times, she would hope that some stranger would call her, claiming that he was holding her father hostage, and somehow,

eventually, he would be released. It was because of her inability to confront her trauma of loss that she had this habit of hallucinating. That she had not seen his dead body is also another reason why she had not been able to accept the reality of his death.

Nishrin told them that the mob came early in the morning and started pelting stones at houses to terrorise the inmates. Her father, a Member of Parliament, contacted the police seeking help, and he was assured that security would be provided. However, no officer came to their rescue when the house came under attack. Nishrin later learned that her family could have been saved because there was a police van in the vicinity. The officers ignored the repeated request and legitimised their inaction, stating they had received no orders (*Even the Crows* 00:35:24–27). One inspector offered to save Jafri and his family. However, he refused this offer since, as a leader, he felt that he was duty-bound to ensure the safety of everyone who had taken shelter in his house.

Her husband, Najid Hussain, testified that when he went to Gujarat, he saw dead bodies everywhere. He saw the little bodies of children dumped in the water tanks. These kids might have jumped into the tanks when they were set on fire. He could not believe that such horrific acts could be committed by members of one community against the members of another. He also shared his concern about structural violence, by which he meant the tacit support given to the extremists by some in the establishment and some in the law enforcement agencies. Gujarat has a tradition of tolerance and accepting diversity, and for a riot to occur in such a state was all the more shocking for him. As his narratives continue in the background,

some archival footage is shown on the screen. Incorporating archival footage is one technique the director has used to tell this story of violence and loss.

Nishrin told them that her father had tried negotiating with the mob to ensure the safety of the people who sought refuge in his house. He offered them money and asked them to take it and leave. When the mob refused to disperse, he went out hoping that they would leave after murdering him and that others would be safe. It was reported that the crowd tortured him for more than forty-five minutes. As was revealed later in a sting operation conducted by a magazine, Jafri was stabbed and later burnt to death. Nishrin and her husband tried to buy a plot in Gujarat because they wanted to return to the state someday. Nevertheless, many people refused to sell them their land because of their religious identity. Eventually, they were able to buy a plot closer to a slum. She was determined to go back since the mortal remains of her father are kept in Gujarat.

The film then switches to the narrative of Imran, whose facial expressions betray his deep-felt trauma. He also has a vivid "flashbulb memory" of the riot (Brown and Kulik 73). He could still vividly recollect the fire and the smoke, which literally and symbolically stand for destruction and disruption. The weaponisation of fire by the rioters is widely reported. Fire has immense destructive potential, and the rioters considered it a cheap yet effective weapon for mass destruction. It was doubly effective since it also destroyed evidence. Imran stated that the police officers offered no help when he approached them. He argued that the situation worsened partly due to the unwillingness of the police personnel to fulfil their constitutional obligations. He narrated how the crowd chose their victims. He told

them that the violence unleashed by the mob had a discernible pattern. The mob attacked them only after verifying their religious affiliation. He also told them about instances of passive violence, which manifested as inaction and a lack of empathy. He recalled with sorrow that some people who were not rioters themselves ignored their repeated pleas for shelter and protection. During the riot, the victims felt like birds whose wings were clipped and, hence, were unable to relocate to safer locations. The documentary carries many images related to birds. The flight of birds conveys the passage of time. The mobility of birds is contrasted with the limited mobility of the victim when the riot was in full swing.

The directors have also tried to tell the story regarding the burning of the S7 coach of the Sabarmati Express in Godhra, which resulted in the loss of lives of many *karsevaks* returning home from Ayodhya. This incident triggered violence in different parts of the state. In the opening scenes, the camera pans across the front page of the leading newspaper in India, which carries several reports and photographs related to the riot. The directors have incorporated news reports and television footage to make the narrative more compelling and trustworthy. The reports in newspapers and on television bear witness to the violence and trauma of the victims. The riot that followed the Godhra train burning incident resulted in large-scale violence and destruction. Imran was attacked by the rioters, and his leg was wounded. He told the directors that because of the loss of blood, he had fallen unconscious and was taken to a nearby hospital. He was later taken to the morgue to identify the charred body of the driver of the car they were travelling in.

Imran had filed a case against the perpetrators. He contended that everyone associated with the riot should be booked for committing crimes against humanity. His trauma increased manifold when he came across the children of his deceased uncles. Since the court cases filed by Imran were still pending, members of the community convened a meeting to discuss the court proceedings, and they reached the conclusion that getting the rioters convicted might be difficult because many witnesses altered their testimonies under compulsion during court proceedings.

The film has incorporated many interviews with social workers who worked among the victims, helping them with rehabilitation and fighting court cases. Father Cedric Prakash, a Catholic priest, played a vital role in the organisation of a people's tribunal to investigate the riot and related crimes. They studied the situation and prepared a detailed report concerning the factors which led to the riot, the violence that erupted on the days of the riot, and its long-lasting consequences. He told the directors that the fact-finding team concluded that without the complicity of some officers in the establishment, the riot would not have lasted for such a prolonged period. He also pointed out that many of these charges did not lead to convictions because conclusive evidence was not presented before the court.

In this film, the directors have included diverse voices from different sections of society whose estimations of the riot radically differ. Many prosperous Gujarati business people thought that a good image of the state should be projected, and too much preoccupation with an episode in the past would be counterproductive. Subhash Thakrar, a businessman from Gujarat serving as the chairman of the

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, argued that discussions should focus on economic prosperity because the production of wealth would improve social stability.

The victims could not leave the past behind. Many of them were displaced to the outskirts of the town after the riot, and their attempts to move back were not successful. The film features a colony in Ahmedabad, closer to a waste dumping ground in the city. Khatam Ben, a riot survivor, complains that even after a decade, no one has come forward to address their grievances. Most of the political parties, whether part of the ruling front or the opposition front, remembered them and made promises on the eve of elections, but in most cases, the promises were not kept, and their situation remained the same. She also added that her state, Gujarat, was indeed growing, and new developmental projects were introduced. However, the benefits of growth reached only a few (*Even the Crows* 01:14:13–17). The tiny houses that these survivors live in attest to their poverty and lack of social security. The anger and frustration of the people are expressed in the form of songs. The lyrics of the songs included in the film convey their grievances. The directors offer their commentary on violence through the songs included in the film. The lines in the song state that hatred had spread to communities, and the hatred had damaged human relationships (*Even the Crows* 01:15:44–49). The song reminds the viewers that violence has reached villages and cities. These lines express the directors' agony in this state of affairs.

In the film, violence is not explicitly shown, but it is indirectly portrayed in the form of newspaper reports, television news footage, and testimonies of victims. Nishrin showed the directors photographs of a victim who was pregnant at the time of the riot and explained that the rioters did not spare her, and she was sexually molested. She also had to witness the murder of her daughter in front of her eyes. The rioters also raped many other women, including her mother. Despite the loss of lives and property, this victim showed immense courage and went forward to testify before the court. Nishrin later added that only two individuals survived out of the many men, women and children in that photograph.

The documentary also records the views of Indian intellectuals working abroad on the riots. Professors like Ania Loomba came forward to register their protest. She stood for the rights of the victims. The film also records the alternate viewpoint expressed by people like Narain Kataria, the president of the Indian American Intellectuals Forum. One man working with this group commented that riots keep happening in different countries regularly and asked why so many people are talking only about the 2002 riot in Gujarat, even though the event happened a decade ago.

In the following footage in the film, interviews with some members of the minority community are shown. They held that everything about the riot was planned well in advance. One lady stated that she understood why the surveys had been conducted and that the data had been collected only when the riot broke out, and the houses identified earlier were targeted. The attackers came when she was in

the kitchen, and she fled, leaving everything behind. She stated that each rioter carried weapons like swords.

Many wealthy Gujarati businessmen believe that India is a resilient country. They argue that no one in the state talks about the riots now except the media persons and politicians (*Even the Crows* 01:07:10–21). However, the following footage is an interview with a riot victim who says that they would never forget the riots in 2002 since they had lost everything and justice had not yet been delivered. These two apparently contradictory responses illustrate the different ways in which different individuals look at the legacy of the riots.

Both Nishrin and Imran want to return to Gujarat to contribute positively to society. Their experiences of loss and suffering have created a strong urge in them to participate in projects aimed at spreading the messages of love and harmony. The experiences of trauma may, at times, turn victims into victimisers, as attested by the fact that many rioters felt aggrieved, being at the receiving end of violent incidents which had taken place in earlier decades, like the Partition of India. On the other hand, in the case of many other victims, traumatic experiences may engender a new sense of solidarity. Nishrin and Imran exemplify this centripetal pole of trauma.

The film emphasises that for society to move forward after instances of violence, measures must be taken to deliver justice. The families of Jafri and Imran continue their fight for justice. The film ends with the recitation of a few lines from a poem by Ehsan Jafri: “How long the heart aches” and “How long the people grieve” (*Even the Crows* 01:15:22–25). In the film, it is suggested that only through

the restoration of harmony and the delivery of justice can peace be restored and wounds be healed. The film upholds its ethical commitment by taking a clear ethical and political position.

In this documentary, the directors have portrayed violence and trauma mostly through interviews with the victims, perpetrators and bystanders. They have also used archival footage and reports published in newspapers and on television to make the narrative more credible. The directors have used off-screen narration to convey the social voice of this film. Incorporating songs about violence and victimisation is another technique the directors used to convey the intensity and consequences of violence. This documentary looks at issues from multiple viewpoints and unravels the various layers of violence. The testimonials of the victims, which are included in the film, are very powerful. This documentary bears witness to violence and trauma and, by doing so, fosters empathy and emphasises the need for understanding and cooperation.

The films *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* illustrate how individual and collective traumas are interrelated. The trauma of individuals like Nishrin, Imran and the widows is evocatively presented in the film. Nishrin suffered from flashbacks because of her inability to leave the memory of trauma behind. The victims' painful memories came back to haunt them when they visited their former places of residence because traumatic memories can be triggered by people and places. Many widows have not even visited their destroyed houses for fear that it might revive the memories of loss.

This avoidance is a symptom of trauma. Imran felt emotionally numb even years after the death of his relatives during the riots. The emotional numbness of Imran and many widows is also an indicator of their deep psychological distress and intense trauma. Many widows also show symptoms of social withdrawal. Their reduced engagement with the outside world is also an indication of their trauma.

