

MOLESTATION OF INNOCUOUS INNOCENCE: A STUDY OF BASHARAT PEER'S THE CURFEWED NIGHT

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ABSTRACT

India even after 70 years of attaining its freedom has thrown one part of its body in the conflict. The hostile attitude of the rest of the country towards Jammu and Kashmir has created a gulf between the hearts which is not easy to cross. The military operations done in the different parts of the state has brought misery to innocents. The bitterness which was created from the beginning of the turmoil in 90's, is still alive. The role of the Indian government in handling the situation is always suspicious. It is not easy for the reader or spectator to decide that whether the government wants to curb the terrorism or they want to create a more problematic condition. The brutal behavior towards the native residents of the state left them with terror and hatred for Indian. Many incidents in the novel bring out that how innocence is crushed in process of killing the wrong.

KEYWORDS: *J&K, Terrorism, Youth, Military Insurgence, Torture, Mind*

INTRODUCTION

Youth, adolescent and young generation are words which provide hope of bright future of any nation, state or a household. The only wish of elders is to have their younger ones to have a unified sensibility to lead a happy and healthy life. Society, authority, and administration, as well as family, play a pivotal role in making an individual as good or bad. We have celebrated 71st years of independence, we have the right to express our views and nobody is there to hinder our rights. In a democracy like India, even government gets condemned for decisions which are not in the favor of a common man. When the rest of India is celebrating this freedom, a part of this nation is crying, bleeding and pleading for justice and this part is known as the "crown of India". Jammu and Kashmir have always been under the threat of violence since India got its liberty. The geography of this part as well the religion of people there make it more vulnerable to any danger from Indian politics as well as from terrorism and this makes the tragedy even more tragic.

Basharat Peer's novel "*The Curfewed Night*" (2009) has opened the doors to the expression of Kashmiri's experience of being in Kashmir. The aim behind writing this novel was the pain of not having any voice of Kashmir unlike other troubled zones in other parts of the world. The distinguishable thing about this novel is that it is a discourse by a person who has faced the pain of turmoil himself. Kashmir which are known as the paradise of the Earth because of its beauty has lost its peace because of terrorism and political reasons which is known to everyone now. Kashmir has become a symbol of militants, gunfire, terror, and insurgency in the mind of people of rest of the country and even among tourists. No one in the valley is unaware of the horrifying circumstances of Kashmir. Manto's words define the position of Basharat very well, "a writer picks up his pen only when his sensibility is hurt". The condition of Kashmir is like a wounded bride

who has lost peace of her life even though she is extremely beautiful. This novel is about an army conflict in Kashmir in 1989.

Basharat Peer has taken the title “*Curfewed Night*” from Agha Shahid Ali’s poem “I See Kashmir from New Delhi at Night” which appears in, which was published in 1997. Ali writes:

The city from where no news can come

Is now so visible in its curfewed night. (1-4)

Every citizen of this country has a right to say and do what one likes. But the discrimination which is politically and emotionally imposed on Kashmir prepares a state of India to stand against injustice. In 1990, when Kashmir tried to stand against political tyranny against it, all the Kashmir’s post offices were closed for seven months. No other state of India has faced this type of restriction.

This study aims to show injustice and step-motherly behavior towards Kashmir and its people, especially youth. Any movement by terrorists against the military was a terror for the people of that particular place. In the 1990’s when rebellion against India was on its peak, Indian government deployed thousands of troops to crush even any silent protest. The treatment of Indian army was so harsh against youth that they all started watching and reading things that were about rebellion like a novel, *Pahadon Ka Beta* about an Afghan boy who fought against Russians and movies like *Lion of the Desert*. Every boy of Kashmir started assuming himself as Farhad. Peer has shown in the novel that how a camp was set up near his village after a terrorist activity. The bullets and bunkers set on the windows of that camp were a symbol of Kashmiri’s feeling of otherness as well as treacherous behavior of the Indian government. The harsh treatment of the Indian army against Kashmiri set them as subalterns. The emotional trauma of losing friends (Kashmiri-Pandits), to see their vacant seats was not easy to bear for the small kids. An incident described by the novelist which he himself had gone through, an attack set by JKLF with the help of a man, Tonga of his village brought tears in the eyes of readers and fears to mind. Now how the novelist and his friends were treated at army camp after the attack is shocking and that led many young boys of his age to the path of terrorism. Examples of young boys like Tariq, Manzoor and hundreds of like them who joined terrorism or got killed after getting trolled at the hands of Indian army create a sense of disillusionment among the innocent kids. The incident of Bashir, a shopkeeper, a distant relative of writer brings sympathy for thousands of like him who have suffered at the hands of army check-post just because of terror in their minds. This clearly shows the bitter relationship of army and natives of J&K. the novel also brings out that how many a times young boys were treated like animals at army camps which cease their right to be treated like humans. The novelist tells that how Kashmir was abundant of stories of soldiers misbehaving with women during crackdowns. He explains that how being in Delhi, he realizes that there are various Indias that exist, one that is in Kashmir and other the place he opted after Kashmir and Aligarh. The incident of attack on novelists’ parents clearly shows that how in those tough times some people were targeting their own people for some petty reasons. Terrorist turned hardly seventeenth years old Afaq Shah, a boy from Srinagar in the 1990s, who became the suicide bomber, tells the need of attention towards those innocent kids getting detached from their lives as well a nation which took them as nothing. In chapter six, the writer tells that children born just before or after armed rebellion became too intimate with war and fear. The reference to short-story by Akhter Mohiuddin ‘The New Disease’ shows the pathetic state of mind of people who require ‘body search’ every time they see a gate. The doctor in the short story prescribed frisking every time to cure that new disease. Identity checks at every place made people habitual of the act

of frisking to remain in the terror of getting caught even without doing anything unlawful. The humiliation one has to go through at the hand of the military at every checking time was an addition to their trauma.

