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Khushboo Ramzan
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of
English, Desh Bhagat
University, Mandi Gobindgarh,
Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab,
India

Trauma: Source of neurosis and resistance: A study of the garden of solitude

Khushboo Ramzan

Abstract

Trauma is a psychological response to a horrible event or a dreadful incident, be it a war, conflict, or natural disaster. Trauma is a condition when someone goes through an accident and, is in denial to accept reality. Some of these signs found among people include flashbacks, recollection of memories, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts. The deterioration of mental balance and becoming a victim of depression and diseases like neurosis. However, the term neurosis was given by William Cullen and redefined by Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. Thus, neurosis is the major outcome of trauma.

Siddhartha Gigoo is an Indian writer, filmmaker, and author of two books of fiction. *The Garden of Solitude* is the writer's debut novel along with his novel *The Fistful of Earth*. He is the first person who raised his voice for Kashmiri Pandits and openly point out the issues of Pandits. The proposed analysis aims at looking at Siddhartha Gigoo's novel *The Garden of Solitude* from the point of view of Trauma and Memory. The novel's major themes are the exodus, exile, loss of culture, and ethnic cleansing of Pandits. On the other hand, the politics of violence in Kashmir started in the early 1990s and the situation in Kashmir led to an exodus of the Pandit Community. He has beautifully managed to pen down the suffering of his community through his works Short Stories, and other works as well. The paper offers a deep insight through textual references and gives vivid detail of the Pandit exodus through the prism of psychoanalytic theory.

Keywords: Conflict, brotherhood, exodus, pain, the nineties, bloodshed, Muslims, refugee camps

Introduction

Over a hundred years the theories of psychoanalysts have found dissimilarities between Traumatic neurosis and another form of neurosis. The root cause of traumatic neurosis is an external event, in contrast, neurosis is caused by an internal event. They are the outcome of conscious and unconscious imagination. When a person undergoes psychic experiences, which can be repressed or denied, defense mechanisms protect the psyche from trauma but indulge in the formation of neurotic symptoms. Freud's analysis and differentiation between Actual neurosis and Psychoneurosis. Psychoneurosis by contrast is the outcome of past events and psychological conflicts involving the unconscious. The theory is quite applicable to the novel in which psychological trauma is visible through the characters.

The title "*The Garden of Solitude*" itself states Kashmir is a beautiful garden amalgamated with two communities sharing culture, customs, and language with different religious beliefs. Centuries-old clans and communities sharing the same land together like brethren lend a helping hand in the highs and lows, shared festivals, sorrows, and happiness marked as "Kashmiriyat."

Kashmir's most revered 14th-century Sufi Saint "Lal Ded" is revered as pious by both Hindus and Muslims and has mentioned Kashmiriyat in her Wakhs:

"Shiva abides in all that is, everywhere

Then do not distinguish between a Hindu and Musalman.

If thou art wise, know thyself
That is true knowledge of the Lord.
I gave up falsehood, deceit, untruth,
I saw the one in all fellow beings
and preached the same doctrine to the mind.

(Lal Ded qtd in Zutshi 22)

Corresponding Author:
Khushboo Ramzan
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of
English, Desh Bhagat
University, Mandi Gobindgarh,
Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab,
India

Siddharth Gigoo's novel is the story of a boy birthed in the pre-insurgency period of Kashmir. The period amidst uneasiness, nervousness, and fears, who live in circumstances of uprooted sensibility and delicacy. Sridar, who is the protagonist of the novel, illustrated as a writer, reconstructs the castles of civilization by recalling the earliest impressions on his mind, and by recounting the changing destinies of the people of his community.

The narrative of life-long physical, spiritual, and mental troubles that were fixed for the Pandit community. It begins with the governmental precariousness and unreliability of constant Indo-Pak conflict culminating in the explosive and violent outbreak of the 90s of the 20th century. The violent phase of Kashmir politics had hardly ushered in 1990 when the governor of Jammu and Kashmir was Jagmohan, the section of Pandits who are forced to leave Kashmir left the valley in utter confusion. Without any point of disembarkation, the section of the community got temporary camps in the hot deserted lands of Jammu; only some well to do people made it to get settled in New Delhi and other areas. The infants and the toddlers knew nothing about the catastrophic change of place, but men and women were left in hopeless circumstances. The difficulty of people of the community who had no government jobs and wholly depended on their land and little resources from their shop-keeping lost even the means of livelihood.

The miserable and poverty-stricken people of the distressed community braved the sternness of the climate with the hope that the violent diplomacy would soon end and the central government would support them and make adequate arrangements for their livelihood and shelter. The authorities keep on changing, but the list of words remained constant. The children who grew up in entirely brutal circumstances were convinced that they belong to a peaceful land that was known for a culture of five thousand years. The accounts of the previous life and shared past, repeated infinite times by the elders to the juniors, aimed at creating an escape from reality and protecting them from torments of trauma to foster the sense of being rooted. It has been stated in the book *Trauma and Recovery*:

The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma. People who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy. When the truth is finally recognized, survivors can begin their recovery (Herman 1).