These films look at the formation of collective trauma closely. They demonstrate how the riots in Delhi in 1984 and Gujarat in 2002 targeted not just some odd individuals but entire communities. These targeted attacks damaged social bonds. Because of this impairment to the prevailing sense of community, the widows in the Widow Colony and victims like Nishrin have not been able to return to their pre-riot places of residence. Members of the entire community were traumatised because their right to life and security was violated. The films show how the affected communities showed various symptoms of collective trauma. The community's trust in public institutions has been significantly eroded by their collective trauma. Even after decades, the widows still doubt the intention of the police and the bureaucracy. Imran and Nishrin have limited trust in the state institutions. The community also suffers from feelings of insecurity, and its members attempt to avoid people and places associated with the memory of trauma. These films have succeeded in illustrating the formation of collective trauma and its various consequences.

These documentary films present the processes leading to the formation of cultural trauma. They explore the role played by songs, photographs, testimonies, archival footage, and memorial services in forming shared memories. These films

record the voices of the victims and survivors and serve as a repository of shared memories of grief and sorrow. They highlight the links between cultural memory and collective trauma and offer a comprehensive analysis of trauma, resilience and healing at the individual and collective levels. The memorialisation of traumatic events is a prerequisite for the formation of cultural trauma (Smelser 36). These two films aid the process of remembering and, by doing so, assist in forming cultural trauma. These films depict cultural trauma vividly. The two films demonstrate how the riot damaged the social fabric and impaired the spirit of togetherness. In the shared memory of the affected communities, the violence on the days of the riot has left an indelible mark. As a result, they continue to suffer from collective grief.

These two documentaries have depicted violence and trauma from an intersectional vantage point. Violence affected the widows more adversely than the other victims because of their poor social and economic status. Imran and Nishrin could continue their fight for justice despite their losses due to their better social and economic status. These films have also explored insidious trauma. The insults and humiliation that the widows in the colony faced were part of their daily experiences of marginalisation. Constant exposure to such acts of microaggression intensified their trauma.

A documentary on violence and its impact on human beings may incorporate personal stories, many of which may contain sensitive information. The directors have undertaken the difficult task of telling the personal stories of victims with all the details, yet care has been taken to protect the interviewees' privacy. This

particular aspect is well illustrated in both documentaries in scenes in which victims talk about the violation of their bodies. These films respect the agency of the victims and steer away from sensationalising their suffering and trauma. The directors of both films have incorporated interviews with the victims to give them a platform to express their voices freely with minimal interruption. The victims are provided with several opportunities to speak with conviction and to articulate their views. The directors have also incorporated the perspectives of other stakeholders, including bystanders and perpetrators. Instead of offering a single perspective, both these documentaries offer views from different perspectives. They offer a nuanced analysis of violence and victimisation by incorporating testimonies of the victims and detailed off-screen narration.

Both documentaries have used various techniques to depict violence and trauma. They have used paintings and songs to evoke feelings, yet care has been taken to balance the proportion of various elements. The directors have carefully selected cinematic techniques, including editing and lighting. They have used close-up shots to depict the emotional trauma of the subjects. However, they have refrained from the overuse of extreme close-up shots to prevent the possibility of sensationalising the topics. In most scenes, the directors use eye-level shots with minimal high-angle and low-angle shots. This choice of camera adds to the realistic appeal of these two films. The directors have also made suitable editing choices. The stories are narrated in parts, and the complete stories emerge only at the end. Many filmmakers rely on reenactments to add realistic appeal to their films, but the

excessive use of this technique may raise ethical concerns. These directors have not included even a single scene of reenactment. The scenes in these films do not shock the audience by presenting violence directly. There are many references to direct violence, but rather than showing them on screen, the directors have focused on their consequences. The use of the disturbing graphic imagery of violence is minimal in these two films.

Depicting trauma in documentary films is a complex and challenging endeavour, but these films have succeeded in depicting the trauma of the victims. These films do not sensationalise psychological distress and the ensuing feelings of helplessness, grief and anguish. The trauma of the victims is expressed mainly through the interviews and the testimonies. The use of archival footage and the audio and video news footage of the riot provides the spectator with the socio-political context that creates an environment that enables the triggering of trauma. The technique of incorporating photographs to evoke the traumatic memory is also worth mentioning. Using low-key lighting in scenes depicting rehabilitation centres helps the directors symbolically render the gloom and sorrows pervading there. Appropriate use of music and the design of sound can evoke different emotions in the spectator. In these films, sound and music are used to evoke feelings and enhance the responses from the audience.

The films also explore the possibility of post-traumatic growth. Despite the difficulties and challenges, the widows in the Widows Colony have not given up and have managed to support their families. Similarly, Nishrin and Imran want to return

to Gujarat to help people in need and participate in reconciliation and healing processes. Rather than fixating on the victims' weaknesses and helplessness, these films celebrate their resilience and strength.

Documentary films on violence and trauma present different perspectives that may shape cultural narratives in different ways. The victims and perpetrators may belong to various cultures. However, the filmmaker must be careful not to create a simplistic narrative about victimisation and perpetration. Reductionist narratives and portrayals may have adverse consequences because narratives play an important role in shaping the cultural memories of communities. Both films approach the topics with cultural sensitivity and do not present a binary of victims and perpetrators. In both films, many people who cut across religious differences are shown as standing united in their fight against the politics of hatred and othering. The widows testified that many of them survived because of the sacrifices of people belonging to different faiths. Both these films acknowledge and celebrate episodes of communal amity and harmony.

These documentary films have powerfully depicted the dialectics of communal violence, collective memory and cultural trauma. The different ways in which violence and trauma shape the identities of individuals and groups have been well delineated in these films. The study found that these documentaries have a distinct social voice that reflects the films' commitment to plural values and secular worldviews. These two films attempt to highlight the socio-political factors that create an environment that enables violence and victimisation. They commit an

ethical act by bearing witness to the trauma of individuals and groups. These films foreground amity, justice and growth, thereby fostering reconciliation and the restoration of communal harmony.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Transcending Violence and Trauma: Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth in the Twenty-first Century Feature and Documentary Films on Communal Violence in India

This thesis attempted to critically analyse and map the dynamics of the various modalities of violence and the ensuing individual, collective and cultural trauma in select twenty-first-century Indian feature and documentary films which address the communal riots in Delhi in 1984 and in Gujarat in 2002. Drawing upon the critical insights provided by postcolonial discourses on violence and trauma, the study sought to explore how these films bear witness to the suffering and trauma of individuals and communities. The thesis attempted to examine the divergent ways in which victims, perpetrators and implicated subjects manage their complex emotional state caused by the traumatic experiences or by the traumatogenic events. The thesis used a relational framework to examine violence and trauma from an intersectional vantage point. The thesis closely examined the similarities and differences in the ways feature films and documentaries approach violence and trauma.

The study found that four feature films, *Firaaq*, *Parzania, Amu*, and *Jogi*, and two documentary films, *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* and *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement*, have addressed violence and trauma from divergent perspectives. In these films, there are several instances of direct, structural and cultural violence. These films have delineated the different ways in which different individuals and groups systematically used physical force and social and

political capital to destroy and harm the members of the other community in the event of the outbreak of communal riots. The films have portrayed the different ways in which the rioters weaponised hatred and mistrust and used it as a tool not only to injure and destroy their victims but also to legitimise and rationalise their violent behaviour. There are many instances of direct violence in these films. These films offer nuanced portrayals of how some rioters intentionally used violence in an unethical manner to cause physical, material and psychological damage. The films contain many scenes of direct violence in which there are apparent perpetrators and victims. Murder, loot, arson and rape are some of the instances of direct violence in these films. Many characters give testimonies about the violence they experienced or witnessed in these films. The different facets of violence, like violation, subjugation, and humiliation, are depicted in all six films. The film *Parzania* contains multiple references to the Godhra train burning incident in which many *karsevaks* were killed. The film presents this incident as a case of physical violation. Cyrus, as he was returning home from the movie theatre, witnessed many incidents of murder and looting. He was shocked when he saw the rioters attempting to molest a woman. Shernaz and Dilshad, while hiding behind the bushes, saw the rioters murdering men and molesting women. Allan was shocked to witness the use of bombs and other weapons to destroy the houses and shops of members of specific communities. The bomb exploding inside the house of Parzan shocked all the inmates. The rioters attempting to stab Shernaz with a sword is another instance of direct violence. Shrnaz felt violated and humiliated when the rioters asked her to make a fire temple using the fire around her. She felt subjugated as the rioters targeted her, her children and her faith. The rioters' devaluing her faith is an instance of humiliation. *Firaaq*

begins with a visual of trucks carrying dead bodies to a graveyard. The camera zooms in on these dead bodies to reveal that they were mutilated. The scene effectively conveys the extent of the violation. Munira's house was looted and destroyed by the rioters. The visuals of Munira holding the charred currency notes illustrate the material losses of the victims. The film *Jogi* shows how the infliction of physical, economic, and psychological injury on Jogi and other Sikhs resulted in the creation of an environment in which the victims felt othered and distraught. For instance, fellow passengers physically and verbally harassed Jogi on the bus. That they branded him a terrorist emotionally hurt him, and such acts of microaggression dampened his spirit. Another instance of direct violence in *Jogi* is the act of the rioters burning to death Mr Bhatt inside his shop. The rioters weaponised fire to kill, to destroy and to tamper with evidence. Another case of direct violence in *Jogi* is a scene in which the rioters attacked a car and set it ablaze with the Sikh passengers locked inside. Amu saw the rioters killing her father from close quarters. *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* presents a list of the Sikhs who were murdered by the rioters. The widows confessed that the cries of children on the days of the riot still haunted them. Rather than showing violence itself, the film focuses on the consequences of violence. The detailed testimonies of these widows convey the modalities and consequences of direct violence. In the film *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*, Nishrin's father, Imran's two uncles, Sakil and Saeed Dawud, and a friend, Muhammed Aswet, were murdered on 28 February 2002. These women became widows and orphans as a consequence of direct violence.

