Chapter V

Irish and Kashmiri Ethnicity: A Comparative Study through Short Stories

In the preceding chapters, it was found that Ireland and Kashmir offer a rich collection of such short stories which amply reflects their ethnic mores and their mythical lore, foregrounding their unique sense of ethnic and cultural personality. Such short stories were studied from the perspective of ethnic literature which has assumed immense significance in the backdrop of the recent conflicts and other local and global factors, and the subsequent sharpening of the ethnic identities. In this chapter an attempt will be made to identify the commonalities between the two traditions through their short stories.

There are many cultural and literary landmarks which make a comparative study between Ireland and Kashmir convincingly tenable. A study of Irish and Kashmiri literary traditions is a study both in comparison and contrast. They have many common dimensions and share certain fundamental similarities while retaining their distinct identities. Some of the major questions common to Ireland and Kashmir are the questions like those of locale, colonial and postcolonial contestations, history and the
construction of ethnic identity and the construction of national narratives through the growth of their respective literary and cultural traditions.

Fundamentally, there are three broad points of convergence which justify the comparative study between the two. They are, in the words of Corkery, “land, religion and language” (1985: 157), in addition to some other issues which are being discussed below.

**Land**

Land has always remained a site of much attachment and commitment in all cultures. All the more so in those cultures which have had any sense of estrangement from the dominant cultures for reasons, geographical, cultural, political or otherwise. In both Ireland and Kashmir, land is a locale of much importance. The short stories in these two traditions treat the theme of land in almost same intense terms. In fact, land shapes the ethnic outlook of these two cultures and defines their ethnic and the linguistic identity.

Irish problem aggravated because of the dislocations of the Irish from their land and their political disempowerment through British interventions. Scots and Welsh were not, like the Irish, deprived of their land or culture by the Britishers. Thus, they
lacked the kind of conviction which is very much palpable in Irish writers. There is almost a similar attachment to the Irish land among all the Irish short story writers. Many stories by the prominent writers exhibit the ideological passion towards their land. Especially, the modern short story writers in Ireland, in view of urbanisation, looked for inspiration to the western regions of the country which were less affected by colonial interventions and the modern day industrialisation.

Yeasts also found expression in the celebration of the landscape, particularly of Sligo and the west of Ireland. His early writing is deeply informed by the spirit of locality. He genuinely loved the west of Ireland for its physical beauty as well as for its associations with folk-lore, legend and myth. “He saw in the celebration of place a useful corrective to the abstractness of ‘conscious patriotism’” (Watson 1979: 99). Looking in retrospect on his youthful attempts to draw Ireland in his art, he drew a distinction between the poetry of Ballyshannon, William Allingham, and Thomas Davis:

Allingham and Davis are two different kinds of love of Ireland.

In Allingham I find the entire emotion for the place one grew up in which I felt as a child and which I sometimes hear of from people of my own class. Davis was possessed on the other
hand with ideas of Ireland, with conscious patriotism. His Ireland was artificial, and idea built up in a couple of generations by a few commonplace men. This artificial idea has done me as much harm as the other has helped me.

(cited in Watson, 99)

Frank O’Connor’s story, ‘Uprooted’, is about the return of two brothers to their childhood home in the west. There they come to realize the huge cultural loss they have suffered by having migrated to urban spaces like Dublin and Wicklow region on the east coast. Familiar language, simple and beautiful peasant girls, vast and open expanse of sky, land and ocean generates a heightened awareness of how rich their land is and how deprived they have become by abandoning their heritage. Here is a passage from the story:

Then with his hands in his trouser pockets and his head bowed he went out to the kitchen. His mother, the coloured shawl about her head, was blowing the fire. The bedroom door was open and he could see his father in shirtsleeves kneeling beside the bed, his face raised reverently towards a holy picture, his braces hanging down behind. He unbolted the half-door, went through the garden and out onto the road. There was a magical light on everything. A boy on a horse rose suddenly against the sky, a startling picture. Through the apple-green light over
Carrigassa ran long steaks of crimson, so still they might have been enameled. Magic, magic, magic! He saw it as in a children’s picture-book with all its colours intolerably bright; something he had outgrown and could never return to, while the world he aspired to was as remote and intangible as it had seemed even in the despair of youth.

(1981, 98)

Liam O’Flaherty’s ‘Galway Bay’ is, similarly, a hymn to his people of the Aran islands. There is a heroic figure of a tough old man who makes his last journey from the islands to the mainland, where he symbolizes the proud values of their past and the robust civilization of Irish antiquity. Sean O’Faolain, in his story, ‘The Silence of the Valley’, also evokes the breakdown of tradition in his account of the death of an old story-teller who could interpret between the past and the present. Such stories represent a widespread feeling of loss as Irish life moves away from its rural landscape and indigenous heritage into the modern world. This sense of loss leads to the depiction of the ideal landscape of the Irish rural areas.

Sean O’Faolain and Frank O’Connor were in the forefront of this exploration of Irish rural and provincial life. O’Faolain’s stories depict the landscape in much more intense terms. His stories
also reflect the tension which was visible in Irish cultural landscape in view of rising urbanization:

(His) stories are therefore much preoccupied with relationship between tradition and modernity, authoritarianism and spontaneity, repression and release in Irish life, particularly as they figure in, or are filtered through Catholicism.

