

WRITING RESISTANCE: A STUDY OF BASHARAT PEER'S *CURFEWED NIGHT*

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ABSTRACT

The country of India celebrated the 67th year of independence in all its states, while Kashmir so called “crown of the nation” has been its consistent major dispute. Ever since Independence, the circumstances in the Kashmir valley have been problematic; and rapidly taking distorting shapes. In the past, there have been conflicts, clashes, violence, protests, etc. which are still ongoing, that resulted in the profuse bloodshed of innocents, civilians, militant/terrorists, and security forces etc. Such circumstances have triggered the war of resistance among the people of the state. This resistance movement came into being when the armed conflict burst out in late 20th century (1989), which alarmed the whole valley and gave a wakeup call to the people to resist brutalities of the Indian forces (as depicted in Peer's *Curfewed Night*). In such resistance mostly youth were ubiquitously seen busy in insurgencies, made easy targets by army forces and militants/guerrillas, and were interrogated, put behind the bars, and even exterminated (Waheed in *The Collaborator*). In effect, India has proved to be exactly the kind of coloniser in the postcolonial period that it shook off the existential status of Kashmiris. The author portrays that after 1989, the culture of Kashmir has been in an absolute chaos, and people have been observing this culture of peace fluctuating into culture of piece/violence. The study will enhance the understanding of Kashmir not just as bollywood or mainstream media always project it as beautiful and peaceful valley without problem, but also how the same valley got trapped in unresolvable turmoil between civilians and military.

KEYWORDS: Kashmir, Hegemony, Postcolonial, Resistance, Violence, *Curfewed Night*

INTRODUCTION

Resistance literature is turning out most advanced and topical form of literature in the postcolonial period. It is a tool globally employed by authors in various languages (from regional to international) to oppose the powers of the dominating colonies or nations. Resistance literature is actually the reflection of those voices raised by the oppressed, suppressed, or repressed communities against the dreadful rule of the tormentors. Resistance is an underground organisation engaged in a struggle for liberation in a country or state under military or totalitarian occupation.

In Kashmir, resistance literature has evolved in the recent years in the similar way as existing in other national and cosmopolitan states of the world. Such literature is turning out rich in the valley in both regional and International languages though contributing to the Indian English literature. Basharat Peer's personal memoir *Curfewed Night* is the primary literary (resistance) effort by any author hailing from the region of Kashmir. The work is the representation of the Kashmir valley, its culture and custom, trade and tradition, economy and commerce, life and death, pupil and people, situation and circumstance etc. It is author's reminiscence about the valley that used to be simple, sweet, pleasant and dazzling a few decades ago, and where all of a sudden everything else got changed, that resulted in the onset of ominous history. Chatterjee remarks that *Curfewed Night* is a love song to the lost paradise of author's childhood (02). It is the

depiction of the Kashmiri culture since the outbreak of the armed conflict in the late 20th century i.e. 1989. It reveals the anxiety of the natives, and their unfortunate halt due to ubiquitous disturbance. The portrayal of the events, episodes, incidents, and accidents etc are authentic and based on author's real life situations and first hand experiences. The memoir is a report of Kashmiri's ongoing conflict, since 1989 to the present, and its narrative goes through the expression of uncertain future of the valley. There is nothing like emotional or sentimental, self-pity or melodramatic in Peer's narrative; "His expression is frank, honest and unbiased" (Samad 01).

