

UNDERSTANDING THE DISPLACEMENT OF PANDITS FROM KASHMIR VALLEY Dialogism in *The Garden of Solitude*

Sujit R. Chandak♦

Abstract: Mikhael Bakhtin has fundamentally changed our understanding of the novel form by shifting emphasis from monologism and freeing the novel author's/narrator's vision controlled narrative to dialogism where multiple voices are possible and there is a recognition of more than one valid understanding of the context. Sidhartha Gigoo's novel *The Garden of Solitude* functions as a work of art that brings out the true nature of fundamentalism, which is characterised by a total lack of openness to the voices of the other side. This paper reads into the multiple voices in the novel and constructs a critical understanding of the displacement of Pandit's from Kashmir. It argues that the insurgency of the 1990s in Kashmir, which was a result of aspiration for a separate political identity for Kashmir was turned into a 'Jihad' against the non-Muslims. Fundamentalism hijacked the age-old plurality of the Kashmiri culture and the casualties were the Pandits and the Sufi form of Islam that was practiced in the Valley. The paper makes a case against fundamentalism that forced Pandits to leave their homes but could not break the emotional bond amongst the Muslims and the Pandits of Kashmir, and presents dialogue as an antidote.

Keywords: Bakhtin, Fundamentalism, Kashmir, Migration, Narrative, Pandits

1. Introduction

We construct our worlds in narratives; narratives are not just an expression of our world but they perform this world, making us

♦**Sujit R. Chandak** works as an Assistant Professor at Shri M. D. Shah Mahila College, Malad (West), Mumbai, and pursues PhD at the Department of English, University of Mumbai.

understand and feel about it in one or the other way. Literature exists at that intersection where what is known, experienced and generally expressed meets what is not known, though experienced but has never been said before. Although literature as a work of art may tell the story of individuals it represents the consciousness of a community in a context. Hence, good literature is always a great record, a chronicle of its time as it is a critique of its own context. This study uses the dialogic practices of narrative in Sidhartha Gigoo's novel *The Garden of Solitude* to reach a layered understanding of the narrative as also the context from which this narrative has emerged.

The context in which the narrative is placed in *The Garden of Solitude* is that of the near total, forced and permanent expulsion in 1989-90 of the minority Hindu community of Kashmir, known by the exonym 'Pandits', and the tragic condition of their life in exile. This event was nothing less than ethnic cleansing and it is one of the darkest periods in the chequered history of Kashmir. However, one gets a sense in the novel that this expulsion of the minority Pandit community seemingly by the majority Muslim community of the valley was detested by a large number of people from within the Muslim community; the novel foregrounds this in the numerous dialogues in which the Muslims are seen assuring the Pandits of their safety, and asking them not to leave. The present article contends that at an individual level the ties of life-long friendships, of love and admiration between the Pandits and their Muslim friends were intact, but at the level of a community there was a difference in the aspirations of the two communities, particularly in the matters of political identity; religious fundamentalist forces capitalized on this difference of political nature to push in a dogmatic, hard line form of Islam into Kashmir and successfully turned the political into dogmatically religious.

In Bakhtin's conception the form of novel is dialogic, in which 'truth' is not what is controlled by the narrator or the author's voice in a novel but it comes out in the polyphony of the various voices present in the novel; this paper uses the dialogic practices present in the novel to analyze and understand the ambivalence

present between the forced traumatic expulsion of the Pandits and the fact of very good relations between the Muslim and the Pandit characters of *The Garden of Solitude*.

Religious fundamentalism is dogmatic and does not believe in dialogue. The way forward in the Kashmir conflict is via dialogue and the willingness to listen to the other; hence, friendship, love and admiration amongst Muslims and Pandits of Kashmir, though at an individual level only, is significant and a dialogic reading of *The Garden of Solitude* brings it out emphatically.