(Corcoran, 720).

His story ‘A Broken World’ shows a train passing through the Irish countryside to the city of Dublin. There are three characters in the story, the narrator, a priest and a farmer. The priest talks about Irish cultural and spiritual poverty while journeying. When the priest leaves the train, the unconcerned farmer tells the narrator that the priest has been silenced by the Church for his former political radicalism. The story concludes with the train approaching Dublin and the narrator gazing out on snow:

I could not deny to the wintry moment its own truth, and that under that white shroud, covering the whole of Ireland, life was lying broken and hardly breathing… The train could be heard easily, in the rarified air, chugging across the bridges that span the city, bearing with it an empty coach. In the morning, Ireland, under its snow, would be silent as a perpetual dawn.

(1982:173)
O’Connor mostly paints a specific Cork setting where he was born and brought up. Some of the stories in which he impeccably draws the Irish provincial life are ‘Guests of the Nation’ (1931), ‘Uprooted’ and ‘A Mother Warning’. The last sentence of the story ‘Guests of the Nation’ is so poignant that it almost draws the barrenness of the Irish landscape as it existed after its revolutionary politics failed to bring the desired results: “… and the old woman and the birds and the bloody stars were all far away, and I was somehow very small and very lonely” (1982: 12)

The present of Ireland informed the modern Irish literature as much as did its mythical and historical past. The social set-up and economic status of people, besides the cultural and religious behavior structured much of its modern short fiction. The city of Dublin was symbolic of whole Ireland which was a sort of cultural nerve centre of the ethnic Irish aesthetic. The streets of Dublin, its public places, buildings and other cultural and social landmarks are continuously named in the Irish writing. The portrayal of the city of Dublin in a way presents the picture of the whole Ireland at a larger level. Dublin, a provincial, isolated and poor city in the erstwhile opulent British Empire supplied most of the literary output of Ireland. The underdeveloped Dublin as against the
developed London reinforces the imagining of the sense of being a British colony among the ethnic Irish writers. Dublin, in Irish texts, is not merely topography but a historical and political metaphor that symbolizes the Irish spirit of resistance and resilience against everything that was perceived to be foreign and alien. Joyce, to whom Dublin was not merely a city but the whole Ireland, was especially fond of it. In fact, as he set out on the project of writing a moral history of Ireland through his short stories, he fixed his eyes on Dublin as he thought the city to be the representative of the whole Ireland.

All stories in his collection, *Dubliners*, are focused on specific economic or social types of various parts of the city. The whole collection is a verbal painting of the city and its inhabitants. However, some of the stories do refer to the countryside. In ‘An Encounter’, there is a skirmish between the boys and the ragged children which ends with children screaming “swaddlers, Swaddlers. The pejorative term, swaddler, refers to Catholics who converted to Protestantism for the sake of food or clothing during famines” (Fairhall 1993: 76). Similarly in the story, ‘Grace’, Pope Leo VIII’s art of composing poetry in Latin reminds of the poor
Irish schooling: “We didn’t learn that, Tom, said Mr Power….
When we went to the penny-a-week school” (2000: 167).

Irish short story is predominantly rural in setting while as Kashmiri short story is predominantly urban:

One thing is obvious that rural Kashmir is beyond the pale of the Kashmiri short story. There is mention of the rural but rural life nowhere finds a fullfledged treatment in them. One plausible reason for this is that our villages have not produced any great short story writer so far.

(Saqi undated: 224)

Kashmir eludes any definition of a colonial/post colonial state. Its borders, too, have traditionally also been very fluid. Both religion and regions are important ingredients of a Kashmiri sense of self (Rai 44). Kashmir is also a sacred place for its Hindu inhabitants. Kashmir, usually referred to as the fabled paradise on earth, is not just a locale. It has had a lot of mystique, not just for its inhabitants but for its visitors as well those who had just heard of it. From rulers to plunderers and poets to historians and artists, its mesmerizing beauty has pulled all to itself:

When Mughal emperor Jehangir was asked at his deathbed about his desire, he drew out a deep sigh and said, “Kashmir, dighar heich” (Kashmir, rest is worthless). … Sir Muhammad
Iqbal went a step further and declared, “In her (Kashmir’s) mountains, rivers and sunset, I have seen God unveiled”. An ardent lover of Kashmir equated it with paradise. Another likened it to a supremely beautiful woman whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire. To Kalhana, Kailasa is the best place in the three worlds, Himalaya the best part of Kailasa, and Kashmir the best place in Himalaya.

(Ahmad, 1)

In fact, Kashmir has always been abundantly eulogized in poetry and prose of not only Kashmiri language but in other languages including Urdu, Hindi and English also. Apart from its natural beauty, Kashmir has remained a melting pot of diverse religious traditions like Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam and has been linked to the ancient silk route, the cultural thoroughfare of the yore. Buddhism as a religion existed in Kashmir for more than a millennium and it flourished in the valley during the second and third century BC. Kanishka, the Kushan ruler held the fourth Buddhist conference in Kashmir only. It is believed that the religious instructions of the conference were inscribed on copper plates and were buried somewhere in Kashmir for posterity. The plates have not been retrieved yet and have added yet another dimension to the mystique of Kashmir.
Along with its many cultural and religious vicissitudes, it has been witness to many political upheavals throughout its history. Kashmir’s kingdom under one of its most celebrated kings, Mukhtapida, extended from Hirat in Afghanistan to Gujarat in south India. However, Kashmir, as it is widely understood in its cultural and geographical sense, refers to the valley of Kashmir and its surrounding areas. This landscape is almost impeccably painted in almost all writers. It always works as the foundational stone against which the writers develop their plots and characters.

