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Surviving the Strife: Perspectives on the contentious Experiences in Basharat Peer and Rahul Pandita's Works

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ABSTRACT

Kashmir has been at the center of academic and policy debates for many decades now. Apart from the works related to conflict and history, there has been a significant surge in conflict related literary works. This paper specifically focuses on two divergent viewpoints emerging from one particular conflict zone. What makes this paper different is the treatment of Kashmiri Muslim and Hindu experiences differently. The conflict in Kashmir has marked differential impact on both communities; Muslims in terms of being at the midst of the turmoil and the Hindus in terms of losing their home land and the subsequent longing for the same. This paper employs the theory-experience debate as developed by Indian scholars like Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarrukai, in understanding the different experiences that Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus went through. It has sought an approach that would have the potential to minimize the chances of 'epistemic violence', with regard to understanding of experiences of both communities, and the further theorization regarding them.

Introduction

Kashmir has been at the center of academic debate for decades now. Most of the scholars have focused on the geo-political and conflict related aspects of that entity. What has often been overlooked is the dimension of peoples 'lived experiences'. 'Lived experience' as an academic concept has mostly been usedby phenomenologists. In Indian context, two scholars Gopal Guru; a dalit academic and Sundar Sarrukai; a Physicist/Philosopher engaged in a series of debates in the form of articles which were published by EPW (Economic and Political Weekly) and subsequently were collected in the form of a book, *'The Cracked Mirror'*. Gopal Guru particularly is of the view that Dalits only can theorize dalit experiences and any non-dalit theorizing dalit experience would amount to what he refers as 'epistemic violence'.

Sarrukai acknowledges Gopal Guru's argument that in this particular debate about "experience and theory, the notion of "lived experience also plays an important role"(Guru and Sarukkai. 2012:33). He however raises certain questions, like"what exactly is the nature of lived experience? What makes lived experience unique only to the community or individual who lives it?" (Guru and Sarukkai. 2012:33). Experience consists of many elements the subject who experiences as well as the structure and content of the experience itself. The impetus for the same might emerge from an internal or the external dimension of subjects understanding. Sarrukkai provides an example where he uses 'the experience of burning my hand' as something which"involves an external event that causes a particular experience in me. But one may also have entirely internal experiences such as feeling hunger, joy, or angst" (Guru and Sarukkai. 2012:33).

Sarrukai is of the view that the word 'lived', when added to 'experience' does not necessarily imply the cause of the experience. This allows us to objectify the notion of experience and transport it everywhere to generate similar experiences, leading us to believe that there is a materiality to the whole complex of experience. This materiality is seen as the authentic experience (Guru and Sarrukai. 2012:33).

Sarrukai further mentions three characteristics which are exhibited in general as 'lived experience' Lived experience is not just about living any experience in the sense that we participate in an experience. He furthers argues that "If lived experience has to play an ethical and epistemological role, if it has to be the adjudicator of some notion of authenticity, then lived experience should be used only for those experiences that are seen as necessary, experiences over which the subject has no choice of whether to experience or not"(Guru and Sarrukai. 2012:35). (The very notion of necessity is itself a complex

philosophical problem and one which different cultures seem to have thematized differently). Even if the experience is unpleasant, there is no choice that allows the subject to leave or even modify it. The experiencer comes to the experience "not as a subject who has some control over that experience but as one who will have to live with that experience" (Guru and Sarrukai. 2012:35). All this makes lived experience qualitatively different from mere experience.

The relevance of this theoretical lens for exploring the lived experiences of Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus is immense. Both of them bore the brunt of conflict, but their lived experiences were markedly different. This paper provides an opportunity to interrogate their respective lived experiences and to draw parallels wherever possible. It aims at proving the voiceless a voice so that they are heard directly.

