

Understanding Cultural Oppression and Misogyny Through Kashmir

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Abstract:

Kashmiri Pundit is not just a sect highlighted due to cinematic outburst recently; it's a long voyage of the residents of heaven on Earth who were born in beauty, brought up in harmony, and bestowed to communal discord and brutal massacre. This piece is to acknowledge their life and traditions rather than discussing the genocide and savagery committed by them. The lifestyle, customs, conventions, cuisines, festivals, and language along with their rich cultural heritage surmounts the much-needed attention since it is an indispensable part of our country and it accounts for our patriotic unity by overshadowing the severance of humanity through different separatist agendas. The real true stories of the women of Kashmir belonging to this sect will be awakening for the contemporary feminist and it will serve as a lifetime biography of the tenacity of womanhood and that gender as a whole. This today is the need of the hour to understand and propagated why this horrific tragedy happened by those who belong to the same state of the same country born out of the real struggle for independence of two hundred years and who ardently believe in “वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्-Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is a Sanskrit phrase which means "the world is one family”

Keywords: Kashmiri Pundits, Genocide, Cultural Heritage, Communal Discord, Traditions, Contemporary Feminism, etc

Discussion:

Kashmiri Pundit or Kashmiri Hindus?

Exodus or Genocide?

These are the prominent questions that occur when we talk about the people of Kashmir that were forced to dislocate or rather leave their birthplace only because of some unnatural emotions that were purely based on negativity and pessimism.

But today we need to know much more than just the barbaric and cold-hearted situations they had to encompass. Let's dive deeper into the real ethnicity of these people.

Kashmiri Pundits were originally people who lived in the Kashmir Valley which lies in the northernmost part of the Indian Sub-continent. The origin dates back to several centuries ago, the dialect is called Kashmiri and they followed Shaivism, which was a school of Hindu Philosophy. The language they spoke was Kashmiri which was Indo – Aryan language with its script. The festival of “KHEER BHAWANI” was celebrated with sheer enthusiasm where they worshipped goddess **Ragnya Devi**. There is a huge gathering of Hindus to celebrate this festival; the idol of the Devi is surrounded by a septagonal water body that changes its color supposedly. The shrine was built by Maharana Pratap

Singh of Jammu and Kashmir. It is also said that Ravana too worshipped Devi Ragnya and built a temple in Sri Lanka although the goddess was displeased by his ruthlessness so she escaped with the help of Hanuman. The night of escape is celebrated as “Ragnya Ratri”. It is symbolic of divinity discarding negative energies irrespective of the power it holds.

Apart from this, the festival of **Navreh** marks the beginning of the Hindu lunar calendar year. On this day the traditional rituals are followed by ending the day with a feast of local dishes. Shivratri is another major day of fiesta where everyone is engulfed with optimism and they observe a fast. The Prasad is relished in the form of aloo pancakes which to date is a well-renowned offering. A lot of Hindus celebrate the festival of Shivratri (Worshipping Lord Shiva) which is also known as Herath in Kashmir. Herath is also celebrated in lieu to show gratitude and seek blessings from the ancestors (The departed souls).

Hitherto, we looked upon some well known facts about the community let's dive deeper. The Kashmiri pundits are said to trace back their lineage to the 6th Century BCE. They are said to be the descendants of the original inhabitants of the Kashmir Valley. Art and culture have also left a great mark on our history. The language is known as “Koshur” has rich literary traditions. The famous Bilhana, Abhinavagupta, Kashmiri Pundit scholars, and poets like Kalhana (author of the "Rajatarangini"), and Lal Ded have created long-lasting effects on Kashmiri literature and philosophy.

There is a unique blend of Hindu-Islamic culture through the mystical Sufi chants and musical influence. A different synergy was created by the combination of Sufi saints and the Kashmiri residents which was praiseworthy. The term Sufi means “The man of the wool” in Arabic. This art was introduced in the 7th Century in the Kashmir Valley. The followers of this cult are as follows Kashmir are the Naqshbandi, the Qadris, the Suhrawardi, the Kubrawi, and the Rishis.

