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**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 youngsters, 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 among geographic region. The book explores the ways that during which conflict has affected Kashmiri girls and youngsters.

Journalist Freny Manecksha has been visiting geographic region for years currently and therefore 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 geographic region. The book permits girls to be the speakers and may be perceived as authentic initial hand accounts.

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

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Moving on the far side male voices, many ladies writers have begun seeing the geographic region conflict through gender-sensitive lens with the aim to concentrate on the struggles of ladies and youngsters 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 elaborately whereas maintaining a print media distance. In giving house to a Gujjar girl World Health Organization 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 had been the maize harvest home season. This is indicative of however tough it's to document incidents of violence among communities that record events not per a western calendar however by keeping track of nature's cycles.

Pakeeza told North American country that she had been creating tea for 2 of her husband's relatives- believed to be militants- after 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 implemented round the space, making it difficult for her to venture out and record the crime.

In a comparatively conservative society of geographic region, talk of anything remotely related to sex is tabooed. Having anyone to speak concerning sexual violence are {often|will be|is|may be} terribly tough here and it often needs tons of trust building. It is during this state of affairs that Pakeeza and plenty of girls like her area unit 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 only 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 way of coping with this by deciphering their expressions and visual communication. One cannot facilitate however appreciate the means 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 usually questioned.

Any account of violence against ladies in geographic region is incomplete while not the mention of the battles of Association of oldsters of Disappeared (APDP) and [\*fr1] widows. These ar the ladies UN agency were compelled to go out of their homes, often against their will. They are fighting a battle which will hardly have any closure. The bitter truth remains that the state will ne'er do enough to provide them justice.

The book conjointly traces stories of youngsters throughout their childhood and their brush with conflict. They have recollections of burnt homes and crackdowns wherever the military would ransack their homes and trample their toys. For Nayeem, the recollections ar embedded on his hand within the kind of a missing thumb. He was disabled from associate degree 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 very fact the conflict isn't a 1 sided side. It involves multiple players and therefore the civilians ar principally 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 those who claim to be fighting for the reason behind azaadi.

The book obscurity queries the premise of armed struggle and thereby takings with a kind of acceptance to that. On one occasion it will embody a lady UN agency was kidnapped and raped by militants. The author ignores the fact that in the first 90's several took up arms to fight the state however all over up exploitation it for his or her personal gains of sinking scores with people they had personal conflicts with. The shadow of the gun was conjointly accustomed produce married alliances that I see nothing but rapes.

Just as reportage a case of violence by “security forces” is as a result of the freedom they'll afford, the violence by non state actors too remains gruelling because of invisible impunity they

enjoy. Conflict any embroils matters because the victim is usually checked out with a degree of mistrust.

The truth remains that the civilian population suffers in multiple ways that together with sexual violence against ladies. This violence remains for the most part unregistered and doesn't realize a platform in books like this that intends to inform the stories of ladies 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 additional incidents concerning the community would have provided a holistic image of violence against ladies.

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 alternative 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 Pine Tree State uncomfortable, as gender primarily based problems square measure created subservient to the struggle for azadi and also the author doesn't build a shot to give credence to dissenting voices.

The book thus navigates the violence against ladies from a singular perspective that's political in nature and a restricted understanding of gendered violence. Let's deduct conflict from geographic area for the sake of an assumption, would Kashmiri ladies are during a higher place.

in the society? And till azadi happens, is violence and harassment of girls about 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 mobilisation, the militants tried compressing the socializing areas for girls yet, by move down the salons and cinemas. The Dukhtaran-e-Millat tried implementing Hijab by offensive ladies with uncovered heads with ink. While the latter finds a mention within the book, the previous is skipped over.

The book interweaves the Sufi tradition of geographical area and girls finding a socialisation house in shrines. 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 suggests that acceptance of an exact code and there's no scope of repose gender interactions. A hearty laughter therein closed house is enough to draw in

attention judgemental appearance. That is not usually a characteristic of an area where ever ladies will expect to be World Health Organization they're.

Towards the tip of the book could be a chapter that talks concerning hijab and the way ladies are getting a lot of assertive in their decisions relating to hijab. The book builds the narrative around stories shared by six ladies, 5 of World Health Organization 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 geographical 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 method of dressing, it is also about the society shaming women on the basis of their clothing.

The book concludes with a quote by Essar Batool, "...I will save myself," that's that absolutely the opposite to Zamruda's approach considering her compromise in acceptive Hurriyat's superiority in decision making. 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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