2. Kashmir Conflict and the Common Kashmiri

The Kashmir question is the most vexatious and distressing issue that has continued to plague the Indian subcontinent since the withdrawal of the colonial powers. It has been a cause of worry for others but for those in the Kashmir valley it has meant living through hellish conditions for a large part of the post-colonial times. It cannot be denied that in the colonial era and before that as well, there had been problems between the rulers and the ruled in the valley. However, post-partition and independence for the two nation states of India and Pakistan, Kashmir and the Kashmiris have lost a lot by way of lives, hopes, livelihood, identity, popular sentiments and aspirations to this conflict of political identity. Various political forces have played their role and, in turn, influenced the masses towards their vision of Kashmir and, as a result, the uniqueness of the Kashmiri identity and the concept of 'Kashmiriyat' itself have undergone a major change in the long, repetitive and turbulent history of the conflict. It is seventy years since partition of British India and the advent of the two nation states of India and Pakistan; however, Kashmir still erupts often and burns claiming more lives.

Until 1990s, in all the conflicts, the people of Kashmir were not involved directly, although they were the main affected party. The dispute and fight was between the state of India and Pakistan. What happened in 1989-'90 onwards in Kashmir was much more divisive, involving common Kashmiri people, and it created situations that completely changed the character of the conflict. All of this began with the alleged large-scale rigging and

electoral malpractices by the Indian Government in the 1987 elections to the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly in which many new parties such as Muslim United Front were participating.¹ These parties felt cheated and lost hope in the democratic process. It is the leaders of these parties who went on to form and lead various militant outfits like being Hizb-ul Mujaheddin (HuM) established in 1989 by Muhammad Ahsan Dar and Mohammed Yusuf Shah, who later styled himself as Syed Salahuddin, and Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) led by Yasin Malik. As they were militant groupings from and for the Kashmir Valley they successfully inspired a large number of Kashmiri youth to take up arms. Many of the Muslim youth crossed the borders for arms training in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK), which is referred to as 'Azad Kashmir' by Pakistan and its allies. Involvement of common Kashmiri populace meant the conflict had now come to each and every town, village, locality and houses and it brought massive levels of tragedy and traumatic experiences to common people. This resulted in the militancy leading to the Kashmir insurgency of the 1990s, the 'second Kashmir crisis' after the first one of 1947-'48.²

3. The Pandit Story: Loss of Homeland and Trauma

Militancy in Kashmir right from beginning was marked by its almost open relationship and support from Pakistan, a Muslim nation, which was founded on the basis of the two-nation theory of its founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Pakistan supported the insurgents and pushed the ideology of a fundamentalist form of Islam instead of the Kashmiri Sufi tradition, tolerance and

¹Husain Altaf, "Kashmir's Flawed Elections," BBC News World Edition 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2223364.stm> (15.4.2016); Donthi Praveen, "How Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Shaped 1987 Elections" <2016, <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/vantage/mufti-mohammad-sayeed-shaped-1987-kashmir-elections>> (15.4.2016); J. G. Cockell, "Ethnic Nationalism and Subaltern Political Process: Exploring Autonomous Democratic Action in Kashmir," *Nations and Nationalism* (July 2000), 319-345.

²A. G. Noorani, "It Is a Revolt," *Frontline* 33.16, (August 2016), 13-20.

liberalism in religion. For Pakistan the Kashmir issue is an emotive one and often referred to as the 'jugular vein' of Pakistan.³ It wants to keep the Kashmir issue on the forefront even if it means that Kashmir keeps burning. For the militant groups the fight was not just for independent Kashmir but an independent and Islamic Kashmir. Due to this the position of the minority Pandits became deeply unsecure. There were a total of 100,000 to 350,000 Pandits in the Kashmir Valley,⁴ all of whom were forced to leave the valley and were systematically chased out by the militant groups and organizations.