Basharat Peer's *Curfewed Night*

Basharat Peer has emerged as one of the leading voices of Kashmir in the last few years. As the literature is usually termed a mirror of the society, Peer's novel *Curfewed Night* has also been one such addition which mirrors the concerns of a young boy living in the shadow of one of the world's longest drawn conflicts. Peer starts his novel with his own biographical sketch, where he paints a picture of the place where he was born. Peer states that he was born in winter in Kashmir. "My village in the southern district of Anantnag sat on the wedge of a mountain range. Paddy fields, green in early summer and golden by autumn, surrounded the cluster of mud and brick houses" (Peer, 2008:1). In winter, snow slid slowly from our roof and fell on our lawns with a thud. My younger brother Wajahat and I made snowmen using pieces of charcoal for their eyes. And when our mother was busy with some household chore and grandfather was away, we rushed to the roof, broke icicles off it, mixed them with a concoction of milk and sugar stolen from the kitchen, and ate our homemade ice creams (Peer, 2008:1). Winter in kashmiri terminology has a specific connotation, particularly one that of despair.

Peer himself mentions 'spring' as the "season of green mountains and meadows, blushing snow and an expanse of yellow mustard flowers in the fields around our village"(Peer, 2008:2). The joy that spring would bring would be echoed even on Radio Kashmir where they used to play songs in Kashmiri celebrating the flowers in the meadows and the nightingales on willow branches. Peer mentions that his favorite song would song end with the refrain: *'And the nightingale sings to the flowers: Our land is a garden!' When we had to harvest a crop, our neighbours and friends would send someone to help; when it was their turn we would reciprocate. You never needed to make a formal request weeks in advance. Somebody always turned up"*(Peer, 2008:2).

Peer's home located was on a road which connected Anantnag town with Pahalgam; a tourist destination. He mentions:

> I would stand on the steps and watch the tourist buses passing by. The multi-coloured buses carried visitors from distant cities like Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi; and also many *angrez*-the word for the British, and our only word for westerners. The *angrez* were interesting; some had very long hair and some shaved their heads. They rode big motorbikes and at times were half-naked. I had asked a neighbour who worked in a hotel, 'Why do the *angrez* travel and we do not?' 'Because they are *angrez* and we are not,' he said. But I worked it out.(Peer, 2008: 4).

The tourism depicted a sense of normalcy in his childhood. When the armed insurgency was yet to begin, people from across the world would visit valley, which contributed to the rich cultural mosaic the valley was known for.

Another aspect of pre-militancy normalcy that Peer points out is the normalized discourse around cinema. He mentions that, "young men and adolescents from our village would hire a bus, go to Heaven cinema in neighbouringAnantnag town, and watch the latest Bollywood film. I wasn't allowed to join them, but after they returned I was riveted by their detailed retelling of the movie" (Peer, 2008: 7)..Entire road would be populated with the faces from movie posters. The canvases, covered in bright reds, yellows, greens, and browns, hung from electricity poles by the roadside or were ferried around the village once a week on a *tonga*(horse cart) while an announcer standing beside the tongawallah dramatically proclaimed the release of a new movie from a megaphone. Peer states that every poster was "a collage of hyper-theatrical expressions: an angry hero in a green shirt and blue trousers, a pistol in hand and a rivulet of blood dripping from his face; a woman in a red sari tied to a pole with thick ropes, her locks falling on her agonised face; the luxuriously moustached villain in a golden suit smoking a pipe or smiling a treacherous smile" (Peer, 2008: 7).

Peer shares that he was enrolled in a Novodaya Vidyallya (a boarding school) at Aishmuuqam, and he would only visit his home during holidays. He mentions an incident, when in December 1989, he went to Srinagar to stay with his father, a group of armed young Kashmiris led by a twenty one year old Yasin Malik kidnapped the daughter of the Indian home minister. Malik and his comrades demanded the release of their jailed friends. After negotiations the Indian government gave in. people cheered for the young guerrillas (Peer, 2008:11). This marked a decisive shift in Kashmiri politics that is yet to be settled.