These films contain many instances of structural violence. Structural

violence not only creates an atmosphere that enables violence but also ensures that many perpetrators are never held accountable for their complicity. In *Parzania*, different scenes show some police officers assisting the rioters in identifying followers of a different faith. The police officer asking the auto-driver about Parzan's religion is a case in point. Another instance of structural violence in the film is seen in the scene in which Asif makes repeated phone calls to the police station seeking help and protection when their colony was attacked by the armed mob. However, his pleas for help were ignored by the officer in charge. Allan's observation that the rioters used official documents like electoral rolls to select their targets exposes the misuse of power and is a pointer to structural violence. In *Firaaq*, Munira observes that she receives differential treatment from some police officers if she reveals her religious identity. Denying some individuals the same privileges and protection is an instance of structural violence. Mr Tejpal Arora, a local politician using official government documents to identify Sikh households, is another instance of structural violence. The apathy of the police officer is revealed by the scene in *Jogi* in which the police officer continued to eat his sumptuous meal even after receiving the report about the outbreak of violence in the area under his jurisdiction. In *Amu*, one Sikh woman testified that some police officers and bureaucrats assisted the rioters (01:03:26–28). Her words also bear witness to structural violence. The film *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* opens with a question regarding the misuse of data in the electoral roll by the rioters. The film alludes to the complicity of some officers whose inaction increased the intensity of violence. One widow stated that some police officers asked them to stay indoors and offered them protection, but when the riots erupted, they assisted the rioters instead. H.S. Phoolka,

an advocate fighting for the victims, argued that corruption in the system is partly responsible for the delay in the delivery of justice. In *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*, Father Cedric Prakash, a Catholic priest who was part of a people's tribunal, asserted that the riots lasted for an extended period mainly because of the complicity of some officers. These films problematise the failure of the law enforcement agencies to offer safety and protection to the victims when violence breaks out. In these films, violence arising from or enabled by institutions and structures of power manifests as unequal treatment, marginalisation, and discrimination.

The references to cultural violence in these films are limited. In *Parzaia*, one rioter asks Shernaz to build a fire temple using the fire, betraying his disregard for the cultural and religious practices of the Parsi community. Such an attitude that normalises and rationalises violence along communal lines is an instance of cultural violence. The film also includes a scene in which the rioters choose their targets after verifying their cultural identities. The rioters perceived that the cultural differences legitimised their acts of violence. Munira, a Muslim woman in the film *Firaaq*, wore a *bindi* on her forehead to conceal her religious and cultural identity. Such episodes in which individuals are forced to conceal their real identities for fear of facing targeted violence and discrimination are also instances of cultural violence. Sameer Arshad Shaikh used his wife's surname, Desai, to escape persecution. He feared that he would face discrimination if he revealed his religious identity. In *Jogi*, many Sikhs were forced to erase markers of their faith, such as their *kesh* and their turbans, to escape persecution. In *Amu*, when Kabir went to a bookstore to buy a

book on the anti-Sikh riots, he did not find even a single book on the topic. The refusal of the mainstream society to acknowledge and document the pain and suffering of affected communities is another illustration of cultural violence. Cultural violence is seen in the belief systems of many individuals in *Firaaq,* who blamed the victims for the outbreak of violence. The desecration of the holy places and holy scriptures by some rioters, as shown in *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement*, is also a case of cultural violence. In these films, cultural violence rationalises, normalises and legitimises both direct and structural violence. These films, through their evocative portrayals of victimisation and suffering, problematise and reject the ideas and policies that support cultural violence. They pose an ethical, epistemological, and aesthetic challenge to the ideologies and worldviews that support violence. It is also to be noted that these films do not aestheticise and sensationalise violence.

These films have attempted to foreground the role of the perpetrator in the acts of violence. In these films, the perpetrators engage in acts that violate the fundamental human rights of the victims and deny them their right to lead their lives with honour and dignity. The perpetrators in these films may be classified into different types based on their attitude and their role in perpetuating violence. Some of the perpetrators, like Chagan in *Firaaq* and some unnamed perpetrators in *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*, occupy the subject position of the floating subject. These people opt for violence under the pressure of the circumstances. The pressure generated by the somewhat unfavourable circumstances makes them behave violently. The

hypersubjects are those perpetrators whose violent behaviour is triggered by the circumstances. However, unlike the floating subject, this subject turns to religion or other ideological systems to justify their involvement in violence. Many unnamed rioters in *Parzania* and *Firaaq* are hypersubjects because they became perpetrators, assuming their deeds were justified and legitimate. Some characters in these films, like Kishan Kumar in *Amu*, may be categorised as non-subjects because, even after committing acts of violence, they refuse to acknowledge their role in the violence, and they claim that they had only limited agency and were only carrying out orders given to them. Kishan Kumar, in *Amu*, was guilty of murdering Sikhs and burning down Sikh establishments. However, later, he justified his actions by stating that he was only following the orders (*Amu* 01:11:43–46). Some of the police officers in these films, who failed to carry out their duties when the riots broke out, later came up with the alibi that they were only acting as per the orders given to them. Many characters like Tejpal Arora in *Jogi* and Sanjay and his friend in *Firaaq* may be termed anti-subjects because they engaged in acts of violence to derive pleasure from the pain and suffering of others. Similarly, as the widows point out, many perpetrators refuse even to acknowledge their complicity in the riot and continue to lead normal lives. These unnamed perpetrators may also be categorised as anti-subjects.

What makes violence during a riot different from other instances is the participation of a large number of ordinary individuals without a criminal track record in the acts of violence. Unlike some leaders who plan and execute the riot with ulterior motives, many of the foot soldiers who engage in acts of violence on

the ground are not necessarily hardened criminals. Hence, they go back to their everyday lives once the riots end. These films critically engage with the intentions and roles of these perpetrators as well. The motives of such perpetrators in these films can be analysed using the theoretical prism of the "banality of evil" developed by the famous philosopher Hannah Arendt in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (252). The basic premise of Arendt's argument is that in instances of large-scale and massive violence, not all perpetrators are necessarily hardened criminals. During outbreaks of massive violence, even otherwise ordinary individuals could be coerced into becoming agents of violence. These individuals are not necessarily monsters because they may not have internalised hatred. Some low-level officers and police constables may have assisted the mob only because they were directed to do so by their superiors. Many perpetrators were ordinary men or low-level officers in films like *Amu*, *Firaaq*, *Parzania*, and *Jogi*. For instance, Chagan in *Parzania* later confessed to Chottu that he was carrying out orders from the local leaders. His making amends by giving an honest testimony before the commission also supports the assumption that he is not a hardcore criminal. In *Jogi*, many police officers assisted the rioters only because such orders were issued by some political leaders. The film does not present these police officers as embodiments of evil, devoid of humanity. The transformation of Lali, a police officer, towards the end of the film *Jogi* supports this assumption. In *Amu*, Kishan Kumar confessed that he was simply carrying out orders. He and the other rioters were given kerosene and were directed to burn down the houses of Sikhs in their locality. His argument that he was merely following orders suggests that he joined the rioters without having an ideological agenda. Many rioters in these feature and

documentary films are unnamed; some have hidden their identities by covering their faces. The films' engagement with their intentions is limited. However, the paradigm of the banality of evil cannot be applied to political leaders like Arora in *Jogi*, who had clear political agendas and ideological justifications for their actions. Similarly, perpetrators like Sanjeev and his friend, who molested a woman to satisfy their carnal desires and took sadistic pleasure in their actions, cannot be theorised within the framework of the banality of evil. The theoretical frame can only be applied to analyse the role of those perpetrators who became agents of violence as a result of their being part of particular political and social structures of power.

The thesis also looked at the representation of implicated subjects in these films. Implicated subjects are those individuals who are neither victims nor perpetrators, yet benefit from violence and oppression because of their being implicated in particular social and political structures. Members of the family of Anuradha Desai in *Firaaq* may be considered implicated subjects. Since they are not affected by systemic injustices, they refuse to acknowledge them. The neighbours of Shernaz in *Parzania,* who refused to reach out and help her family when the riots broke out, do not commit acts of direct violence, yet benefit from the social and political circumstances that prevailed during and after the violence. Sheela's husband is also an implicated subject because he caused indirect harm through his inaction. Aarti's father-in-law did not care about the impact of the riots on the victims because the victims belonged to some other community. Such individuals may be described as implicated subjects.

The study found that these films examine violence from intersectional perspectives. These films explore the relationship between the victims' overlapping social identities and the degree of their victimisation. Those with social and economic capital, like Allan and Sameer, could somehow survive after the restoration of normalcy. On the other hand, those who were socially and economically disadvantaged had to face much harsher short-term and long-term consequences of communal riots, as illustrated by the suffering of the widows in the Widow Colony even decades after the riot. In *Parzania*, Shernaz and Cyrus were able to return to their house after the riot because they were members of the middle class. Their Parsi religious identity and middle-class status created a unique experience of othering. In the case of Nikhat, her religious, class and gender identities compounded her loss. Allan, owing to his identity as a white man, received slightly better treatment. Children suffer more than adults because of their limited agency when riots break out. The suffering of Mohsin and Parzan illustrates this point. The widows in the film *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* have not been able to return home even decades after the riot because they were socially and politically disadvantaged. These women faced economic difficulties because the earning member of the household had been killed. Their identity as widows adversely affected their social positioning. These women also did not have significant political clout. These social, political, and economic aspects intersected, resulting in the creation of unique experiences of suffering. Their religious and gender identities compounded their already precarious condition. Compared to these widows, Nishrin Hussain and Imran Dawood in *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*

occupy a better social and economic position. Hence, they are able to settle down after the riot and continue their fight for justice.

These films offer nuanced perspectives on structural intersectionality. *Amu*, *Jogi, Firaaq, Parzania*, and *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* illustrate how the structures of power in a society treat different groups unequally. In *Parzania,* the attempts of the police to present a false narrative before the commission illustrate how those in power perpetually rationalise and legitimise acts of violence. Victims like Cyrus and Shernaz felt left out by law enforcement agencies, since the officers refused to register their complaints and address their grievances. *Firaaq* illustrates how the complicity and incompetence of some police officers adversely affected the victims. In *Amu* and *Jogi,* there are many references to the role played by bureaucrats like Mr Sehgal, who let the riot go unchecked under their watch. Many survivors in *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* share stories about economic exploitation. They had to work under inhuman conditions and were paid poorly since the wealthy and privileged exploited their precarious condition.

These films engage with political intersectionality as well. These films explore how the overlapping identities of the survivors limited their political power and agency. They also illustrate how political institutions create, perpetuate or legitimise violence of different kinds. For instance, the film *Jogi* looks at how political leaders like Tejpal Arora violated the victims' right to life and right to property. In *Amu,* one unnamed politician attempted to manipulate the victims in the refugee camp. During the riots, he ignored the pleas for help, but later, he visited the

relief camp to distribute blankets to the widows. The widows in the Widow Colony have not yet been relocated, partly because of their limited political agency. They stated that political parties remembered them on the eve of elections. However, after the elections, these victims' demands were ignored by the leaders of these parties. Similarly, the fight for justice undertaken by Nishrin Hussain and Imran Dawood has not reached its logical conclusion due to their lack of political power. These films portray how overlapping factors such as class, religion and gender limit the political agency of the affected individuals and groups.