The trauma of these catastrophic events generated many narratives in various forms of literature; there is no escape from memory, and reliving traumatic experience is important as a way of coming to terms with reality. The literature produced from this context is a performance of memory, which helps in keeping normalcy. According to Cathy Caruth, "it [trauma] is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available."⁵ *The Garden of Solitude* attempts to tell and preserve such a reality, that of the Pandit's tragedy, which otherwise will not be available, and will fade away eventually.

4. Sidhartha Gigoo's *The Garden of Solitude*

The context in which the forced expulsion of the entire Pandit community took place, their life in exile in Jammu and various other places in India, the courage shown by the community in picking up pieces of their shattered lives and attempts at making a new start is narrated in Sidhartha Gigoo's novel *The Garden of*

³PTI, "Now, Pak President Says Kashmir Is His Country's Jugular Vein," *The Hindu*, 23 March 2016, 14.

⁴Ramchandra Guha, *India After Gandhi*, New Delhi: Picador India, 2007, 651; Arvind Gigoo, Shaleen Kumar Singh, Adarsh Ajit, *From Home to House Writings of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile*, New Delhi: Harper Collins India, 2015, xiii.

⁵Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experiences: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996, 4.

Solitude.⁶ It is a narrative of trauma, of reliving the massively catastrophic and tragic events that led to the near total, forced and hurried migration of the Pandits from the Kashmir Valley, a place which is the only homeland that this unique community ever had; in a matter of 6-9 months the entire Pandit community was uprooted from what has been its home since ages. It is the story of the city of Srinagar and how there was a sudden change in the atmosphere, in the way people had lived for generations till the year 1989. It tells the story of Sridar, the school going son of a Pandit family and the family's migration to Jammu under the threat from the militants; a poignant tale of the community which literally had to flee from their houses, farms, jobs and from life itself as they knew it, to an entirely alien land and culture although the country and even the state was the same. It is a novel of massive trauma and suffering and of courage shown by the Pandit community in the face of a catastrophe, which had snatched everything from this once cultured, wealthy, white-collar, intelligent community of Kashmir. At the same time it is the story of the Kashmiri Muslims as well; large sections of whom could not see life in Kashmir without the Pandits and the others who in the name of Islam made the Pandits leave their homes. It is the tale of the Kashmiris and Kashmir, which was no more a paradise on earth but only wreckage after the catastrophic insurgency and its aftermath.

5. Narrative Structure of *The Garden of Solitude*

The Garden of Solitude has a non-diegetic narrator, narrator is not a character of the novel, and the novel is divided into four parts. It contains a prologue and an epilogue, both of which refer to the great-grand parents of the protagonist Sridar. The story of the great-grand parents in the prologue and how they, on their part, recounted their parents' lives in Kashmir sets the tone of the novel in that it tells us how deeply connected the Pandits are with Kashmir Valley; indeed their entire identity is with Kashmir. In the epilogue Sridar is seen releasing a book, *The Book*

⁶Siddhartha Gigoo, *The Garden of Solitude*, New Delhi: Rupa Publication India, 2011 (references are given within the text).

of *the Ancestors*, which he has written so as to recreate the untraceable book written by his great-grandfather. In bringing the prologue and epilogue the author has created an opportunity to speak about up to five generations of Pandits lives in Kashmir; the rest of the novel is about the three generation of this community in Kashmir. Although the novel traces the lives of mainly the family of Sridar, his parents and grandparents, the picture that comes up is of the entire community.

The Garden of Solitude makes use of levels of narrative, particularly the hypo-diegetic narration. Narrative levels make it possible to have multiple narrative voices possible and the voice can be identified distinctly by asking the questions who narrates, and from where the narrative comes from. Theorists of narratives such as Gerald Gennet have spoken about the possibilities of having hypo-diegetic narration which are outside of but embedded to the main intradiegetic or primary narrative.⁷ Hypo-diegetic level of narrative narrates a story, which is not part of the main diegetic world of the primary narrative. It is, in simple terms, a story within a story with nothing that directly has any impact on the main tale that is being narrated. These are stories which are embedded to the main narrative but may not have any direct adverse impact on the main story even when they are removed. *The Garden of Solitude* contains many narrations, which tell not the primary story of Sridar and his family, but stories outside of this frame though embedded to it. What such stories do is help in presenting a sense of the times from sources, which are independent of the main characters of the novel.