Peer acknowledges that he, like many young Kashmiris shared"a sense of the alienation and resentment against Indian rule"(Peer, 2008:11). He states that these young men "did not relate to the symbols of Indian nationalism-the flag, the national anthem, the cricket team. (Peer, 2008:11). He narrates the story of a cricket match, of whose mention we also find in Rahul Pandita's book, later to be discussed in this paper. The mere mention of this cricket match has raised both emotions as well as eyebrows as far as Kashmiris and their relationship with Indian union is concerned. He narrates the detailing of the said match as

> The commentator on the radio said, 'Pakistan needs three runs on one ball to win this match. Chetan Sharma will be bowling to JavedMiandad from the pavilion end of the stadium.' I ran outside; the crowd was tense, silent. Abu's hands fell to his sides. "There is no chance. Just no chance!' Then he seized his radio set and smashed it on the road. We watched the broken pieces of the radio scatter and then gathered around Amin, the pharmacist, and his radio set. Chetan Sharma, the Indian bowler, was about to bowl the last, deciding ball of the match to the Pakistani batsman, Miandad. The commentator told us that Miandad was scanning the cricket field, deciding where to hit the ball when it reached him. That he bowed westward towards Mecca in prayer. That he rose from the ground and faced Sharma, who was running towards the wickets. Sharma was close to the wickets and a tense Miandad faced him (Peer, 2008:12)

The stadium was silent. Sharma threw the ball. It was a full toss. Miandad swung his bat. The commentator shouted: 'It is a six! Pakistan has won the match. They have scored three more runs than required.' People hugged each other, jumped around, and shouted over the din of the celebratory crackers. (Peer, 2008:12). The result and the subsequent celebration marked a shift in public sentiment in the valley and its open depiction.

Millitancy and State response

The gun had finally arrived in Kashmir, the armed insurgency had begun, and the much awaited state response was also in full swing. Peer states, that before dinner, my family gathered as usual around the radio for the evening news on BBC World Service. Only two days earlier, Jagmohan, an Indian bureaucrat infamous for his hatred of Muslims, had been appointed governor of Jammu and Kashmir (Peer, 2008: 14). Peer narrates that "from his palatial residence on the slope of the hill bordering Dal Lake, he gave orders to crush the incipient rebellion. Throughout the night of 19th January, paramilitary men slammed doors in Srinagar and dragged out young men. By morning hundreds had been arrested; curfew was imposed. Kashmiris poured out onto the streets in thousands and shouted slogans of freedom from India" (Peer, 2008: 14).

There was a wave of protests,

> one protest began from a southern Srinagar area where my parents now live, passed the city centre, LalChowk, and marched through the nearby Maisuma district towards the shrine of a revered Sufi saint a few miles ahead. Protesters were crossing the dilapidated wooden Gawkadal Bridge in Maisuma when the Indian paramilitary, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), opened fire. More than fifty people were killed. It was the first massacre in the Kashmir Valley(Peer, 2008:15).

Peer states that as the news sank in, everyone in Kashmir wept. Peer adds a personal sentiment as well, when he talks about his own family, because his father was posted one few hundred meters from where the massacre had taken place. He talks about the faith and hope that his mother had, when she would say, that she was certain his father would be safe. He narrates that she would say "he wouldn't leave for office on a tense day like that. He will be fine. And he will never go near a procession"(Peer, 2008:15). But there was lack of assurance about the same, since there was no phone in our village. Grandfather walked out of the room onto the lawn; we followed him. Our neighbours had come out as well. We looked at each other. Nobody said much. "Later that night 1 lay in my bed imagining the massacre in Srinagar" (Peer, 2008:15).

Peer points out the sentiment on streets which would begraffitied with 'war till end'He mentions that the other graffiti would read 'Self-determination is Our Birthright'. The Indian government seemed to have deployed hundreds of thousands of troops to crush the rebellion He narrates that "almost every day the soldiers patrolled our village, walking in a mixture of nervousness and aggression their fingers close to the triggers of their automatic and semi- automatic machine guns. Military and paramilitary camps sprouted up in almost every small town and village (Peer, 2008:18).

Peer mentions that the following winter that he was politically baptized. The initial introduction was towards acronyms: JKLF (Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front), JKSLF (Jammu and Kashmir Students Liberation Front), BSF (Border Security Force), CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force). To go with these, he further mentions that he got to learn new phrases: "frisking, crackdown, bunker, search, identity card, arrest and torture"(Peer, 2008:19). That winter, according to Peer, "busloads of Kashmiri youth went to border towns and crossed over to Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir for arms training. They returned as militants carrying Kalashnikovs, hand grenades, light machine guns, and rocket launchers issued by Pakistan"(Peer, 2008:19). He further mentions that his friends were now takking about Afghan Jihad inspired novel, *Pahadoonka Beta*, about a young Afghan boy who fought

the Russians (Peer, 2008:19). This marked an ideological turn in Kashmir, which was hitherto cut off from outside inferences.