India is known for its smooth amalgamation of culture, festivals, cuisines, ethnicities, and languages. Kashmir is well known for its riveting food, Rogan Josh (Lamb Curry with a distinctive savory flavor), Dum Aloo (Potato blended with flavourful yogurt and spices), Yakhni (A very famous dish with a yogurt curry incorporating pieces of lams meat or chicken), Nadru Yakhni (lotus stems cooked with yogurt creating a remarkable memory) and last but not the least is the delightful Modur Pulao cooked with a touch of saffron and filled with the richness of dry fruits.

Saffron, dried ginger powder, fennel, and Kashmiri red chili powder are frequently used in Kashmiri Pundit cuisine to give the dishes their particular flavor. The Valley of Kashmir is also accredited with a GI (Geographical Identification) tag for its Kashmiri Saffron. There is an enormous amount of research done on the Kashmiri Genocide and the exodus thereafter but in this paper, we would delve deeper into the psyche of the perception of whole heart-wrenching tragedy on women through literary techniques and cinematic adaptations.

The departure caused a sense of rupture in Kashmir's social structure. Communities that had coexisted for generations were abruptly split apart, undermining their sense of reliance, togetherness, and trust. A divided and polarised society was a result of the decline in harmonious social relationships. Although the

social cohesion stepped up in an unwanted manner the coercion of women was not only abominable but excruciating at the same time.

In English Literature we have arguably formulated our conjectures wisely based on several theories. One such theory that explains the condition of women in Kashmir is the lack of “Intersectional Feminism”.

Intersectional feminism is the voice of those who have suffered multiple and continuous forms of atrocities to understand the depth of inequality. Here we are talking about Gender. During the time of insurgency in 1989 and even in the time of the brutal massacre of Kashmiri Hindus the role of gender shrieked inhumanity. The majority of the oppressors were male and where the male victims were killed or brutally butchered, the female body became merely an object. A myriad of heinous crimes were committed, rape being the most common felony.

As explained by Sigmund Freud, the concept of schaulust, Scopophilia is a phenomenon of deriving sexual pleasure by looking at objects of eroticism ranging from several fetishes to naked bodies as an alternative to the actual act of physical intimacy. This particular theory was amplified when almost every woman was subjected to violence in public and the destruction of their prestige was openly conducted by the so-called self-proclaimed liberators of Kashmir.

Innumerable mothers, sisters, daughters, and even newborns were harvested in the fire of feud that was a result of the concept of Toxic Masculinity in both mind and body. Literary theories are a reflection of society and such events show the mental level of the people who are easily influenced by their people.

The interpretation of the incidents and their brutalities are also delineated through cinematic adaptations. by the Hindi Film Industry. One of the finest examples is “Kashmir Files” a 2022 drama film that reiterated some horrific incidents before the exodus. The plot follows a Kashmiri Hindu council student, raised through his expatriated forefather and shielded from the expertise of the occasions of the death of his dad and mom. After his forefather's loss of life, the scholar, who had come to agree with at council that the outpour changed into benign, becomes pushed to find the records of his own family's deaths. The plot alternates between the scholar's hunt within the present time, 2020, and his family's travails of thirty instances ahead. The film was released in theatres on 11 March 2022.

A lot of other films have depicted the tumultuous life of the migrated Kashmiri Pundits or their day-to-day struggle for sustaining their breath. A few other Hindi Drama Films are Shikara (2020), Haider (2014), Pinjar (2003), and Mission Kashmir (2000). Different movies highlights d new struggle of the locals, especially women. The loss of the male member would bring the lady in charge all of sudden of herself along with her own family diminishing the concept of structural functionalism.

The theory of “Structuralism Functionalism” explains how men and women are trained to complement each other since childhood to create an amicable family unit. This theory failed maladroitly because the early anthropologist over-emphasized the work division of both gender failing to comprehend the “Other” gender as a surviving tribe.

Talcott Parson's concept of Qualities pushes the above theory concerning society. Parson said that boys are trained with Instrumental qualities where they are taught to be the breadwinners and girls simultaneously are taught Expressive qualities to be empathetic, laborious, and faithfully abiding. Both theories are another indication of the misery that suddenly was splashed on the women of Kashmir who had to escape anyhow to save themselves. Many of them still recollect the blood-tingling details of the elopement. Several interviews, biographies, and movies are evidence of it.

