International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences
Vol-11, Issue-6; November-December, 2026

Peer-Reviewed Journal
Journal Home Page Available: https://ijels.com/
Journal DOI: 10.22161/ijels

Media and Narrative in Sahana Vijayakumar's Kasheer: A Critical Analysis of Representational Politics and Historical Memory

Harish H.R.[1], Nagaratna V. Parande[2]

[1]Assistant Professor of English, Government First Grade College, Nesargi, Karnataka, India
[2]Professor, Department of Studies in English, Kittur Rani Chennamma University, Karnataka, India

Received: 02 Oct 2026; Received in revised form: 28 Oct 2026; Accepted: 03 Nov 2026; Available online: 07 Nov 2026
©2026 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Abstract— *This article treats Sahana Vijayakumar's Kasheer: A Diabolical Betrayal of Kashmiri Hindus as a counter-hegemonic narrative intervention in the disputed historiography of Kashmir. Global and national narratives tend to reduce Kashmir to a territorial dispute, a separatist struggle, or a humanitarian crisis. The novel rearticulates this conflict as an epistemological one, grounded in selective storytelling, ideological gatekeeping, and systemic silencing. The study contends that Kasheer is a project of reparative historiography that not only represents events but also seeks to recover suppressed memory and to challenge dominant interpretive frameworks, through close readings of paratextual elements, character construction, debate sequences, and symbolic narrative devices. The novel establishes a binary between institutionalized media narratives, personified in Sundarkrishna and Meeradevi, and the empirical quest for truth, embodied in the protagonist Narendra, reflecting the rise of a "New Indian Intellectual" rooted in the rigor of scholarship and an Indigenous civilizational consciousness (Kshaatra). The text employs intertextual strategies, invoking works such as Sir William Muir's The Life of Mahomet and Dr. Tawfik Hamid's Inside Jihad, deliberately blurring the line between fiction and research methodology. The narrative also relocates historical blame from abstract geopolitical forces to specific decisions, juxtaposing Jawaharlal Nehru's purported ideological idealism with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's perceived pragmatism. Alongside this intellectual critique, the novel foregrounds a trauma aesthetics, employing motifs such as the bell of justice ("Megachh Insaaf"), the "unconceived womb," and images of exile, to recover an experiential memory long buried beneath media and academic silence.*

Keywords— ***media, narrative, contested historiography, geopolitics, hegemony, paratext, epistemic violence***

Introduction

The geopolitical conflict in Kashmir—often reduced in international forums to a dispute over territorial sovereignty between India and Pakistan, or interpreted as an internal insurgency—operates at a much deeper level. It is a confrontation that is not only military and political but epistemic. Kashmir has become a warzone of competing meanings: a site of memory, identity, and historical truth that is repeatedly contested, erased, rewritten, and weaponized. The conflict is fought not only with guns, stones, and military strategy, but with the very vocabulary by which reality is articulated.

In the broader postcolonial history of South Asia, the story of Kashmir has largely been seen through a limited set of ideological lenses: secular nationalism, separatist discourse, human rights advocacy, and geostrategic reasoning. These discourses have shaped global and domestic perceptions of the conflict, but they

have also functioned as interpretive barriers. In the process, they often conceal more than they reveal, casting Kashmir as a civilizational and political matter that is fragmented and partial rather than whole.

It is in this highly contested terrain of narratives that Sahana Vijayakumar's novel, *Kasheer: A Diabolical Betrayal of Kashmiri Hindus*, positions itself. The novel is not merely another entry in the genre of historical fiction; it is a conscious act of resistance and counter-narration within the contemporary Indian media and intellectual ecosystem. Vijayakumar challenges the institutional frameworks that have shaped dominant perceptions of the Kashmiri conflict and reframes the discourse from a perspective historically relegated to the margins.

