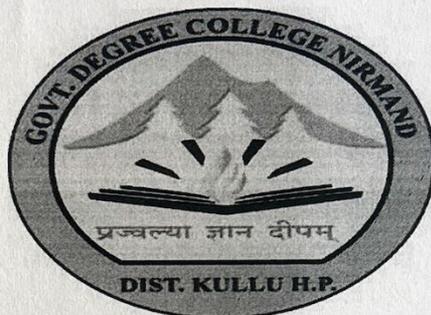


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A Community in Exile: A Critical Analysis of Siddhartha Gigoo's *The Garden of Solitude* (2011)

Priyanka Thakur  

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government Degree College, Nirmand, Himachal Pradesh, India.

Abstract

The research paper focuses on Siddhartha Gigoo's novel, *The Garden of Solitude*, dedicated to the people living in exile and their desire for a peaceful state of mind. Siddhartha Gigoo in the novel has highlighted exile as a major theme and *The Garden of Solitude* (2011) tells the story of a community without reflection which has been forgotten by the world. The Kashmiri Pandits lost their reflection when the world turned its face away from their plight and suffering in refugee camps. The absence of reflection also indicates the erasure of identity. The question of Kashmiri Pandits has been excluded from all the dominant discourses and the novel is an endeavour by a Pandit to bring before the world the grim life of refugee camps.

The novel asserts the need to preserve the stories of a community whose elders have lost their fight against failing memories. The protagonist of the novel believes in preserving identity through literary pursuits and that is why he records the stories that connect displaced Pandits to their roots in Kashmir. The concept of identity politics is at major stake here in the novel and the identity of his community has an essential link to its past in Kashmir and that link is personified by the elders living in exile. There is a theme of journey in his life that ultimately takes him back to his roots in Kashmir. The journey is in the search for the lost reflection of his community that he tries to get back by collecting stories slowly fading away.

Keywords: Exile, Kashmir, Pandits, Identity, Cultural politics.



Reduced Inequalities

Siddhartha Gigoo has dedicated his novel, *The Garden of Solitude*, to the people living in exile and their desire for a peaceful state of mind: "All I dream of now is a garden of solitude, where I get a morsel of rice in the morning and a morsel of rice in the evening". (Gigoo, 2011, p. V) An exile only hopes for a peaceful physical place and a mental space through which he or she can escape his/her anxieties, confusions, struggles, and pain of life in exile. Life in exile is a state of

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