6. Polyphonic voices in *The Garden of Solitude*

Such a narrative, which is much more than just the personal, can never relay itself fully in one narratorial voice; a single narrative voice cannot do justice to the multitudes of stories that make up this community in these turbulent times; nor can a single narrative voice, though it is omniscient, third person one, be relied upon. There has to be space made for various voices, as in

⁷Gerard Gennet, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980, 212-262.

life the narrative must present itself in a dialogic mode, which enables a multiplicity of meaning; monologic conformity of meaning is not going to help in any way in bringing out the semblance of life and experiences that a novel seeks to convey. As Mikhael Bakhtin has shown, novel as a form is a 'whole artistic system' that constructs its own world. In *Discourse in the Novel*, Bakhtin stresses that literary study of the novel can never focus singularly on stylistics or ideological analysis; it has to bring together the formal and ideological aspects. "The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice. In it the investigator is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities..."⁸

Direct authorial literary-artistic narration is the authorial voice; we see this voice as recording the everyday happenings, making the reader jump from one conversation to the other; conversations that are mundane, philosophic, friendly, doubtful, fearful, distrustful, guilt-ridden, longing for the past and the innocence and love present there. However, this authorial voice is not one that takes sides. Although the narrative is focalized from the point of view of Sridar, his family and the wider Pandit community, one can easily see that the Muslim community is described by this authorial voice in an objective and truthful manner. There are Muslim characters of all types, some good, some mundane but not a single one is painted as bad or inherently wrong by this authorial voice; it does not play a part in driving the narrative towards one or the other kind of meaning; it is objective and more of a facilitator for the story to unfold.

Dialogues of the character or the stylization of oral everyday narration is of great importance in *The Garden of Solitude* as it is largely written in the fashion of a chronicle of the times. We find numerous instances where the communication between characters, apart from conveying the obvious, direct meaning contained therein, keeps providing them with a sense of how things are. The narrative voices that come out in dialogues are of

⁸Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans., Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, 262.

two types: voices of the Pandits and Muslims of Kashmir. So there are not just accounts being narrated by Sridar, the protagonist and his family and other Pandits but there are many narration by members of the Muslim community, who rue the displacement of Pandits but are helpless in doing anything; the situation is beyond them and they feel as vulnerable and even more as they have to face not just militancy and the response to it by the Indian security establishment but their own radicalized youth.

7. Patterns of Events in the Four Parts of *The Garden of Solitude*

Though the four parts of the novel narrate the Pandit story sequentially in a linear and chronological fashion, by bringing in a number of letters, dreams and remembrance by a range of characters, the author very innovatively has been able to fracture the narrative structure and makes it possible for the readers to go back and forth in time and appreciate the nuances of an event, an utterance or a word in the wake of time having elapsed. Various patterns can be identified in these four parts of the novel; these patterns could be identified in terms of the geographical and attendant cultural space inhabited by the Pandits, the changing fortunes of the Pandit life, and the narrative focusing on various age groups and character types.

The first pattern could be identified as part one of the novel being about Pandit life in the Kashmir Valley, part two about their lives in Jammu, the third narrating their lives in various Indian places outside of Jammu and Kashmir, and the fourth looks at Pandit life out of India, globally and back to the valley.

Second pattern is that of their identity while in the valley as being learned, intelligent, white-collared, landowning, prosperous and how it reverses when they come to Jammu as people who are poor, refugee, to be pitied at, and even not intelligent enough as they have failed in identifying what was coming to their fate.

