

Trauma of Conflict in the Novel *Under the Shadow of Militancy*

Muzafar Ahmad Pandith
Research Scholar,
Department of English,
Jiwaji University, Gwalior. (M.P.)

Yasir Ahmad Dar
Research Scholar,
Department of English and MEL
University of Lucknow. (U.P.)

Abstract:

Kashmir hailed as the paradise on earth has a rich history in the historical pages of the world. Some call it the Desiccated land, some land of Parvati or Rishi Bhumi and some the crown of India. This crown of India has witnessed a bleak conflict in 90's that shook the hearts of the people and weakened the thread of unity in Kashmir. The conflict not only affected the lives of people but also compelled the Kashmiri Pandits to leave their all belongings and migrate to other cities of India to save their precious culture and life. The period is considered as most pathetic and is imprinted in the minds of people and historical treatises of Kashmir. The conflict gave rise to terrorism and chained the freedom of every individual and changed the scenario of Kashmir. The conflict opened the gates of violence and terror curbed the freedom of people by tormenting physical, psychological agonies and pains. The common people both from Hindu as well as Muslim community were attacked and killed brutally. Day after day these killings and tortures increased and created havoc in the valley. *Under the Shadow of Militancy: The Dairy of a Kashmiri Girl* portrays all such incidents faced by the common people during these years. Therefore, the paper attempts to explore agony and pain, suffering and loss inflicted upon the common masses in the novel.

Key words: Paradise, Trauma, Unity, Kashmiri Pundits, Treatise, Violence, Terror, Conflict.

Under the Shadow of Militancy was published in the year 2002 by Tej N. Dhar. The dairy is said to be written by an unknown girl of Kashmir which throws light on the life of Kashmiri Pandits who lived their life under the canopy of agony, death, trauma and pain during 1990's in Kashmir. Lukacs states that, 'A writers relation

to history is not something special and isolated, it is an important component of his relation to the whole of reality and especially society' (Lukacs 167). It was a conflict that did not pinpointed a particular community or sect but both the religious sects whether Kashmir Muslims or Kashmiri Hindus as they suffered a great loss of precious lives and property. The Kashmiri Pundits who are considered as the early inhabitants of Kashmir had been forced to evacuate to the other places dominated by the Hindu religion. Notices and messages were sent to the people to vacate their own land or to face the harsh agonies and tortures. Pundits who were minority in Kashmir got compelled to save their lives and settle down in the other cities of India. Refugee camps were established in Jammu and Delhi in order to help these Pundits who became the victim of the conflict. Many innocent Kashmiri Pandits were tortured and killed only because of their religion. The innocent people became the target and got exiled to the places that were totally different to them. The Pundits leave behind their everything and suffered mental tortures, clash, rootlessness and still a desire to return back to their ancestral land where they have jeweled their dreams. The conflict though very pathetic and tragic had not given wings by any writer and remained under the dark hedge for many years from outside world. Writers began to focus on the political scenario, religious clashes and historical narratives of the Kashmir during 90's and nobody dared to jot the pains and pangs of Kashmiri people in their literature so that the agonies may be highlighted globally. The news regarding the conflict though headline of every newspaper focuses on the rise of terrorism but no reference about the impact of this blot on the masses of Kashmir. The intellectuals of the time were busy with only the discussion of a clash between India and Pakistan. The sentiments and the miserable condition of the people living in Kashmir seems invisible from the pages that can highlight the issue in every nook and corner of the world. The cries and pain of Kashmiri Pundits seems inaudible to every intellectual who directly or indirectly was associated with the national politics of India. Thus it clarifies that the turmoil must have given unhealed wounds to the masses of the people of Kashmir but it is unfortunate that the evidences regarding this conflict seems invisible in the literature penned by the moral giants and methodical minds of that time. The poem entitled When Autumn came by Faiz Ahmad Faiz seems appropriate if comparing the Kashmiri Pandits with the birds. The autumn symbolizes the conflict of 90,s and the rise of militancy in Kashmir.

This is the way that autumn came to the trees:

It stripped them down to the skin

Here the autumn is the conflict of 90's which made its appearance aggressively and used violent force to turn the piece of Kashmir in to turmoil and compelled the Kashmiri Pundits to leave their all belongings and left the valley. They also swallowed this agony and pain silently as they were hapless and helpless.

Tej Nath Dhar reflected the wrath and horror of his community in the treatise *Under the Shadow of Militancy* during 90's. The narration of Dhar is somehow different from the other writers as it highlights the plight and pain of Kashmiri Pundits by quoting both public and private incidents that engulfed the valley in 1990's. A piece of art should be read in context of socio-political views of the novelist, which implies, "A writers political and religious beliefs are not excrescences to be laughed away but something that will leave their mark even on the smallest detail of his work" (Orwell 33). The novel has been titled *Under the Shadow of Militancy* by the writer as it witnesses the life of Kashmiri Pundits who had to spend their lives under the shadow of death. The Kashmiri Pundits had to face brutal atrocities and were exiled from their nests by creating an atmosphere of terror and trauma. Salman Rushdie too records this in his novel entitled *Shalimar the Clown* and states, "Kill one, scare ten. Kill one, scare ten" (295). Dhar opens his novel with a quote of South African writer Andre Brink which serves apt and appropriate epitaph for his treatise. Dhar quotes, "Writing is an affirmation, not only of the individual but, through him, of the nameless and voiceless multitude, who must rely on him to define the validity of their right to be" (Brink 205). It is clear from the quote that literary treatises give voice to the unheard voices, emotions and sentiments of the people. It is the responsibly of the writer to highlight the issues of his nation in order to provide the justice to the people who are being crushed in any conflict. Dhar's novel is an immortal record of the Kashmiri conflict of 1990's and the impact of the conflict upon the Kashmiri Pundits who had to bear the agony, pain, torture, misfortunes of the times without having any fault. He writes:

It provides an authentic record of a crucial period in the growth of militancy, which could have taken a different turn if the governments in power in the state and centre had acted differently from how they did. . . . the narrative vividly records the various facets of the terrorist menace and violence that the members of Pandit community had to face and which forced them to flee for their dear lives. (Introduction XIX)

The novel is divided in to 67 chapters with a single plot and reflects the condition of Kashmiri Pundits during 1990's armored with realistic incidents. Dhar himself has witnessed the trauma, pain and agony when the valley was under the dark canopy of militancy during 1990's. The state of Eden got collapsed and the peace shut its doors in the valley. Turmoil, misfortunes, suffering and pain began to knock in the alleys of the people. He has dexterously infused into the writing the pain of being born in Kashmir and the pain of being a Kashmiri Pandit. The novel is a mirror by which we can observe the conditions of Kashmiri Pandits who became the victim of killings, murders, abductions, assassinations, threats, pains and sufferings. The condition got too worsen that after evenings no one dares to remain out of the home. Nazir, a character in the novel informs the narrators wife that if she listens any knock at the door, she must open the door without any enquiry as they might be the Mujahedeen, the saviors of community. It is evident that the militants take refuge in both the Muslim as well as the Hindu families in Kashmir to taste the delicious food and to warm themselves from the chilly gusts of cold. Dhar narrates “. . . this was minimum that every citizen should do, as they had taken on the dangerous struggle to change the political system of the state” (*Under the Shadow of Militancy* 5). The structure of the militants not only was horrible but their dress code clearly differentiates them from the common masses of Kashmir. “There were three bearded young men, all of them more than six feet tall. She understood at once from their appearance and dress that they were not local people. The more she watched them, the more worried she became. In panic, she clutched at Vasu and Vinay” (4).

The innocent Kashmiri became pain stricken and witnessed such moments which they never have thought and their lifestyle totally got changed as they all were very near to death. The new terms like Crackdown, Hartal, Azadi, Curfew, Hit order etc. began to emerge in the valley that were very new to the people of Kashmir. The concept of curfew has dexterously expressed by Dhar:

People rush to their homes in the evening to ensure that they are not caught violating the curfew timings. I have stayed home for many days now; the curfew timings do not allow me to make a two-way trip to my far-away office. I also realize that staying home is the best guarantee of safety. (67)

The security forces in order to track and kill the militants conduct house to house search. The young boys whether Muslim or Hindu is beaten mercilessly in order to get a clue about the hiding places of the militants. It was mandatory to everyone to cooperate with the security agencies or to face the wrath and loot of all their things like the mixture of coal, rice and flour. He narrates:

Ranjit also said that at one place, the soldiers overturned sacks of rice, flour, and coal, to mix them into a pile of waste, to punish people for their discourteous behaviour and non-cooperative ways. Some people complained that gold ornaments and jewellery had disappeared from the secret compartments of their wardrobes. (21)

People were assembled at one place and all the exit points are sealed by the security forces in order to track the hiding militants who had taken refuge in the nearby houses. People some innocent and some guilty being beaten ruthlessly and no one dares to interfere in such matters. Loudspeakers burst to announce the sedge of the village and the place where people are expected to assemble for questioning by the security agencies. “. . . A uniformed officer, who sat in a chair away from these groups, called people for questioning, 104 one by one. Much later, when it was all over, the soldiers moved into the localities to search our homes” (26-27). Messages began to post demanding Kashmiri Pundits to evacuate the land or taste the horrific death. Notices, messages, slogans, calls were sent to the doors of Kashmiri Pandits to leave the valley as soon as possible in order to save themselves from the wrath of militants. The narrator narrates “but what about the notice that had been slapped on the door of my compound: Leave this place in forty-eight hours or be prepared to face the consequence” (16). The local newspaper entitled *Alsafa* was the medium through which the threats were published in order to compel the Kashmiri Pundits to leave their own land and live their life in tents somewhere out of Kashmir.

Thus the conflict which is still tormenting the sentiments of the people has made the valley of Kashmir hell, and has made thousands of children orphan, thousands of women as widow and thousand handicapped. The conflict compelled the Kashmiri Pundits to leave their all belongings and settle down in the cities dominated by the Hindu people without having any guilty. The novel describes the real incidents of Kashmir that were never been recorded by any writer in the realms of literature. If a person wants to know that horror, tortures, pain, agony etc. inflicted upon the people of Kashmir by the conflict of 1990's must read this novel written by an unknown Kashmiri girl and published by Tej. N. Dhar. To conclude the novel is a true picture from which we can observe the pain when one has to leave all his belongings and settle down in alien lands without being guilty.

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