

URMILA DESHPANDE'S NOVEL, *KASHMIR BLUES*: AN OVERVIEW

Ms.A.Mahara Devi

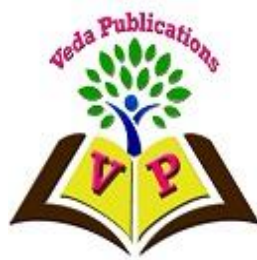
(Assistant Professor, Department of English, E.M.G.Yadava Women's College, Madurai.)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.54513/IJREP.2021.7402>

Abstract

This research article examines an unpredicted travel of the characters in the atmospheric streets of Bombay and Delhi, Sapphire mines, Shiva carpets, the valley of beautiful flowers, love and death. The mood of the novel changes into a mythological tone, by the legend behind the blue stone. In the novel, *Kashmir Blues*, the character of samaad has been well portrayed by the author. The elegance of Kashmir is displayed throughout the novel, and it focuses on its beauty, atmosphere, entire landscape, tradition, customs, trade and occupation. Urmila Deshpande has given the beautiful description about the foreign land also. She has portrayed various places of India with an exact description. Throughout the novel the character of Samaad's existence and his absence extremely influences other characters as well as the readers. At the end of the novel, Samaad's stoic character leaves imprint on the minds of the characters and also the readers. The setting and atmosphere in the novel have contributed a lot for the characters like Naia and Leon for their betterment of well-being.

Keywords: *Blue stone, Atmosphere, Kashmir, Landscape, Carpets.*



Article Info:

Article Received 09/11/2021

Accepted on: 23/11/2021

Published online: 17/12/2021

Urmila Deshpande is a prominent Indian writer and also an actress. Urmila is the daughter of Gowri Deshpande, an Indian writer. Apart from as an actress, she is a model, editor, photographer, columnist and traveler. Urmila's novel, *Kashmir Blues* gives a center of attention on the unpredicted travel of the characters in the atmospheric streets of Bombay and Delhi, Sapphire mines, Shiva carpets, the valley of beautiful flowers, love and death. The novel *Kashmir Blues* begins with Naia, a young American girl who finds the truth that she was taken from India through the letters of her dead parents. So Naia decides to leave America and travels towards India to find her real biological parents. Naia is accompanied with Leon, her friend who is a photographer, looking out for adventures. Soon, they happen to meet her biological parents Viren and Saroj. There, a new main character who turns the plot to a different path, Samaad is introduced.

In the novel, *Kashmir Blues*, settings play a significant role. The main plot starts with the beautiful description and an introduction of Kashmir and Samaad and his profession as a Carpet seller. The elegance of Kashmir is displayed throughout the novel, and it focuses on its beauty, atmosphere, entire landscape, tradition, customs, trade and occupation. Here, they have mentioned that at once Kashmir was the crown of India. Naia and Leon, the central characters are from United states, in the city of Angles. Urmila Deshpande has given the beautiful description about the foreign land also. She has portrayed various places of India with an exact description. Naia has given a neat description about the park in India, where she had been taken by her father Jim even, she before she coming to India.

Actually, the park which is mentioned in the novel is placed in Bombay and that situated high on a hill, with a heart-stopping view of the city. The Park was consisting of beautiful flowers and trees. When Naia comes to India, she first visits Bombay. Naia completely hates the atmosphere of Mumbai and she states that,

But of travelling in this country, in this way, with no clean food, with no place she could put her stuff down without thoughts of bacteria-laden saliva, unwashed hands, disease, dirt, garbage, so much humanity that there were no individuals, just a mess [Deshpande, 88]

Naia's opinion about Mumbai has changed after her meeting with Samaad. Her attitude towards the atmosphere of India has changed from awkwardness to awe. Moreover, Naia's friend, Leon is highly animated by the love of danger and beautiful landscape of Kashmir. Leon is extremely admired by Samaad, both as a photographer and also as a lover of adventures. Easily, Leon gets connected with samaad, and he feels some kind of belonging and a bond with Samaad and his place.

On the other side, the character of Naia is very passive. Leon, easily adopted the atmosphere of India and he fit in that, but Naia feels very difficult to adopt the things which were in India. Soon, she meets her parents, but she does not create any emotional feelings with her biological parents. Often, she exposes her unwillingness and aversion for the atmosphere in India, even though it is her own birth place. In the novel, the setting and the atmosphere comprises not only the places in India, but also, it describes the life style of particular area. Naia is highly addicted to smoke and it was very bad for her health. Her friend Leon, completely enjoys the environment and atmosphere of India, and he does not give his interest towards the Indian vegetarian food. On the other hand, Naia does not fully fit into the Indianness. She is struggling between the two different identities of her past and present. Because in USA, she led her life in a different life style and she never follow any customs like that. So, the things which she faced in India, is very strange to her comparing with her life in foreign land.