A young girl who hasn't even started her married life goes through the torture of gangrape by the army soldiers on the night she gets married in 90's in Chawalgam, was a nightmare for the Kashmiris. Mubeena Ghani was deserted by her in-laws. Living in the village of her in-laws with her husbands, Rashid and Mubeena get the nicknames as 'crossfire bride' and crossfire groom' by the villagers. The pain they have to go through is undescriptive. Description of torture place named as Papa-2 gives goosebumps to any person. The tragic-tales of Hussein, Ansar, Shafi and many more like them who lost hope of life after being into those torture room clearly shows that in the fit of curbing terrorism, the youth of J&K was destroyed. The cruelty to the extent that the private parts of these youngsters were mutilated led the Kashmiris to think that to what place they belong to. Such behavior towards the budding youth of J&K raised an existentialistic dilemma for the people of the state.

The unending tale of tragic past and present of J&K in this novel send a chill down the spine of the reader. This novel raises a question to what could be the outcome of the treatment of Indian politics including military against those harmless young boys and girls who have suffered and lost their mental stability in those attacks by terrorists as well as their own army. Throughout the novel, one feels a sense of loss. It seems as if the people of the state have lost their mental peace and have fallen into an era of disillusionment and despair. In those times, India has proved itself exactly like colonizer for J&K. This novel has brought out the real picture of chaos after 1989, unresolvable turmoil between army and civilians. Succeeding towards the end of the novel, the conversation between an army Officer from Haryana, who in discussion comes to know that the novelist is also from Delhi University, suddenly changes his tone and becomes friendly while discussing memories of campus and his college time. This incident brings a thing to the surface that it was the involvement of politics that made human a machine and brought bitterness in the relationship of people and the army. The novel highlights the point that Indian politics has given full chance to the terrorists as we separatist to possess the mind of youth and old of J&K. Instead of sustaining the faith of J&K in India, Indian army and politicians have created terror and hatred among innocent minds. They have left them crippled which they can never come off easily.

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The epigraph of Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night* (2008), from James Baldwin, leads us onto the story of Kashmir, chronicled by one of its own. Peer noticed changes in his small world: a militant was spotted with a Kalashnikov under his pheran; a teacher told them about the Indian freedom struggle and how students paid a high price; amid the death, fear and anger all around, young boys, including Peer, wanted to join militant groups. At home his grandfather confronted him with watery green eyes: "How do you think this old man can deal with your death?" In 1993, Peer was sent to Aligarh for further studies. Later, he went back home to write about Kashmir after stumbling into a bookshop in Delhi and seeing books from every conflict zone. Basharat Peer, an Indian author, has penned his poignant memoir, *Curfewed Night* where he flawlessly captures the conflicted as well as forgotten pain of the pastoral state of India through his childhood days till adulthood and the author has also captivated the strong sense of one's own "home" be it idyllic or broken or tortured. In *Curfewed Night* he draws a harrowing portrait of Kashmir and its people. Here are stories of a young man's initiation into a Pakistani training camp; a mother who watches her son forced to hold an exploding bomb; a poet who finds religion when his entire family is killed. Basharat Peer's poignant *Curfewed Night* is as much a chronicle of Kashmir's conflicted past and uncertain future as it is a love song to the paradise valley of his childhood. The book's relentless and breathless narrative is perhaps deliberate, maybe an attempt to drive home the urgency of the situation. After all, by most estimates, more than a hundred thousand lives have been lost since the inception of the conflict in the late 80s. Tragedy is! we are no more closer to a peaceful solution than we were at any point in the past. Peer recounts his relatively peaceful childhood in the early 80s in the idyllic northern state. Then, with the people's growing discontent with Indian governance, arrived the militant freedom fighter with his Kalashnikov and things were never the same since. The story *Curfewed Night* by Basharat Peer is about a young man and his journey through life during the separatist movement during the Kashmir war between Pakistan and India. This young man grows up to be a reporter in the city of Delhi after going to school and it is there that he acquires the ability to so adequately tell the story of Kashmir during one of the bloodiest conflicts that the world has ever seen. In the story the writer is telling a first-hand. *Curfewed Night* is a charged story that really shows the readers just how difficult and scary it was to be living in Kashmir during the India-Pakistan war. The story starts off with a short explanation of the rigged elections and corruption during the time that Kashmir was divided between India and Pakistan. It goes on to describe not.