

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**CHRONICLE OF DISPLACEMENT, ALIENATION AND OPPRESSION OF WOMAN
IN *THE COLLABORATOR* BY MIRZAWAHEED**

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Abstract

Violence has always been an inseparable part of literature ever since its origin. Every age's major or minor work somehow incorporated violent elements in them. Be it any ancient text or any modern or postmodern ones, each of which is replete with bloodshed and bloody pursuits. This holds true to the fiction written on protracted Kashmir conflict by indigenous Kashmiri writers. Kashmir is an apple of discord between India and Pakistan since 1947. The conflict took a heavy toll on the lives of Kashmiris. It has jeopardized the lives of people caught midst of the conflict. Due to unending violence, there are thousands of deaths and thousands others are displaced and imprisoned. The fiction on Kashmir is filled with the elements of bloodshed, violence and psychic trauma. It also portrays the pangs, agonies and tragedies of daily lives of Kashmiris living under the repressive mechanism of power and militarization. This paper would aim at foregrounding the alienation and displacement as an after-effect of violence by taking up the novel of Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator*. It would also portray the

oppression of woman under this unending Kashmir conflict.

Keywords: Alienation, Displacement, Oppression, Psychic Trauma, Patriarchy.

The Kashmir's conflict has stirred the imagination of numerous writers of the past and also the present all over the world. The indigenous Kashmiri writers are no exception to this. Having been born and growing amidst of the conflict, they have presented their firsthand experience of the conflict quite succinctly. The prominent among the indigenous voices are Mirza Waheed, Shahnaz Bashir, Siddhartha Gigoo, Rahul Pandita and Feroz Rather. All of them portrayed the pain and agonies in a language which is not their own so as to reach out to the world. By doing this, they became the voice of otherwise voiceless Kashmiri people.

Having been born and brought up in Kashmir, Mirza Waheed knows the conflict of Kashmir pretty well. As being the native of Kashmir, Mirza Waheed portrayed lived

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experience of Kashmir conflict and the prevailing violence in his novel *The Collaborator* Published in 2012. In *The Collaborator* is a true representation of the traumatic experience, of the ensuing conflict, faced by the people of Kashmir. The novel is divided into three major parts. The 1st part gives an account of the events of past and the present and the sufferings and agony the narrator's family went through being left alone in the village of Nowgham. The second part is about the routine crackdowns and nocturnal raids. The third and the final part is about the relationship between the unnamed narrator and captain Kadian.

The repercussions of these protracted conflicts are heart rending and blood curdling. The ugly war leads to routinely encounters, crackdowns and inhumanely torture. The unending conflict leads to marginalization, sub-ordination and alienation of people in Kashmir. All this is depicted poignantly in *The Collaborator* by Waheed. Due to this conflict the people had been displaced from their own home. There were constant crackdowns, routinely raids and torture in the village of Nowgham. This unending cycle of violence left the villagers of Nowgham restless and mentally traumatized. They often forgot sleeping after hearing the voice of shelling and gunshots. In order to save them and their children, the people of Nowgham fled from their village and took refuge in the other places. They don't want to see the beheading of their children like Farooq who

has been tortured and then killed brutally by Indian Army. Even the village's headman couldn't persuade them to stay. Then narrator's four friends Gul, Mohd, Ashfaq and Hussain left the desolated village of Nowgham where now he can only listen the reverberating sound of their childhood. Now the only family left in the deserted village is of narrator's. "All the boys are gone, gone, no one left in the village. It's empty now all empty!" (24)

The displacement depicted in the novel is not only a physical but also a mental displacement. The continuous skirmishes have destroyed the people's lives. People have not only been displaced from their native village but they were also displaced from their central point of thinking: Before the beginning of this conflict the people in Kashmir were happy and were living a balanced life without any conflict in their psyche but with the onset of this ugly war there is a sudden tumult in their psyche and their mental balance has completely been shaken and in most instances has been disheveled. They are unable to fathom as to what a terrible curse has befallen them.

The conflict led the young Kashmiri boys joining indigenous or foreign militant groups. This soul tiring conflict and the proxy war in Kashmir has displaced young Kashmiri boy from the warmth of their cozy rooms to the cold and lonely rooms of the horrible dungeons or tough terrain of mighty Himalayan Mountains. Hundreds of young boys have fled from their villages to join one or the other militants groups to

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fight for their freedom. This is best depicted in one of the paragraph of the novel below: "My friends, all of my friends went away too and God only knows if they will ever come back"(6-7). Also here: "It's all happening, dear, happening everywhere.....the story of the sixteen boys (some said twenty, some thirty) who had apparently disappeared together"(256).