The text is explicitly positioned against what the author calls a "hegemonic silence"—a silence that has allegedly enabled the systemic erasure of the Kashmiri Hindu (Pandit) exodus from mainstream socio-political consciousness. The novel foregrounds the forced displacement and collective trauma of the Kashmiri Hindu community and directly contests what Vijayakumar characterizes as "entrenched narratives" that have represented the Kashmir question through the lens of "Kashmiriyat" (the rhetoric of syncretic harmony) or as an instance of state-driven suppression of Muslim political aspirations (Vijayakumar vi). *Kasheer* thus functions as a polemical intervention, interrogating both the legitimacy of these frameworks and the reasons for their dominance.

This article offers a critical, in-depth analysis of the nexus of media, narrative construction, and ideological framing in the novel. It argues that *Kasheer* operates as a meta-narrative, challenging not only the events it fictionalizes but also the politics of how those events have been represented, ignored, or distorted. The novel suggests that the erasure of the Kashmiri Hindu experience was not incidental to the chaos of conflict but a manufactured silence, sustained by what the narrator calls a complicit triad of media, academia, and political authority.

Through close textual analysis of the primary narrative—especially its paratextual elements and opening chapters—this study investigates how Vijayakumar establishes a binary opposition between "institutionalized falsehood," represented by media networks, editorial rooms, and televised debates, and "suppressed empirical truth," embodied by survivors, witnesses, and the protagonist. Through its representation of newsroom power dynamics, editorial self-censorship, activist rhetoric, and the internal psychological landscapes of displaced characters, the novel dismantles the normative "secular" analytical paradigm and offers an alternative reading of Kashmir.

The analysis also interrogates the author's use of historical revisionism as a narrative method—especially the juxtaposition of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel—to examine how the text reclaims a repressed historical agency. This framing builds on the notion of "Kshaatra," defined within the novel as a martial and intellectual sovereignty, positioned as a precondition for regaining narrative ownership, cultural legitimacy, and epistemic justice.

The vocabulary of "hegemony" and "silence" that recurs throughout *Kasheer* is not merely rhetorical; it belongs to a wider critical tradition that this article draws upon to sharpen its analysis. Antonio Gramsci's account of hegemony as a form of domination secured through cultural and ideological consent, rather than coercion alone, offers a useful frame for the novel's depiction of a media-academic-political "complicit triad": what the text calls institutionalized falsehood functions, in Gramscian terms, as the manufacture of consent for a particular version of the Kashmir question (Gramsci 12). Correspondingly, Gayatri Spivak's theorization of epistemic violence—the process by which dominant discourses foreclose the very conditions under which a subaltern position can be heard—illuminates the novel's central claim that the Kashmiri Hindu experience was not simply overlooked but structurally rendered unspeakable within existing interpretive frameworks (Spivak 280-84). Reading *Kasheer* alongside these frameworks clarifies that its polemical energy targets the discursive architecture—media, academic, and political—that determines whose testimony counts as history, rather than any single actor within it.

The Architecture of Silence: Paratextual Framing and the Embedded Story

In literary theory, the paratext—the preface, acknowledgments, foreword, and authorial note—operates as a threshold or interpretive frame through which the reader is led into the text. According to Gérard Genette, the paratext functions as a "zone of transition" and an epistemic guide, setting up the reader's expectations before the main narrative even begins (2). In *Kasheer: A Diabolical Betrayal of Kashmiri Hindus*, the paratext is not merely supplementary but a strategic tool of rhetorical orientation. These initial components serve as manifestos of intent, establishing the ideological stance and interpretive momentum on which the rest of the narrative is built. They foreground the book's central claim that the historical representation of Kashmir has been "held captive" by a dominant ideological machinery that needs to be interrogated and dismantled (Vijayakumar 8).

This intellectual confrontation is announced in the Author's Note. The piercing note reads, "It is a travesty that some stories go untold, lost in the cacophony of dominant narratives and complex realities" (Vijayakumar v). The choice of the word "cacophony" is purposeful and rhetorically potent: it names not silence but the weaponization of noise, a media and academic environment thick with competing claims, sensationalism, and ideological overwriting. Here, silence is produced not by absence but by excess—a state in which the Hindu experience in Kashmir is not unheard but out-shouted. By referring to the memory of the displaced community as an "unfortunate story" consigned to "oblivion," Vijayakumar sets up a binary between the inflated lie and the suppressed truth (Vijayakumar v). This dichotomy is the structural backbone of the entire novel.