Representational intersectionality deals with how the experiences of individuals are "represented in the cultural imaginary" ("Mapping the Margins" 1280). These films validate the experiences of the marginalised and the less privileged, such as the widows and the orphans, by representing their struggles and challenges. The representational strategies, such as the inclusion of detailed testimonies in *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* and the incorporation of multiple perspectives in *Firaaq* and *Parzania,* adopted in these films may be viewed as ethical interventions in cultural representation. Films like *Jogi* and *Amu* validate the experiences of the victims by recording the memories of the individuals and communities who were at the receiving end of violence. That these films adopt an inclusive approach and challenge stereotypes also deserves special mention. These films pose an ethical and aesthetic challenge to the intersecting forms of marginalisation and oppression at the level of culture.

These films have tried to look at communal riots and the ensuing violence

from diachronic and synchronic perspectives. Many of these films try to link the violence in the present with the instances of violence in the past and, by doing so, attempt to nuance deliberations of violence. Some of the scenes in these films try to locate the root of violence in the painful memories of Partition. The memories of the violence that erupted after the Partition were passed down to the generations, resulting in the formation of intergenerational trauma. *Parzania* contains a scene in which a teacher explains to students that after Partition, thousands of Hindu families were forced to flee from those areas which became part of Pakistan to avoid persecution. The traumatic memory of forced displacement reemerges in moments of communal conflicts. In *Firaaq*, one police officer asked Sameer to go to Pakistan when he told him his surname was not Desai but Shaikh. The film *Amu* ends with a reference to the eruption of the riot in Gujarat and, by doing so, establishes a parallel between different instances of violence in the country. In *Jogi*, there are multiple references to the suffering of the Sikh community during the days of Partition. As the Sikhs were attacked by the rioters, Jogi tried to find out why even some friends turned out to be enemies. He could identify similarity in the pattern of violence in 1947 and 1984: “One day, out of the blue, someone close to you turns into your enemy. The same happened in 1947” (*Jogi* 01:23:00–04). Violence in the present reawakens the memories of the violence in the past. Films like *Parzania* and *Firaaq* demonstrate how some vested interest groups were able to weaponise the memories of past violence and polarise society along communal lines. The internalised fear of a violent other also resulted in the creation of an atmosphere that fuelled the outbreak of communal violence.

These films have also portrayed the social and economic factors that created distrust and enmity along communal lines. Some individuals used the cover of the riot to destroy the business establishments of others. The attack on the shops owned by Sameer in *Firaaq* is a case in point. *Jogi* and *Parzania* also feature many instances of targeted attacks on business establishments by members of other communities. Personal vendetta prompted some characters in these films to join the riot mob. Lali Katiyal hated Jogi because he held him responsible for the death of his sister Kamaljeet Kaur. He used the riot as a pretext to settle the score with Jogi and the members of his community. Some leaders used riots to mobilise people under certain political parties. The films show how some political leaders used violence as a cover to hide their failure to address pressing concerns such as food, housing and jobs. Tejpal Arora in *Jogi,* a local politician who coordinated the riot, is a case in point. In *Amu*, a politician plays a dual role. Initially, he orchestrates the riot, and later, he goes to the refugee camp to distribute blankets to the inmates.

Another factor that these films focus on is the failure of institutions such as the police and the bureaucracy to protect the rights of all individuals, which are enshrined in the Indian Constitution. In *Parzania,* the police ignored Asif's repeated pleas for help. Munira felt that the police officer did not even try to stop and arrest the rioters. There are similar scenes in *Amu*, *Firaaq* and *Jogi* as well. There are references to the complicity of some bureaucrats in *Amu*. Kabir’s father, Mr Sehgal, a high-level bureaucrat, was complicit in the riot because he refused to fulfil his constitutional responsibilities. These films have problematised the functioning of an “institutional riot system” that fuelled communal violence (Brass 369). *Amu*, *Firaaq*,

Jogi, *Parzania*, *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* clearly illustrate how the nexus of antisocial elements, political leaders, communal outfits, and some bureaucrats plan and execute riots. Politicians like Tejpal Arora and police officers like Lali ran a base camp to assist the rioters in *Jogi*. This nexus deliberately and maliciously subverted the law and order system. In *Parzania,* those who were associated with the riot system coerced the victims to give false testimonies before the commission of enquiry. The subversion of justice by this riot system is responsible for the ongoing suffering of the widows in *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and Nishrin Hussain and Imran in *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat*. The institutional riot system ensures that the guilty are not punished, and the delivery of justice is delayed. The way the local politicians manipulate the masses during the riots, as depicted in the films *Jogi* and *Amu*, supports Steven I. Wilkinson's argument that, during riots, some politicians polarise the people for political gains (2). These films commit an ethical act by laying bare the modalities of the institutional riot system.

The directors have used various techniques to represent violence on screen. In *Parzania* and *Firaaq*, instances of gruesome violence, such as rape, are only reported and not visually represented. This technique of implying violence shifts the focus to the consequences of violence. It also reflects the ethical choices of the filmmakers. Cyrus saw a man attempting to molest a woman, but rape and sexual violation are not shown on screen. In *Firaaq*, Aarti's husband's friend claims that he had raped many women during the riots, but visuals of rape are not included in the film. The technique of indirectly or symbolically representing gruesome violence

limits the possibility of spectators getting vicariously traumatised. These films seek to highlight the emotional toll of violence on different stakeholders. These films focus primarily on the short-term and long-term consequences of violence at the individual and collective levels. Different editing styles are used in many of these films to capture the intensity of violence. *Firaaq* uses jump cuts and quick cuts to convey the shock associated with violence. The technique of parallel editing is used in scenes, such as the one in *Parzania* that juxtaposes Shernaz's attempts to flee from the mob and Cyrus's attempt to reach his house. In the film, Cyrus' vision of vultures swooping down and the visuals of rioters chasing their victims are interspersed. Parallel editing style is used in this scene to present a nuanced perspective on violence. The use of close-up shots to convey the victims' reactions to violence is also a technique used in these films. The shock and trauma on the face of young Amu as she witnessed her father being dragged away is conveyed through extreme close-up shots of her face. In *Jogi*, the director has used close-up shots to convey the trauma of a Sikh mother as she shaves her daughter's hair. In *Amu*, *Jogi* and *Parzania*, rapid cuts are used to show the intensity of violence and wide shots are used to present a broader view of violence. The directors have used shaky camera angles in *Jogi* and *Firaaq* to amplify the tension during the riot. Ambient sounds, such as the police siren, suggest violence in *Jogi*. The evocative use of silence to suggest violence in *Jogi* and *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled* deserves special mention. The excellent performance of actors like Naseeruddin Shah as Khan Saheb and Cyrus Pithawala, Deepti Naval as Aarti, Sarika as Shernaz Pithawala, Konkona Sen Sharma as Kaju and Ali Abbas Zafar as Jogi makes the representation of violence and trauma in these films very realistic.

Many techniques used to represent violence on screen in feature films and documentary films are similar, yet the treatment of violence in documentary films is slightly different. One technique used to convey the extent and intensity of violence in both documentaries is the incorporation of interviews with victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. They have also included detailed testimonies of the victims, such as the widows and the orphans, to convey the impact of violence. The films have used voice-over narration to present the social and political background. Both these documentaries have incorporated many photographs and archival footage to convey the intensity of violence. The films have used intertitles and texts on screen to provide statistical information and factual details.

The study found that these films offer a polyphonic perspective on violence by recording the views of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. These films have also portrayed different forms of violence, such as direct, structural, and cultural violence. The directors of these films have not tried to glorify, sensationalise, or legitimise acts of violence in these films.

This study used a relational approach and a postcolonial trauma framework to study the representations of individual and collective trauma in select feature and documentary films. Postcolonial trauma studies provided the theoretical background to study the expressions and articulations of pain, loss, grief, and sorrow in the postcolonial context. Adopting the relational approach in this study on trauma facilitated the exploration of the linkages and connections across boundaries, disciplines and varying conceptualisations. This study found that many characters in these films show visible symptoms of trauma. The victims of trauma may find it

difficult to manage their emotions, and may suffer from mental states like negative thoughts, suicidal impulses and uncontrolled anger (American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-5* 272). Trauma may also alter the victims' memories, and the victims may suffer from flashbacks in which they are forced to relive their troubling experiences over and over again. Amu suffered from flashbacks in which she saw her mother standing on the other side of the railway tracks, but then her vision was blocked by a moving train. Her inability to manage her painful memories is a symptom of her psychological trauma. Aarti suffered from haunting flashbacks. The memory of violence on the day of the riot, such as the inhuman treatment meted out to her neighbours by the rioters, continued to haunt her. Because of trauma, the self-perception of the victims may undergo tremendous changes, and they may be flooded with negative emotions such as fear, shame and helplessness. Sameer and Munira were flooded with fear, sorrow, helplessness and anger, which testify to their traumatic condition. Sameer felt helpless and weak, as illustrated by the scene in which he gave compensation to a motorcyclist who rammed into his car. Munira felt distraught, as illustrated by her tears and the blank expression on her face immediately after returning to her house, which was partially destroyed.

The trigger of trauma varied in the cases of individual instances. Some, like Aarti in *Firaaq* and Shernaz in *Parzania*, are traumatised because of sudden exposure to violence and hence suffer from PTSD. Aarti was traumatised because she held herself responsible for the death of her neighbours. She was haunted by feelings of guilt and shame. She had intrusive thoughts and was haunted by the visuals of her hapless neighbour knocking on her door, requesting help. She

persistently heard the knocking sound during her flashbacks and opened the doors occasionally. She suffered from intense distress and felt detached from others, including her husband. She also suffered from self-destructive behaviour, such as burning her hand with boiling oil. Shernaz had negative emotions and was not able to manage them. She had intrusive thoughts about her life before and after the riot. Her intense stress and sorrow are other indications of her traumatic condition. Many of the victims in *Jogi* were unable to articulate their pain. This silence and numbness convey the intensity of their trauma. It is to be noted that "silence is the voice of trauma" (Ritter 176). Heer, Jogi's sister, was traumatised on account of witnessing the death of her husband. She suffered from dissociation, which is a symptom of trauma. She was unable to integrate the painful, traumatogenic experiences. The Sikhs who took refuge in a nearby gurudwara to escape from violence were unable to speak, and this speechless fright is another symptom of trauma. In the film *Amu*, Kaju is seen shivering in her sleep because she has strange, disturbing dreams. Frequent nightmares and the inability to sleep are two symptoms of Amu's psychological trauma. Keya observed that Amu has not developed bonds with anyone. Her inability to form lasting relationships is a symptom of her trauma. Another symptom of trauma is that it can be triggered over and over again. A trauma trigger refers to a stimulus that may trigger memories about past traumatic events (Bryce et al. 2882). One widow in the colony told the director that his questions had triggered her trauma. She also confirmed that many of the widows have not visited their former places of residence for fear that such a visit may trigger their traumatic memories. Amu's traumatic memory was triggered when she visited the slum and the nearby railway station. Nishrin loves her state but fears visiting Gujarat because

she assumes that such a visit may trigger her traumatic memories. Hence, she avoids places and things that are connected to the trigger of her trauma. Similarly, many widows have not visited their destroyed houses for fear that it might revive their painful memories. Such avoidance is a symptom of psychological trauma (Sheynin et al. 285). Suffering from survivor's guilt is another symptom of trauma. Survivor's guilt often leads to “emotional distress and negative self-appraisal” (Murray et al. 28). One unnamed widow is still haunted by the fact that she was unable to save the life of a child on the day of the riot. Another widow carries survivor's guilt because of her inability to save her husband's life. Many of the widows suffer from such negative self-appraisal, and they are traumatised by it. Many of the victims of trauma have flashbulb memories. Imran has a vivid memory of the riot, and the memory of fire and smoke still haunts him.