The Kashmiri short story is the cultural topography of Kashmir. Almost all Kashmiri writers are engrossed in Kashmir as a piece of land. Though there is not such a stark difference between the rural and urban setting in Kashmir as it existed in Ireland of modern twentieth century, its stories are mostly set in the city of Srinagar, though there are exceptions where the rural landscape of Kashmir has been portrayed. Dina Nath Nadim wrote a story, ‘sheena peto peto’, during the formative years of the Kashmiri short story. The story tells the tale of hardships the Kashmiri peasant had to undergo outside Kashmir, while feeling nostalgic about their motherland. The labour class would move to the plains of the Punjab to earn livelihood for their families. However, the
story also shows the tragedies which unfold in the wake of these seasonal migrations and divided families of Kashmiris.

Akhter Mohiuddin and Amin Kamil are especially relevant in this context as they were very much rooted in the native soil of Kashmir. Kamil’s story ‘Jahannami’, is the artistic depiction of the countryside of Kashmir. While the grim reality of the inhabitants of the village becoming the victims of a shroud-thief is discussed in the story, the intensity of the moribund theme is lessened by the beautiful landscape painted in the story. Similarly, Mohiuddin’s story ‘sheene jung’, while talking of the economic exploitation of the gullible Kashmiris at the hands of the privileged, beautifully draws the winter season of the Kashmir valley which has its own beauty and promise for the ethnic Kashmiris.

As those who stayed back in the aftermath of the militancy in Kashmir continued to talk of the broken world of Kashmir, those who had to flee the valley kept on talking of the broken values which forced them to leave their motherland. Arjan Dev Majboor’s poignant story ‘haaras ti korun wande’ is of special interest as it tragically draws the harmonious landscape of Kashmir as it existed before the exodus of the Pandits from the valley. Rattan Lal Shant is another writer whose stories draw the characters of those Pandits
who continue to willow in the landscape of Kashmir while being away from it physically. ‘The spectacles’ is one such story by Shant that talks of the trauma of displacement. Even after decades, the unnamed protagonist has not been able to reconcile to his migration and keeps losing his way for Kashmir. As he goes out of his apartment in Jammu for the market, he ends up in the old bazaar of his native place in Kashmir. It’s the phone call of his wife which finally wakes him up to conscious state:

With the telephone call, he was now somewhat alert and recollected that Kakni, without her pair of spectacles had a fall in the compound. He recollected that Kukuji, the boy from the Koul family in the neighbourhood had gone missing yesterday. He looked to himself and had the sudden realization that he, in his daily routine, had left his home with the bag on his shoulder in the morning. But now where is he? Where has he come? He was perplexed.

(Shant, 2015: 99)

There is Kashmir everywhere in these stories. Not just the landscape but also the political signposts that are spread far and wide across Kashmir. ‘samah’ by Ghulshan Majeed is a story which revolves around the clock-tower located in the central part of the Srinagar city. The clock-tower has been witness to a lot of
commotion and turmoil and the story talks of undefined commotion, thereby evoking the political importance of this signpost:

What is reality, only God knows! The story is that a shoe fell off at Lal Chowk. One who fell it was whisked away by the crowd. A kid saw this. He put his foot inside it before he would be pulled with his arm by his mother to the other side of the road. . . When Majja (the kid) reached the spot where the shoe had fallen off, the sweeper had collected all junk in a willow dustbin. The shoe was on top of it.

(Majeed, 201)

The story shows the commotion the spot is known for as also the life of Kashmiri which revolves around the same spot. It also puts into perspective the political uncertainty prevailing in Kashmir in the background of those symbolic signposts which Kashmiris have been identifying with historically.

**Language**

The issue of language also is very complex in these two cultural identities. Irish left Gaelic, their native language, and chose English to put forth their point of view, Kashmiris preferred Kashmiri, their mother tongue and left Urdu which had a wider
readership. Irish chose English to reach far and wide, Kashmiris chose Kashmiri language to appeal locally.

In Irish context, there was a shift from native Gaelic language to the non-native English while in Kashmiri context, the shift occurred from the non-native Urdu to the native Kashmiri, though it lacked any kind of patronage. The Irish authors faced a strange dilemma after they chose to write in English. There were multiple reasons for their switching from Irish to English. One of the potent reasons was that “more people of Irish descent live[d] abroad than in Ireland. Untold thousands emigrated to America and to the British colonies that became independent, or joined the English-speaking Commonwealth” (Partridge 156). In this way, there were ‘three expressions of cultural assumptions in Ireland: Irish, English and Anglo-Irish” (Watson, 150). On the other hand, there were just two expressions in Kashmiri context as the tradition of the short story writing in Kashmir has picked up very recently: Urdu and English.

English rule in Ireland was perceived to have led to the death of the Irish language. But the language and the writers in the native language continued to thrive in all ages despite all oppression the place witnessed. That is why Ireland continues to be proud of a
robust literary output that it has been continuously producing over its long history. Its history and tradition continued to engage with and thrive on each other.