Dr. S. L. Bhyrappa's foreword intensifies this critique by moving the charge of neglect from oversight into the arena of moral failure. He blames "Indian intellectuals" and "media" for lacking the "honesty to accept the roots of the problem" (Vijayakumar vii). Bhyrappa traces a long tradition of Indian intellectualism that, in his view, "revels either in [its] magnanimity of religious tolerance or beyond the skies Gandhian idealism" (Vijayakumar vii). The phrase is a stinging indictment of the Nehruvian secular paradigm, which, the foreword suggests, has made communal harmony a national moral aspiration even at the cost of suppressing painful or politically inconvenient truths. The implication is significant: the silence around the Kashmiri Hindu expulsion is framed here not as a passive void but as an ideological position, constructed and presented as ethical restraint.

Bhyrappa also links this moral silence to political expediency, observing that the "lifeline of democracy" has turned into "vote bank politics" (Vijayakumar vii), implying that the exclusion of the Pandit narrative was driven by electoral calculation rather than intellectual honesty. History, in this reading, becomes a commodity bargained between statecraft and public perception. The image of "Indian tourists" visiting Srinagar to declare that "all is peaceful" (Vijayakumar viii) operates as a metaphor for collective denial: these tourists become unwitting participants in a curated spectacle, consumers of a sanitized reality, while the real "grave dangers" remain hidden in the "nooks and crannies" of the valley (Vijayakumar viii). The paratext, therefore, positions the novel not as fiction but as a kind of counter-intelligence—an attempt to uncover and overturn a deliberate epistemic concealment.

This construction is reinforced by external commentary on the book. A widely syndicated press notice marking the novel's English release described it as interrogating the dominant "reporting on Kashmir" that has purportedly "whitewashed the human tragedy of Kashmiri Hindus" (IANS). The word "whitewashing" implies a conscious, concerted effort at erasure: that journalists, historians, and political commentators did not merely overlook the suffering of the Pandits but actively rewrote the story to preserve the illusion of "Kashmiriyat" or to safeguard the secular self-image of the Indian state. In this framing, the erasure becomes a political act masquerading as neutrality.

The translator's preface reiterates and amplifies this criticism, stating that history has been "held captive by entrenched narratives" (Vijayakumar vi). This captivity, the preface suggests, is not only conceptual but epistemological—the locking away of lived experience from archival legitimacy. The novel, in this sense, understands itself as an act of narrative liberation.

In such a context, figures like Narendra, the protagonist-researcher, function as more than fictional voices; they become ideological surrogates for the reader, marking the passage from passive consumer of hegemonic narrative to critical interrogator of suppressed memory. The titular phrase "a diabolical betrayal" thus carries a double meaning: the betrayal of neighbors during the exodus, and the betrayal by media, academia, and the political establishment that, in the novel's account, narrated the tragedy out of existence.

The Media Establishment: Constructing and Unmaking the Secular Archetype

The critique of media institutions in *Kasheer* is expressed through the deliberate construction of character types that represent the ideological and operational processes of what the novel calls the contemporary Indian "establishment." Figures such as Sundarkrishna, the editor of *Janavani*, and Meeradevi, a self-declared "progressive liberal activist," are not merely individualized characters but embodiments of what the novel terms the media-intellectual complex. Their behavior, linguistic choices, and self-justifying internal rationalizations offer a sociological anatomy of elite discourse in India—a discourse that positions itself as moral, progressive, and "secular" but which, according to the novel's logic, systematically suppresses inconvenient truths.

Sundarkrishna's character is the focus of this representational strategy. He is constructed not as a journalist devoted to objective truth-seeking but as a political strategist devoted to maintaining ideological dominance. His editorial strategy exemplifies how the so-

called "dominant narrative" is carefully curated rather than organically occurring, a point the novel foregrounds through several key scenes, most notably the televised debate in chapter four on the "ban on azaan." In this exchange, Sundarkrishna relies on rhetorical vocabulary rather than empirical reasoning: "This is a secular country of ours," he insists. "All the religions' customs and practices should be respected… Can we not respect the sentiments of the minority community?" (Vijayakumar 58).

