



Surviving and Subverting the Oppressive State in the Literature of Witness: A Comparative Study of Rohingya and Kashmiri Life Narratives

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ABSTRACT

Cultural expressions, both oral and written, provide a powerful medium to resist and survive oppression. Drawing on this premise, the study comparatively interprets Rohingya and Kashmiri life narratives, examining how the Myanmar and Indian state, concurrently, employ oppressive and totalitarian apparatuses of power to obliterate identity, disenfranchise, dehumanize, and displace the Rohingyas and Kashmiris in Rakhine and Indian-held Kashmir respectively. Utilizing theorizations of Hannah Arendt, Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault, this research investigates two life narratives: Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring* (2021) and Habiburrahman's *First, They Erased Our Name* (2018). The study has found that the two states, Myanmar and India, convergently use systemic and institutionalized stratum of violence and power to marginalize and obfuscate the existence of their two minority communities. Taking these life narratives as embodiments of the 'Literature of Witness', this paper suggests that the precarious survival in the besieged territories also posits discursive subversion and resistance to oppression, empowering the two communities to reclaim their collective identity, history, and cultural ethos through the act of writing. This study can contribute meaningfully to ongoing debates in trauma studies, South Asian studies, life writing and the literature of witness's role in conflict zones.

1. Introduction

It has been one of the hallmarks of totalitarian states to make naked yet systemic use of power to silence the dissenting voices throughout history of human civilization. However, this oppressive praxis reached its zenith during the early twentieth century with the rise of totalitarian and authoritarian ideologies in the European hemisphere. German Nazism, Italian fascism and Russian Stalinism—all these authoritarian ideologies led by all-powerful demagogues, attempted to reinforce oppressive and antidemocratic doctrines in their respective domains. These hegemonic, exclusionist and ideologically driven systems subsided and lost currency in the wake of post-World War II times and the subsequent creation of United Nations Organizations (UNO) but continued to operate implicitly till the end of cold war coupled with the disintegration of USSR. By the time around 1990s, liberal democracy, hinged upon guarantee of fundamental rights, egalitarianism and respect for human dignity, started garnering popularity and acceptance at large. The liberal democracy, Francis Fukuyama argued in his seminal book *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), triumphed as a popular political doctrine after the fall of German wall and the disintegration of USSR, priding itself as a harbinger of egalitarianism and championing human rights. Along with modern democracies, traditional and semi traditional political systems also adopted liberal democratic norms by the end of twentieth century. As a part of the argument of this research paper, the totalitarianism and fascist praxis have not died down even in the twenty first

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century. The glaring examples of the reworking of totalitarianism and authoritarianism are found in Indian-held Kashmir and Myanmar's Rakhine state. Although Indian polity, in constitutional terms, is a secular and democratic republic but in practice behaves not only undemocratically but also oppressively, mirroring the totalitarian and fascist regimes of the yore. The state of Myanmar is traditional democratic cum Buddhist-led political system having strong military junta in power under the veneer of electoral system, uses totalitarian and oppressive stratums. The political systems of Myanmar and India differ fundamentally, but in their treatment of marginalized community-Rohingyas and Kashmiri- both states converge in their use of power. The research investigates two life narratives-each hailing from one conflicting zone-that how the naked use of power and state apparatuses are employed to disenfranchise, dehumanize and depopulate the marginalized communities in both the besieged zones. Furthermore, this research also claims that the writers and story tellers become witnesses to the injustices and brutalities of the oppressive state. They become the witness to the plight, ostracism, and marginalization of their respective communities, and embed their narratives with their personal testimonies. This research has found that the life narratives under study help the suppressed selves not only in reclaiming their identity, past, culture and history but also complement in subverting the hegemonic and oppressive state structures.

In the literary parlance, less attention is paid to exploring Rohingya and Kashmiri literature in comparative mode, despite having strong similarities in state's operational policies. The existing scholarship had largely relied upon journalistic writing, history and political commentaries. There has been lack of sustained and rigorous literary textual analysis of life narratives originating from both the territories. This study has endeavored to evaluate life narratives in a comparative mode, finding commonalities and convergences in terms of state's use of power and the subsequent plight of the minor groups in the besieged territories. Moreover, no study to date has discussed life narratives through the combined theoretical framework, evaluating survival, subversion and identity reclamation at the same time. Furthermore, this study links life narratives with the genre of 'literature of Witness, that renders this research incremental.

The literature of Witness is, comparatively, a recent addition to trauma and memoir studies, that by focusing on eyewitness accounts reconfigures "authorizing identity of the witness" to the terrible world around it. In the words of a pioneer scholar in the field, Minoli Salgado, this kind of literature marks a double agency that subverts and challenges oppressive and demonic discourse viz-a-viz providing multiple ways to understand truth, subjectivity, survival, resilience and justice. (Salgado, 2025)

This study has relied upon comparative methods to evaluate two life narratives- Habiburahman's *First, They Erased Our Name* (2018) and Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring* (2021)-seeking convergences in the use of state apparatuses, disciplining techniques and other state powers to obliterate the identity of two communities-Myanmar's Rohingyas and ordinary Muslim Kashmiris in the Indian-held Kashmir. These two life narratives based on the personal experiences of the authors, in the words of Whitlock (2007), give voice to the voiceless in the terrorized and besieged territories. The comparative method has also been used to find commonalities in two paradoxical states. The Indian state claims to be secular and democratic, founded on Nehruvian doctrine but, in practice, it behaves like a fascist and totalitarian state in the Indian-held Kashmir in twenty first century. This is glaringly evident from India's abrogation of Article 370 that revoked Kashmir's special constitutional status. The Act was enforced through prolonged communication blackouts and massive military deployment in Kashmir valley. In the similar way, the Myanmar state is founded upon the nonviolent and pacifist doctrine of Buddhism, has unleashed unimaginable terror on Rohingyas in Rakhine state. It has been declared in the UN's Fact-Finding Mission (2018) that the military Junta in Myanmar has committed genocidal crimes, persecuting, disenfranchising and reterritorializing Rohingyas in the worst possible way (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018, p. 14). The comparison has found that both the narratives present chilling tales of rampant killings, custodial torture, kidnapping, rape, and forced conversions. These harrowing tales depict aggressive and belligerent nation-states committing genocidal crimes and crimes against humanity. The investigation of the two narratives has been done through the theoretical framework theorized in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Louis Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1971), and Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977). This theoretical framing provides critical lens to understand the nexus of power, discourse, ideology and authoritarianism in understanding the survival as well as subversion of two marginalized communities. Arendt has explored the nature of a totalitarian state and how it suppresses dissenting voices, plurality and diversity through various mechanisms. Althusser talks about the use of state apparatuses to silence the dissenting voices. Michael Foucault has discussed hegemonic state's disciplining and narrative fabricating mechanisms. This integrated theoretical model is utilized to understand the totalitarian streaks of two states-Myanmar and India-in a bid to investigate the mechanisms to disenfranchise, dehumanize, reterritorialize, and depopulate the marginalized communities in their respective territories. However, these narratives also subvert and challenge the hegemonic discourse and state power, breeding resilience and courage to survive at the face of adversity and brutality. In the broader macro spectrum, the research illuminates that modern states-India and Myanmar-have reverted to ethno-centralism, tribalism, parochialism, and ultra-nationalism in the twenty first century. There has been a rise in identity politics coinciding with the ethnic cleansing, genocidal erasure and desecration of human bodies to erase voice and agency. This research paper is divided into the following sections: Section 1 includes the comprehensive introduction; Section 2 is premised upon exhaustive review of literature with a focus on finding the research gap; Section 3 deals with the theoretical