Curfewed Night is all about the youth of Kashmir who resist the hegemonic powers of Indian security forces. The forces have been dominating the people and depriving them of their rights. Such hegemony has given rise to the agonizing circumstances and created awareness among people to raise their voice against grotesque treatment of troops. The atmosphere of grief, terror, threat, misery, anguish etc caused to Kashmiris is well described through the narrative. The brutal torture caused both by security forces, paramilitary and militants have put natives on shocking brink. At present more than six lakh of Indian troops are scattered for the protection and safety of the people in the valley; but inhabitants never feel secured rather experience threat from such protectors. The breathless narrative of the author estimates that more than 70,000 lives have been lost, and about 8,000 have been disappeared since the inception of the conflict in 1989 to the present (Chaterjee 01). The profuse blood-shed has taken place in the valley that destroyed everything and dispossessed its inhabitants of everything like beauty, smile, talent, charm, genre, future, employment, trade, identity, etc though turned this so called Paradise into Hell. In his book *Kashmir Under Shade and Sunlight*, Tyndale Bisoece writes: "if the people of West would have faced what people of Kashmir have faced, they would have lost the virility" (qtd. in Fatima 01).

The delicate and personal touch to the work is that most of the author's friends fled to Pakistan to get trained there, and even the author himself wanted to pick-up the gun, and to support the resistance and liberation movement in his homeland, but his father's wisdom worked out and he fails to execute his plan of crossing the border. It has been so because the excesses of forces have been so extreme that it compelled civilians to follow the wrong path of picking gun and ammunition, and later in most cases these civilians have been labelled as terrorists. The people of Kashmir felt that their personal identity and social character have been at stake due to the extreme tortures of forces, so they preferred notorious way to defend atrocities and to get rid of such clout. The author feels traumatized by the gruesome state of affairs; and the threat that had been always haunting people about something unfavourable may take place at any unfortunate time. Thus agitated atmosphere erupted all over, and augmented restlessness among the people that they will encounter some violence or hostility. The fact behind any violence is that youth have been seen busy in rebellious activities, such as protest, stone-pelting, raising voices, showing aggression to security forces, usage of abusive and rough arguments, slogans, graffiti etc. The two nations Indo-Pakistan have been playing with the sentiments of the Kashmiri people. It is like a football which is kicked off from pole to post by these two nations for their personal benefits. Nobody cares of the collective consciousness of the people in Kashmir. Since partition both nations have been struggling to achieve this precious trophy and in such combat the damage is done to the people of Kashmir only.

The memoir *Curfewed Night* describes that the circle of violence/protest has taken a rapid and devastating shape when youth of the time began to idolize the freedom fighters, separatist leaders and resistant elites like Geelani, Mirwaiz, Shah, and Malik etc. whose liberation movement came into action in the 1990's turning out almost all natives towards this movement. In valley, the liberation and resistance movement is associated in two contrast ways: one is violent resistance, i.e. through guns/ammunition, protests, and stone-pelting etc; and another is peaceful resistance through pens, reading,

education, intellect, and discussions etc. These resistance movements are fought on political, military, diplomatic and domestic fronts. The motive behind such resistance and violence is to liberate the valley from the clutches of troops, and to crave for personal identity and self-determination. Right to self-determination has been the main issue that gives rise to every mishap and adverse state of affairs in the valley. And it is through this issue, the resistance literature got evolved among authors like Peer, Waheed, Kaul, Bashir, Kak, Ali etc in the state to write in International language to be heard by the external world. These authors have been employing resistance literature as a tool to raise their voice against tormenters.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus the memoir *Curfewed Night* is the representation of the Kashmir after the breakout of armed conflict. It is the portrayal of those events and episodes that took place in the personal life of the author. It depicts that the same narrative or same story which is deeply present in each and every Kashmiri. The book reveals the worsening condition of the Kashmir with the depiction of the imposition of cruelty and ruthlessness on civilians by security forces. It is more of commentary on the vicissitudes of human life and existence in the late 20th century. The book largely contributes to the body of Indian literature via resistance literature. Such literature is being written in abundance to protect people against atrocities and to knock down the illegitimate authority of hegemonic state in this postcolonial period. The issue of Kashmir is literally being discussed at national and international levels, from local tea shops to cosmopolitan cafeterias, from cinema theatres to dining tables, from classrooms to lecture halls, and from literary debates to political discussions etc. People in abroad nations have been busy in writing resistance, which is turning out to be a useful tool towards—if not freedom and liberation at least peace and tranquillity.

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