When Narendra introduces historical data, the debate shifts register. He challenges the religious rationale for loudspeakers by tracing the history of the azaan to 622-23 AD, referencing the Prophet Muhammad, the household in Medina, and the follower Bilal (Vijayakumar 59), citing specific scholarship such as Margoliouth's *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*.

This exchange points to a central theme of the novel: the clash between dogma (Sundarkrishna's invocation of "secularism") and data (Narendra's historical references). The media establishment, in the novel's portrayal, is allergic to specifics: Sundarkrishna and Meeradevi speak in generalities—"intolerance," "rights," "harmony"—while Narendra speaks in footnotes. The novel suggests that the "secular" narrative survives only through its vagueness; as specific historical facts—such as the temporary abrogation of Article 370 under Part 21 of the Constitution—emerge, the narrative begins to fall apart, and the activists are compelled to retreat, literally so in Meeradevi's case.

Here, terms such as "secular," "sensitivities," and "tolerance" are revealed to function as ideological weapons—linguistic armor rather than neutral descriptors. Sundarkrishna's language does not pursue balanced argument but instead operates as a defensive shield against competing perspectives. This becomes even more apparent when the debate turns to government "rehabilitation" programs for displaced Kashmiri Hindus: Sundarkrishna insists that the state should "behave responsibly" and avoid encroaching upon "minority interests," even if doing so curtails the rights of the displaced Hindu population (Vijayakumar 61). The implicit logic is instructive: the possibility of "stone-pelting" becomes a form of negotiated intimidation, a variable already built into editorial policy and public discourse.

This representation is consistent with the ideological critique presented in the novel's foreword. For Bhyrappa, the media establishment operates within a "framework of appeasement," in which social harmony is maintained not through justice or truth but through selective silence and moral posturing. Sundarkrishna, in this light, exemplifies a paradigm in which avoiding unrest takes priority over establishing factual accuracy.

This critique deepens in chapter six, which exposes the intellectual architecture of Sundarkrishna's worldview. His inner reflections reveal a lineage of ideological affinities traceable to Nehruvian political philosophy and the influence of communist thought on Indian academia. He recalls Nehru's substitution of "Vande Mataram" with "Jai Hind" as an early instance of successful cultural re-engineering (Vijayakumar 79) and, in commenting on "the history of communists participating in almost all the [national] movements"—including the 1919 Soviet arms episode and support for the Nizam of Hyderabad (Vijayakumar 80)—glorifies ideological subversion as historical inevitability.

Sundarkrishna admires education systems he describes as factories for ideological alignment. A "reputed university," implicitly modeled on Jawaharlal Nehru University, is portrayed as having been deliberately built to "bolster secularism" and to produce an "army of professors" committed to this outlook (Vijayakumar 81). In his soliloquy, he acknowledges frankly that history is being revised—including the concealment of medieval Hindu-Muslim conflicts and the deliberate fabrication of exaggerated accounts of Hindu sectarian violence (Vijayakumar 81).

This admission marks the ideological turning point of the novel. The media editor is not portrayed as simply mistaken or ignorant but as consciously complicit. He states plainly that the "socialist experiment… succeeded under the guise of secularism" (Vijayakumar 80) and that his present task is to provide "ventilator support to dying communist doctrines" (Vijayakumar 63). The metaphor is telling: the ideology, in the novel's account, is dead in substance but kept alive artificially, sustained by the oxygen of media patronage.

Meeradevi and the Commercialization of Activism

If Sundarkrishna represents structural power and ideological manufacture, Meeradevi is the aesthetic and consumable layer of the same system—the performative activist whose outrage is curated for visibility and influence. Where Sundarkrishna operates with calculated cynicism, Meeradevi works through emotional theatrics.