underpinnings; Section 4 describes the methodology; Section 5 is based on detailed textual analysis; and Section 6 summarizes and concludes the argument.

2. Literature Review

This section situates the current study within existing scholarship on Rohingya and Kashmiri literature, identifying the theoretical and methodological gaps that this comparative research addresses. There has been a plethora of literature produced in the first half of the twentieth century that deals with the atrocities of German Nazism and Italian fascism. Critical debates and scholarships, generally, focused on the blatant use of power and its aftermaths on populace. However, the totalitarianism in the twenty first century –a time when democracy and human rights debates have gained currency across the world–replicates itself, though in morphed form, in a bid to disenfranchise, dehumanize, and depopulate minority groups that supposedly pose threat to the ethnonationalist states of contemporary times. This research argues that the totalitarian states of Myanmar and India in case of Rakhine and Indian-held Kashmir respectively employ state apparatuses such as military, bureaucracy and judiciary in pursuit of obliterating and suppressing the oppressed selves. In such contesting times, literary testimonials, hereby, called the ‘literature of witness’, not only provide hope and resilience but also subvert the hegemonic regimes and aligned discourses.

The literature of witness is a body of writing or narratives in which the survivors of brutalities and injustice record their individual experiences to expose the demonic states. The literature of witness, a recent development in literary scholarship, reclaims identity, history and culture of the persecuted and oppressed minorities in Myanmar and India. It includes those narratives that serve as testimony to traumatic historical events such as the Holocaust, slavery, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid settings. Its genealogy can be traced to the Latin word ‘testis’ which means a third party that stands witness to the happenings. In German narratives the word ‘Zeugenschaft’ is also used in the same connotations- being witness. In the literary discourse, the concept is referred to a genre of literature that contains personal experiences of the sufferers; a body of writing in which the personal and political domains get blurred. King (2017) explains that literature of witness is not merely a neutral record of events; it must emotionally engage the reader and motivate change. In his words, it "engages us in the critical issues at hand, perhaps to an extent that we might be subsequently moved to change ourselves and the world we live in in order to remedy them" (King, 2017, para. 4). This kind of literature transforms lives by bearing witness to essentially tragic situations in a bid to demand world attention. It is essential to differentiate this literature from the other adjacent categories. Usually, it is associated with trauma studies. The trauma studies, following conceptualizations of Caruth (1996) and Haerman (1992), is mainly focused on the inner, psychic or the intrinsic side of human personality; whereas the literature of witness is oriented towards change. Furthermore, the act of witnessing, as Felman and Laub opine, is often considered in legal and juridical matters. However, the act of witnessing in the world of literature is not to be taken as formal testimony; rather, it takes the shape of a memoir or life writing.

The Literature of witness, with its power of testimony, weakens the project of silencing. Laura Sasu opines that “totalitarianism, in all its forms, has proven extremely efficient in concealing its secrets and leaving no witnesses behind, to testify|” (2013). This kind of literature, with its “inherent claim to truth” and “the transition from upheaval to creativity” (Sasu, 2013), works as a shield against, to what Orwell has said on another occasion “the systematic erasure of memory in totalitarian societies”. Therefore, the menace of totalitarianism and its remnants could only be encountered through literature and art.

Life writings and the literature of witness complement each other in many ways. Two life narratives from two different territories yet similar complexities are taken as primary texts in the current study. In life writing, the author recounts the happenings in first-person narration. The writing is based on firsthand experiences which are usually politically inflected. The primary texts-First, They Erased Our Name and Rumours of Spring- are life narratives based on individual experiences and testimonies, but these have been studied in the paper, exceeding their explicit orientation, to examine survival under oppressive political structure and reclamation of collective identity. This research, utilizing theoretical postulates of Arendt, Althusser and Foucault, argues that the literature of witness-two life narratives- try to restore the identity and history of the silenced communities, that otherwise the totalitarian state would have obliterated and erased. The writers become the custodian of truth and reclaim humanity and rationality. The ‘literature of witness’ seen through life narratives is not merely a literary or aesthetic response, but it also becomes a veritable arm of political intervention.

The Rohingyas in Myanmar are facing ethnic cleansing, a phenomenon defined by the United Nations Commission of Experts, as "rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons of another ethnic or religious group" (United Nations Security Council, 1994, para. 129). Identity obliteration is another desirable pursuit of the oppressive state which refers to the sanitization of distinctive cultural, religious and historical ethos. Dehumanization is incongruent with other concepts and is aptly defined by Kanwal (2020) that it is an act that robs human beings of their basic humanity by mutilating respect and honor of the subjects, pushing them to the verge of disgust and vulgarization (p. 67).

Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring: A Girlhood in Kashmir* (2021) is a memoir that falls into the genre of testimonial narrative, in which the narrator encapsulates personal experiences, familial complexities and domestic happening viz-a-viz exposing turmoil in Kashmir valley in 1990s. The personal story of a girl growing up in the 1990s of turbulent Indian-held Kashmir, also embeds the socio-political chaos in the valley wrought out by the belligerence of Indian state in those days. Bashir vividly remembers precarious living in the besieged territory, while at the same time reincarnating rich cultural and regional ethos of the Muslim community in Kashmir valley. She exposes the fascist and totalitarian mindset of the Hindutva led Indian polity.

Gowhar Fazili (2021) has reviewed the memoir highlighting Farah Bashir's ability to expose the demonic Indian belligerence through narrating ordinary lives and stories (Fazili, 2021). Her life story is unlike the reportage that lacks emotional vigor and depth, an ability that earns her distinctive place in the echelons of Kashmiri literature in English. Her writing, in the words of Whitlock (2007) is a "soft weapon" that could penetrate cultural and political hegemonic discourse, which otherwise would not have been possible in ordinary reportage or historiography. Nitasha Kaul (2021) has discussed the gendered dimensions of the memoir arguing that the powerful state's use of coercion, surveillance and disciplining mechanisms make the existence of the targeted community vulnerable (p. 138). She argues that the Kashmir valley is figured as a feminized body rendered perpetually vulnerable to marking and violation under military occupation. Kanwal (2020) has analyzed Kashmiri memoirs, including Bashir's, within a framework of trauma and dehumanization frame of reference, arguing that such texts expose "the pulverization of the human" effected by the military occupations (p. 67). However, these above given critical underpinnings rendered by Fazili, Kaul and Kanwal, had studied memoirs in isolation, mainly focused upon trauma and gendered critique. The current study enhances the research arch by employing the comparative mode to examine the working of an oppressive state through a systematic theoretical framework.

Basharat Peer's commentary on the subject is meaningful. He is also a celebrated author and has written *Curfewed Night* in the year 2010. His writing also falls into the category of the 'literature of witnesses'. While commenting on the turbulent times in which Farah Bashir, too, was growing up, he narrates that "in Kashmir, the army had taken away so much from us. They had taken away our capacity to mourn" (p. 112). Both the writers invoke the power of testimonial literature to reclaim the collective Kashmiri identity, ethos and pathos. Bashir's autobiographical "I" is constituted less through individual introspection than through her bond with her dying grandmother and her besieged house. The self or personal story recounted on the page is inseparable from the collective Kashmiri body it stands for. Signifying the importance of testimonial narratives in the besieged territories and the evocation of shared grief, these life narratives sabotage the Indian State's project of identity erasure and dehumanization of Kashmiri selves.

Habiburahman's *First, They Erased Our Name: A Rohingya Speaks* (2018), authored along with Sophie Tololan, is a significant Rohingya life narrative in English language. It chronicles the personal story of the author right from childhood in Myanmar's Rakhine state spent through cyclic persecutions and plight while living at the detention camps. The author has been able to narrate the painful survival in Rakhine after being settled in Australia. The book has garnered significant global attention that highlights the plight of Rohingyas in Myanmar where state sponsored genocide, migration and ethnic cleansing add consistently to the misery of the stateless Rohingya community. Although the book has received global reception but has got little attention of serious critical scholarship so far, a gap this research tries to fill. Only a small body of scholarship is available. Overall, the Rohingya literature is a recent addition to literary scholarship. The precarious living under the totalitarian state had snubbed imaginative renderings that only come from a free mind. It is only through writing praxes that the Rohingyas can document their personal plights. As a matter of fact, many persecution survivors have narrated stories of untold misery and have exposed their plight to the world. Most of the Rohingya writers, after fleeing from conflict zones and settling mainly in Western countries, narrate their experiences tinged with personal grief and loss.

Ibrahim's *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Genocide* (2016) validates Habiburahman's account by arguing that:

The Rohingyas have been subjected to one of the most sustained and systematic campaigns of exclusion in the modern world, a process in which the state has erased their history from school textbooks, denied their existence in official discourse, and reduced them to the status of illegal aliens in their own homeland. (p. 25)

This chilling fact signals the tribulations that the Rohingyas as a minority group must face in Myanmar state. Zarni and Cowley (2014) have investigated the persecution of the Rohingyas from the perspective of genocide studies. They argue that the genocide in Myanmar is a kind of "slow burning genocide" that has been constructed over several decades with the help of various debilitating mechanisms hinged upon unjust legislation, segregating the minority group, forceful eviction from their legitimate native land and systemic mass violence. First, *They Erased Our Name* recounts the shameful destruction of villages in 2016 and 2017 in the Rakhine state. The world could only see the destruction through satellite images, as the Myanmar military denied media access to the conflict zones in Rakhine state. Subverting the oppression in Rakhine, Habiburahman's testimony based on lived experiences exposes the enormity of atrocities and human loss in a poignant way. As reflected in the above scholarship, the critiques of Ibrahim, Zarni and Cowley have approached the Rohingya crises with the prism of genocide studies correlated with violation of human rights. These frameworks establish the historical and legal side of Rohingya question,

stopping short of a rigorous literary analysis of life narratives. The current study presents sustained literary analysis showing how these testimonial narratives record precarious survival and perform subversion at the face of oppressing state.

Kashmiri literature, on the other hand, has mainly been discussed with the postcolonial perspectives, focusing on identity formation and the recolonization of the Kashmiri subject under India's rising Hindu nationalist ideology. At the level of oral tradition. Kashmiri folk tales have been discussed in the sense that folk tales travelling from generation to generation are the markers of the Kashmiri idiom, idyllic life, and are emblems of Kashmir's culture and civilization. Zutshi (2004) gives importance to storytelling as, he opines, it is one medium to reclaim the lost identity and revive the rich culture. Zutshi further elaborates that "Kashmir's literary and oral traditions formed the sinews of a distinctive regional identity that proved remarkably resilient in the face of successive waves of external political domination" (p. 12). Zutshi's account of oral tradition is valuable for tracing the revival of Kashmiri identity. It is focused upon folklore and pre-existing cultural archives. It does not discuss the contemporary relevance of the life narratives in highlighting the precarious survival and the reclamation of collective Kashmiri identity, a gap that the current study takes up directly.