Amidst all this chaos and tumult of violence and the disappearance of almost all of his friends and other families, the narrator has been alienated. In this desolate valley, the voice of narrator is fraught with resignation, deadness and desperation. This deadly and divested valley's alienation is crippling him. The nature of his job made him traumatized and he has lost the complete sense of the world and is a fanatic now. He is sagging under the burden of the guilt of the only person in the village working for the Army. He has been waiting tirelessly for his friends in the valley where now only the phantom traces are present. His alienation is perpetuated when he got no traces of his friends.

Seeing this pathetic and frightful condition all around, he kept on slipping in this pit of alienation that makes him a fanatic who often indulges in day dreaming now. He is isolated and indecisive. Alone now, he is contemplating whether to join militancy or to remain with Kadian for whom he harbors great contempt. He wakes up and sobs in the loneliest hour of the night with a dread and then unable to fall asleep. This loneliness and consistent

isolation makes him nostalgic and he starts reminiscence about the glorious past. In the chapter "Hussain and I", the narrator portrays the past memories of the narrator and his friend Hussain when they both were together and when both of them would enjoy walking up the hills. About their bond the narrator says" we carried on a bond of togetherness, of closeness having being made the only confidant". (256)

..."But here i am, in my valley, and here are these poor fellows, lost forever, murdered, beyond grief, beyond redemption, beyond brutality. Here i still am, unable to decide what to do now. Do i run away, flee with Ma and Baba, cross into Pakistan finally, or try to bury these old boys -one by one, part by part, limb by limb, smile by smile, grin by grin." (213-214)

The memory of Hussain often hovers around him and pinches him and the place where he is standing now is replete with the ruins. He is surrounded by the dead bodies of his own people and he is quite afraid and uncertain of finding his friend in those corpses which makes him sad:

.... "this is the place , this place that you have turned into a ghostly graveyard , it glowed with the warmth of my friends around the alawaa of our childhood. . .where i now stand

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surrounded by men departed long ago and recent : fathers, brothers, husbands, lovers, sons, cousins, and uncles and friends and mates , all dispersed rubbish-like in your playground" (249)

More than anyone else women are the worst sufferer of this conflict. In a patriarchal society an ensuing conflict has doubly oppressed the already oppressed woman. Nitasha Kaul in this regard writes:

"The women of Kashmir are in the tens of thousands of widows and half-widows; wives of killed and disappeared men; as well as mothers and grandmothers of missing children. Vulnerable, often impoverished, the sorrow, struggles and humiliation of these women of Kashmir are a catalogue of charges against the occupation of Kashmir." (Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir, 253).

The Collaborator by Waheed depicts the pathetic tales of women's suffering. In the novels there are certain scenes where the sufferings of women are presented with pathos .For example during the Governor visits to Nowgham village, on the occasion of Indian Republic, we see the menstruating woman crying. They were made to stand during the chilling cold of November.

The conflict takes a heavy toll on the women living midst of it because of their vulnerability. The violence committed on their bodies includes sexual assault like rape. According to Amnesty International, "In Jammu and Kashmir, rape is practiced as part of a systematic attempt to humiliate and intimidate the local population during counter-insurgency operations" (Jahangir 4).There's a village called Kunanposhpora where 40 women were raped by Forces. In presenting the sufferings of women , Mirza Waheed creates a group of women hailing from Poshpur , who he named as "Milk Beggars" .Having been under the prolonged curfew ,these women stopped lactating because of which their children are hungry so they came to Nowgham in search of milk . These women represent the helplessness of women under curfews.

There is perpetual silence of women in the novel as can be seen through narrator's mother who doesn't talk except for some rarest occasion when she is angry. She wants to leave the village but the patriarchal set up of her family and society prohibits from doing what she wants. Also, when he visits Shaban Khatana house, it is the males of the house who do all the talking.

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village but the patriarchal set up of her family and society prohibits from doing what she wants. Also, when he visits Shaban Khatana house, it is the males of the house who do all the talking. Extremist militants group wanted to enforce an Islamic code of behavior. They attacked the women who didn't want to conform to their rules. The forces don't either treat women well, while on the look for militants with captain Kadian, Dasrath Singh kicks a pregnant woman in her belly, who gave birth to a baby with fractured limbs. The narrator's mother is one of the many women living under the shadow of suppression.

Conclusion:

The Kashmir Imbroglia has divested the lives of the people living there .The enormity of the violence rendered people traumatized and consequently the identity of Kashmiris is hugely impacted. The sordid picture of unending conflict has been portrayed poignantly in the fiction. *The Collaborator* by Mirza Wahid presents the individual and the collective consciousness of Kashmiris living midst of the conflict. It presents horrific tales of agony and pain with heart rendering scenes from the lived experiences. *The Collaborator* is a multi-faceted text presenting plethora of aspects of the conflict thus becomes the true representative of the conflict.

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