In the televised debate, her intellectual fragility becomes evident. Confronted with Narendra's constitutional references, especially to Part 21 and Article 370, she abandons argumentation altogether and resorts to affective manipulation, replying indignantly, "Have you been there, have you seen the atrocities our soldiers have committed… Have you seen the pain and suffering of the innocents there?" (Vijayakumar 62). Her walkout,

punctuated by the "clatter of her high heels," turns dissent into spectacle. The narrative renders her a symbol of a class willing to extend empathy toward the "Other" (Muslims) while showing little interest in the displaced "Self" (Hindus).

Chapter six further exposes Meeradevi's motives. Her decision to write a book on Kashmir stems not from moral conviction but from the need for a "sensational subject" to elevate her intellectual standing (Vijayakumar 88). She admits that she does not "have a handle on the subject" but decides to write the book anyway, simply to "show" Narendra (Vijayakumar 89). Her reliance on a ghostwriter, Ramnath, and her collusion with a minister to guarantee the book's success reveal the machinery behind a manufactured intellectual legitimacy that the novel sets out to criticize.

Kasheer thus constructs a pointed critique of the secular media archetype through Sundarkrishna and Meeradevi. The two characters function as symbolic nodes through which the novel traces the production, circulation, and defense of the "dominant narratives" announced in its paratext. The media establishment, in this reading, is not simply wrong but ideologically motivated: a system of narrative control, political appeasement, and commodified suffering.

Here, the erasure of the Kashmiri Hindu experience is presented not as mere absence but as a deliberate architecture of silence.

Counter-Narrative Strategies

In *Kasheer*, the protagonist Narendra functions not only as a narrative agent but also as a methodological proposition for reclaiming suppressed histories and epistemologies. His characterization exemplifies what the text calls the "New Indian Intellectual"—a figure who combines the analytical rigor of Western scholarship with the ethical, cultural, and civilizational grounding of Indigenous consciousness (Kshaatra). Where Sundarkrishna and Meeradevi rely on emotional manipulation, selective memory, and ideological posturing, Narendra's epistemic posture is evidentiary, textually grounded, and historically aware; he functions as the counterpoint to the intellectual archetypes criticized earlier in the text.

Central to Narendra's counter-narrative strategy is his refusal to resort to emotional rhetoric. His method is forensically grounded in citation, documentation, and logical articulation. His references during debates to Sir William Muir's *The Life of Mahomet* and Dr. Tawfik Hamid's *Inside Jihad* (Vijayakumar 94) reflect a deliberate blurring between fiction and non-fictional research practice. In Vijayakumar's work, the line between scholarly citation and narrative performance collapses, as genuine bibliographic material is folded into fictional dialogue. This strategy renders the text both a novel and a pedagogical tool—a kind of syllabus instructing the reader to interrogate the "dominant narrative" with primary sources rather than inherited assumption.

This evidentiary strategy is exemplified in Narendra's exchange with a columnist on the subject of the burqa. Rather than speaking in generalities, he cites a specific Qur'anic reference, Surah 33, Ayah 59, to argue that the burqa functioned historically not as a symbol of universal modesty or piety but as a marker distinguishing "free women" from "slaves" (Vijayakumar 94). This precise reference exposes what the novel frames as the shallowness of those who defend such practices without understanding their origins—characters like Meeradevi, whose advocacy is performative rather than informed. The novel thereby positions knowledge-precision as a counterweight to the affective posturing that dominates televised and intellectual discourse.

A major dimension of the counter-discourse developed in *Kasheer* is its rewriting of post-Independence leadership memory, particularly around the figures of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The novel treats this engagement as critical to understanding the Kashmir crisis, arguing that historical misrepresentation lies at the root of present political confusion.

Nehru is depicted as the architect of strategic blunders arising from "arrogance induced folly" and the influence of international approval and communist sympathies, which the text claims ultimately "created the Kashmir problem" (Vijayakumar vii, 70). Patel, by contrast, is presented as the counterfactual solution—"the realist" who, the text claims, could have resolved Kashmir "like Hyderabad" had he not been politically constrained by both Gandhi and Nehru (Vijayakumar 71). This claim draws on references to Mountbatten's correspondence and the political decision to assign the Kashmir portfolio to Gopalaswamy Iyengar (Vijayakumar 69-70).