The foregoing review reveals three interconnected gaps in the existing scholarship. First, Rohingya and Kashmiri life narratives have not been analyzed with the comparative mode that this study has relied upon. Second, the literature of witness as a genre has not been aligned with the theorizations of Arendt, Althusser, and Foucault in an integrated way. Third, existing studies have focused on journalistic, historical, and political approaches, leaving survival, subversion and identity-reclaiming functions of these narratives underexplored. As an aberration, the current study is premised upon sustained literary and critical analysis, reading both texts as literature of witness through a combined and integrated theoretical framework. Moreover, the comparative study of Rohingya and Kashmiri life narratives authenticates commonalities of totalitarianism. Within South Asian literary studies, the comparative method is essential. Kashmiri narratives have traditionally been discussed through postcolonial perspectives merely focusing on India and Pakistan. The diasporic Rohingya writings have rarely been included in the South Asian canon. Bringing the two into a comparative frame extends the geographic and communal boundaries of what counts as South Asian literature of witness. The Rohingya literature itself has been given little scholarly attention. This research would open new avenues in research on the literature produced by "the world's most persecuted community". As a contribution to scholarship in South Asian literature, this research would help Rohingyas in gaining world attention to their miserable plight. This study suggests that the life narratives do not only recount the sufferings of Rohingyas and Kashmiris or expose the totalitarianism but also highlight the way such aesthetically written personal narrations subvert the hegemonic and dominant discursivity. Such endeavors provide counter-ideological contestations. These two life narratives recount the survival within oppressive spaces reclaiming their distinctive identity and culture. As Ibrahim (2016) has stated that Myanmar state intentionally tried to erase the history and identity of Rohingyas as to deny them ownership and rights (p. 25). As subversive praxis, these life narratives help in getting recognition of the political and individual rights of both disenfranchised communities deserving justice, honorable living, safety, security, legal protection and territorial rights.

3. Theoretical Framework

The ongoing research exposes the oppressive tools of authoritarian states in suppressing and persecuting the Muslim subjects in Myanmar and India with the theoretical arch provided by Arendt, Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault. Hannah Arendt, a German American theorist, has delineated upon the genesis of totalitarianism in the 20th century. Arendt (1951) opines in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) that the powerful totalitarian state spreads terror and initiate propaganda in a bid to silence, and rob people of their rationality, sanity and other human values (p. 438). It curtails the thinking power of the subjects as to implement absolutism. Though this book was published in post-totalitarian period, its premise and argument are quite relevant to and reflective of modern times. Arendt (1951) delineates that the totalitarian doctrine mirrors "a novel form of government" that aims at transforming human nature through spreading terror and propaganda (p. 461). She elaborates further by warning that "the totalitarian attempt at global conquest and total domination has been the destructive way out of all impasses. Its victory may coincide with the destruction of humanity; wherever it has ruled, it has begun to destroy the essence of man" (p. 460). A totalitarian state causes statelessness with the purpose to deprive the populace of legal protection. She is of the view that "the stateless person, without the right to have rights, is exposed to the absolute sovereignty of other men" (p. 296). In a nutshell, in words of Arendt, totalitarianism is a mechanism that uses both physical power and ideological persuasion to control external behavior as well as the intrinsic self (p. 461). Arendt's views reflect the terrible state of Rohingyas in Myanmar where they are forcefully reterritorialized and banished from their native state, Rakhine. They are even denied Myanmar citizenship depriving them of human rights, security, peace and even living. Thousands of Rohingyas have faced extrajudicial persecutions at the hands of the Myanmar military. The situation in Kashmir is quite similar. Politically, they are deprived of their special status via abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution and the imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring* (2021) exposes Indian state's belligerence that gets reflected through dawn to dusk curfews, extrajudicial and custodial killings, house trespassing, communication blackouts, ubiquitous presence of armed forces, unwarranted search operations denying ordinary Kashmiris their basic rights. It is not necessarily the military interventions that denies rights; rather, as Arendt contends, the totalitarian states try to dehumanize the populace

that “destroys the essence” (p. 460), mirrors the precarious survival of Muslim subjects in both Myanmar and Indian states. As a matter of fact, Althusser’s underpinnings regarding state apparatuses, which validate Arendt’s positionality on totalitarianism, are discussed in both the primary texts.

Louis Althusser is of the view that the fascist state employs state apparatuses-bureaucracy and military-in such a way that the complicity and acceptance of power becomes a natural phenomenon. This institutional suppression through the military, judiciary, and bureaucracy is used to suppress, oppress, and dehumanize the oppressed subjects. He is of the view that “violence is mute and intended to disperse, silence, isolate others, disrupting the civic bonds that tie them together in acts and speeches” (Althusser, 1971, p. 149). In the words of Althusser (1971), ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (p. 162), exposing that the totalitarian state does not only obliterate the perception of the marginalized groups but the perception of the majority group as well. The Kashmiri and Rohingya communities become a threat for the majority community, rendering legitimacy in persecuting and disenfranchising the minority groups. In case of India, the dominant Hindutva ideology castigates the Muslim minority in multiple ways. Althusser makes the distinction between the repressive and the ideological state, the one functioning with violence and the other with ideology, aspiring for the establishment of hegemony (p. 145). In Kashmir, the state apparatuses work through media propaganda, changes in curriculum, change in citizenship laws, abrogation of constitution, constant surveillance and policing as to suppress the dissenting voices demanding self-determination and independence. In case of Myanmar, Habiburrahman becomes witness to state apparatuses operating through Tatmadaw. The institutional violence in Myanmar gets reflected through Buddhist institutions, media control, illegal operations, unwarranted arrests, summary trials, formation of discriminatory citizenship laws. Althusser’s (1971) understanding of totalitarianism illuminates the fact that the suppression in both the conflicting territories is institutionalized as to legitimate violence.

Foucault’s theorization extends the debate further, examining the operation of power at the micro level via surveillance, discipline, and biopolitical management of both Rohingya and Kashmiri communities. He is of the view that power does not only operate through physical or visible means. The powerful creates a web of discourse that enables the normalcy of subjection. The powerless accepts the weaker position through consent rather than being compelled through blatant coercive mechanism. Foucault contends that power inherently works through surveillance, normalization and promotion of docility. He declares that “the Panopticon must be understood as a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men” (p. 205). Furthermore, he argues that power “invests, marks, trains, and tortures” the body (p. 25). Foucault’s panoptic conception based on surveillance and discipline is reflected in both the narratives.