The event-based model of trauma is inadequate to analyse the representations of trauma in these films because a single catastrophic event is not always the trigger of the trauma of many characters. Long-lasting experiences of seclusion and marginalisation can also trigger trauma, as many of the stories in these films illustrate. Laura S. Brown has developed the concept of insidious trauma to refer to “the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment, but that does violence to the soul and spirit” (“Not Outside the Range” 107). These films have vividly illustrated how experiences of everyday violence could be a potential trigger of trauma. The case of Sameer Desai, who, on account of his marital relationship with a Hindu family, was not physically targeted, yet constant exposure to microaggressions like

the disparaging comments made by others about the members of his community emotionally drained him. The fact that others held him accountable for crimes committed by some odd individuals solely because he belonged to the same religion as the alleged perpetrators made him feel othered and disturbed, ultimately leaving him traumatised. It was because of his trauma that he started risk-taking behaviours, such as revealing his real religious identity to the policeman, who was biased against the members of his religion. His frustration was also visible in his emotional outbursts. In traditional Indian villages, widows are not considered to be equals. The constant exposure to a hostile climate and unfair treatment in the colony intensified the trauma of these widows and their children. Munira is shaken by the differential treatment when she reveals her religious identity. Disguising her identity to escape from discrimination was a traumatic experience for her. These characters suffer from increased levels of anxiety and stress due to the constant exposure to insidious trauma.

Many characters in these films developed Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder because of their constant exposure to trauma. Individuals, like the widows in the Widows Colony, are traumatised by long-term exposure to physically, emotionally and morally disturbing and troubling states and situations, and hence suffer from Complex PTSD (Herman, *Trauma* 2). These widows found it challenging to control their sorrow and have avoided visiting their villages for fear that it might trigger their traumatic memories. Avoidance is a symptom of trauma. Many widows in the colony had terrible hallucinations and nightmares. Munira also suffered from CPTSD. She developed negative perceptions about her husband and

her friend, and the development of such negative perceptions is another indication of trauma. She distrusted her friend and neighbour, Jyothi. She also showed withdrawal symptoms, and the frequency of her interactions with her husband came down owing to her traumatisation. She suffered from feelings of guilt, which is also a direct consequence of trauma. She finds it challenging to maintain her interpersonal relationships. She also suffers from dissociation and feels detached from her surroundings. Sameer experienced microaggressions on account of his religious identity. Such continued exposure to othering and marginalisation made him suffer from C PTSD. His risk-taking behaviour and increased level of stress reveal his trauma.

Recent developments in the field of trauma studies have expanded the boundaries of Trauma Studies. Many scholars like MacNair and McGlothlin argue that not just victims but perpetrators of violence also may suffer from trauma. One reason why perpetration leads to psychological disturbances is that "the human mind, contrary to certain political ideologies, is not well suited for killing" (MacNair 170). Many symptoms of PTSD may be seen in perpetrators as well. Chagan, in the film *Parzania*, suffered from perpetration-induced traumatic stress. His initial response to escape from his trauma was the denial of moral and ethical responsibility. He also attempted to rationalise his involvement in rioting with the claim that if he had refused to join the mob, he also would have become a target. His anxiety and panic are indications of his trauma. Similarly, Kishan Kumar, a rioter in *Amu,* also suffers from Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress. Unable and unwilling to acknowledge his role in the violence, he sought refuge in liquor to evade his

moral responsibilities. He tried to rationalise his actions by arguing that not just he but many others in the position of privilege were also involved in violence, and holding him alone responsible for what transpired during the riot was meaningless. Avoidance, another symptom of his perpetrator trauma, manifests as his deliberate evasion of moral responsibility. It is to be noted that these films' engagement with perpetrator trauma and perpetration-induced traumatic stress is limited. The concept of perpetrator trauma and its varied narrative representations in literature and cinema in the Indian context require further studies.

Both feature films and documentary films have incorporated testimonies of victims to depict trauma. The first-hand accounts given by the victims in the form of detailed testimonies validate the instances of violence shown in the films. These films acknowledge the agency of the victims by incorporating their views and perceptions. *Parzania* contains detailed testimonies of many victims. Towards the end of the film, there is a scene in which the victims are given a chance to make detailed testimonies before the commission of enquiry. Shernaz testified that she had seen thousands of armed men roaming the streets. She told the commission that one police officer, Mr Shankar, who was her husband's friend, refused to help them and assisted the rioters instead. She also testified that the violence had destroyed their personal and public lives. A doctor came forward and testified before the commission that on the day of the riot, he had seen the armed mob blocking vehicles, including ambulances, carrying the injured to nearby hospitals. Another woman testified that she had seen her daughter being raped and trucks carrying hundreds of dead bodies. These testimonies reveal the intensity of trauma. The

widows in the Widow Colony testify about their suffering. Nishrin and Imran narrate their stories of loss through detailed oral testimonies. By incorporating these testimonies, these films ethically bear witness to the trauma of these victims.

All four feature films and the two documentary films look at trauma from an intersectional lens. They offer a detailed critical analysis of the different ways in which the interweaving of the different forms and types of social stratifications along markers of identity, such as caste, religion, gender and class, result in the creation of distinct experiences of trauma and recovery. Social or cultural capital, mobility, connections, and access to support systems, legal institutions, and healthcare facilities vary from individual to individual, belonging to the same victimised community. As a result, different individuals may cope with their trauma differently. Individuals with access to support systems may heal faster, and the suffering of others may go unacknowledged and unaddressed. One's positionality within the power hierarchy often influences the impact of violence and trauma on individuals. Munira experienced trauma differently from her husband because the intersection of sexism and communalism made her experience particular and different ways. A better support system was in place for Anuradha's husband, Sameer, due to his class identity. Children like Mohsin suffer the most and are the most vulnerable section in the absence of a proper support system in place. *Firaaq* features characters from diverse social, political, and religious backgrounds, offering a detailed look at the differences in the experiences of individuals exposed to violence triggered by the same riot. Cyrus and Shernaz had better support systems, which expedited their recovery from trauma. Many widows in the colony had

limited social and political influence. They continue to be traumatised because their social, political and cultural identities gave them limited opportunities to recover from trauma. Adopting the intersectional approach helped the researcher identify different patterns and responses to trauma that exist synchronically.

This study also closely analysed how these films addressed the complex relationship between memory and trauma. Amu's trauma intensified because she has not been able to recollect her memories of her childhood days in India. As she gradually regains her memory through her detailed interaction with her foster mother, she reclaims her identity, which, in turn, facilitates her healing. The widows in the colony keep their memories of their relatives killed by the rioters alive by organising memorial services in the gurudwara. Imran and Nishrin struggle to manage their memory of the traumatic loss of the lives of their beloved ones during the riot. Memories of trauma may be transmitted across generations, which may result in the creation of intergenerational and transgenerational trauma. Films like *Parzania*, *Jogi* and *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* contain many references to Partition trauma. They explore, albeit briefly, how the transmission of the memory of violence during the Partition may lead to the formation of intergenerational and transgenerational trauma. The memory of shared and culturally transmitted trauma linked to the Partition violence of victims like Jogi and the widows is reawakened as a result of their victimisation during the riots. Violent episodes in the present rekindle the memories of traumatic experiences from Partition. Films like *Firaaq* and *Parzania* suggest that the transgenerational transmission of stories about the Partition is one of the root causes of the historical

trauma of many communities. *Parzania* begins with a description of the suffering of the different communities who have been displaced as a result of Partition. In *Firaaq*, a police officer asked Sameer to go to Pakistan. Comments like this illustrate how memory of past traumatic events shapes attitudes, behaviours and actions in the present. In the absence of structured and well-organised initiatives like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, the transmission of trauma fosters the creation of an ecosystem that enables the eruption, rationalisation and legitimisation of violence along communal lines (Bucaille 313).

The plotlines of films like *Parzania* and *Amu* illustrate the multidirectionality of memory. By the term multidirectional, Rothberg means that memory is "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not private" (*Multidirectional Memory* 11). He argues that historical memories are "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (*Multidirectional Memory* 3). He asserts that multidirectional memory and its varied dynamics would aid the formation of "new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice" (*Multidirectional Memory* 5). Though each of these films addresses one particular riot and its consequences, they also contain references to other instances of violence. For instance, the film *Amu*, a film on the Anti-Sikh riots, ends with a reference to the riots in Gujarat. In the same film, there are also references to the trauma of the Americans after the September 11 terrorist attacks. *Jogi* contains direct and indirect references to the violence on the day of the Partition. Jogi talks about the similarity between the patterns of violence in the present and in 1947: "One day, out of the blue, someone close to you turns into your

enemy. The same happened in 1947" (*Jogi* 01:23:00–04). Jogi argues that his community would come out of the trauma of the present as they had come out of the trauma of the Partition violence. He claims Sikhs are like phoenixes, and they "will rise from the ashes" (*Jogi* 00:50:36–38). These films reject the zero-sum logic of memory and illustrate how different memories can coexist. The documentary film *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* draws a parallel between the victims of the Anti-Sikh Riots in 1984 and the Gujarat Riots in 2002. H.S. Phoolka points out that the pattern of suffering of the victims of both riots is similar. In the case of the victims of the riot in 1984, the delivery of justice has been delayed. He argues that the same pattern is being repeated in the case of the victims of the 2002 riots in the state of Gujarat. These films contain multiple instances of cross-referencing. These films support the assumption that historical memory is relational and multidirectional. These films emerge as cultural containers in which memories about discrete historical events engage in critical and creative deliberations. These films provide the spectators with an avenue for cross-cultural witnessing.