The binary between Nehru as the author of confusion and Patel as an unfulfilled resolution is central to the novel's ideological project. The "whitewashing," in the novel's account, that persists in media and academic institutions celebrating Nehru is part of the same phenomenon that forecloses a reckoning with Kashmir. Conversely, the reclamation of Patel is envisioned as a symbolic restoration of "Kshaatra," the martial-intellectual spirit the novel presents as necessary for defending national sovereignty and cultural memory.

The novel also registers the changing dynamics of narrative power in the digital era. For Narendra's associate

Vishran, social media becomes a key battleground in the contest against hegemonic messaging: digital platforms, he argues, are essential for "exposing fake news and separating the grain of truth from the chaff of falsehoods" (Vijayakumar 52), allowing younger users to challenge legacy power structures without institutional gatekeeping, trapping "incoherent journalists" and "intellectuals" in the "witchery of their own words" (Vijayakumar 52). This is presented as a microcosm of a larger socio-political shift in India: the rise of Indic and right-aligned counter-narratives on platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, unmediated by institutions like newspapers, universities, and television networks.

The novel's arguments set in Bangalore form its intellectual architecture, while the narrative's move to Kashmir supplies the emotional validation of those arguments. There, the text turns to affective and symbolic imagery to deconstruct sanitized media constructions of "normalcy."

The Bell of Justice ("Megachh Insaaf")

One of the novel's most resonant symbols is the bell kept outside Bashir Ahmed's house by Kailash Masterji (Kailash Pandit). Each morning, in counterpoint to the azaan, Kailash rings the bell and calls out, "Megachh Insaaf" ("I want justice") (Vijayakumar 25). This ritual functions as a sonic counter-occupation of public space: in a soundscape where mosque loudspeakers have historically been used to mobilize crowds, the bell becomes the persistent echo of unprocessed injustice. Bashir Ahmed's response—fear, guilt, and retreat—demonstrates that while institutions may reject truth, memory retains an acoustic endurance.

"The Unconceived Womb"

A press notice on the novel's English release describes "Aarti Kaul's unconceived womb" as a powerful metaphor for genocidal consequence (IANS). It signals not only the loss of individuals but of lineage, futurity, and civilizational continuity, expanding the tragedy from displacement to demographic erasure and suggesting that the silence surrounding this loss constitutes the final indictment of media and state. Similarly, Sanjeev Kaul's description of the elders as "walking dead, the zombies" who have "completely lost their memory" (Vijayakumar 34) disrupts the dominant media discourse of "resilience." The novel does not represent exile as a state of resilience but as a form of existential suspension—a life without a homeland figured as a kind of death.

***Kasheer* in the Literary Arena**

To understand the novel's intervention, it is necessary to locate it within the existing Kashmiri literary discourse. Scholar Ananya Jahanara Kabir describes Kashmir as a "Territory of Desire," an object of aesthetic fantasy for the Indian imagination. *Kasheer* deconstructs this gaze: Narendra's is not a touristic journey—he explicitly rejects "Gulmarg" and "Pahalgam"—but an investigative one, undertaken in search of "ruined homes" and "back roads" (Vijayakumar 66). In the opening declaration, Kashmir itself states, "Kashmir is not the lush green cradle… Kashmir is my smoldering body" (Vijayakumar 78), a formulation that departs sharply from the Bollywood-tourism template of "paradise on earth."

Where memoirs such as Rahul Pandita's *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* narrate the Pandit exodus largely through personal reminiscence, *Kasheer* stages this history as public argument, embedding memoir-like testimony within polemical debate and media critique (Pandita 45-48). Ultimately, while works such as Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* and Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator* foreground the suffering of Kashmiri Muslims caught between the state and militants, *Kasheer* subverts this framework, reconfiguring the central trauma as the "diabolical betrayal" of Muslim neighbors and thereby contesting what it frames as a monopoly held by the "oppressed Kashmiri Muslim" narrative (Vijayakumar 88-90).

