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Victims of Violence: A Critical Analysis of Khalid Hussain's Selected Stories from *Satisar Ka Suraj*

Nasir Faried Butt

Ph. D. Scholar

Department of English

Central University of

Jammu, Jammu, J&K

Abstract

Violence and resistance has been the major motif of the majority of conflict-zone literatures. The authors have used this motif either as a mode of resistance or as a means to outpour their traumatic experiences. Hannah Arendt, in her book *On Violence*, deals with the ideas as to how violence is related with power. She details how the institutional power structures exercise violence in order to maintain their rule and status quo as well as to suppress any resistance to the state power. This paper however analyses how the violence meted out either by the state or by those coercive forces who turn militant against the state affects the common lot in the remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir. For this purpose, the paper deals with a few stories from a collection of a regional author Khalid Hussain, titled *Satisar Ka Suraj*, (which translates as 'The Sun of Sati Sar')¹ written in Urdu.

Keywords- *Violence, Misappropriation, Sufi, Terrorism, Idealism, Religion*

Khalid Hussain is a contemporary writer who has written many short stories in Gojri, Dogri, Urdu and Punjabi. He was born in Udhampur district of Jammu province, Jammu and Kashmir. In his stories, he deals with the sufferings of the poor torn between the clashes of the state forces and the militant organisations in the region. Hussain's anthology *Satisar Ka Suraj* talks about the life after partition of India, political misappropriation during the contemporary times, rift between Hindus and Muslims created by the political and religious leaders alike and many other things that have led to disturbance and violence in Jammu and Kashmir. This paper however has taken only a few selected stories that prove to be the most representative of the theme under study.

In one of his eponymous stories, (*Satisar Ka Suraj*), Khalid Hussain juxtaposes the legends of Sufis and Rishis of ancient Kashmir with the current political juggernaut in the

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region. In this story, Khalid Hussain presents the realistic devastated picture of the contemporary politically charged and violence ridden Kashmir using surrealistic technique: He begins the story describing the qualities of the famous Sufi Saint, Nund Rishi or Sheikh Noor ud Din², whose shrine is at Charar Sharif, the one which was destroyed in a gun battle during the early 1990's. Alluding to the secular sufi tradition of the ancient Kashmir, Hussain praises Nund Rishi as such saint "who would blow the *shankh* in Mosques and offer *Namaz* in temples" (Khalid Hussain, 55. My translation). Hussain also describes a demon, a *rakshas*, who is the metaphorical and allegorical incarnation of distrust or political opportunism which has given rise to the present condition [of violence in Kashmir]. The *rakshas* says Hussain could not bear the peace, love and communal harmony disseminated by the Saint and therefore got jealous of and grew animosity against the Sufi. The allegorical *rakshasa*, which stands for communal demon, gets worried to see the peace and prosperity in the Valley:

His [the Sufi's] fame and faith pierced the *rakshasa* like a thorn stuck in heel; he hated the Sufi. The hatred and envy was burning the demon into ashes. So he wanted to destroy the light of the holy gleam. He wanted the holy waters of *ganga* and the *zam-zam* to with each other. His name was Hakim. (Hussain 55, My translation)

Here in the above story, ironically and paradoxically, the demon or the *rakshasa* is named Hakim. Hakim translates into "the administrator" in English, and it is also a title or status name which means 'a governor,' 'a judge,' 'a philosopher' or 'physician who heals,' or a religious or spiritual healer. But the name here may refer to the leaders and torch bearers of political groups both secular, religious, political, administrative and separatists who have made the dream of the *rakshasa* come true (*Miriam Webster Dictionary Online*). Khaled further describes Hakim the *rakshasa* as "the Hakim who wanted to rule the earth; the Hakim who enslaved people; the Hakim who was intoxicated with his thirst of empire" (Hussain 55, My Translation). And one day, laments the narrator, the devil won over the pious Sufism: Innocence and humanity were murdered; terror and violence tore the garments of humanity apart (57).