The event that marks the significance of Peer as coherent but complex writer is the mention of the classroom, which opened after winter vacations, when he spots vacant seats in his classroom. He narrates,

> And then our eyes were fixed on those empty chairs for a long time. Five of our Kashmiri Pandit classmates were not there. Along with killing hundreds of pro-India Muslims ranging from political activists to suspected informers for Indian intelligence, the militants killed hundreds of Pandits on similar grounds, or without a reason. The deaths had scared the Pandits and thousands, including my classmates and their families, had left the Valley by March 1990 for Jammu, Delhi, and various other Indian cities and towns (Peer, 2008:20).

Peer mentions how Pakistani involvement made the gun a wonder weapon in valley, which had the potential to liberate Kashmiris. He mentions that "the best story was about the magical Kalashnikov. Made in Russia, a gift from Pakistan, it was known to have powers greater than Aladdin's lamp"(Peer, 2008:21). According to Peer, "it is as small as a hand and shoots two hundred bullets.' 'No! It is as long as a cricket bat and fires fifty bullets in a minute.' 'My brother touched a Kalashnikov, he says it is very light. He told mother that he wanted to become a militant. She cried, and father slapped him.' Pervez told me there were many militants in his village and they wore beautiful green uniforms (Peer, 2008:21). The fascination about the weapon, not necessarily the cause can also be pointed out.

The subsequent chapters his book point towards dehumanization, segregation and marginalization of his people. The graveyards, the people protesting, everything would remind him of the conflict. Peer mentions that 'every now and then I would walk past a small park shaded by thick *chinars* and notice a circle of women and men with white headbands and placards in the park. I would stop at times but often simply walk past with an air of resignation".(Peer, 2008:135). Between 4000 and 8000 men have disappeared after being arrested by the military, paramilitary, and the police. Newspapers routinely refer to the missing men as 'disappeared persons', and their waiting wives are the 'half-widows'. The government has refused to set up a commission of enquiry into the disappearances and claims that the missing citizens of Kashmir have joined militant groups and crossed for arms training to Pakistan. Many Kashmiris believe the 'disappeared' men were killed in custody and cremated in mass graves. Wives of many such men have given up hope and tried to move on. Others are obsessively fighting for justice, hoping their loved ones will return (Peer, 2008:135).

Rahul Pandita's*'Our Moon has Blood Clots'*

Rahul Pandita is one of those 'unfortunate ones' who had to leave their home, their belonging and most importantly their identity. In his book, *'Our Moon has Blood Clots'*, Pandita has meticulously managed to share the ordeal that Kashmiri Pandits had to face during their exile from Kashmir. While tracing the origins of his family he states that His was a family of Kashmiri Pandits who had fled from Srinagar, in the Kashmir Valley in 1990. He narrates that his family had been forced to leave the land where their ancestors had lived for thousands of years. He further mentions states that most of these exiled families had sought refuge in the plains of Jammu, because of its proximity to home. He writes that he had just turned fourteen, and that June, he was living with his family in a "small, damp room in a cheap hotel"(Pandita, 2013:1).

While sharing the amount of pain and discomfort his community faced, he shares one such incident where "they found the old man dead in his torn tent, with a pack of chilled milk pressedagainst his right cheek. It was our first June in exile, and the heat felt like a blow inthe back of the head". He further states that "his neighbour, who discovered his lifeless body in the refugeecamp, recalled later that he had found his Stewart Warner radio on, playing an oldHindi film song:*Aadmimusafirhai, Aatahai, jaatahai.*Man is a travellerHe comes, he goes (Pandita, 2013:1).Pandita further mentions that

> One afternoon I went to the camp to meet a friend. He hadn't turned up at schoolthat day, as his grandmother had fainted that morning from heat and exhaustion.They made her drink glucose water, and she was feeling better now. The two of uswent to a corner and sat there on a parapet, talking about girls. We perspired a lot,but in that corner we had a little privacy. Nobody could see us there except a cowthat grazed on a patch of comatose grass, and near my feet there was an anthill whereants laboured hard, filling their larder with grains and the wings of a butterfly. (Pandita, 2013:2).