The major setting of the novel is sapphire mine and it is considered as the destination, where Leon and Naia desires to seek with the help of Samaad. So, the blue stone is sparkling in such a way that it is known as the best ever gem on the earth. Here, the mood of the novel changed into a mythological tone, by the legend behind the blue stone. Leon and Samaad talks about the stone and Leon ask question to Samaad regarding the stone and he insists that why the stones are in blue colour and also about sapphire mining. Sammad replies,

Sometimes Shiva looks at the world. And he sees the misery and the ugliness and the greed that we live by. And he remembers how the world was without men. And then he cries. And his tears fall to the earth. They go deep, and stay there forever. Unless we find them [Deshpande, 135].

It is a great believe that the blue sapphire is known as the tears of Lord shivs which continues to shed for the vanity of hope and life.

In the novel, the character of samaad has been well portrayed by the author. Moreover, his character was a puzzling one throughout the novel, whether he was human or inhumane. Here, the two sides of samaad are revealed through some significant scenes. In the beginning of the novel, Samaad is only introduced as a carpet seller and his carpets were of very good quality and it is liked by everyone in Delhi. Naia's father Viren had a traditional carpet, and he loved that more than everything in the house. So, the house of Viren always furnished with Samaad's carpet. Samaad always used to pray five times every day. Another side of Samaad is somewhat inhumane. Because the sapphire mining of Samaad had started only with the murder of Ali. At the same time, he was very helpful for the people in Kashmir. And he has cured some of the physical pain like bone breakage and cured disease also. Here, Ali is one of the troops of army in Kashmir. At one time Ali seek the help of Samaad, but unexpectedly Samaad killed Ali, because Ali noted down the sapphire mine. In that situation, the character of Samaad is showed as a covert. But he justified the murder of Ali at the end of the novel.

Samaad and his brother Jabra are doing the Sapphire mining for the welfare of the people in Kashmir. But this Sapphire mining was considered as an illegal business. Soldiers are in the troops believes that Samaad will be the head of this sapphire mining and others follow the words of Samaad. Then, Samaad happened to meet Naia and Leon at Viren's house. He went to their house to sell the carpets and he was admired by Naia. Leon asks Samaad to take photographs of the beauty of Kashmir, "I just know that what was once the most beautiful place on earth is now also the most dangerous" [Deshpande, 111]. So, Leon stays in Samaad's house for long days. Samaad have the habit of reveal the secrets regarding mining to the persons, whoever he believed. So, he tells everything to Leon and on hearing this, Leon was highly admired by Samaad and wishes to stay with him forever. But at first Leon thinks that Samaad is doing for his welfare and Samaad replies to Leon in the following manner,

Do you think I do this for myself? Do you think I want power and wealth, Leon? I cannot change the world, I cannot change this country, I cannot even really change the way things are in this place. But I have to try. I was given

the chance; I was given this... Not many people find such a purpose in their lives, nor the strength within themselves, nor the means to achieve it [Deshpande, 136].

Naia is heavily addicted by drugs and the reason for her addiction is that her loneliness she faced in the new place and she extremely missed her best friend, Leon. Later, Samaad promises Leon that he helps Naia to get rid of her drug habit. Samaad consoles Leon and says, "You have a very big heart. She is your friend, and you love her. You are my friend, and I will help you" [Deshpane, 155]. So, both Leon and Naia goes along with Samaad and soon she starts to fell in love with Samaad forever. Then, she came to Samaad's place to know about the sapphire mining. Samaad is also an agent for Tara and Viren. He hides the truth about sapphire mining from Tara and Viren. When the army decides to take charge against Samaad, he determines to send Leon, Naia, Jabra and Karan back to Delhi. Because, he wholeheartedly cares for their welfare and lives. But Naia loves Samaad truly and even she dreams about having children with Samaad. Samaad is very stubborn in his path. So Samaad withdraw his plan to escape from the army. He decides to surrender himself to the army, but finally he died out of explosion.

The name of Samaad has not vanished in the hearts of each and every people in Kashmir though he died. Especially, samaad's image and his daughters in not faded in the hearts of Leon. So, throughout the novel the character of Samaad's existence and his absence extremely influences other characters as well as the readers. At the end of the novel, Samaad's stoic character leaves imprint on the minds of the characters and also the readers. The setting and atmosphere in the novel have contributed a lot for the characters like Naia and Leon for their betterment of well-being.

References

Deshpande, Urmila. *Kashmir Blues*. New Delhi: Tranquebar Press. 2010.