As long as Ireland was part of the United Kingdom, the language problem remained a serious issue of confrontation. The Gaelic language, though virtually non-existent in major cities, was being spoken in villages and towns leading to friction at times. Language was one of the sites of contestation between the ethnic Irish and the colonial British. The Irish language was considered to be a potent mark of Irish cultural identity. While there were concerted attempts by the Britishers to anglicize Ireland, the ethnic Irish pitted themselves hard against all such attempts to retain their mother tongue that stood for their indigenous ethos.

Language is not just a means of communication. It enshrines a cultural ethos that the Irish held very dear. However this cultural ethos was equally subject to the political ruptures they had been witnessing. There were some authors who tried to address this problem. Andrew Carpenter identifies this problem like this:

I find a constant and pervasive sense of authorial doubt and questioning in Anglo-Irish literature – a questioning which may broadly be called ironic . . . No one writing in Ireland . . . is both wholly Gaelic Irish and wholly inside the English
language. The compromise each writer makes as he writes of Ireland in English, is almost a racial one . . . To some extent, this awareness of two living cultures – the writer not feeling he belongs properly to either – accounts at the most obvious level for the Anglo-Irish writer’s insecurity and his need to take up a position of ironic detachment from his creation: but this is only part of the reason . . . Only after a process of linguistic and social self-definition can anyone born or bred in Ireland develop the confidence to react to the dualities of Irish life . . . The Irish language may be seen as a pointless anachronism or as the key to national identity . . . The world in which one sees two things at once becomes merely confusing, in life as in literature, without rigorous technical control . . . What is important is that all these sets of visions are co-existent; after all, the tension between appearance and reality is at the heart of many works of literature in many cultures; but the simultaneous awareness of two appearances and two realities is, I am inclined to think, an important element in the tone of Anglo-Irish writing and the personality of the Anglo-Irish writer.

(1977: 174-84)

The Irish writing could be seen as a part of the larger struggle of the former colonies to retrieve their authentic version of culture from their national archives to avoid the uncertainties of the present (Ariaz 208:118).
Irish short story is an evolution from the historical struggle to the retrieval of a folk narrative towards the construction of an ethnic identity with a literature of its own. That is why the Irish history props up so much through them. Mythical lore of Ireland is the bedrock that supports this narrative. The main themes and motifs of the Irish stories evolve out of its strong historical context of colonization, resistance and its struggle for the formation of its ethnic identity. George Moore was one of the pioneering men of letters in Ireland who also initiated the movement for the Gaelic revival. He produced foul volumes of short stories in English. In fact it was mainly because of his efforts that most of the Irish literary revival shifted to the English language for a wider readership. His collection of stories, *The Untilled Field* (1903), was originally supposed to be translated into Gaelic for contributing towards the revival of the Gaelic language. But his treatment of the priest class unnerved the puritan Gaelic who opposed him for his religious ideas as he had renounced the Catholic religion and had joined the Anglican Church of Ireland.

The Kashmiri language, having survived the long-drawn historical evolution and continuing to exist even now speaks of its inner strength and structural flexibility which enabled it to adapt to
historical transitions. This language has had two drawbacks; first that it never got any kind of official patronage as it has never remained court language of Kashmir. Second that Kashmiri language never had a standard script.

Kings and rulers never patronized the Kashmiri language which badly hampered its growth, despite having been one of the oldest languages in the Indian subcontinent. The absence of any standard script led to the absence of a strong tradition of writing in this language. That is why, in spite of having a rich store of folk songs, folk literature and folk tales, they were never put into writing. This folk literature continued to exist in oral form, while being embedded in the history of Kashmir. Walter Lawrence says that if the Kashmir history were not available in written form, it would not be an issue as its history is safe in the memory of Kashmiris in the form of legends and folktales (quoted in Mohiuddin, 23).

The complex issue of medium and language also beset the Kashmiri short story in its initial phase. The initial short story writers including Prem Nath Pardesi, Prem Nath Dhar, Somnath Zutshi, Akhter Mohiuddin, Tej Bahadur Bhan, Sufi Ghulam Mohammad and Ali Muhammad Lone, started writing their stories
in the Urdu language because of being a much larger language and its reach within the whole sub-continent:

The genre of the short story entered the Kashmiri language through Urdu. Some Kashmiri critics feel ashamed of accepting this fact and ignore the Urdu language by connecting emerging genres and themes of the Kashmiri language directly to English. Although the fact is that the birth of the short story in the Kashmiri language was the impact of the Urdu short story. A big proof of this is that those writers who initially paid attention to the Kashmiri short story were actually short story writers of the Urdu language.

(Muzmar, 59)

There were many factors that prompted the shift from the Urdu to the Kashmiri language among the story writers. However, most visible factor was the progressivist ideology of those writers, which believed in literature to be closer to life, and “mother tongue was thought to be the most natural idiom of translating life into literature” (Muzmar, 59-60).

Religion

Religious consciousness also pervades these two cultures which all its flaws. Interestingly, religion has grown into a formative ingredient of the ethnic profile of both Ireland and Kashmir. This
factor had to a great extent furthered the linguistic and literary traditions of these two locales and has left deep imprints on them. Irish short story liberally talks about the contestation between the Catholics and the Protestants. The stories are also rife with religious priests and religiously conscious people.