Foucault improvises upon his theorization in his book *The History of Sexuality* (1976) and is of the view that modern states do not only use surveillance as controlling mechanisms but also manage biopolitical spheres. Biopolitical management aims at regulating the movement of entire population, regulation of health, reproductive functions and survival (p. 140). Such biopolitical programs are employed by the Myanmar state that deny the basic health facilities to Rohingya community, worsened by displacement, marriage restrictions and curtailment of reproductive rights. The demographic restructuring in the wake of abrogation of special status of Kashmir reflects biopolitical management of Kashmiri subjects. Application of Foucault’s views on the primary texts establishes the fact that the modern oppressive state manages the oppressed communities at the micro level as well. Power turns the suppressed subject into a situation where discipline is achieved on its own (p.138). However, the brutality and power mechanisms of the oppressive state are unable to achieve the normalcy; rather, they form the veritable form of resistance and initiate subversive discursivity in the face of adversity.

There is a need for terminological clarification regarding the interchangeable use of key words such as ‘totalitarian’, ‘fascist’, and ‘hegemonic’ throughout the study. All these terms are used to describe different facets of oppression. The word ‘totalitarian’ invokes Arendt’s usage to reflect all-powerful state’s desire to obliterate the inner self and the plurality at large. The term ‘fascist’ denotes in the paper the naked and coercive use of state apparatuses following Althusser’s theorization. The term ‘hegemonic’ is used in Foucault’s perspective to describe the ideological underpinnings of establishing authority. Another delimitation is necessary to discuss here. Arendt’s concept of totalitarianism was developed in wake of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. The contemporary political systems of Myanmar and India are not directly related to Arendt’s concepts. Both countries, though imperfectly, retain competitive elections, a plural society and judicial institutions, which otherwise would not have been possible in the totalitarian states of the yore. Therefore, this paper uses the word totalitarian in diagnostic way. The paper claims that the totalitarian streaks are manifested in the besieged territories of Indian-held Kashmir and Myanmar’s Rakhine state. Arundhati Roy, a renowned left-wing Indian scholar, has reprimanded Indian polity owing to former’s fascist rule in Kashmir. Both the states’ reception of minority communities in the conflict zones mirror the totalitarian ideology.

In sum, the integrated and theoretically juxtaposed framework is necessary to discuss survival, subversion and reclamation of identity in complementary and coincided theoretical lens. Arendt’s theorization provides the diagnosis of the totalitarian state’s desire to obliterate the identity and to render the marginalized subjects stateless and disenfranchised. Althusser’s institutional level understanding of exploitation of the subjects complements Arendt’s standpoint. State apparatuses such as military,

bureaucracy and legislative bodies are used in the service of establishing hegemony. The hegemonic nature of the oppressive state is delineated by Foucault who is of the view that state power operates through surveillance, discipline, and biopolitical control of ordinary life.

4. Methodology

Arendt's (1951) theorization of totalitarianism, Althusser's (1971) concept of the state apparatus, and Foucault's (1977) postulates of disciplinary power together provide a unified and integrated approach in understanding the life narratives. This study has specifically used the word 'life narratives' to provide authenticity to the testimonies. Although these narratives are personal accounts of surviving under the oppressive systems but their ability to showcase collective loss, grief, survival and reclamation of cultural identities of the communities these writers belong to. In terms of existing scholarship in the field, Rohingya literature is sparsely analyzed, whereas the comparative study of both the Rohingya and Kashmiri narratives have not been carried out to date. Therefore, the review section of the research paper has primarily relied upon newspaper book reviews, interviews of the authors, and other critical works published online. It is interesting to know that critical debates and literary scholarship have not given much attention to this perspective of South Asian studies. This paper claims to contribute, though at minimal level, to the voice of the two important marginalized communities in Asia.

Despite demographic and political differences, Myanmar and Indian state's behavior in the conflict zones are compared to understand the similarity in coercive patterns with one clear distinction: Indian state is occupying Kashmir against the wishes of Muslim Kashmiri subjects whereas Myanmar wants to oust and disenfranchise Rohingyas who consider themselves legal inhabitants of Rakhine state. Without delving much into the nature of communities, the research has focused on the fact that how oppressive state-India and Myanmar in case of this study-mirror totalitarianism. In doing so, the research has done textual analysis of Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring* and Habiburrahman's *First, They Erased Our Name*. The textual analysis is supported by the underlying historical and socio-political realities as we. The textual analysis is complemented by contextual and intertextual analysis, utilizing theoretical references and historical facts to read the primary texts in relation to their sociopolitical realities.

The comparison is orchestrated is based on the structural position of Rohingyas and Kashmiris as Muslim minorities subjected to state violence and oppression, systematically carried out through state apparatuses. The paper also illuminates that both the states are doing opposite to their enshrined principles. The two life narratives selected as primary texts are individual accounts, yet their extended relevance is considered. The analysis has focused on events of legal exclusion, surveillance, curfews, custodial torture, disciplining mechanisms, and unwarranted search operations among others in both the memoirs. It is also seen how collectively these narratives help demonstrate resistance and reclamation of their respective identities. Corresponding episodes from the two texts are read against each other under the same theoretical frame of reference, so that each thematic subsection of the analysis chapter Rohingya and Kashmiri episodes side by side before tracing their convergences and divergences. The paper marks two differences in terms of evidence in the analysis: textual reading relies on direct quotes from the texts as to examine voice, imagery, and testimonial authenticity. Contextual evidence is drawn from real history, UN reports and other secondary authorships as to foreground literary interpretation in larger socio-political paradigm.