Third pattern consists of how the part one tells the story of the Pandit's glorious existence and tragic expulsion from the Kashmir Valley, part two lays bare how their lives were reduced to ruinous condition when they migrated to Jammu, the third

and fourth part depict their attempts at getting a toehold in a new world at the same time giving up of hopes of recovering the glory of the past in the Kashmir valley. If the first part is about celebration and tragedy of life, the second part is about survival and trauma, the third part is about grit and courage, the fourth part is about the hard-work and the undying charm for their homeland, the land of their ancestors.

The deep emotional connect felt by the Pandits with the Kashmir valley, something which was the primary part of the Pandit identity, is evident in the phrase *Maej Kasheer* ('mother Kashmir' in Kashmiri language).⁹ This phrase is uttered many times in the novel by both the Pandit and Muslim characters; it represents the identity of the Kashmir valley as the motherland.

8. Winds of Change in Kashmir Valley from Liberal to Rigid

One of the best friends of Sridar's father Lasa is Ali, a bookshop owner and neighbour. They bond over books, tea and debate issues of current affairs. Even Ali who, it is mentioned, was like a member of family for Lasa did not want to reveal everything to Lasa, as it turns out, when they are having tea and Radio Azad Kashmir is playing at a roadside restaurant. Everyone, including Ali, become extra attentive when there is a long list of names of people who have requested a song being broadcast:

Ali also listened patiently to the announcement. He held his breath till the end of the announcement.

Ali thought to himself, 'They have reached the training camps in Azad Kashmir. God is with them. The names of the others may be announced tomorrow'.

Ali said to Lasa 'I like these songs. I had also requested for a song. They might play it tomorrow'.

'But you didn't listen to the songs,' Lasa said. 'You heard the names only. What is this?'

Ali thought, 'Lasa shouldn't know. He is a Pandit' (10).

This is a day-to-day conversation between longstanding friends and it can serve as an example, amongst many others,

⁹Sanjay Safaya, "Kasheer" <<http://kashmirpedia.kauls.net/> Kasheer> (11.4.2016).

which tells the reader about the change in the atmosphere that necessitated communication and confidence gap among friends. Differences in identifying the other were becoming more firm, in this case Lasa, a Pandit, was seen by his friend Ali as someone who should not be privy to certain information; the information that many young boys were crossing over the borders and people waited for them and also for the news of their safety and well-being, which got conveyed when the announcement mentioned the names of the boys who requested the song. In Ali keeping this as secret from Lasa there is no mischief, nor is there any intention of hurting or harming Lasa. Ali would like to keep it as secret as he feels that this, the training of the boys and they being upheld as heroes who were sacrificing their youths for Kashmir, is not something, that the Pandits would like. Ali is enchanted by this idea of freedom for Kashmir and he would love to have his Pandit friends in this but he has some knowledge that the militants who are preparing to fight the Indian state do not see the Pandits as part of their struggle. This kind of dialogues between characters informs the reader about what is not said directly, the change that is happening but has not been pronounced in clear terms by anyone yet. There is a sense in which the Pandits have been othered in the Muslim minds, seen as separate from the Muslims in the valley. Ali and Lasa remain friends throughout the novel; it is a life-long relationship of great friendship.

It is perplexing, and with the benefit of hindsight, indeed utterly shocking, that right up to the time of the beginning of their expulsion from the valley the Pandits never thought they would face such a situation; neither did the Muslims thought so, as is evident in the novel by the way both the communities are shocked when the expulsion of the entire community becomes real. The pathetic conditions in which Pandits had to leave, intensifies the traumatic experience. It was so because both these communities had lived and bonded together for hundreds of years, there were generations of friendship between Pandit and Muslim families. Even their religion and religious practices, the only basic marker which separated them into two different

identities, had been influenced by each other and had changed from each other's influence; the Islam practiced by Muslim in Kashmir was a form with a lot of Sufi elements, the Pandits similarly were, meat-eating Brahmins, not to be found anywhere else in the rest of India. The Islam and the Hinduism of Kashmir both were different in their nature from their counterparts in the rest of the Indian subcontinent. It is a record of history that there were no partition riots witnessed in Kashmir, a border state like Punjab, which bled and burnt. This comes out in the novel in various voices, one being in the letter of Ali to Lasa: "How can Pandits live elsewhere when their roots are here? Their homes and hearts are here ... Kashmir without the Pandits is no Kashmir. By loosing you Kashmir lost its soul" (178).