The abundance at home and dependence on others outside was the hallmark of the new life. He mentions that on the day his friends grandmother fainted, suddenly there was a commotion, and my friend jumped down and said, "'I think arelief van has come.' While he ran, and I ran after him, he told me that vans camenearly every day, distributing essential items to the camp residents: kerosene oil,biscuits, milk powder, rice, vegetables"(Pandita, 2013:3).

As they reached the van, "a queue had already formed infront of a load carrier filled with tomatoes. I also stood at the end of it, behind myfriend. Two men stood in front of the heap, and one of them gave away a few anaemictomatoes to the people in the queue. He kept saying, '*Dheeredheere*. Slowly,

slowly.'Some people were returning with armfuls of tomatoes. My friend looked at a womanwho held them to her breast and he winked at me. Meanwhile, some angry voicesrose from the front. The tomatoes were running out, and many people were stillwaiting. They had begun to give only three tomatoes to each person. In a few minutesit was reduced to one tomato per person. A man in the queue objected to two peoplefrom the same family queuing up. 'I have ten mouths to feed,' said one. An oldwoman intervened. 'Do we have to fight over a few tomatoes now?' she asked. Afterthat, there was silence (Pandita, 2013:3).

There was also an old issue of the *Daily Excelsior* newspaper thatevery Kashmiri Pandits subscribed to in Jammu because it informed them of who ofthe community had died in exile. Pandita shares his own agony as his cousin bother, with whom he shared a very close bond was also killed by militants in Kashmir. He seemed to have this pain hid in him, and when Kashmiris muslim leadership would talk of returning of Pandits, he would get angry, open the paper, where on itsfront page is a picture of Ravi's(his cousin) mutilated face. The blood from his nose—the resultof a blow from the butt of a Kalashnikov—has dried up. His forehead still looksbeautiful and clear, and so does his moustache that I had wanted to imitate when Iwas young (Pandita 2013:6).

It is this backdrop which brings back his old memories. The loud clapping. the jeering. thereaching a crescendo. The hiss of the loudspeaker, the noise beats hard onmy chest, like a drumbeat gone berserk. My head feels like an inferno, and a coldsweat traverses down my back.*Hum kyachaaaahte—Azadiiii! "*What do we want—Freeeedom!'Once I was with a few non-Kashmiri friends, and one of them was enacting a scenehe had witnessed in video footage shot early in 1990 in Kashmir: a mammoth crowdin LalChowk, shouting, 'Indian dogs go back!' and '*Hum kyachahte—Azadi!*'. Itmade all of them laugh.

To me, it brought back memories of the kicks I had braved inschool while I sang the National Anthem. But in gatherings like these, my friendsshouted for Azadi just for fun. For them it was just a joke—the sight of a crowdclenching fists, demanding freedom in a funny accent. Before I had improved mine,my friends would make fun of me as well. 'Look at our friend here, he doesn't live in *Bharat*, he lives in *Barat*.''Tonight, he will go to his *gar*, not *ghar*.' I would laugh with them, making fun, in turn, of some of them for their inabilityto use the *nukta*, the small dot that makes *jahaaj*what it is: *jahaaz*.But this word, Azadi, it frightens me. Images of those days return to haunt me. People out on the roads, People peering out of their windows. People on the rooftopsof buses. In shikaras. And in mosques.'Hum *kyachaaaahte—Azadiiii!*'I no longer sing the National Anthem. A few years ago, a child beggar at a

traffic signal pinned the national flag onto my shirt. I threw it away in the waste bin of a café near my house. (Pandita, 2013:9).

Pandita further shares the anecdote related to his mother's longing for her home in Kashmir. He narrates that "the home story was a statement that Ma had got into the habit of telling anyonewho would listen". It didn't matter to her whether they cared or not. It had become apart of herself, entrenched like a precious stone in the mosaic of her identity.Pandita mentions that his mother had lost her voice, probably to some disease, and since he no longer noticed the oft-repeated sentences, that he started to realize how much that statement meant to her. Pandita states that "it was the only thing thatreminded her of who she was, more than theoccasional glances she would steal at themirror when no one else was looking.'*Our home in Kashmir had twenty-two rooms*'(Pandita, 2013:10).