Religious differences between the Catholics and the Protestants had added to the intensity of the Irish conflict and made the relationship between the warring sides intractable and complex. The Catholic and Protestant religious differences are also shown in much of the Irish short story to be a strong undercurrent. In fact the Irish conflict is aggravated to a large extent by the religious factors. In fact it has been a consistent topic in the Irish literature in general.

For English, the Irish or Celtic ‘race’ was usually synonymous with religion and both the words, Irish and Catholic, were treated as derogatory (Cheng, 16). On the other hand, the Irish too suffered from complexes of their own. They had evolved a belief that the Irish were unique, “like no other race on earth”. That’s why, most of the Irish writers and nationalists did not identify much with nationalist movements elsewhere (Kiberd, 255).
Church and priests figure prominently in the Irish short story. In O’Connor’s stories like ‘Uprooted’ and ‘A Mother’s Warning’ priests are depicted to be sexually frustrated and very lonely. Clerical celibacy is also shown to be deeply inhibiting for Irish society in general. O’Connor also recognised the role religion played in people’s lives. In ‘The shepherds’, he draws with sympathy, the character of the priest who tries to save a young woman of his parish from being corrupted by a French sea captain. On the other hand, in O’Faolain’s story, ‘A broken world’, the character of the priest is shown to be falsely religious and having compromised on his ideals for political considerations.

The story ‘Grace’ by Joyce discusses the struggle between the two sects in a very interesting way. There is a man falling down the stairs to reveal the struggle between the two faiths. No one comes to the fore to help the unidentified fainted man. The fallen man represents Ireland which was thought be not getting support for being fainted though she desperately needed the help to restore her self. Joyce mocks at attempts to make religion a factor to fight. There is a passage, a dialogue between two characters in the story which shows the undercurrent tension between the two sects as well as the attempts for reconciliation on both sides.
But he’s an Orangeman, Crofton, isn’t he? Said Mr Power.

Course he is, said Mr Kernan, and a damned, decent Orangeman too. We went into Butler’s in Moore Street.

Faith, I was genuinely moved, tell you the God’s truth.

And I remember well his words. Kernan, he said, we worship at different altars, her said, but out belief is the same.

Struck me as very well put.

(2000: 165)

Religious consciousness is an important ingredient of the Kashmiri ethnicity also. After the Britishers sold the valley of Kashmir to Maharaja Ghulab Singh of Jammu in 1847, Kashmiris were not ruled by Hindus but Kashmir became a Hindu State (Rai 2007: 7). Subsequently, Islamic consciousness emerged as a prominent and integral component of Kashmiri struggle for identity, along with other political and egalitarian ideals.

In case of Ireland, catholic Christianity has dominated even the literary discourse, relegating the Protestantism to Northern Ireland. In case of Kashmir, which is overwhelmingly dominated by Muslims, Hindus have been developing their literary tradition quite separately from the Muslim writing especially after the 1990s. The separation refers to a wider gap that exists along
religious and ideological lines. However, these differences get blurred when it comes to the formative influences of the collective literary traditions of the ethnic Kashmiris. They draw their inspiration from the same sources of myth and folklore. Both the religious groups own their past in totality without discarding any phase of it.

Kashmiri short stories also talk of the uneasy relation between the two communities of Muslims and Hindus. Of special importance is the story ‘taaph’ by Hari Krishan Koul which is about a lady who has the problem of compatibility in New Delhi where she has lately moved to spend some time with her son. The whole story talks of her adjustment problem with her new neighbours in Delhi. At the same time, she keeps on thanking God for being away from “the dirty” Muslim washermen, milkmen and the like. The story brings to the fore the uneasy equation between the two communities in the context of Kashmir which they have been having over many centuries now, after the advent of Islam, for the simple reason of Pandits having got displaced from their privileged position. The Pandits also grudgingly looked at the scenario which developed in the post-1947 where the Pandits, despite always having enjoyed the position of power and privilege,
were reduced to their numerical strength which was very miniscule.

At the same time, the two communities were culturally synchronised and lived rather a harmonious life over the centuries. Such an aspect of the Kashmiri culture is depicted in ‘haaras tikorun wande’ by Arjan Dev Majboor. The story is written in the aftermath of Pandit migration from Kashmir, after the armed revolt broke out against the Indian ruler in Kashmir. But the story through the deranged consciousness of ‘Poshikuj’, the old lady, talks of that era of harmony and mutual coexistence which got disturbed after the militancy. There were reported atrocities against the community by the Muslim militants which forced the Pandits in exile. Poshikuj is living in a migrant camp in Jammu with her family but psychologically, she continues to live in Kashmir as her mental condition has deranged. She talks of Muslim characters who she has been in touch with all her life. Her whole cultural life revolves around Muslim characters, though she is Hindu by religion. The story painfully draws that traumatised agony to the fore which the Pandit Kashmiris had to undergo after the militancy.
Mythology

Both the traditions have liberally borrowed from their ancient mythical past to forge their ethnic identities in modern age. Their selves are a direct outcome of their mythical sources which have been shaping their worldview and lifestyle over the centuries.