Different narratives on trauma from postcolonial localities foreground the embeddedness of trauma in social structures. Stef Craps argues that postcolonial trauma studies should "take account of the specific social and historical contexts in which trauma narratives are produced and received, and be open and attentive to the diverse strategies of representation and resistance that these contexts invite or necessitate" (*Postcolonial Witnessing* 5). In the context of postcolonial localities like India, the impact of trauma on groups is an area of significant concern. In addition to individual trauma, these films have also addressed collective trauma.

These films focus on collective experiences of encountering violence and trauma. In these films, individual experiences are not isolated, and the individual stories are presented as a part of the larger story about the community and the nation. *Amu* and *Jogi* illustrate how the communal riot impaired the prevailing sense of community. Members of the Sikh community felt othered as a result of the differential treatment accorded to them. The refusal of the conductor even to take money from the Sikh passengers on the bus is a case in point. In *Firaaq*, members of the Muslim community feel threatened and suffer from anxiety and fear. The scene in the film in which some youths try to get a gun to ensure their safety betrays their insecurity. Their feeling of shared depression is another symptom of collective trauma. The widows in the Widow Colony organise collective mourning rituals and memorial services in the gurudwaras. Many members of the affected communities, like Jogi, Munira and Sameer, developed a feeling after the riot that their communities had been treated unjustly and that their rights and values had been trampled, and this feeling affected their group consciousness, altered their memoryscape, and changed their worldview. Sameer rediscovered his religious identity and started embracing it even though he was not a practising Muslim before the riot. Munira, like many other victims, started distrusting the administrative machinery, which she felt was complicit in the violence. In all six films, collective trauma resulted in a breakdown of social trust. It also led to further division and polarisation within the society. In *Parzania*, Asif wanted to arrange better accommodation only for the members of his community. He considered his Parsi neighbour as the other, despite their shared experiences of loss and pain. These films have portrayed the complex ways in which the community's identity was affected and altered by collective trauma. These films

have also represented the different ways in which collective trauma results in the formation of new solidarities and new forms of identities, as in the cases of Shernaz and Sameer. The films also represent the struggles of the affected community in coping with its trauma. After exposure to trauma, communities in these films attempted to reevaluate their priorities and came to new understandings. These films acknowledge the capacity of the affected groups to make informed decisions even after their encounter with trauma.

Trauma may engender centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. These films depict the "two opposed but ultimately complementary forces: a centrifugal impulse towards isolation, loneliness, the individual and the focus on open wounds; and a centripetal movement towards healing, connection, the community and its chorus of voices" (Martínez-Falquina 846). One negative consequence of trauma on communities is that it may reopen fault lines which might have pre-existed the traumatic event, leading to division and polarisation. Such a disintegration caused by trauma best illustrates the centrifugal pole of trauma (Erikson, *New Species of Trouble* 236). Collective trauma may create polarisation, division and enmity. These films offer a novel perspective on how collective trauma ruptured the social fabric and created an atmosphere of hatred and distrust. In *Firaaq,* characters like Sameer and Munira felt isolated and lonely on account of the way they were treated by the rioters. Jogi's friend and neighbour Shankar turned against him when the riot broke out. Violence reopened the old wounds and led to further division and polarisation. The title of the film, *Firaaq*, means separation and is, hence, a pointer to the centrifugal dimension of trauma. Characters like Aarti and Mohsin felt isolated and

alienated after the riot. Such experiences also illustrate the centrifugal impulse towards loneliness. Erikson points out that trauma can also bring people together and aid the creation of a community by evoking a shared feeling among the victims. (Erikson, “Notes on Trauma” 186). These developments may be referred to as the centripetal pole of trauma. The development of a shared sense of solidarity among the victims after the traumatic event bears testimony to the power of trauma in “creating communities” (Luckhurst 213). The widows in the Widows Colony came from different backgrounds, yet their shared trauma created a feeling of community. Similarly, women in the refugee camp in the film *Parzania* stood by each other because their shared experiences engendered a feeling of solidarity among the victims. In *Jogi*, members of the Sikh community are brought together owing to their shared experiences of marginalisation and victimisation. The sorrow engendered a new feeling of community among the Sikhs while they were being transported from Delhi to Punjab in a truck. These films attempt to foreground the centripetal pole that entails “affirmation and self-empowerment despite their condition, and it is centred on recognising post-traumatic growth and resilience” (Martínez-Falquina 846).

These films go beyond exploring the emotional and psychological aspects of trauma and foreground collective, material and spatial angles of trauma. These films look at the different ways in which trauma affects not just isolated individuals but entire groups and communities as well. The suffering of individuals like Amu, Jogi, Shernaz, Cyrus, Munira and Imran is not isolated, and the communal and social dimensions of their suffering are highlighted in these films. The films' focus is on

the suffering of the entire communities, and they depict how the social and communal fabric was ruptured by instances of violence. These films depict how trauma triggered by the riot caused “psychic disruption in whole families, clans, and communities” (Grahan 128). Postcolonial discourses focus on the relation between trauma and space. Spatial relocations and reconfigurations may be a cause or a consequence of trauma. The film *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* offers a detailed exploration of the spatial dimension of trauma. Similarly, Nishrin wants to return to her home state, and her spatial relocation makes her feel lonely and distraught. In the case of Amu, her relocation to the United States is linked to the riot. Her father was murdered, her mother committed suicide, and she was taken to a new country by her foster mother. Nevertheless, the faint memories of the childhood spaces that she inhabited shaped her identity. She somehow carried the memories associated with those spaces within her. When the riot started, Jogi planned to shift the Sikhs to a safer location near Punjab. The community carried the memories of dislocation caused by Partition, and these old memories were revived by the new experiences of similar relocation under compulsion. Traumatic events “involve the loss of not just language but also land, houses, shops and stocks; breadwinners lost their able-bodiedness and ability to earn their own living” and hence also have a material angle (Grahan 128). All these films also focus on the material losses of the victims. Munira’s house was destroyed, Sameer’s shop was looted and attacked, and many Sikh business houses and establishments were burnt down. The expression on Munira’s face as she was standing helplessly, holding

charred currency notes in her hands, betrays her intense trauma caused by material losses. The widows lost their houses and ended up in a colony. The material losses traumatised them and their children. In *Jogi*, there is a scene that shows the burning down of a car with the driver and passengers inside. Targeting the car is significant because many Sikhs were employed as taxi drivers in Delhi in the 1980s. The economic losses, coupled with social marginalisation, led to the formation of individual and collective trauma. Similarly, the rioters destroyed the shop owned by Sameer with the intention of disturbing his social and economic status. This material loss emotionally drains and traumatises Sameer. The films offer a nuanced and layered analysis of trauma by engaging not just with its linguistic, emotional and psychological aspects but with its collective, spatial and material aspects as well. The narratives of trauma in all these films have paid attention to the underlying historical context, and the specificity of each case is taken into consideration. These films examine violence and trauma from social, political, and cultural vantage points.

Postcolonial trauma models acknowledge the role of rituals and religious ceremonies in helping individuals and communities cope with their trauma. The role of religion and spiritual practices in expediting the recovery process is explored in detail by postcolonial trauma scholars such as Visser, who has argued that “openness to non-Western belief systems and their rituals and ceremonies in the engagement with trauma is needed in order to achieve the remaining major objectives of the long-standing thesis of decolonising trauma theory” (“Decolonizing Trauma

Theory" 250). In these films, spirituality gives the victims a paradigm within which the trauma suffered by the individual can be managed differently. Dilshad, Parzan's sister, felt relieved after offering prayers to God. The story of Khan Saheb in *Firaaq* deserves special mention in this regard. It was his spirituality that made him strong enough to retain his faith in humanity despite the orgy of violence that he had witnessed all around him. Religion may give the victim a new orientation and a renewed sense of purpose in life. The widows continued their lives even after losing their husbands because their religious beliefs empowered and equipped them to confront the challenges that they faced. Religious affiliations also ensure the support of a community in managing their losses and grief. These films demonstrate that rituals and practices like prayers and ceremonies are empowering and can potentially expedite recovery.

Conversely, certain religious practices and dogmas may also delay the healing process. Some victims may not be able to confront reality because their spiritual orientation may delude them. The case of Cyrus is a case in point. He evaded his responsibility and used his faith-related practices to evade reality. He gave his daughter false hope that Parzan would return to the family once his fasting ended. Shernaz rightly observed that such irresponsible behaviour further added to Dilsahd's suffering. It is also to be noted that in the cases of some individuals, encounters with trauma may result in their losing their faith in religion, and they may start looking for alternative faith systems. Allan's story best illustrates how some characters lose faith in religion due to their encounter with trauma. These films

illustrate the complex role played by religion and rituals. In some cases, they might aid recovery; in others, they might delay it.

Postcolonial Trauma models do not define trauma solely "in terms of weakness, victimisation, and melancholia" (Visser, "Decolonizing Trauma Theory" 255). They conceive of recovery, resilience, and growth as potential responses to trauma. Many characters in these films, like Amu, Jogi, Shernaz and Allan, are traumatised, but their post-traumatic life is not presented solely in terms of fragility and weakness. Many characters in these films, like Allan and Amu, attempt to work through their trauma, and it helps them articulate their positions and process their memories. These films explore and highlight the themes of healing, recuperation and resistance. Allan in *Parzania* heals himself by learning about Gandhi's idea of non-violence. Gandhian philosophy gave him a new way of conceptualising his trauma. Cyrus, in the same film, seeks refuge in his spiritual guru. His spiritual teacher gave him a new spiritual orientation, which helped him manage his trauma. Aarti in *Firaaq* tries to reach out to the victims, and her attempts to establish a connection with Mohsin expedite her healing. Jogi's willingness to sacrifice his life for others in the community facilitated his healing. *Firaaq*, *Parzania*, *Jogi, The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement* and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* emphasise that recovery from trauma at the individual and collective levels requires social and political interventions as well. They assert that systemic interventions are required to heal the community, which in turn would heal the individual members.