Kashmir has an awe-inspiring origin. Kashmir, formerly known only as the Kashmir Valley, now refers to the entire extension, including the Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh Autonomous Regions, Pakistan-administered Azad Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, extending to Aksai Chin. Territory controlled by Trans-Karakorum China. Hinduism and Buddhism originated in Kashmir in the first half of the millennium, followed by Shaphism in the ninth century. Islamization of Kashmir and Muslim rule beginning in 1339 dominated the region for five centuries, from the 13th to the 15th century. A little fact about Jammu and Kashmir is that Emperor Jahangir nicknamed it Paradise on Earth.

If we talk about the modern day Kashmir we would look into the very soul of Individuality and brotherhood. The art and culture of this heavenly place is as old as its lineage. The paintings of Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu are primarily called as Pahari paintings and they are in miniature form. These pahari paintings are clearly divided in two art forms, Basoli and Kullu style.

The traditional music of Kashmir is beautiful blend of cultures be it Hindu, Muslim and Buddhists, displaying the prominence of the three when they gained acceptance. Although Kashmiri demography is currently Islamic but its roots lies in the highest degree of Brahmins called Sarasvat Brahmins. The gradual transitioning of the population through different mode and means of belief system has led to the current residency of Kashmir.

Talking about music, Chakri is popular form of music. It is a well-liked kind of Kashmiri and Jammu traditional music. This song is performed by Kashmiris who are both Hindu and Muslim as a component of folklore and religious ceremonies. The responsorial song style known as chakri is sometimes employed for narrative purposes. Similar musical instruments are used as events, including the rubab, harmonium, sarangi, nout, geger, chimta, and tumbaknaer. A quick note sequence called rouf is performed to end a chakri. During Kashmiri wedding Henna evenings, this type of music is played.

Apart from Chakri there are other forms of traditional music such as:

Ladishah (social and political views are portrayed through sarcasm), Henzae (Kashmiri pundits perform these during festivals), Wanvun (It literally means Chorus and it's a style of singing), Surma (Performed to display the sentiments of a newly married bride whose groom has gone on war), Bakhan (It is performed without the use of any musical instruments), Wuegi-Nachun (This is a feeble known dance form performed by Kashmiris after a wedding ceremony) , etc.

The name Acharya Charaka, a traveling monk, author, and editor of the well-known Charaka Samhita, founder of Ancient Ayurveda, and appropriately known as the Father of Indian Medicine, is highly regarded in the medical community. He explained the basics of human anatomy, researched the origins

of illnesses, provided advice on how to stay healthy, and had a thorough understanding of the medications that may treat a wide range of disorders. In the world of Ayurveda, he was undoubtedly a brilliant light. In ancient India, Charaka was born about 600 BCE. He was a Kashmiri by birth.

Although despite the beauty and invigorations of sentimental unity this place has seen major bloodshed which totally unwanted and borne to hatred and malice of some hideous minds. It cannot be ignored how major residents were forced to seek shelter somewhere else despite their birth right on the land. It is still recorded on various social media sites through interviews of those survivors who despite of losing their identity and families created a new one fighting through the resistance of the inner self who did not succumb to defeat.

Some people ask why all the Kashmiri Hindu belong to Brahmin Caste, not all but the majority of them were Brahmins because the rest of the others were converted by the tyrants. Without sowing the seed of Islam phobia I would like to highlight the rich culture of the Kashmir's oppressed locals who were denied justice despite the axiomatic clues of savagery against them

Conclusion:

Life can bring unprecedented circumstances that leave a lifelong impact or permanent changes in and out in mind, body and soul. The plight of Kashmiri pundits is not inconspicuous for the entire nation. Reminiscing the sacrifice of those families and the tough survival of others can only give them recognition but keeping the lineage of their culture and ethnicity can be done only by highlighting the culture and lifestyle of the origin. This paper is not to evoke hatred or negativity towards a certain community, caste or person it is a way to bring the pain and plight of those people, the women flag bearers of strength of Kashmir who lost their life or dignity and the reason behind such status of women under one umbrella. The literary techniques used in the paper are well researched and aptly apply to the condition.

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