Ireland, as other ancient cultural entities, has a rich collection of folktales, mythologies and legends. A symbol of premodern cultural praxis, the myths and legends were looked down upon in earlier times but with fresh research into the field, it was held that the pre-recorded history has its own importance in the evolution of the civilization in every culture. With fresh insight, the whole history and the pre-historic period was relooked at and fresh conclusions were drawn to trace the growth of the civilization more accurately. Folktales, myths, legends and other allied motifs play a great role in the formation of a nation’s psyche. Such tales and anecdotes show these communities at their best as well as at their worst. They show the cultural practices, behavioural patterns, the ways of living, costumes etc in the ancient times, alongwith their evolution over the time, exhibiting the ethnic pattern of a community. Such tales would be heard with great enthusiasm in
pre-technology era and they continue to have their relevance even after the onslaught of technology.

In fact, it can be assumed that folklore is the elementary narration of a nation. This is as much true about Ireland and Kashmir as about other nations and communities. In the early twentieth century when Ireland witnessed the renaissance of its indigenous tradition, some great minds of the Irish nation also were engaged in the arduous task of rediscovering their mythical lore and absorbing that into their literary output. These attempts were taken up as a project to infuse a new lease of life in the contemporary reality of the nation and to assert its distinct cultural identity.

Yeats discovered many mythical figures from the Irish mythical lore and gave new life to them through his writings. It was through his efforts that the mythical figures like Cuchulain, Conchubar, Maeve and others were dug out from the dead past of Ireland and integrated into the poetry:

(Yeats) proved how totally adequate these products of an ancient mythology were to express the immense complexity of life in the twentieth century. Yeats’s achievement alone would
justify the fusion of Gaelic and Anglo-Irish into a single, sturdy tradition.

(Kennely, 29)

At the hands of Yeats, this tradition reached its pinnacle with the masterly integration of the past and the present, and reflecting his changing view of Ireland. Beginning with his youthful and idealistic perception of Ireland, and the disillusionment, he finally evolved into having a nuanced understanding of his motherland. In fact, his role in the creation of the modern, young and independent state of Ireland is immense:

Yeats is Ireland’s greatest poet, not least because he learned to confront the challenging complexities of Irish life. He recognized that Ireland is always capable of treachery and squalor, but he was also aware of its capacity for heroism and nobility. He witnessed and experienced ‘the weasle’s twist, the weasle’s tooth’. Yet he exhorted later generations to be, and continue to be, the ‘indomitable Irishery’.

(Kennelly, 40)

Joyce also used the mythology but not so much in his stories as much in his later novels.

Kashmiris are traditionally believed to have been in constant communion with nature. The same dialogue with nature is said to
have yielded a lot of myths, legends, tales, and other oral structures that continue to give expression to the cultural personality of Kashmir. For centuries, Kashmir has been the centre of learning and place of dissemination of different religious denominations including Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. The folklore developed in the respective eras naturally became reflective of related customs and varied patterns of social life and political development.

The Kashmiri folk tales have not only dealt with social and political aspects of Kashmiri life but have also made commendable contribution in recording historical anecdotes of Kashmir particularly of its earliest times. The recording of such myths as Heemal Nagray, Aka Nandun, Bombu ta Loler, Wuzra maal, sein Kissir etc reveal several aspects of social and political life of Kashmir which get reflected in its literature too.

Broadly speaking, the history of Kashmir, both physical and political, is shrouded in legend and mythology. The two have been interwoven with actual happenings in such a manner that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other (Ahmad, 2). As in the case of Ireland, Kashmir’s rich literary and cultural legacy also deeply informs its history and literature. Its folklore is rich,
multicultural and intercontinental. Its mythologies originate from east as well as west. Its peaceful transition from one historical phase to another stretches its literary imagination from one cultural context to another. Its mythical lore is said to be far richer than the folk literature of any other country in the world:

While chronicling the history of ancient Kashmir, Kalhana, in addition to the available sources or relics has been significantly guided by folklore in circulation. Stein substantiates this in the following expression: it cannot be doubted that Kalhana had taken many of the legends and anecdotes so frequently in the early portion of his narrative from the traditional lore current in his own time and not from earlier writers. Not to talk of Kalhana, Peer Hassan, the nineteenth century historian of Kashmir, has also taken help from oral tradition by borrowing certain characters to fill the missing gaps in Kashmir history.

(Fayyaz, 110)

The earliest voluminous collection of Kashmiri tales is said to be Som Deva’s **Katha Sarita Sagar**, comprising lakhs of verses which he presented to the king of Kashmir. The king Anant did not like the language. Som Deva, in a fit of depression, consigned the collection to fire. The leftover portion of the book was later published under the same title. It is said that **Katha Sarit Sagar** was
based upon yet another collection of stories called *Brahat Katha*
written in Pashachi dialect by Gunnadiya:

In *Katha Sarit Sagar*, one finds stories depicting various
segments of the ancient Kashmiri society comprising magic,
music, social relationship, religious rituals, bravery, wars and
battles and immense love for gods and goddesses demonstrated
by human beings under all circumstances.

(Khayal 2007:56)

J Hinton Knowles, a famous folklorist who stayed in
Kashmir for four years around 1885, was so surprised by the
density and richness of the Kashmiri folklore that he was forced to
remark:

Kashmir as a field of folklore literature is perhaps not surpassed
in fertility, by any other country in the world. My interest had
been aroused from first of the rich store of popular lore which
Kashmiri presents in its folktales, songs, proverbs and the like.