The organizational pattern provides structural coherence and unity in the presentation of arguments of this research. Arendt's theorizations are utilized to investigate the dehumanization and obliteration of identity in both the narratives, whereas Althusser's conceptions of state apparatuses are applied to see how institutional mechanisms of oppression work in conflict zones. Foucault's disciplinary and biopolitical theoretical frames complement Arendt's theorization regarding totalitarianism. The testimonial nature of the lived experiences of the writers is taken as discursive practice that not only resists the oppression but also strives to reclaim identity, culture and history of the two suppressed communities under study. This paper is divided into five sections followed by conclusion and references. The analysis section is further divided into subsections to bring more clarity and cogence. The drafting of the paper is done in APA 7th edition.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. State Oppression, Disenfranchisement and the Obliteration of Identity in both Life Narratives

A totalitarian state, in the words of Hannah Arendt, strips its subjects of "right to have rights", finds its true reflection in Myanmar's passing of Citizenship Law, stripping more than a million Rohingyas of their legitimate existence and territory. Habiburrahman poignantly recounts this institutionalized identity erasure program of the Rohingya community by commenting in *First, They Erased Our Name* (2018) that:

With a stroke of the pen, our ethnic group officially disappears. The announcement falls like a thunderbolt on more than a million Rohingya who live in Arakan State, our ancestral land in western Burma. The brainwashing starts. Rumours and alarm spread insidiously from village to village. From now on, the word 'Rohingya' is prohibited. It no longer exists. We no longer exist. (p. 5)

It is not just the physical erasure of Rohingyas from the national scene through naked use of power and violence but, it also works through legal shield. Rohingyas first lost their identity of being Rohingyas and existence before turning into stateless and homeless minority. This obliteration of identity at the hands of oppressive state is, following Althusser's standpoint, ideological in nature, because the state apparatuses in the form of legislative body are used to legally deny the Rohingyas their right to own their ancestral and legitimate land. In the same vein, Indian state has abrogated the Article 370 that allows merger and legally makes assimilation possible, obliterates the distinctive identity and land rights to Kashmiris. Just like the native Rohingyas who are turned into foreigners in their own land, Kashmiris, too, face similar position. Lamenting the obliteration of Rohingyas, Habiburrahman recounts that: "The word 'Rohingya' is forbidden. We only use it among ourselves in the hut. It is our secret identity. Dad insists that we use the term 'Muslim' when we introduce ourselves. If we say that we are Rohingya, we would be signing the family's death warrant, he says. So, we never do" (p. 19). The Myanmar state is bent upon annihilating Rohingya identity considering it as existential threat to majoritarian nationalism. That is why Habiburrahman must have chosen the title of his memoir very carefully. Erasure of name is the desired object of Myanmar, but Habiburrahman would not let it happen through his memoir.

In Farah Bashir's *Rumours of Spring* (2021), the identity obliteration and disenfranchisement of ordinary Muslim Kashmiris have been done through ubiquitous presence of military infrastructure in the streets of Indian-held Kashmir. Again, the state apparatus in the form of Indian troops is used for surveillance that ultimately curbs freedom. In Farah Bashir's memoir, the guests who were coming to mourn the death of the grandmother of the protagonist get late due to 'dawn to dusk' curfews imposed in the streets of Indian-held Kashmir, that consequently causes delay in the funeral ritual. In totalitarian states, subjects are disciplined and controlled as to make them passive and servile, lacking rationality and independent thinking. Farah recounts that the military bunkers are installed everywhere in the city as to hinder the free movement of Kashmiris. This spatial management through military apparatuses is carried through curfews and ubiquitous surveillance. Bashir recounts that "curfew swelled up the air with fear and uncertainty. It controlled everything. It disciplined people inside their own houses, animals on the streets, and had even tamed the loud sneezes of the tobacco-seller who lived two houses from ours" (p. 5). The manning of human body, animals and even neighbour's loud sneezes suggests that curfews and disciplining mechanisms reach beyond the regulation movement into the regulation of the most inner and involuntary registers of human life. These curfews, as Althusser opines, operate through the normalization of a condition in which the oppressed subject gets silenced and disciplined resulting in obliteration of identity (p. 145).

5.2. State Violence and the Blatant Use of State Apparatuses

The military apparatuses in the totalitarian states work both in implicit and explicit ways. The military operations in Myanmar, as Habiburrahman recounts, named as 'Pure Gold', 'Dragon King', 'Purify and Whiten like the Jasmine Flower' and 'Clean and Beautiful Nation' carried out by the Myanmar state, refer to the draconic Orwellian like totalitarian state's gimmicks, are launched to sanitize the spatiality of the Rohingyas' presence. These military operations are actually "manhunts, massacres with poetic, fanciful, warlike names that bestow glory on those who perpetrate them" (Habiburrahman, 2018, p. 84), are symbolic frameworks to exterminate, to borrow a term from Fanon, the 'wretched of the earth' in Myanmar state. The working of oppressive ideology manifested through schemas of state apparatuses, can be gauged from the narration of Habiburrahman's father who had to face illegal custody. The father in the memoir recounts that:

Twenty officers took turns to interrogate and hurt me. A so-called doctor asked me a whole lot of questions about the medicines that I use. Then the chief of police locked me up in a room alone with him. He walked round me, threatened me, hit me, and played with his pistol, saying that he would put a bullet in my head ... I had to sign a paper to say that I exchanged kyats for foreign currency. (p. 96-97)

The father of Habiburrahman is forcefully compelled to accept himself as a criminal by signing the signature himself. This speech of the father reflects how ideology and state apparatuses work together to disenfranchise and dehumanize Rohingyas. Not only the extrajudicial custodies but the harsh treatment met out to the prisoners also speaks volumes about state atrocities.

5.3. Surveillance, Control and Dehumanization

In Farah Bashir's life narrative, the state institutions are employed without giving warnings that puts the subject into a perennial disposition of self-regulation and fear. The aftermaths of these crackdowns and illegal trespassing into homes become part of painful memories. Breakage of communication is another strategy of totalitarian state to silence the already silenced subjects. The controlling of communication channels and interceptions of calls robs Kashmiris of the right of communications. As we see in the text of Farah Bashir's memoir that the dwellers talk through windows and even this so-called facility gets closed during the curfew impositions because an opened window could initiate unwarranted search operation and illegal trespassing into the personal spheres of ordinary Kashmiris.