8. Terror and Fear among Pandits and Muslims of Kashmir

One event that stands out is the description of how when Sridar was 14 he was chased by a dog, brown in colour, and he ran home breathlessly seeking cover and protection from his mother. The reader is told: "Sridar stopped walking on the street on which the dog ruled. The dog did not stop terrorising Sridar and barked at him even from a distance" (4). It was Manhanandju, grandfather of Sridar who was troubled by the way the dog could terrorise his grandchild and shooed the dog away. This event is given a symbolic meaning when Mahanandju is repeatedly troubled by the image of the dog chasing Sridar years later when he is living the life of a poor migrant in Jammu, having been chased out from the valley by militancy: "Sridar's fear of the dog remained etched in Mahanandju's memory for a long time. Years later, the fading memory of a dog bite haunted Mahanandju in a series of recurrent dreams" (4).

The symbolic inference being sought to be drawn by the author between the dog chasing Sridar and the Pandit's being chased out by the militants, the terror of it all, becomes clear when, in part three of the novel, Mahanandju's memory is playing truant, his psyche is traumatised, he continuously has various nightmares, one of which is where Sridar is being chased by the brown dog, and it succeeds in biting him. The brown dog

has returned to the memory of the grandfather, it has returned after the old man has undergone the traumatic experience of being forced to leave his birthplace, the place of his ancestors. When Sridar telephones his home he gets to know about it from his father, who tells him:

'Perhaps, he saw a dream in which a dog chased you and bit you. And he believed it to be true. Don't worry. He will forget about it soon,' Lasa had said.

Sridar decided to leave for home. He wanted to see his grandfather..." (170).

The feeling of security which comes in staying in your own country, among own people and being free is seen to be totally missing in the life-world of not just the Pandits, who are being mentally and physically harassed and literarily being chased out, but even in the minds of the common Muslim characters of *The Garden of Solitude*. The following is one of the several conversations that bring out the treacherous nature of the insurgency and the fearful atmosphere that it brought with it:

Lasa dreaded staying at home all day. He dreaded stepping out in the street. One morning Lasa entered Razaq's house to get his television repaired... The family respected Lasa. When Razaq saw Lasa he became tense. He opened the window of the room and shouted 'Is the search going anywhere? We Muslims are being killed. Damn India, Damn Indian dogs. We want azadi. I hate India.' Razaq closed the door.

'Pandit Sahib, you are my brother. I was simply acting. The boys are on the street. I am safe now' (43).

The common people have normal relationship amongst themselves. In numerous instances in the novel it becomes clear that there is no hatred or problem between people; they do not see and judge people as being good or bad just from their religion, though this is what a purist, fundamentalist form of any religion strives for. In fact it was the Muslim neighbours of many a Pandit families who in the nick of the time warned them and helped them in escaping from being killed by the militants.

With each passing day it becomes clearer that the Pandits have no choice other than leaving from the Kashmir valley. Soon there appear posters on the walls of houses of Pandits asking them to leave. There are announcements being made every day from the mosque asking Pandits to vacate the Valley. Pandits are being kidnapped, murdered and there is the reality of a 'hit list' which contains the names of Pandits to be eliminated. Lasa, who is an optimist, goes to meet his friend Manzoor, with the hope that he can get to know from Manzoor about his own status. Manzoor's own brother has been picked up by the army in what is known as a 'crackdown' rendering the mother on the verge of madness. He tells Lasa:

I found a note in my brother's cupboard. It read: 'Make my son a freedom fighter. Teach him the songs of freedom. Don't let him lose the remembrance of the dream for which I die'. Manzoor confided in Lasa...