Pandita craft fully dwells back to the history of place and his ancestors. He states that he exactly is not sure where hisancestors originally came from, but probability was that they had travelled from the plains of Punjab to settle in the Kashmir Valley,in the lap of the Himalayas, roughly three thousand years ago. He then draws a link between their (ancestors) entry and his own exit from valley. He categorically mentions that he and his family left the valley through the same route that his ancestors arrived from, and this time the decision was not a conscious one but the one which the circumstances; religious persecution had forced them to take.

Pandita then delves into the mythological and geological orions of the Kashmir valley, He along with scholars like ChitrelekhaZutshi, ShonaleekhaKaul and PMK Bamzai try to strike a balance between mythology and geology. He is of the opinion that Kashmir in remote antiquity had been lake. The valley had emerged out of thisbody of water due to a geological event, most probably an earthquake. He states that his ancestors hadmade it home gradually, building a legend around their settlement.

> They said that thevast lake that Kashmir had been before they settled there was inhabited by a demoncalled Jalodbhava. He had been granted immortality so long as he remainedunderwater. It was then that one of our gods drained the lake, sending Jalodbhavainto hiding over a hill. Ultimately, our patron goddessassumed the form of a bird and dropped a pebble from her beak that, before landing, turned into a big rock, killingthe demon instantly.The land was abundant with nature's bounty, but geographically isolated. Perhapsunder the spell of nature's magnificence, my ancestors took to the pursuit ofknowledge. It is thus that Kashmir became the primeval home of the Brahmins, or*Brahmans*—those who are *conscious*. (Pandita, 2013:12)

He is mesmerized by the beauty of his homeland, and quotes his grandfather who used to say "even the gods are jealous of it"(Pandita, 2013:12). Pandita boasts about the contribution of his ancestors to art

and scholarship. He quotes ArthurAnthony MacDonnell, the great professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, who had onceremarked, 'History is the one weak spot in Indian literature. It is, in fact, nonexistent'. He then counters Prof. MacDonnell's argument by citing the example of the twelfth-century Kashmiri Pandit scholar, Kalhana, putting asidethe Hindu question of existence being 'dream and delusion', penned the magnumopus, *Rajatarangini*(River of Kings), which is counted among the world's mostextraordinary historical works.

In the tenth century, the great Kashmiri Pandit scholar Abhinavagupta wrotethirty-five works, including *Tantraloka*, a treatise on Kashmiri Shaivism, and *Abhinavabharti*, a splendid commentary on the *Natyasastra*, the seed of the Indianperforming arts. The eleventh century Kashmiri Pandit poet Kshemendra wrote*Brhatkathamanjari*, a collection of stories representing the lost tradition of *brhatkatha*(big story). From the same text, another Pandit scholar, Somadeva, prepared thefamous *Kathasaritsagara*(Oceans of the Streams of Stories). (Pandita, 2013:12). Pandita then points out to the two golden phases in Kashmir's history which were the reigns of Lalitadityaand Avantivarman. Lalitaditya ruled Kashmir for about four decades in the earlyeighth century AD. He was considered a great administrator, and among hisachievements the building of the Sun temple at Martand in south Kashmir isconsidered the greatest. (Pandita, 2013:12). Avantivarman built his place at present day Awantipora.

Pandita then talks about the rulers who particularly targeted Hindus. Prime among then was Sultan Sikandarwho let loose a reign of terror and brutality against his Hindusubjects. He tried to destroy the Martand temple but failed. He imposed taxes onHindus and forbade them from practising their religion. So much so that he came to be known as *Butshikan*—the idol-breaker. He and his ministers destroyed any Hindutexts they could find. It is said of him that the number of Pandits he murdered was solarge that seven maunds of sacred thread worn by them were burnt (Pandita, 2013: 15).

AfterSikander, Kashmir was blessed with the rulership of SultanZain-ul-Abidin took over in 1420; he proved to be atolerant ruler. Pandita quotes the historian Srivara,Zain-ul-Abidin's court pandit and musician, who described his rule as being, 'like thecooling sandal paste after the harsh summer heat in a desert' (Pandita, 2013: 15).