The dehumanization of Rohingyas is not only initiated through naked use of power, rather, through slur and stereotyping of their existence. The dominant majority in Myanmar uses the derogatory word 'kalar' for Rohingyas as to belittle and

dehumanize them. Habiburrahman documents this form of dehumanization in this way: “They call us kalars, a pejorative term expressing scorn and disgust for dark-skinned ethnic groups. In a different time and place, under different circumstances, ‘kalar’ would have meant wog or nigger. The word is like a slap in the face; it undermines us more with each passing day” (p. 5). These kinds of slurs and shaming techniques are employed to make the Rohingyas think of themselves inferior and abhorring. This dehumanization, ultimately, gives collective legitimacy to the perpetrators of violence to not disenfranchise and but also to depopulate and annihilate the Rohingya community. This textual evidence exposes the totalitarian mindset. Habiburrahman refers to this fact recounting a dialogue of the military personnel when he says that “‘Bring me the Bengali’ ... ‘Shut it, you dirty kalar pig! We have orders to investigate this shop’” (p. 74). The dehumanizing and precarious living of the Rohingyas rightly reflects Arendt’s views that the totalitarian state reduces the subject to “a ghost in the country of their birth” (p. 295). Habiburrahman (2018) validates this claim by documenting that: “Beating a Rohingya is no more reprehensible than thrashing a defenseless animal” (p. 99). The body of the Rohingya is turned into an animal having no legal or moral or even religious protection.

In comparison, the dehumanization in the Kashmiri context can be understood through the protagonist’s desire to remain invisible for the sake of living with peace. Though commenting on a movie, Farah recounts her desire to remain visible. In the memoir, she says that “I, too, desperately wished that I could vanish, escape everyone’s gaze, and not attract any unwanted attention. Not be thrown acid at like Nuzhat, not to be stared at by the troops” (p. 80). This desire to remain invisible is not about self-esteem but about the panopticon enslavement that has rendered the Kashmiris’ selves invisible. Moreover, the unwarranted intervention into the homes refers to the blurring of boundaries between the personal and private spheres. She narrates that “Someone takes over your house without warning or permission, ransacks your bedroom, goes through all your things, turns your house upside-down” (p. 76). The home becomes the site of invasion rather than the personal refuge. In both life narratives, dehumanization of both the community in their respective lands is orchestrated intentionally, which aims at two ends: first, the oppressed community would lose the power to pose resistance, and secondly, it provides collective legitimacy to majoritarian ethno-nationalist state to reterritorialize and depopulate the minority groups. How this demonic state project is encountered and resisted through these narratives is the subject of succeeding section.

5.4. Cultural Reclamation and Subversion in both the Life Narratives

After discussing the nature of the totalitarianism staged by both the states-Myanmar and India that aims to obliterate the identity, disenfranchise the minority groups, denial of human rights, forceful eviction from the land and ethnic cleansing, let us delve deeper to analyze that how Rohingyas and Kashmiris reclaim their identity, subvert the dominant discourse and survive in the terribly oppressive conditions. Habiburrahman and Farah Bashir complement each other in presenting the oral tradition and portrayal of rich ‘suppressed’ culture and history in their narratives. According to Hannah Arendt, writers reconstitute and reclaim their past and identity through the act of writing. These two writers have brought the plight of Rohingyas in Rakhine state and Muslim Kashmiri subjects into global limelight. They have made the story of their respective communities a part of the world’s memory. The writer becomes the custodian of memory and history much like Habiburrahman’s mother charges him, saying: Your memory is all you will have to keep our history alive, Habib. So, listen to me carefully, because your grandmother won’t be here forever” (p. 10–11). Similarly, the grandmother also warns about the sanitization of history at the hands of Myanmar’s majority. She too gives responsibility to Habiburrahman to preserve the memory as to counter totalitarianism through the act of writing. Writers are the bastions of keeping memories alive in the regimes bent upon erasing them. There are many instances in the text where the characters revisit places, events, peaceful coexistence of yore, the massacres and Rohingyas’ displacement. Habiburrahman’s (2018) reflects on the preservation of memory that “the Rohingya do not have a written history. Our story could be told through the number of deaths, or the number of refugees, if only someone were counting ... They want to eliminate everything that defines our identity” (p. 108). The oral tradition in the Rohingya culture where stories are transported from generation to generation is itself an act of preserving the history and culture, contrary to the totalitarian doctrines that aim to sabotage them.

Farah Bashir, too, preserves the distinctive identity, memory, history and culture of Kashmiris under the yoke of the totalitarian and oppressive Indian state in the besieged zone of Indian-held Kashmir. She recounts the beautiful Kashmiri oral tradition, richness of local songs, the aroma of foods, rituals and family gatherings as to celebrate history and culture. The music at weddings, she laments, has vanished owing to the protracted curfews, killings in families and terrifying world outside. She remembers the traditional song sung at weddings called ‘wanwun’, and by quoting its lyrics in Kashmiri language, she preserves the rich culture of Kashmir. By doing this, she subverts the oppressive state’s desire to erase history and culture as to homogenize Kashmiri selves within the larger Indian polity. The selection of the title of the memoir is itself very symbolic as well as subversive. Bashir discusses that “to expect change in the season in a month’s time felt less like a reality but more like rumours of spring” (p. 20). Time and again, she refers to the chinar trees, saffron fields, river light and beautiful objects of nature in Kashmir valley, is emblematic of reclaiming history, culture and identity of Kashmir. She reasserts that the beauty and solace of Kashmir that got disturbed by the Indian military’s intervention in 1947, and then to the horrifying 1990s till contemporary times in the twenty first century. In another episode, it is recounted that the father of Farah Bashir had saved

the local music system. The perseverance of music as a cultural artifact becomes, even, an anathema for the Indian troops. The father's act of listening to Kashmiri Sufi kalam and Urdu ghazals is another example of identity reclamation in the horrifying times and it also posits subversion in its own kind. The survival of the music system despite repeated crackdowns and search operation is symbolic of preservation of the cultural life of Kashmiris as a whole. The father did not let go of the richness of culture at the hands of preying Indian forces.

The literature of witness itself-both the life narrative investigated in this research-is also precursors of resistance and subversion. The act of writing and documenting the atrocities of their respective totalitarian states is an emblematic of dissenting voice. Both the life narratives constitute the counter argument and try to subvert the hegemonic discourse. These writings restore agency to those whom the state has silenced. They provide the testimony of their trials and tribulations that would have otherwise never attained world attention. Since these two books belong to the genre of life writing, these personal accounts provide authentic narrations tinged with pathos. The act of documenting the testimonial narratives is not a personal desire but it is also a public duty and responsibility "The one voice of Myanmar had not spoken for us, and so now we would have to speak for ourselves" (p. 265). Habiburrahman reincarnates the Rohingyas' collective identity, exposes state brutalities and helps transform stories of the dead to the living. As mentioned earlier, scholarships on Rohingya literature are scarce. He comments on the absence of history in the way that: "Who will tell the story of these massacres? The Rohingya do not have a written history. Our story could be told through the number of deaths, or the number of refugees, if only someone were counting ... We strive to keep the memory of these massacres alive" (pp. 107-108). First, They Erased Our Name becomes the custodian of historical record. The book is not only a commentary on the socio-political and cultural realities of the Rohingyas but is also a great supplement to understanding real history. Because literary work has the prerogative to intervene into territories of mind and soul where an historian or philosopher would not dare to go. In that way, writers like Habiburrahman and Farah Bashir are doing great service to the people of their respective communities.