Lasa asked Manzoor to find out if he figured in the hit list ... 'No harm will come to you and your family Lasa. Don't leave your home. I will die to protect your family'... (56).

Manzoor's voice betrays what seems to be a duality; on one side, he is hateful of India, as he is sure his brother and scores of others are tortured and killed by the Indian Army; he wants to be a militant, and takes the separatist line, the stance which was hell bent on driving the Pandits out of the Valley; on the other side he will do anything to protect the Pandits, as for him Kashmir cannot be imagined without the Pandits. Though it may seem a duality, this is how Kashmir has been; the culture of Kashmir, *Kashmiriyat*, was always a subtle blend of the Muslim and Hindus of Kashmir. While the struggle and desire for a political identity was real so was the brotherhood between Muslims and Pandits of Kashmir. The hatred towards one community is something that is contrived and has come to the valley from outside. It is the fundamentalist ideology, which would not like to have any debate, dialogue let alone any kind of disagreement, that was responsible for the forced migration of the Pandits from Kashmir valley.

For the Pandits it was a double whammy, they had to suffer the loss of their land, homes, jobs, way of life and when they did arrive in Jammu, where the government had promised to find settlement for them, they could see that it was not just shabby but degrading. Suddenly, the prosperous, knowledgeable and white-collared Pandits had to face the ignominy of living on the very basic help that was doled out to them in the camps set up by the Indian government. The land in the plains was not at all to the liking of any of them, who were used to living by the side of the snow-capped mountains. Many suffered from physical illness and loss of mental balance. An entire community had suddenly been dislodged from their roots. The following texts portray the feelings of the Pandit community:

'We were slain there. And now we will be slain here,' a young man mourned. 'We are safe now', someone else commented. 'I do not wish to be cremated here. I long for my room,' an old man standing nearby howled.

It was a procession of old men and women. Suddenly, the entire migrant community seemed to have grown old, the old seemed to outnumber the young (84).

The forced migration of Pandits was not just an assault on their physical lives but one on their psyche; the fear and trauma which gripped them in the valley was not soothed at all in Jammu; rather it became a near permanent presence in their lives, making old men lose their mental balance and the young all their dreams. When Pamposh, Sridar's migrant friend, narrates his life in camp one line that haunts Sridar is: "We have no picture of our ancestors" (97). A similar image is evoked, when Mahanandju wants to shave and the mirror cannot be located, wherein he mockingly says "I am a man without a reflection" (85). These are many ways in which the Pandits give expression to the loss of identity that they suffered.

9. Syncretism of Kashmir Replaced by Fundamentalism

The tolerant religion and cultural practices of Kashmir are evident in the old man who is seen pleading with the Pandits:

Pandits, do not leave your motherland. It is a conspiracy by our enemy to separate brother from brother... I speak from my soul. Pandits do not leave this place. Without you how will we exist? He pleaded... 'Islam does not teach violence. It is not right to torture the innocent,' the old man howled.

A young Muslim bystander climbed the steps of the mosque and slapped the old man... 'Let the Pandit men leave Kashmir, but let them leave their women behind' the young man growled. He laughed (68).

These are the two distinct voices of the Kashmiri Muslim; the old representing the liberal, accommodative view of Islam and the young man standing for the change to a more fundamental form, which has infiltrated into the Kashmiri culture from across the border; freedom struggle and jihad were separated by a very thin line, at times not separated at all. It is indeed strange that when so many people, the general populace, wanted Pandits to stay, they were forced to migrate, literally chased out of their homes.

