
BEYOND THE PRISM OF THE “BEAUTIFUL” – A KASHMIR NARRATIVE THROUGH GENDER-LENS

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Abstract

Appearances are mostly deceptive and Kashmir is not an exception. The Green Valley of dreams, that was once as peaceful as sleep, is now a hub of violence and deaths. Amidst political altercations and physical rampage, the lives of the Kashmiri women have been affected badly. There are so many cases of violence, sexual harassment, and rapes against the daughters of Eve. The number of half-widows has risen in recent times. Amidst all this, the forgotten struggles of these women never come into the light.

Through lay eyes on I Shine: Narratives of Kashmir's girls and kids, author Freny Manecksha compels the audience to look beyond the prism of the “beautiful”, while herself holding on to the thread of conflict to bring out the feminine voices from inside geographical area. The book explores the ways in which within which conflict has affected Kashmiri girls and kids.

Journalist Freny Manecksha has been visiting geographical area for years currently and also the book was a results of all her visits and interactions with the locals, especially women. Her book documents stories of ladies from the slim lanes of Srinagar to the hillsides of geographical area. The book permits girls to be the speakers and may be perceived as authentic initial hand accounts.

Keywords: *half-widows, prism, conflict zone, female voice.*

Moving on the far side male voices, many ladies writers have begun seeing the geographical area conflict through gender-sensitive lens with the aim to target the struggles of ladies and kids of the restive Himalayan Valley. One such writer is Freny Manecksha, an independent journalist from the Indian city of Mumbai.

She has been covering Kashmir since 2010. She felt the difference between seeing Kashmir from Mumbai and seeing Kashmir from Kashmir. Freny's debut non-fiction work Behold, I Shine is

based on narratives of the Kashmiri women and children whose lives have been ruptured by militarization in post-1989 Kashmir.

In the pre-militancy days, she had visited the Kashmir Valley as a student and also a trekker. Her frequent visits to Kashmir since last seven years, as a journalist, have improved her understanding of Kashmir's political landscape, social issues and cultural milieu. By Freny's own admission, the 2010 summer uprising in Kashmir and the cruel plight of many single women, widows and half-widows, "brought about a quantum shift in my perceptions of the region (Kashmir)."

"The ever-increasing toll of fatalities—largely of youth—made me very uneasy. Were these young boys and even some girls actually being paid by Pakistan—as the Indian government claimed—to throng the streets, throw stones and get killed?....," she writes in the preface of her book. Finally, a fellow journalist Dilnaz Boga convinced Freny to land in Kashmir.

The book presents emotions in an elaborate way whereas maintaining a print media distance. In giving area to a Gujjar girl UN agency was raped, the book manages to picture the complexity of reporting an act of sexual violence at the hands of state forces. She (Pakeeza) may solely make sure that it absolutely was the maize gathering season. This is indicative of however tough it's to document incidents of violence inside communities that record events not per a western calendar however by keeping track of nature's cycles.

Pakeeza told United States that she had been creating tea for 2 of her husband's relatives- believed to be militants- once they saw troops approaching and ran away. Pakeeza aforementioned she had no recollection of what ensued. In her words she 'lost consciousness'.

Soon after, a security cordon was enforced round the space, making it difficult for her to venture out and record the crime. She recounted that some days later, a senior army officer had offered the family a sum of 5,00,000 in exchange for silence; they were also assured that perpetrators would be suspended. This supporting of cash was a distrustful exercise in manipulation whereby a poor family's sense of honour was commodified. It created a marital discord. Abstract

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“Beautiful” and “conflict zone” – are 2 descriptions that are similar to geographical area. Through lay eyes on *I Shine: Narratives of Kashmir's girls and kids*, author Freny Manecksha compels the audience to look beyond the prism of the “beautiful”, while herself holding on to the thread of conflict to bring out the feminine voices from inside geographical area. The book explores the ways in which within which conflict has affected Kashmiri girls and kids.

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In a comparatively conservative society of geographical area, talk about something remotely associated with sex is tabooed. Having anyone to speak concerning sexual violence are will be terribly tough here and it often needs plenty of trust building. It is during this state of affairs that Pakeeza and plenty of girls like her are expected to recount their experiences of sexual violence. In turn, she believed that the error was hers for the militants were from their community.

"How will she grapple with, not solely the act[rape], but also the violence of the society that shames her, the victim?"

"How does she remain true to herself and her story when the sections of the society have already stigmatised her – viewing her as 'ruined', or having brought the crime upon herself?"

"How will she elucidate the sexual details once she comes from a society wherever such speak is taken into account inappropriate?"

The author finds the simplest way of managing this by deciphering their expressions and visual communication. One cannot facilitate however appreciate the approach the author tries to bring into image the community that has long been seen with suspicion by Kashmiris. The community of Gujjars is believed to be nearer to the military and CRPF and their allegiance is often questioned.

