

Book Review: Kashmir: Orphans, Nurture and Challenges.

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Orphans on the shores of Lost Paradise!

Armed conflicts keep increasing all over the world and children are the ones most affected. According to UNICEF, eighteen million children have grown up in war zones, where two million have died, six million have been permanently disabled and one million have become orphans. Is there anything more immoral in the war than the involvement of children in something they do not understand and they do not choose? Off course, NO. War-affected children very often suffer psychological problems such as depression, PTSD, long term problems in coping with future stressful situations, anger and aggressiveness. The family and social networks are shattered. As a result most children often experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that may affect their entire later life. Tragedy of errors is that many children with PTSD develop highly aggressive behavior that, in the end, leads to the militias.

The book "*Kashmir: Orphans, Nurture and Challenges*" by Rao Farman Ali is a dandy case study of orphans in Kashmir. The book throws light on the genesis of Kashmir conflict and how it has brought a train of orphans to Kashmir valley. It mindfully tells about the dreadful challenges that Kashmiris are confronting from ages. The author of the book genuinely supports

that the psychological effects of conflict on children are long lasting and horrific. The role of NGOs and some key problems that they face in Kashmir, entertains the right place in the book. With an accurate beginning, the first chapter of the book opens up with some geographical facts about Kashmir valley and gradually takes a reader to the shores of Kashmir history, poetry, Kashmir resistance against Dogra raj and the armed revolt of 1988 against Indian oppression, which is still going on.

The book terribly exposes Afghans and Sikhs, who ruled Kashmir “Were more savages than other monarchs” and the writer labels the period of 1819-1846AD as the darkest period of Kashmir history. What makes the book an authenticated account on Kashmir is that the writer quotes famous writes to support his own narrative, which adds stars to its authentication. The ill-fated life of Kashmiri Muslims remains the point of discussion throughout the book and one can glue his eyes to the book while reading pathetic tales of Kashmiri Muslims, like while telling a woeful tale of Kashmiri Muslims the writer quotes a famous author Sir Walter Lawrence, “...Kashmiri Pandits had a power and authority, and Muslims....were forced to work to keep idle Brahmans in comfort”. The book “*Kashmir: Orphans, Nurture and Challenges*”, a magnificent piece of writing, magnificently takes a reader on a tour to Mauryan rule, Karkota rule, Afghan rule, Mughal rule, sikh rule and others. After going through the pages of this book one can feel the pain of Kashmiri people and how these innocent and humble masses have been suppressed and oppressed time and again by foreign invaders. The whole book dances on the tones of some famous and widely read authors who wrote on Kashmir, which makes the book quite interesting and a must read.

The book “*Kashmir: Orphans, Nurture and Challenges*” also gives us an authentic account of armed conflict in Kashmir and its impact. As the writer says, “Conflict is the active disagreement between different contending political forces or states and war in action is its worst form, wherein lethal weapons are used as a part of hostile aggression”. While explaining the conflict and its impact the author of the book takes a reader to Palestine, Iraq, Libya, Syria,

Afghanistan, Algeria, Nigeria, Rwanda, Thailand, Colombia, Cambodia, Uganda, Congo and Guatemala's civil war(1965) and defends his point of view that armed conflict tears apart economies, destroys land and ruins relations. The past 27 years of armed conflict in Kashmir resulted in an alarming increase in the number of orphans. A survey conducted by Kashmir based voluntary organization puts the figure at 0.015 million in the category of armed conflict. During the last two decades the Kashmir society has scattered, leaving children either orphaned or as household heads.

The author rightly states that the Kashmir conflict remains on the dusty shelves of New Delhi and Islamabad and the poor masses of Kashmir have been put under black blanket of terror and torture. The role of NGOs in a conflict torn state has occupied the throne of the book and has been marked as “most crucial actors in the establishment of civil society in areas where the State has failed to keep democratic institutions running”. The book also promotes the efforts of state government in welfare schemes and gives a detailed description about the same.

The book arranges an assembly of all issues and problems which sprang out from the river of conflict in Kashmir. The conflict has bestowed the battalion of orphans and how we can deal with these challenges, is the most serious part of the book. Indeed, it is a must read.