The Pandits have been the sufferer of the ethnic cleansing which happened in the Kashmir Valley. However, even the reasonable and common Muslim of Kashmir is not free to live life in his own terms; because if he does so he is at a danger of being labelled someone against the fight for Azadi. At some point of time the struggle for Azadi and the Kashmiri Muslims unique identity of practicing a liberal form of Islam has been a casualty; what came in its place was fundamentalist Islam. Ramachandra Guha writes:

The fundamentalists also came down hard on the pleasures of the people. Cinema halls and video parlours were closed, drinking and smoking banned ... ordering women to cover themselves in ... burqa. The burqa was contrary to Kashmiri custom ... by 1995 or thereabouts, there were only two functioning institution in Kashmir – the Indian army on one side and the network of *jihadi* groups on the other.¹⁰

This finds mention in the novel when Lasa's friend Ali's brother Qazi meets him in Delhi he says: "The Coffee House and the

¹⁰ Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 653.

Broadway Cinema were set on fire. One by one all cinema halls were asked to shut down. The wine shop too closed permanently" (131). For the Kashmiri life has changed, they have been forced to change from a uniquely liberal Islam derived heavily from Sufism to a fundamentalist purist form of Islam and the minority Pandit community has been forced to migrate.

10. Conclusion

This article has shown how *The Garden of Solitude* chronicles in a literary way the tragic and historically significant expulsion of the Pandits from the Kashmir Valley. Taking Bakhtin's idea of the possibility of multiple truths and voices in a novel it has analyzed the various voices which may not clearly point to just a single truth or a clear understanding of the reasons for the expulsion of the Pandits but the views of various characters and their interaction certainly point to the dangers of fundamentalism of religion, which is harmful not just to the people from other religions but even to those of its own as well.

The danger of fundamentalism is in its unwillingness to listen and take into account the voice of the other. It is dictatorial and wants to impose its monolithic views on the people. Fundamentalism in religion becomes most powerful when those having liberal views in any religion do not engage in debates and protest against the arbitrary way in which fundamentalism functions. At such times the common people, especially those in the minority, become most vulnerable as fundamentalism now operates with the collective power of the community, which has been sanctioned by the silence of the liberals. The liberals by being silent become part of the oppression unleashed by the fundamentalist forces. When the Pandits were being ordered to vacate the Kashmir valley or when they were being harassed, there was no opposition, no questioning of it from the liberals within the Muslim community; there was sympathy for the Pandits, there was an attempt to provide sense of security to the Pandits and when needed even safe passage to escape from the militants, but there was no attempt to raise objections and to question the Islamic fundamentalists from within the

community. The liberals amongst the Muslim in Kashmir failed to see the way fundamentalism was creeping into Kashmir in the façade of struggle for freedom or *Azadi*, which soon changed to Jihad, a religious war that not only committed the ethnic cleansing of Pandits but also fractured the daily lives of Kashmiri Muslim by seeking to make them lead a life which was Islamic according to the fundamentalist forces.

This article has shown through a dialogic analysis how there is dialogue and relationship between the individual Muslims and Pandits of Kashmir but as a community, at the level of a collective identity there are certain differences that are political in nature. The Muslim community, as a collective, in the 1989-90s insurgency of Kashmir, sided with the insurgents and that was equivalent to taking the side of Pakistan, as the insurgency was being openly supported by Pakistan; this was not to the liking of the minority Pandit community. This constituted a distinct difference in the political leaning and aspirations amongst the Muslims and the Pandits of Kashmir. It manifested itself only in 1989-90s when there was local level participation in the Kashmir insurgency. The willingness of Muslims to side with Pakistan changed the relationship between the communities; the syncretism of Kashmir, which accommodated the views of the two religions and even adopted each other's practices was possible due to the continuous dialogue between the two communities. Islamic fundamentalism that was pushed into Kashmir left no scope for dialogue; without dialogue both the communities suffered at a collective level. The way of peace, of mutual co-existence for the two communities of Kashmir can start only when there is willingness to listen to the other and to have dialogue not just at the individual level but at the collective level of the community.