(quoted in Aatash 2014:7)

In addition to Knowles, there were many European orientalists and
other researchers like Earnest Nieve, Karl Fredrich, Sir Richard
Temple, George Abraham Grierson, Anand Coomaraswami etc,
who compiled, published and analysed the Kashmiri folklore. In
1885, Knowles also published *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Words*
and Proverbs, comprising around fifteen hundred entries. He subsequently published the English translation of 64 folk tales of Kashmir, entitled Folktales of Kashmir in 1887. Sir Aurel Stein, another folklorist who visited Kashmir in the early twentieth century, heard twelve folktales from a Kashmiri folktale narrator, Hatim Tilwani, and published them from London in 1923.

Kashmiris, irrespective of their religious affiliations tend to look at whole Kashmir in a mysterious way. Every water body, a mountain peak, ancient thoroughfares, forests, seasons and even mounds and hillocks carry a strange kind of mystique for each Kashmiri. Such an outlook has evolved a unique kind of psyche among Kashmiris of looking at their ethnicity. This tendency to mythologise has occupied the minds of Kashmiris so much that the lines for them between myth and history are blurred. There are historical anecdotes and personalities which have assumed mythical character and at the same time there are mythological narratives that are as much common among Kashmiris as if they are a part of their historical lore. Kashmiris across the board love and cherish their motherland and their ethnic connection to it which gives them a sense of proud identity:

The lineage of the Kashmiri people has given them distinctive looks; the fusion and assimilation of varied faiths and culture
have resulted in their particular and specific ethnicity. The land, the climate, the geography further helped in the evolution of this ethnicity. A common language has bound them together.

(Punjabi 2008: 12)

Kashmiri short story writers have treated the theme of myth in diverse ys. Some simply borrowed a myth from the ancient past and developed it into a story. ‘Jahannami’ by Kamil is one such story which is based on a folktale. Other writers have borrowed from the myth but then integrated into a modern narrative to lend more immediacy to it. ‘Shraz’ by Hriday Koul Bharti and ‘kohi qaafas peth jin ti pari saze langhis ghindaan’ by Farooq Masoodi, are two such stories which are based on mythical symbolism.

Colonial experience

English colonial discourse of Ireland, as said above, was deeply informed by earliest representations of Ireland in the British literary and historical texts which described Ireland as the ‘Land of Ire and the Land of Wrath’. Originally, Ireland was the English name for the country and essentially conveyed a negative English image. “Ireland was defined by and against English ideals” (Bradshaw 3). In fact, it has been said that Irish were the darks of the white Europe, and “amid the celebrated advance of Victorial times, Ireland was retarded child” (Brown 1972: 4).
Irish representations in English narratives, literary or otherwise, show a deep prejudice among the Britishers since the earliest times of their encounter. ‘English civility’ was always discussed in comparison to ‘Irish barbarity’ suggesting that Irishness for Britishers was not an identity but an insult.

The wars and the broken treaties between the two sides show the lack of trust and also the relationship of a colony and its coloniser throughout their history. “The determination of an English self depends upon the subjection of an Irish other” (Bradshaw et al 1993: 9). Ireland was in some ways a testing ground for English military aspirations. In fact, in the 15th century British Army embarked on one of its most notorious campaigns there (Bradshaw, 10). Ireland was also the place where criminals would be banished.

In 1691, the English broke the Treaty of Limerick and fully captured the Catholic Ireland. Anglo-Irish aristocracy replaced the old Irish gentry, breaking the indigenous social order. The new social set-up disturbed the traditional hierarchy in the Irish society and led to a lot of social tension which got reflected in the Irish short story too. Egan O’Rahilly was a witness to these developments and lamented it in his poetry:
All over Ireland why this chill?

Why this foul mist?

Why the crying birds?

Why do the heavens mutter

Such wrathful words?

Why this blow to a poet?

Why do the Feale and Shannon tremble?

Why does the wild sky spill

Such venomous rain

On plain and hill?

What has put song in chains

And nobles in bonds?

Why do God’s own bold

Servants and prophets

Walk shocked and appalled?

The cause of their grief

Is that fair William Gould

Has died in France.

Christ! No wonder this pall

Darkens the lands.
Giver of horses and cloaks,

Of silver and gold,

Silk, wine, meat, bread;

This giver, this generous giver

Is dead.

(Quoted in Kenelly 1970: 33-34)

The sense of enslavement and disillusionment with what was happening to them was so deep that Ireland was totally cut off from the developments in its surroundings. In fact, Ireland remained untouched by the renaissance in Europe also (Kennelly 32).

Such a colonial relation between England and Ireland formed the basis of much of the Irish nationalist literature which looked within its own self, mythical lore, historical narrative to invent metaphors of resistance for the construction of their unique identity. That is the reason, many historical moments in the Irish history including the rising of 1916, the troubles of 1920s, the civil war in 1922 etc, figure prominently in the Irish writing.

A heated question in the context of Ireland is whether it has been a kingdom or a colony. There have been two opinions about it:
On the one hand, there was a prescription of the Ireland, more prescriptive than real, as a culturally undifferentiated society, a polity with a constitution clearly similar to England’s, in other words a Kingdom as defined by the 1541 Act for ‘the kingly title’. Yet there was a second assumption, more adventitious perhaps but more real, that Ireland was a colony with opportunities for gain and advancement for those who were willing to adventure for them.