CONCLUSION

Kasheer, by Sahana Vijayakumar, can be read as an ambitious work of reparative historiography, a literary intervention that seeks not merely to tell stories but to actively recalibrate the moral and historical lens through which Kashmir is viewed. *Kasheer* is not a conventional historical novel; it performs a double task, restoring a silenced history to the public domain while confronting the ideological machinery that the novel claims enabled that silence.

The novel is explicit that it is not simply attempting to "tell a story" but to "correct the record." This distinction is at the heart of its narrative project. The text contends that the Kashmir crisis is not only geopolitical but epistemological, as evidenced in its characterization of the media establishment through Sundarkrishna, its satire of the liberal intelligentsia through Meeradevi, and its elevation of Narendra as a model of disciplined inquiry and "empirical truth-seeking." The violence against the Kashmiri Hindu community was material, the novel suggests, but the violence of ongoing denial, distortion, and minimization constitutes an additional, continuing violence enacted through narrative control.

In this context, the novel presents the current "media narrative" on Kashmir as anything but incidental.

It is figured as a construct—a conceptual "Matrix" of "secular platitudes" and communist distortion designed to keep the Indian public in intellectual passivity or ideological "slumber." The metaphor is telling: the problem, in the novel's framing, is not the absence of information but the presence of curated misinformation.

Kasheer's project of reclaiming what it perceives as a ruptured link in India's civilizational continuity draws together historical, mythological, and contemporary registers, invoking figures such as Shankara and Kashyapa alongside the political present. The trauma of Kashmiri Hindu displacement, the text suggests, is civilizational as much as political—a rupture in cultural memory and identity.

The novel concludes that justice, or "Insaaf," for Kashmiri Hindus cannot be achieved through bureaucratic gestures such as government "rehabilitation" packages; material restitution, in this account, does not mend the deeper wound. What is required, the narrative argues, is a Narrative Rehabilitation—the re-inscription of the displaced community's experience into the heart of India's historical and cultural discourse—a form of repair that can occur only once this suppressed truth is accepted within the public sphere.

This conclusion is reinforced by the symbolic oppositions that echo throughout the text: there can be no justice, the novel suggests, until the "cacophony" of institutional falsehood has been dismantled and the "bell" of truth rung loud and long. As at the opening of the narrative, Kashmir remains, in this rendering, not the romanticized "lush green cradle" of tourist imagination but a "smouldering body" whose wounds remain untreated.

In this sense, *Kasheer* functions not only as a retrospective narrative of loss but as a strategic intervention into the ongoing narrative contest over Kashmir. In reconstituting the intellectual terrain of the present, the novel seeks to recover agency over the contested future of Kashmiri identity, memory, and justice.

REFERENCES

[1] Genette, Gérard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin, Cambridge UP, 1997.

[2] Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, International Publishers, 1971.

[3] Hamid, Tawfik. *Inside Jihad: How Radical Islam Works, Why It Should Terrify Us, How to Defeat It*. Updated ed., Mountain Lake Press, 2015.

[4] IANS. "'Kasheer' in English Voices 'Diabolical Betrayal' of Kashmiri Hindus." *South Asia Monitor*, 9 Jan. 2021, www.southasiamonitor.org/books/kasheer-english-voices-diabolical-betrayal-kashmiri-hindus.

[5] Kabir, Ananya Jahanara. *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir*. U of Minnesota P, 2009.

[6] Margoliouth, D. S. *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905.

[7] Muir, William. *The Life of Mahomet: From Original Sources*. New ed., Smith, Elder, 1894.

[8] Pandita, Rahul. *Our Moon Has Blood Clots: The Exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits*. Random House India, 2013.

[9] Peer, Basharat. *Curfewed Night: A Frontline Memoir of Life, Love and War in Kashmir*. Random House India, 2010.

[10] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, U of Illinois P, 1988, pp. 271-313.

[11] Vijayakumar, Sahana. *Kasheer: A Diabolical Betrayal of Kashmiri Hindus*. Translated by Hemanth Shanthigrama, Garuda Prakashan, 2020.

[12] Waheed, Mirza. *The Collaborator*. Penguin Books, 2011.