New research in the field of trauma has found that, in some instances, trauma may result in positive psychological changes. Some individuals may develop strength and resilience as a result of undergoing severe psychological distress. Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence coined the term post-traumatic growth to refer to these changes in the attitudes and behaviours of the survivors of trauma. Post-traumatic growth is related to resilience, but individuals experiencing post-traumatic growth not only regain their pre-traumatic mental state but also experience positive changes in their outlook and worldview. Not all victims of trauma may experience post-traumatic growth, and in the case of some survivors, symptoms of PTSD and PTG may coexist. In these films, many characters like Aarti, Cyrus, and Shernaz develop personal strength and emerge emotionally stronger after encountering trauma. Aarti was a conventional housewife at the beginning of the film. However, she reoriented her priorities and emerged stronger, as illustrated by her bold decision to look after a Muslim boy, Mohsin. Allan developed a new philosophy of life after learning about and internalising Gandhian ideals; he developed empathy towards other victims and attempted to make meaningful changes in their lives. That he wrote a book to share his altered vision also illustrates his post-traumatic growth. The widows in the Widow Colony were very resilient. Their resilience gave them the energy to look for jobs. They also developed positive attitudes toward life, and their perception of themselves and others underwent a positive transformation. Their interpersonal relationship with other widows also developed, and this is a significant indication of post-traumatic growth. They developed their empathy and formed more

profound and long-lasting bonds. Their life goals and priorities underwent radical changes, and they became willing to explore new avenues of life again. They started to appreciate their life more meaningfully and, as a result, showed more gratitude. They underwent a spiritual transformation, which resulted in a reappreciation of their faith. However, in the case of some characters like Cyrus, Imran and Nishrin in these films, healing remains incomplete.

These films attempt to make visible "the creative and political" rather than the "pathological and negative" by exploring themes of communal amity and harmony (Craps, *Postcolonial Witnessing* 127). Films like *Jogi* and *Parzania* begin with scenes that illustrate the harmony in society prior to the eruption of violence. Jogi's family was planning the birthday celebration of his nephew, and the members of the family were in a jovial mood. Intercommunal relations, such as the friendship between Jogi and Shankar, existed. In *Parzania*, before the riot, members of different religions lived peacefully in the same colony. Shernaz, Sheela and Nikhat had a deep emotional bond. The film then explores how the relations were strained as the situation became tense. However, the films suggest that many ordinary human beings stood for each other even during the riots. Sheela wanted to help Shernaz. Jyothi offered emotional and financial support to Munira. She prepared food for her because Munira's house had been destroyed. Jogi and Kaleem Ansari stood together to save the members of the Sikh community. Kaleem Ansari gave them food and shelter in a nearby mosque and arranged transportation facilities. He risked his life to help the Sikh families. Similarly, Rawinder, a police officer who was Jogi's

childhood friend, did his best to save Jogi and his community. He even ignored the orders given to him by local leaders and was able to save hundreds of lives. The coexistence of intercommunal ties, even during the riots, facilitated the restoration of communal harmony after the riots. The restoration of normalcy was partial in many cases, yet the plotline of these films suggests that a return to normalcy is possible. In *Parzania*, Nikhat and Shernaz were reunited, and their friendship thrived even after episodes of violence. Chottu offered help and assistance during and after the riots. Chagan assisted the rioters under compulsion, yet after the riot, he came forward to testify about violence before the commission. Jayaram's message that Gandhi's message of peace and non-violence would eventually thrive is echoed throughout the film *Parzania*. Kaju, also known as Amu, was adopted by Keya Roy after her Sikh father was killed by the rioters. Towards the end of the film, *Firaaq* Khan Saheb decides to restart his *baithak* again. Music and songs here symbolise the return of harmony and amity.

Films like *Jogi*, *Parzania* and *Firaaq* illustrate the role of "local networks of civic engagement" between different communities in easing communal tension (Varshney 9). The connection of individuals across communities facilitated the restoration of peace. The intercommunal alliances between Jogi, Rawinder, and Kaleem Ansari limited the damage caused by the riot. Similarly, Kaju's mother's ties with Keya Roy ensured a brighter future for Kaju. Similarly, in *Amu,* when the rioters came searching for Sikhs, fellow passengers in the train compartment saved them. In *Firaaq,* Khan Saheb restarted his music classes, and members of other

faiths attended them because of a strong civic network in his neighbourhood. Acts like this became possible because, even before the riot, there was a civic network, as illustrated by members of different faiths attending the music lessons together at the house of Khan Saheb. The widows in the colony stated that they were saved because many members of other religions risked their lives to save them. They mentioned the name of Kanshi, a tea seller who attempted to save many lives. There are also references to a generous man, Muhammad Ali, who offered food and shelter to Sikhs. Many Indians stood together even during times of polarisation and division. Some of them, like Prakash Jan, lost their lives while attempting to save the lives of others. A widow in the colony stated that she did not hold any religion, or all the followers of a particular religion, responsible for the riot. This observation is also a pointer to amity and harmony in society. Her view that riots are planned by a few is also supported by other inmates in the colony. These films on communal violence also become records of communal amity, empathy and compassion. They acknowledge and celebrate communal harmony in society and posit that violence is not the norm but an exception.

Looked at from the vantage point of postcolonial trauma studies, the treatment of violence, trauma and healing in these films offers novel insights. This study reveals that the select films have placed the issue of communal violence and the ensuing trauma against historical and social contexts, and the historical specificity of each event is emphasised. This study establishes that these films do not conceive of trauma in terms of weakness and stasis; instead, they foreground the

possibility of healing, reconciliation and growth. That they deal with the trauma of the people situated in the non-West is highly significant. These films succeed in articulating and visually representing the trauma of hapless men, women, and children in different parts of India. By doing so, they address the gaps in canonical trauma studies that have failed to address the trauma suffered by people outside the West. These films do not blindly adhere to the modernist aesthetics of fragmentation and explore indigenous ways of articulating trauma. The films discussed in this thesis move away from the classical trauma aesthetic formulations based on narrative impossibility and develop alternative formulations based on narrative possibility. Though postcolonial critics resist the prescriptive notion that only those texts sticking to the modernist aesthetics of fragmentation can record trauma, they acknowledge that the narrative style based on non-linearity and fragmentation is one among the many suitable styles to represent trauma. Their objection was only to the attempts to grade different styles and techniques so that certain styles are celebrated, and others are devalued.

The techniques used by these feature films to depict trauma are varied. The films *Firaaq* and *Amu* use the technique of non-linear narration. The disjointed style of narration mirrors the disjointed state of the memory of the victims of trauma. Trauma is a memory recorded differently in the human brain; hence, traumatic memory is managed and recalled differently. In these two films, the directors employ the technique of flashbacks to represent this aspect of traumatic memory. The films record how traumatic memories often intrude into the present, resulting in

the triggering of the symptoms of trauma. Aarti in *Firaaq* suffered from flashbacks and hallucinations and felt that somebody was knocking on her door. Cyrus in *Parzania* hallucinated that his son was standing inside the police station, but to his dismay, he realised that it was some other boy. While sitting at the movie theatre, Cyrus saw images of Parzan projected on the screen. He felt that Parzan's life was gradually unfolding before his eyes. This episode of hallucination reveals the intensity of Cyrus' trauma. All these films use close-up shots to depict the complex emotional state of the trauma subjects. For instance, in *Parzania*, the director used close-up shots of the hands and faces of Shernaz to highlight the mixed emotions on her face when she received a phone call from the police station informing her that her son had been found. Songs and poems that are very evocative are also used to suggest trauma in *Jog*i and *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat.* The use of a highly suggestive and evocative background score and soundtrack to represent trauma is to be noted. Music and songs can record sorrow, grief, helplessness, and disorientation associated with trauma. The use of melancholic music in song sequences to record the sorrow and grief of the characters in *Jogi* and *Amu* also deserves mention. The tonal variations and inflexions in voice are also effectively used in these films. The voices of the widows broke as they recounted their stories. Another technique used in these films to record the disorientation caused by trauma is the incorporation of shaky and blurry visuals. The scene at the railway station on the day of the riot in *Amu* is a case in point. The use of archival footage, photographs, and images from newspapers and magazines in *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* and *The Widow*

Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement to tell the complex story of trauma also deserves mention. The use of silence in these films is highly suggestive. The Sikhs who took refuge in the gurudwara were unable to articulate their pain. The silence inside the truck and in this gurudwara suggests the intensity of collective trauma. The films have also used the technique of incorporating scenes of flashbacks. The traumatic memory is often recollected many times by the victims. In *Parzania*, Shernaz had a flashback about Parzan as she was preparing food in the kitchen. These flashbacks are presented in black and white in the film. Another scene in which a flashback is used is when Cyrus sees the images of his son projected on the screen at the movie theatre. These films also use different editing styles to record trauma. The director used tight framing to convey Amu's loneliness. Tight framing also indicates her isolation. A wide shot is used in the film to suggest Moshin's vulnerability. Deep focus shots are used to suggest the intensity of the emotional turmoil in *Jogi* and *Amu*. The use of colour tone and lighting in these films is highly suggestive. Shades and low-key lighting suggest trauma. Past events are presented in black and white in *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* and *The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement.* Distinct colour tones in these films suggest the differences between the present and the past.

Certain techniques documentary films use to record trauma are similar to those of feature films. However, documentaries also have certain genre-specific features, which make them a powerful platform for recording violence and trauma. Archival footage is put to powerful use in *Even the Crows: A Divided Gujarat* and

The Widow Colony: India's Unsettled Settlement. The films have incorporated many direct interviews with the victims, and the incorporation of the testimonies of the victims makes these narratives convincing. The directors have also incorporated interviews with bystanders, perpetrators and experts from different fields to make these films a dialogic platform for divergent viewpoints to coexist and interact. The directors used off-screen narration to provide the historical background of the story. The use of silence and music in these films is highly suggestive. Compared with feature films, the use of diegetic music in documentary films is comparatively higher. These documentary films have avoided reenactments and have not attempted to recreate a historical incident. They have incorporated actual archival footage. They have not incorporated animated sequences to make their narratives more visually appealing. These two choices of not incorporating scenes of animation and reenactments align with the ethical position of these films while dealing with individual and collective trauma. These films offer detailed commentary on the underlying context and incorporate multiple voices and viewpoints. Hence, they do not thin down the thick narratives. Documentary films have an important social role to play. The voice that they adopt is, hence, very significant. These two documentary films have distinct social voices, effectively conveying their social, political, and ethical positions.