(quoted in Bradshaw, 3)

Ireland was always perceived by the natives to have been under the colonial yoke of the British. However, such a question is very tricky in the Irish context given the fact that the Irish were very much a part and parcel of the British colonial adventures elsewhere in the world. That is why that bitterness which is the hallmark of the erstwhile colonies of the British empire is missing in her writers. At least, it does not have the same intensity as do those from, say, African countries or Asian countries.

Despite the complexity involved in the question, the fact remains that the relation between Ireland and England was not without a strong element of imperialism. Ireland would always be drawn in comparison to the British, with all her differences of religion, cultural conservatism, mythical fountainheads and
indigenous literary landscape, including characters, geography and aspirations. Contrarily, Britishers were reticent when it came to owning the ordinary citizens of Ireland. While the formidable Irish authors formed the core of any canonical British text, Irish cultural life would be conspicuous by its absence in British texts. English and Irish were treated as two alternatives, having the relationship of either/or (Bradshaw et al, 1). In this relationship, no possibility of any neutral expression was perceived to be existing as they were thought to be hiding a complex cultural relation of power and colonization. Such a relation also got expression in its short stories too. There are many anecdotes from the Irish resistance which have been adopted in short stories.

Ireland and symbolic references to the Irish nationalist cause and the subsequent betrayal of the same by the Irish permeates all the stories by Joyce. Similarly, O’Connor and O’Faolain also, in their stories, talk of the end of their romance with the Irish nationalism. O’Connor, in his story ‘Guests of the nation, shows two British soldiers becoming friends with their captors but they are finally executed as the two men of the captors’ side have also been killed. Another story of his, “The mass island”, is about the
search for an ancestral piece of land which has been run over by a modern macademised road.

Kashmiris are tenably considered to be the descendants of Nagas who were displaced by the onslaught of Aryans from the northern hemisphere in ancient past. The displacement led to resistance from Nagas who were ultimately routed and pushed down to the south. Therefore, the resistance against Aryans is said to be the basis of all following resistances by Kashmiris. The strife also gave birth to some of the most potent and tragic folktales of Kashmir which symbolically refer to the Kashmiri spirit for love and freedom. Heemal and Nyagray, the mythical characters of two lovers, from the period are one such myth whose remnants dot the whole topographical and cultural landscape of Kashmir. One remnant of this myth is a deep well in the southern district of Shopian in which it is believed that Nyagray jumped down to escape the wrath of Aryans after he failed to consummate his love with Heemal.

Though Kashmir never remained under the direct control of any European imperial power, it remained for long periods under the control of the rulers from the Punjab of the Indian subcontinent,
who were under the suzerainty of the Britishers. It also remained under the control of Afghans for some time.

The Afghani, Sikh and Dogra periods of the recent history of Kashmir are considered to be the most painful and torturous phase of its history as Kashmiris were subjected to the worst kind of occupation of their history during these times. However, the same phase also proved to be one of the most creative spells from the literary point of view. A lot of creative expressions, proverbs and historical anecdotes that have assumed the status of literary lore came into existence during this period only.

Some of the anecdotes were subsequently adopted by the Kashmiri writers in their stories too. Amin Kamil’s ‘Phaatak’ talks of the Dogra period brutality in a straight forward manner. It gives a forthright expression to the ludicrous level, the regime inflicted on its subjects. Similarly, another story of his, ‘sawaal cchu kaluk’, shows the political uncertainty prevailing in Kashmir in the backdrop of the hostile relations between India and Pakistan. Akhter Mohiuddin in an equally bold way put into writing the brutal after effects of the more recent conflict in the Kashmir history. His stories like ‘jalli hind dande phel’, ‘now bemear’ and ‘atank wadi’ talk of the result of heavy militarization of Kashmir
and the resilient spirit of Kashmiris who bore all the brutal oppression with exemplary bravery.

**Partition/dislocation**

Partition in the context of Kashmir and dislocation in the context of Kashmir is another aspect of the divided selves of the two cultures. It refers to the deep fissures existing within these cultures as also to the slender threads which hold them together. The two cultures got divided on the basis of partition and migration respectively. Both were traumas culturally. The partition traumatized the collective Irish psyche and divided the sense of wholeness the Irish possessed, besides depriving them of a large chunk of land which was very much a part of their cultural matrix and their collective memory. The partition and the independence of Irish Republic took its own heavy toll of the national unity. The glorious years of the fight against the ancient enemy, so sacredly celebrated in folklore gave way to strife and civil war which bruised the country’s soul. The result was the birth of the most recent literature which is characterized by a deep sense of disillusionment and cynicism and is beyond the purview of this study.

Almost same was the situation among the Pandit writers in Kashmir who had to migrate from Kashmir after the armed revolt
broke out in Kashmir. Arjan Dev Masjboor’s ‘Haaras ti korun wande’ and Rattan Lal Shant’s ‘the spectacles show the deep scars of migration on an inalienable part of the Kashmiri ethnic community.

**Conclusion**

The same intense awareness of ethnic identity gets reflected in the short fiction of both Ireland and Kashmir, which articulates the hopes and aspirations of these communities. As seen above, the short fiction of these two communities is a powerful medium through which their ethnic mores get a sense of anchoring. Both the traditions look within and outside for sources to reinforce their strong sense of distinct ethnic and cultural identity.