Any account of violence against girls in geographical area is incomplete while not the mention of the battles of Association of oldsters of Disappeared (APDP) and [*fr1] widows. These are the ladies WHO were compelled to get out of their homes, typically against their can. They are fighting a battle which will hardly have any closure. The bitter truth remains that the state will never do enough to grant them justice.

The book conjointly traces stories of youngsters throughout their early life and their brush with conflict. They have reminiscences of burnt homes and crackdowns wherever the military would ransack their homes and trample their toys. For Nayeem, the reminiscences are embedded on his hand within the type of a missing thumb. He was livid from AN explosive that was lying around; he picked it up, excited at having discovered one thing uncommon.

Woven around the thread of conflict, the book however fails to dissect it from different angles. The literature together with the media news nowadays ignores the actual fact the conflict isn't a 1 sided facet. It involves multiple players and therefore the civilians are largely caught in between. The book makes mentions the violence suffered at the hand of the military, the police and the CRPF, all of whom she refers to as "security forces", but fails to mention atrocities committed by people who claim to be fighting for the reason for azaadi.

The book's obscurity queries the premise of armed struggle and thereby takes with a kind of acceptance to that. On one occasion it will embody a lady WHO was kidnapped and raped by militants. The author ignores the truth that in the first 90's several took up arms to fight the state however concluded up victimization it for his or her personal gains of sinking scores with people they had personal conflicts with. The shadow of the gun was conjointly wont to produce marital status alliances that I see nothing but rapes.

Just as reportage a case of violence by "security forces" is as a result of the exemption they will afford, the violence by non state actors too remains gruelling because of invisible impunity they enjoy. Conflict additionally embroils matters because the victim is often checked out with a degree of mistrust.

The truth remains that the civilian population suffers in multiple ways in which together with sexual violence against girls. This violence remains for the most part unsupported and doesn't realize a platform in books like this that intends to inform the stories of girls in conflict. The book gives a passing reference to the story of Kashmiri Pundits in a footnote, and a mention of the abduction and killing of a Kashmiri Pundit woman Sarla Bhat. The inclusion of a lot of incidents concerning the community would have provided a holistic image of violence against girls.

In the chapter "Josh tha, Jawan thay", the author records Zamruda Habib describe that they (Kashmiri women demanding azadi) would welcome militants and show their support by washing their clothes and providing logistical support. Others maintain that not all would welcome the militants and instead had no selection however to let within the men with guns in their hands. Zamruda who believed in empowering women to decision-making positions during college days, first became publicly vocal about gender rights after an incident of dowry harassment. As a

reader, this premise makes ME uncomfortable, as gender based mostly problems square measure created subservient to the struggle for azadi and therefore the author doesn't build a trial to give credence to dissenting voices.

The book thus navigates the violence against girls from a singular perspective that's political in nature and a restricted understanding of gendered violence. Let's figure conflict from geographical area for the sake of an assumption, would Kashmiri girls are in a very higher place within the society? And till azadi happens, is violence and harassment of girls getting to stay untold? The book does not answer these questions.

“Has militarization eroded the cultural matrix (of Kashmir)?” the author asks. During 90's and later, additionally to social control, the militants tried compressing the meeting areas for girls further, by movement down the salons and cinemas. The Dukhtaran-e-Millat tried imposing Hijab by offensive girls with uncovered heads with ink. While the latter finds a mention within the book, the previous is omitted.

The book interweaves the Sufi tradition of geographic area and ladies finding a socialisation house in shrines. Following young designer, Mahum Shabir, the author documents the inside of shrines and observes women spending time there without the fear of aggression. The shrines give Mahum a space “to just be”, a conjecture that the author seems to generalise. The shrines, no matter how liberal, still fail in proving a flexible and non restrictive space to women. The entry in itself means that acceptance of an explicit codification and there's no scope of entomb gender interactions. A hearty laughter therein closed house is enough to draw in attention judgemental appearance. That is not generally a characteristic of an area wherever girls will expect to be United Nations agency they're.

Towards the tip of the book could be a chapter that talks concerning hijab and the way girls have become a lot of assertive in their selections relating to hijab. The book builds the narrative around stories shared by six girls, 5 of United Nations agency wear hijab of their own can and one doesn't. The author believes the group's option to be representative of girls declarative management over their dressing that could be a gross generalisation. In most components of Srinagar and mostly in rural areas of geographic area, dressing and morality are still closely linked and women do not have complete agency when it comes to their attire. Choice of dressing isn't restricted to oldsters acceptive their daughter's means of dressing, it is also about the society shaming women on the basis of their clothing.

Behold, I Shine is as topical as it is significant. And more than anything else, it celebrates the spirit of womanhood and is a call for empathy with our fellow countrymen and women.

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