Monopoly of representation under oppressive control belongs to the powerful. Farah Bashir contests this monopoly of representation regarding the valley of Kashmir. The Kashmir dispute is subject to multiple interpretations and labeling based on the mere reportage of the happenings. The reality is most often distorted and malformed in the mainstream ethnonationalist discourses in India except for some of the profound critics like Arundhati Roy. Farah Bashir's memoir presents the perspective of a person who has witnessed and experienced all happenings directly. About the false representation of Kashmiri struggle as an instance of terrorism, she narrates that "territorial dispute sold as the rock-bed of terrorism" (2021, p. 227). Even her father in the memoir comments about the tarnishing of the Kashmiri aspirations. Bashir recounts his father saying to her that "Sometimes, he commented on the stark difference of what was really happening in Kashmir and how differently it was being presented to the world outside" (p. 227). The ideologically driven state apparatuses generate distorted narrative regarding Kashmir and the testimonies of writers like Farah Bashir vividly debunk, what Edward Said commented in a different context, self-fulfilling prophecies and concoctions. In the memoir, the state has curtailed communication channels to isolate the Muslim subjects, but the protagonist breaks this communication barrier by writing letters and then preserving them. The totalitarian states aspire to create a cage where the subjects live like caged birds; whereas, Farah Bashir, to take vocabulary from Maya Angelou, makes the caged birds sing through her writing. Her writings retain the beauty of human camaraderie, rich Kashmiri culture and shared experiences of Kashmiris, that subverts the hegemonic and oppressive designs of Indian polity in the Indian-held Kashmir.

6. Findings and Conclusion

In the rigorous analysis, it has been observed that both the life narratives-Habiburrahman's First, They Erased Our Name (2018) and Farah Bashir's Rumours of Spring (2021)- break the vicious nexus between ideology and totalitarianism. The testimonies and the lived experiences of both the writers in the conflict zones subvert the hegemonic and biased discursive practices fabricated by the nationalist states of Myanmar and India. By exposing the strategies of oppressive states and vividly documenting the terrifyingly miserable living of both communities, these writers assert and reclaim identity, history, rich culture, and the power of resilience in surviving oppressive spaces. The literature of witness transforms the invisible subjects into visible agency. and refuses to surrender to debilitating oppression.

Likewise, the comparative evaluation of Farah Bashir's Rumours of Spring and Habiburrahman's First, They Erased Our Name, has found that both life narratives, significantly, fall into the category of the literature of witness. This genre ensures enhanced efficacy in positing resistance to the hegemonic discourse and totalitarianism, because the authors of these narratives document lived experiences in their narratives. Art and literary aesthetics have always been a good source of commentary on sociopolitical happenings, but life narratives based on testimony and the act of witnessing enrich, even more, robust understanding. It has been found that these narratives not only challenge oppressive discursivity, but their voices accelerate political resistance and political activism as well.

Furthermore, the paper has highlighted points of convergence in the ways totalitarian governments work in ostracizing targeted minority groups. Tracing imprints of the theorizations of Hannah Arendt, Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault, the paper has

declared that both the oppressive states-Myanmar and India-exhibit stratum of totalitarianism: the coercive use of repressive state apparatuses-military, legislation and judiciary, the obliteration of identity via disciplining and surveillance and hegemonic discourse. All these totalitarian tactics are used to, collectively, disenfranchise, displace, dehumanize and depopulate the Rohingyas in Myanmar and Muslim Kashmiris in Indian-held Kashmir.

Along with convergences in Kashmiri and Rohingya narratives under study, these two narratives differ in narrative techniques. Bashir recounts her childhood days in fragmentary and circular ways, mostly relying on sensory images. She presents memories in involuntarily and intrusive way rather than ordered assemblage of events. Bashir showcases her ability to intervene through her fidelity to lived sensations. Habiburhman, on the other hand, recounts/narrates events and memories in a chronological and linear way. In a way, his writing supplements the historical record. The sanitization of history of Rohingyas is demonstrated by his explicit act of naming dates, place names, names of the dead and names of important happenings. Bashir's restrained, understated tone portrays chilling reality of Kashmir through juxtaposition of personal and the political, whereas Habiburrahman's testimonial narrative exposes the scale of Myanmar state's atrocities through accumulation and narrating incident upon incident in an ordered way.

Taken together, this research concludes the argument by suggesting that the oppressive mechanisms employed in both the states are unable to silence the dissenting voices of Rohingyas or Kashmiri in their respective spheres. The act of writing life narratives challenges the demonic and capturing mindset. Farah Bashir and Habiburrahman not only initiate resistance through the act of documenting testimonies but also strive to reclaim their identities, language, celebrate cultural specificities, and revisit past and memory. Their writings debunk the myths about Rohingyas that they are existential threat to the majority Burmese population. Moreover, the literature of witness is not merely documentation of trials and tribulations of the oppressed communities; it is also symbiotic of reassertion and reclamation of identity, humanity, dignity and inevitability of listening to the voiceless. This research work adds constructively to the scholarship on the literature of witness by offering the first comparative study of Rohingya and Kashmiri life narratives, demonstrating that testimonial writing is not only an aesthetic response to oppression but also a form of political intervention and identity reclamation. Through comparative analysis, this paper contributes constructively to the sense that the literature of witness works simultaneously as testimonial narration and as a socio-political intervention: it does not merely recount oppression but aesthetically works to reverse and even challenge it.

In the future prospect, this research paper would open new avenues and fresh standpoints of understanding evaluating the literature originating from Palestine, China's Uyghur community, and other similar minority groups across the globe. Literature of witness is an evolving field and needs rigorous scholarship and research. This study of two testimonial narratives offers multifarious standpoints for further research investigations in literature hailing not only from South Asia but around the world as well.

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