Hussain gives a long description of the triumph of evil over the centuries old tradition of innocence and harmony, and of the rise of communal and political distrust and violence—possibly a reference, in part, to the violence during the partition period and more precisely to the post-1990's. Referring to the destruction of the shrine of the famous Sufi, Hussain juxtaposes the legend with the contemporary situation thus:

Then it happened that people saw that two rings of smoke arose from the burning shrine and flew high and high and then disappeared into an unknown land. This sigh made the shrines of other Hindu saints and Muslim Sufis cry loud, and their tombstones shake. It seemed that Nund Rishi, along with his

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foster mother Lal Ded, fled away from this luckless land—perhaps to the land of his forefathers. (Khalid Hussain 59, My translation)

Then all the saints and Sufis unite and vow to find the great Sufi saint and bring him back to the Valley hoping that he may save the land from the evil. And they decide that a few selected saints and Sadhus must rise from their tombs and set on the journey to bring the grand Saint back home. The selected group of saints from across the Valley go and reach Kishtwar³, in the court of sufisaint Shah Farid ud Din, his sons Shah Asrar and Shah Akhyar⁴. The great Saint of Kishtwar first led the prayer in congregation of the saints, and then directed them to go back and find Nund Rishi in their hearts, in their prayers, in their good deed and brotherhood, in the dew of flowers, in the tombs of other saints and in the temples of Hindu gods and goddesses (Khalid Hussain, 60-61). When the band of the saints return back to Kashmir, they find themselves welcomed by an infinite mob of people; and then, the great Saint Nund Rishi appears from nowhere whose appearance sends a wave of happiness and relief to the crowd as well as the band of seeker-saints. Then the Sufi delivers a lecture on how to bring back the age-old peace and harmony to the valley:

You people has forgotten your culture and tradition. . . You had caught the plight of greed, desire, fraud and envy. . . The whole land was reeking with the filth inside you. All that was good was gone from your hearts. You have reaped what you had sown. . . That is the reason you have been caught in misery. . . Had I not told you to refrains from all such malice? . . . Then how could you yield to the powers of vice? Why did you give in before the tyranny of power and terror? . . . Now you must make the amber of terror and tyranny die off. Save your traditions and culture. Destroy the hatred and vice in order to save and preserve your culture and tradition. (Sufi)

And then all the community set their journey on the path of spirituality and truthfulness so that the venomous water of Kashmir flows out to make room for clear and pure water of spirituality and good. (Khalid Hussain 63, My translation)

This short story juxtaposes the history with the contemporary Kashmir. Hussain sees hope for the solution of Kashmir violence and destruction in Sufi spirituality which must make all the people realize their age old tradition of Kashmiriyat which was once a fusion of Islam Shaivism. To the author, this is the only way to unite all the people together and fight against the extremism of both the religious and political powers that have pushed the land in perpetual trouble for their political gains.

Hussain sees the temporary peace between India and Pakistan as a hope for the divided families across the LOC⁵ in the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Bus Service that started in 2005 and was flagged off by the then Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh. Hussain's Story titled *Lakeer* in the anthology revolves around the Bus Service of 2005

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which tells the story of an octogenarian and his wife who were separated during their youthful age on the event of Division of the Country into Two nations. The title itself is suggestive the theme of the story. The title translates as 'Line' which refers to the Line of Control earmarked during the partition. The 'Line' also suggests that line which was drawn between the families and loved ones of the people of the border regions. The story reflects how the Line of Partition left many families bereft of their close relatives and had become the citizens of the enemy nations to one another.

The narrator, a resident of Jammu and Kashmir succeeds to get the visa and permission for travelling to the other side of the LOC through the Bus Service in April 2005. He is visited by many relatives and friends before he sets for his journey. Sajawal, an old man of around eighty or so visits and begs him to listen to the old man's story of his separation from his wife whom he had married against the will of her family before partition. They had eloped and fled to Rajouri, now the Indian part. After a few years when they had settled in Rajouri, Sajawal's wife Sabri went to her Village with an old Sikh family friend Uttam Singh. She went to her mother and learned that her father had died of shock and humiliation. And then, the partition is announced and the chaos starts. Uttam Singh had promised Sajawal to take his wife to her dying mother and get her back safely to Sajawal again. So Uttam Singh, in order to keep the promise, sets his journey back to Rajouri with Sabri; but they are attacked by the armed Tribals who kill Uttam Singh and take Sabri hostage. She is then sold to some Sardar Khan who exploits her for two years. The borders being sealed now, Sabri could never make it to Rajouri where her children and her husband were waiting for her return. The story told by the old Sajawal moves the narrator who assures the old man that he would go and find Sajawal's old wife if she is alive and tell her about Sajawal's hardships throughout his life without her. Then the narrator is lost in the thoughts of how the partition of India and Pakistan ruined the families and relations:

I began thinking that the division of the nation destroyed lakhs of families; lakhs of people were devoured by death and murder. In my heart of hearts, I began to curse the politicians and religious fanatics who were responsible for the Partition for the sake of their power and positions. (Hussain 75)

Resentful of the communal violence that ensued during the partition, Uttam Singh in an episode, while urging Sabri to get ready to cross into Rajouri, tells her: "It all has happened due to the division of India and the creation of Pakistan. Communal riots have surged high. Men are being killed in the name of Sikh, Muslim and Hindu. This fire is spreading everywhere" (77).

After the narrator finds Sajawal's wife Sabri, who is now an old and weak, he listens to her hardships she had gone through and how she was caught and sold after her guardian Uttam Singh was killed by the tribal raiders. The narrator approaches high officials in

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Pakistan and entreats them to arrange for Sabri's pass to go to India. They agree, and after his return back to Indian side of Jammu and Kashmir, she is allowed to travel to Rajouri with a permission of one month stay.

The life of people between the borders is a metaphor of hope played by the author in this story. The border stretched through the land of people of the area has divided their otherwise stable Kashmiri identity into a divided one that has its roots on the both sides of the LoC. Despite the political rivalry between the two nations that has created a big chasm between the residents of the two nations, yet the life of those who have had the direct impact of the Partition on their lives, families and identities is as complex as anything. In this story, Sabri is not allowed to live with her husband and children even at the age near death. Despite Sajawal's and the narrators tireless efforts to get her a permanent citizenship so that she can fulfil her last wish—that is, the wish to die close to her husband and children. Sajawal breaks down cries out:

If Sabri lives here with me and her children, what wrong is done to the *Sarkar* [the government]? What threat can be posed by an eighty –years-old woman who just want to die in peace.' Every eye got filled with tears listening to his words. He had already knocked at every door of the government, but of no avail. (81)

When the day arrives for her to leave, every villager is all sorrow. Sajawal and his children accompany Sabri to see her off at the border. After the legal formalities, she has to cross the border at Chakkan Da Bagh area in Rajouri. When she arrives at a point right at the midst of Indian and Pakistani borders, she turns around and take a last look at her family and again turns towards Pakistan's border. Walking a few steps, she trembles and falls on the ground. The guards of both Indian and Pakistani borders rush forward, and find her dead.

This death between the borders of India and Pakistan, takes place in a patch of land which is neither Indian nor Pakistani, and both Indian and Pakistani land, and hence called 'NO-Man's Land.' Her death is symbolic of the unison of those who were separated by the Partition, and who are still bearing the brunt of the catastrophe. Hussain does not continue this story ahead but he forces the readers to find the solution for the identity and emotions of those who live and die in the No-Man's land; who wish to re-unite with their loved ones; who have suffered and are still constantly suffering due to the rivalry between India and Pakistan—the rivalry that was purely political but was made communal (82). Uttam Singh's character in the story re-defines the hope and trust between communities that was betrayed by the religious fanatics and political leaders who have died long ago leaving the legacies of distrust and suffering behind.

This seed of enmity and rivalry that has grown into a forest full of nettle was sown during the partition. Khalid Hussain records the atrocities meted out to the people at the

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hands of both armed forces and police as well as the militants in his short story titles *Ek Mere Bande Ki Kahani*. (which translates as “One Story of my Man”): Manzoor, the protagonist is stuck in his small country flour mill set on the bank of a stream in his village due to heavy snow fall, and is not able to go home as it is already dark. Late at night, he is surprised to see four young militants visit him for food and shelter. He serves them food out of fear and quivers and prays that the military should not know all this else he will be ruined. Before leaving, they force him to go with them and show them the way as they have planned to stage a revenge attack on a police station at Basant Garh. Manzoor is so terrified and beseeches them to spare him:

I implored and requested them not to take me with themselves because if police or the forces get even an inkling of this, they will kill me. My parents, my brothers and sisters will be caught in a big trouble; but the devils didn't pay heed to my requests. Anyway, what impact can the requests and wails have on those having power of arms? We walked on the bypath to Basantgarh. I had to carry the load of the *Amir*, the head of the team. From the halfway, they let me go back, at the break of the dawn, after my repeated requests, threatening me for my family's and my life if I disclosed their plans and whereabouts with anyone; and I did not. (Hussain 91, My translation)

His life becomes worse when one of the militants he had encountered gets arrested. He told all this story to the SSP at Udhampur Police Station, who believed in his innocence and bid him to be careful afterwards. But after the transfer of the good Officer, Manzoor's real trouble starts. He would be called to the station every now and then, interrogated and asked the same questions again and again. He would be asked for bribes and ransom money by every officer promising to set him free from all this trouble, and he would pay them till his father lost every bit of his property. He narrates his story saying

They would beat me, torture me; I began to see the death before me even though I was alive. My home, my family and my parents well all burning in the fire of helplessness and terror. The police didn't want to listen to the truth. . . . I was time and again imprisoned in the Police custody and my father would again and again pay a hefty ransom money to get me released. . . . Our house and property got sold because of this administrative terrorism. (93)

Out of dissatisfaction, disgust and helplessness rose anger in him that made him decide to join the militants in order to away from this frequent and torturous ordeal. After joining the militants, his sufferings of his psyche and emotional trauma did not leave him. He was full of disgust as he would join his party in the same acts of entering people's homes and demanding food and shelter on the gun point. The *Amir* of the militant group one day asks him to kill one Thakur Mangal Singh of Doda, who was the head of a village. Manzoor knew

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the Thakur and didn't agree with his *Amir* that he was an informer, and refused to kill him. When the *Amir* sent some other militants to kill the Thakur, Manzoor stealthily manages to inform the Thakur of the plan of the militants and saves his life (96). His team suspect him and kill him pumping a few rounds of bullets in his back.

The story is told by the dead Manzoor who suffered all through his life, and is still, even after his death, feeling gloomy and sad on how things go because of the militancy and conflict. Khalid Hussain's recording of minute social and emotional landscape suggests to various aspects of the sufferings that the people of the conflict infested villagers. He mourns over the loss of life and peace of the people who suffer most in the village areas where militants take shelter; where both militants and the police terrorise and exploit the victims. Hussain focuses on the local social milieu of the victimised villagers of the border areas.

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Notes

¹ Satisar is one of the Old names of Jammu and Kashmir. The title of the book by Khaled Hussain is therefore well translated as the Sun of Satisar. (See Khaled Hussain pp. 25)

² The Saint is called by the Hindus as Nund Rishi, and by the Muslims as Sheikh Norr ud Din.

³ Kishtwar is a District which lies in the Chanab Valley of Jammu region, and is connected to Kashmir's Anantmag district via Synthan pass on its north-west, and to Udhampur District by NH1A via district Doda. Nund Rishi is believed to having been originally born in Kishtwar who later was sent to Kashmir where he was adopted by Lal Ded on the behest of some Sufi saint. The legend goes that Nund Rishi was born in a royal Hindu family, and in his

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childhood, fell critically ill and had no hope to survive. So his mother took him to some saint of the times who told her that he must be left with the saints of Kashmir and he will get well and live a healthy life. There in Kashmir, famous Sufi poetess and saint Lal Ded fostered him and was given the name Sheikh Noor ud Din. This is why he is revered both by Hindus as Nund Rishi and by Muslims Sheikh ul Alam.

⁴ Shah Farid ud Din was the great Sufi saint of Kishtwar of the time. His sons Asrar ud Din and Akhyar ud Din were also holy saints with spiritual powers that, as the legend says, made a wall gallop like a horse to take them for a ride; and the river Chanab halt to let the little saint collect shells from the river bed.

⁵ The families divided in 1947-48 Indo-Pak war on Kashmir. The Kashmiris across the LOC still have first relative on the respective opposite sides of the border.

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