Siddhartha Gigoo wanted to convey the suffering of the Pandit community to the world of which they were unaware. Two decades have passed, and still, people are not fully aware that this minor section was living in Kashmir along with Muslims. What was dealt with them? It was his duty to convey to the people what happened twenty years ago. He was the first person to raise his voice and describe his pain. Kashmir belonged to the Pandits, where they were living with Muslims for centuries, how they were evicted from Kashmir, separated from their motherland and left behind their memories. It was not easy for them to leave Kashmir, and the emotional and mental struggle of leaving the valley led them to many mental diseases, and disorders, including mental trauma and neurosis. Trauma, as defined by American Psychological Association (APA), is an event beyond the normal human experience, and literature on

trauma is written to retell the experience to make it real to the community and individual as it is mentioned in the book *On Trauma and Traumatic Memories*, "Trauma is inherently linked to any form of ingurgitated violence; people have tendencies to regurgitate what they have witnessed or experienced. Intellectuals in general and writers in particular find refuge in their texts. (Majoul 11). Siddhartha Gigoo through his main character Sridhar, and his family, have delineated the torment of the Pandits. Sridhar experiences on his own how terrorism, protest, and the fight for freedom emerged in the valley. It is assumed the author portrays his own story through his central protagonist in a way he is the mouthpiece of the author. Earlier he had a peaceful life in Kashmir and how it changed in Jammu after the uprising of militancy. He has acquainted with the pain that Pandits went through when they had to stay in tents under the scorching sun in Jammu. The endless waiting and yearning to go back is the manifestation of pain and trauma. The loss and the deprivation that the community undergoes are not material loss only but include psychological loss. The novel *The Garden of Solitude* showcases the hardships and loss of the people as it says: 'We lost everything, our house, our shop, and our orchard,' she sobbed while stirring a bowl of rice on the stove. They had to flee in the dead of the night when their neighbours warned them of a threat to Pandits and advised them to leave. The woman said that she had not even washed the utensils the previous night." The little girl played tirelessly the whole day and created a din in the dormitory. The little girl's mother told her they would have to leave again. 'We have to go and see grandpa at his house,' she said to the girl. 'But, mommy, you said the same thing in our house. mother scolded her. 'Have patience. Tomorrow, we will leave,' she comforted the girl (Gigoo 69).

The scene symbolizes the determination and hopes to return to their home where their belonging is scattered. It is evident something inside them is alive, it is a hope to go back. The men and women were shaken by painful shocks, diseases, and mental illnesses, among them, old people went mad due to the trauma of being separated from their homes, lost their senses and most people passed away. Rahul Pandita in his novel *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* described the familiar episode in which, "they found the old man dead in this torn tent, with a pack of chilled milk pressed against his right cheek. It was our first June in exile, and the heat felt like a blow in the back of the head (1). Most people died because of snake bites or due to the heat of the sun there was only one question to be asked during the funeral processions that left the camp every day as mentioned in the novel, "Snakebite or sunstroke?" In the coming days, Sridar and Pamposh saw many camp dwellers line up, one by one, in the crematorium. Between them breathed words bereft of any meaning! Words! Silence!" (Gigoo 85).

Gigoo depicts these tents as gloomy places where he creates an artificial cultural bubble among other residents of the camp. Civilization and culture, or the memories of culture, are used as a source to escape from trauma. And there was a scene in which it is seen how Pamposh was telling Sridhar the circumstances of his life in these gloomy tents:

'Every day I lead the life of a centipede. I crawl. I lick. I hide. I sting. I wake up to the fumes of kerosene in the morning and the sting of speeding ants, feeding ravenously on the sugar spilled on the floor of the tent. It feels as if I have never had a morsel of rice for ages. I wake up hungry

and go to bed hungry. I lead the life of a centipede, I crawl. All around the camp is the stench of human excrement and waste. (Gigoo 81)

The reminiscence and recollection of memories are presented evocatively. Remembrance plays an important role in maintaining the old rituals and customs of a section and helps to stand against the turmoil. The old memories of Sridar include his three phobias, "In his boyhood, Sridar feared three things – the dog in the street, India losing to Pakistan in a cricket match, and circumcision performed on the Muslim boys of the locality (Gigoo 4). Memories play an important role in the novel, a recollection of memories of the past gives a height to the imagination of the readers. The novel delineates all displaced individuals, men, and women as sufferers of the same misfortune. The old cultural values are gone with the wind, and bare sustenance is the priority. There are many painful scenes of the miserable life in migrant camps which provides detailed information for the readers to understand the political and religious diplomacy that led to Pandit's exodus.

Conclusion

In *Cultural Narrative and Collective Trauma*, the writer has given vivid detail in this regard:

The founding narratives of the states of India and Pakistan are also explored to examine the collective meanings of the enormous ethnic and religious violence that took place in the postcolonial separation of the subcontinent. Nationalist narratives stressed the triumph over colonialism and the religious necessity of establishing an Islamic state. An emerging challenge to these accounts has been produced by postcolonial thinkers, who have narrated the violence of Partition not simply in terms of traumatic effects on individuals. (2)

The fictional writings written on Kashmir represent the conflict it is facing today. The world was oblivious to the tension in Kashmir and many authors obsessively tried to bring the conflict into the vision of Kashmir. Basharat peer's *curfewed nights*, Mirza Waheed's *The Collaborator*, and Shanaz Basheer's *The Half mother* are other fictional accounts that depict trauma. Their fictional narratives depict the collective trauma of the world. Along with *The Garden of Solitude* which is an understanding of life in the Jammu migrant camp. The novel is an authentic commentary on the political tension and turmoil that started in the 1990s with the uprising of militancy in Kashmir. This political tension was between India and Pakistan regarding the borders and lands, but the biggest victim of this tension is the Kashmiri Pandits. Who had no fault but still got caught in the middle of the fight between these two countries. These people were a part of this land for centuries, and now they have been threatened to leave Kashmir based on religion.

Gigoo is conveying a painful experience in this novel and it would not be wrong to say that novel will serve as history for generations to come who would like to know about the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits.

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