E. Kaplan and Ban Wang have identified four different positions for spectators of trauma cinema. In the first case, the cinema comforts the spectator (9). Some other films may vicariously traumatise the spectator (9). The third type

positions the spectator as a voyeur (10). Those films that are ethically and aesthetically significant position the spectator as a witness (10). All six films analysed in this study position the spectator as a witness. These films have the potential to make the spectator bear witness to a traumatic event. They empathetically unsettle the spectator while ensuring that the spectator does not appropriate another's trauma. They provide the spectators a new perspective on violence, trauma and survival.

The relational framework used in this study facilitated the incorporation of broader and culture-specific trauma registers. The research was conducted with the conviction that "the way forward in trauma research is to conceptualise trauma not by theorising hierarchical structures which would privilege some conceptual approaches and delegitimise others, but by envisaging trauma as a complicated network of concepts and approaches, all centred around trauma" (Visser, "Entanglements of Trauma" 3). The adoption of a relational approach made the incorporation of ideas from different disciplines and theoretical formulations possible. It also facilitated a more nuanced approach to analysing the representation of trauma in select films. Though the basic premises of this thesis are based on postcolonial trauma studies, the researcher has also attempted to incorporate some ideas developed by earlier theorists when and where necessary. For instance, the postcolonial supposition that trauma is curable and that narrative is cathartic in no way contradicts the argument put forward by earlier scholars like Caruth that some aspects of trauma may defy easy understanding. These films do not limit their

exploration to “notions of absence, holes, deferral, crises of meaning, unknowing and dissociation” that may prevent “any possibility for healing for individuals or entire nations” and assume added significance in a postcolonial context (Mengel and Borzaga xiii). These films do acknowledge that trauma has a profound and long-lasting impact. However, they do not negate the possibility of resilience and healing. Exploration of the possibility of growth and renewal does not mean that past trauma and its continuing legacy must be negated. The claim that trauma can be narrated and expressed does not mean that representations of trauma are always precise. Classical Trauma theorists postulated that the narrative of trauma may lead to greater indeterminacy. These films posit that traumatic experiences are claimable and representable. They do not attempt to universalise the concept of trauma. Instead, they look for the specificity of each experience. These films do not lead to greater indeterminacy and scepticism. Instead, they open up possibilities of new ways of engaging with the legacy of trauma so that the wounds are healed, communities are brought together, social cohesion is restored, and the possibility of reconciliation and growth is acknowledged.

This thesis contributes to the growing body of scholarship in the field of postcolonial trauma studies by examining the traumatic events in India and by foregrounding the traumatic experiences of individuals within a postcolonial context. Even within a postcolonial location, there are stratifications based on social, political, and economic factors. The experiences of those individuals at the margins often go unacknowledged and remain underdocumented. In this scenario, this thesis

that used the framework of intersectionality to document the diverse traumatic experiences of men, women, and children with limited social, economic, and cultural capital has immense ethical, aesthetic, and epistemological significance. This study establishes that these films foreground the possibility of resilience and post-traumatic growth. Another finding is that these films explore the possibility of healing and reconciliation at individual and collective levels. The study found that these films focus primarily on victims' accounts concerning grief, loss and suffering and offer only limited perspectives on the trauma suffered by the perpetrators. By closely examining areas such as perpetrator trauma, implicated subjects, multidirectional memory, and post-traumatic growth, which have received limited scholarly attention in the Indian context, this study makes a valuable contribution to the emerging field of trauma studies in India.

The acknowledgement of the pain, suffering and grief experienced by the victims through artistic and cultural representation is an ethical act since “the recognition of everyone’s grief and loss is the only solid foundation from which social change can begin” (Granek 67). It is to be noted that “those whose lives are not regarded as potentially grievable, and hence valuable, are made to bear the burden of starvation, underemployment, legal disenfranchisement, and differential exposure to violence and death” (Butler 25). Grieving for the subaltern is a just intervention because it rejects a reductive framework according to which some lives are grievable and others are not (Butler 30). This study establishes that these films perform an ethical act by making lives grievable and fostering reconciliation.

This study demonstrates that the select twenty-first-century Indian films offer an in-depth, critical analysis of communal violence, trauma, and post-traumatic growth. The select films bear witness to the trauma of individuals and groups by documenting their pain, suffering, and grief. Moreover, these films make significant contributions to the efforts aimed at resolution, reconciliation and healing by acknowledging and celebrating communal amity and harmony in society. In this age in which instances of violence are reported in different parts of India, the role of cinema in fostering messages of peace and harmony remains all the more relevant.

Chapter VI

Recommendations

The representation of trauma in literary, cinematic and cultural narratives produced in India has received limited scholarly attention. The paradigm of postcolonial trauma studies should be applied more to examine different representations of violence and trauma in texts produced in postcolonial localities in general and India in particular. Attempts must be made to develop a more nuanced framework of trauma studies that takes into account the political, cultural and social specificity of the Indian context. The artistic expressions of trauma by groups such as refugees and migrant groups with limited political, social and cultural capital require further study.

The thesis explored the complex relation between memory and trauma, but since the key focus of this study was on the dialectics of violence and trauma, topics such as intergenerational memory and transgenerational memory have received only limited attention. These topics deserve a full-length analysis. Violence of high magnitude may trigger both intercommunal and intra-communal violence. Though the researcher has looked at trauma from an intersectional vantage point, further studies must be conducted on the complex role played by caste and class in the making of not just victims but also perpetrators.

The Partition of India in 1947 resulted in numerous instances of gruesome violence, and the memory of the same is passed down across generations. New novels and films that look at the various dimensions of Partition continue to be produced. Studies must be conducted on literary and cinematic texts that deal with

intergenerational and transgenerational transmission of partition trauma. More attempts must be made to study the artistic representations of the complex relationship between cultural memory and collective trauma in the Indian context.

India has witnessed numerous instances of political, sectarian and communal violence since its independence. Some of these incidents have not yet become a part of the public imagination because the affected groups lack adequate social, economic and cultural capital. Of late, a number of artistic texts from different regions in India have looked at these events from diverse vantage points. Further exploration of these texts is required to discover the representational strategies they use to narrate stories of trauma.

A number of films dealing with sensitive issues, such as historical violence, find it challenging to obtain censorship certificates, without which public screenings of films would be regulated. Studies must be conducted about censorship politics and the directors' different strategies to get the certification. The incorporation of the methodologies of trauma studies and censorship studies would open up numerous areas for critical investigation.

Numerous Indian films have explored the role of the perpetrators in violence. However, there are very few studies on the political, social, and psychological factors that influence the making of a perpetrator. Artistic and cultural texts produced in India have paid only limited attention to the trauma of the perpetrators. More studies may be conducted about the representation of the perpetrator and the act of perpetration in various texts, with a special focus on the trauma suffered by some perpetrators after committing heinous crimes.

Instances of collective violence, like riots, engender different subject positions, such as victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. Some bystanders may be called implicated subjects because they are the direct and indirect beneficiaries of an unjust system. More studies must be conducted about the short-term and long-term consequences of violence on implicated subjects. The trauma suffered by implicated subjects needs further critical examination.

India, a country with a rich spiritual heritage, has many communities that use rituals and ceremonies to cope with trauma. Faith is often empowering, and spirituality makes individuals and communities more resilient. The cathartic role of religion, spirituality, and rituals as represented in different trauma narratives produced in India warrants further studies.

Numerous short films on violence have been produced and circulated in the last few decades. Because of the easy access to filmmaking technology, the number of short films on violence has increased exponentially. Groups with limited access to the technologies of making and circulating visual narratives use short films as an avenue for cultural and political expression. More studies are required to identify, group and analyse short films on communal violence and trauma.

Digital Space and social media have opened up new avenues for cultural expression. New forms of visual storytelling using Instagram reels and YouTube shorts have unique ethics and aesthetics. Studies must be conducted about the representations of trauma in various social media sites. Cyberspace is a platform on which different forms of epistemic and cultural violence are planned and executed. Targeted attacks and cyberbullying within the virtual space may traumatise

individuals and communities. Studies must be conducted about cultural representations of different forms of trauma triggered by multiple discourses in the digital space.

Collective violence may affect almost all individuals in a community, but its impact may vary in accordance with many factors, such as the victims' gender, class, caste and geographical location. The compounding of different forms of disadvantages creates unique experiences of oppression and suffering. Further exploration is required on the various representations of the intersectional dynamics of violence in the context of India in different texts.

The impact of collective violence on children may be severe and long-lasting. The trauma of widows may be chronic and severe because of their precarious condition. More studies must be conducted about the cultural representations of the trauma of children and widows.

A significant consequence of political and communal violence is the large-scale displacement of victims and communities. Such forced exiles and imposed migration may cause trauma. Further studies are required on the various representations of trauma caused by such geographical and cultural dislocations triggered by riots or other forms of targeted violence.

Cinema has the potential to traumatise the spectator vicariously. Cinema can position the spectator in different subject positions in tune with the director's political, ethical, and epistemological choices. The portrayal of trauma in a number of films is such that it may vicariously traumatise the viewers. Further scholarly

attention needs to be paid to the impact of trauma cinema on the viewers, with a particular focus on the formation of vicarious trauma.

A number of filmmakers approach cinema with the sole aim of generating money, and hence, they ignore ethical concerns even when dealing with historical incidents. Studies must be conducted to explore and problematise how the market forces thin down thick histories of violence and trauma. More research work must be carried out to explore and expose the attempts to sensationalise historical trauma.

Art and culture can also be used as tools for propaganda. Cerian groups with vested interests sometimes attempt to appropriate the memory of trauma to further their agenda. More studies should be conducted about the different ways in which various forms of art and cinema are sometimes used to weaponise trauma.

Numerous films in genres such as comedy and horror contain subplots related to communal and political riots. Further research needs to be carried out about the different narrative and representation strategies used by different genres to address issues related to violence and trauma.

The emergence of OTT platforms has popularised new genres of films, such as web series. The flexibility of the genre provides it with a broader canvas to delve deep into the complex layers of the history of violence and traumatisation. Further research is required on how web series approach cultural memory and collective trauma.

Cyberspace, social media and OTT platforms have provided a platform for local memories to travel across spaces and reach a global audience. Such wide

circulation of traumatic memories opens up spaces for cross-cultural witnessing. Studies must be conducted to discover the different ways in which the travel of trauma narratives across cultures facilitates the possibility of cross-cultural witnessing. The manner in which various texts engage with the interconnections of various traumatic histories and the related concept of multidirectional memory merits further scholarly attention.

To conclude, the cinematic representation of violence and trauma in the Indian context is an area that has immense research potential. More studies on these topics using an interdisciplinary framework may broaden the horizons of the emerging paradigm of trauma studies in the postcolonial context.

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