After this rule, Kashmir was ruled by Cheks, who were later defeated by Mughals. Oandita is of the opinion that it was after the Afghan invasion of valley that the real misfortune had befallen on Kashmiris. In his book *The Valley of Kashmir*, Walter R.Lawrence writes of one of the Afghan

governors, Assad Khan: "It was his practice totie up the Pandits, two and two, in grass sacks and sink them in the Dal lake (Pandita 2013: 16).

Pandita mentions the taboos that were attached with murder and blood within Kashmiri psyche. He narrates that sometimes during a summer sunset, when the sky turned crimson, serene old mentaking leisurely puffs from their hookahs would look at it and then sigh and say,'There has been *khoonrizi*—bloodshed—somewhere.' He talked of shared values that post-Afghan Kashmiris had between different communities. He provides an example of such syncretism by citing examples of celebration of festivals like Eid and Shivratri (Pandita, 2013: 27).

The tide seemed to turned somewhere by 1986 major anti-Pandit riots broke out in Anantnag in southern Kashmir inretaliation to rumors that Muslims had been killed in the Hindu-majority region ofJammu. Some believed the riots were a conspiracy by one political party to bringdown another party's government. Whatever the reasons, the Pandits became thetarget. Houses were looted and burnt down, men beaten up, women raped anddozens of temples destroyed. A massive statue of the goddess Durga was broughtdown in the ancient Lok Bhawan temple (Pandita, 2013: 28). He further talks of an event when Indian Prime MinisterMrs. Indira Gandhi had visited Kashmir and she had addressed arally in Iqbal Park where men sat in front row and abused her(Pandita, 2013:33).

An interesting incident that Pandita shares is about a cricket match, which was played, October 13, 1983, between India and West Indies. Pandita had himself been a spectator during that match.

> The two captains camedown for the toss, which was won by the West Indies. They chose to field. I shoutedin joy when a few minutes later Sunil Gavaskar and Kris Srikkanth entered theground to open the batting for India.And that was when it all began.Ravi and I sat in disbelief as the stadium erupted with deafening cries of '*Pakistanzindabad!*' Green flags, both Pakistani and the identical Jamaat-e-Islami banner, wereseen being carried by people in the stadium. Many in the crowd also held posters ofPakistani cricketers. The Indian batsmen looked like rabbits caught in glaringheadlights. On the sixteenth ball he faced, Gavaskar was caught out, having scored only eleven runs. The whole team crumbled in 41 overs for a total score of 176 runs.Later, as the West Indies team batted, the Indian fielders faced severe harassment.They were booed badly. A half-eaten apple was thrown at Dilip Vengsarkar, whichhit him on his back.Of course, India lost that match.Years later, as a journalist, I met the cricketer Kirti Azad at a party. Azad was a part of the Indian team that day and had hit two defiant sixes in a lost cause. 'How can I ever forget that day?' he told me. 'It was like playing in Pakistan againstPakistan (Pandita 2013: 34)

Pandita narrates that after returning home he tried to comfort himself with a soft drink (Pandita 2013: 34).

This marked a shift in popular discourse around Kashmir, its relationship with India and Pakistan. The situation had turned bad, and many Kashmiri pandits were being killed in the broad day light (Pandita 2013: 47). He states that throughout the year 1990, Pandits were being picked up selectively and put to death". And ultimately almost entire community left valley and are yet to return back.

Conclusion

The contrasting narratives by two Kashmiri communities depict the complexity at hand. Not many works on the field hitherto have tried to engage both communities simultaneously in one academic work. By using the theory-experience debate, it has been theoretically established that the experiences of both communities were qualitatively different. Basharat Peer's narration ditrectly deals with the problem in hand that is the high militarization, subsequent radicalization and the after effects of this violent confrontation. Rahula Pandita's has multiple layers, where he uses history, mythology and the community experience both inside the conflict zone and outside it. Both the communities are dehumanized, one at home and another outside it.

The striking feature of the works of both writers is the mention of Cricket as a catalyst for change in psyche and perception and a mode of marking ones aspiration. Both writers have talked about the troubled past, but are hopeful of a better future.

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