

ISSN:0976-8165



The Criterion

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL IN ENGLISH

Bi-Monthly Peer-Reviewed eJournal

VOL. 15 ISSUE-2 APRIL 2024

15 YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

Editor-In-Chief: **Dr. Vishwanath Bite**

Managing Editor: **Dr. Madhuri Bite**

www.the-criterion.com

Impact Factor: 8.67

AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Title of the Book: Rumours of Spring: A Girlhood in Kashmir

Author: Farah Bashir

Publication: harpercollins.co.in

Publication Year: 2021

Pages:226

Genre: Fiction

Reviewed by:

Qurat ul Aen Malik

Ph.D. Research Scholar:

Department of English

Sharda University,

Greater Noida UP India.

Farah Bashir, originally from Kashmir, used to be a Reuters photojournalist and now works as a communications consultant. 'Rumours of Spring: A girlhood in Kashmir' marks her debut as an author. In this poignant coming-of-age memoir, Farah Bashir vividly depicts the subtle impact of territorial conflict on daily life in Kashmir. With haunting simplicity, she portrays moments of strength and endurance from her childhood amid the growing trauma and turmoil over the years.

In a world where we often find ourselves lost in the hustle and bustle of daily life, books have the remarkable power to transport us to places we've never been, to illuminate the human experience in its most raw and unfiltered form. 'Rumours of Spring: A Girlhood in Kashmir' by Farah Bashir is one such book. It is a poignant memoir that takes us on a profoundly intimate journey through the tumultuous landscape of Kashmir in the 1990s, as seen through the eyes of a young girl.

Kashmir, often referred to as "Heaven on Earth," is a place of breathtaking natural beauty. But behind this facade of tranquillity lies a different reality, one soaked in the blood of innocents who became collateral damage in the ongoing conflict. Farah Bashir's memoir peels back the layers of this complex region and unravels the stories that rarely make headlines. It provides an unfiltered and unapologetic look into the lives of Kashmiris, giving voice to the little girl who once played amidst the chaos and uncertainty.

Farah Bashir's memoir is, at its core, a coming-of-age story set against the backdrop of a conflict-ridden Kashmir. It offers a poignant narrative of a girlhood that defies traditional norms. In a land where curfews, crackdowns, unexplained arrests, shootings, and teargas became the norm, even the simplest of daily tasks were shrouded in fear and anxiety. The year 1989 marked a turning point in young Farah's life. It was the year when her world was forever altered. The memories of that time are etched in her mind as she recalls the sudden outbreak of violence, followed by curfews and the horrifying rumours at home that declared her dead. This came on a day when she fulfilled a long-cherished dream of getting her first proper haircut, only to have her joy brutally cut short. As a nightmarish reality descended, she found herself pulling strands of her hair in the dark, a coping mechanism born from the stress of living in a world where gunfire and uncertainty were the norm. What sets 'Rumours of Spring' apart is its multifaceted narrative. It is not solely a memoir of a young girl's experiences but a broader narrative that encompasses her family, friends, neighbours, teachers, and acquaintances. Bashir's storytelling captures how violence interacts with and impacts the routine lives of ordinary people. It delves into the very essence of humanity amidst a conflict zone. It explores themes of trauma, resilience, and the sheer will to survive in a world marked by terror. Bashir's memoir paints a unique coming-of-age story, one that defies convention. It masterfully interweaves moments of youthful vitality and resilience within the harrowing landscape of the Kashmir conflict. She shares anecdotes of secretly dancing to pop songs on banned radio stations, crafting her first love letter, and experiencing the magic of cinema for the first time. These moments of youthful innocence stand in stark contrast to the harsh realities that surround her. Farah Bashir's prose is nothing short of captivating. Her writing possesses a rare quality - it's evocative yet straightforward. Through her words, she immerses readers in the heart of Kashmir, allowing them to feel the raw emotions of her characters. Her descriptions of the region's beauty and the brutality of conflict are both vivid and eloquent. It's as if she invites readers to take a seat at the Kashmiri hearth, where stories of survival are passed down through generations.

With approximately 36 small chapters, the central character, Bobeh (Kashmiri word for grandmother), steals the spotlight. While the memoir primarily revolves around Farah Bashir's own transformation, it's the portrayal of supporting characters that adds depth and authenticity to the narrative. Her family members, friends, and neighbours become vivid representations of the resilience and unyielding spirit of Kashmiris. It's within these characters that we witness the true essence of the Kashmiri people. 'Rumours of Spring' delves into themes that transcend

the boundaries of Kashmir. It explores the human capacity to endure and adapt in the face of unimaginable adversity. The narrative also delves into the intricate balance between personal aspirations and the collective struggle, shedding light on how individuals find solace and meaning amidst chaos. It's a universal story of human existence marked by hope, love, and the indomitable will to survive. This memoir is a profound emotional journey. It doesn't just recount events; it immerses readers in the heart-wrenching experiences of the author and the Kashmiri people. It's impossible to read this book without feeling a profound sense of sorrow, yet it also inspires hope and resilience. Farah Bashir's storytelling leaves an indelible mark on the reader, a lasting emotional resonance that lingers long after the last page is turned. Farah Bashir seamlessly weaves Kashmiri culture, language, and traditions into the narrative. This cultural immersion enriches the storytelling experience, providing readers with a deep understanding of the region's unique heritage and the enduring spirit of its people. It's a tapestry of culture and identity that adds layers of authenticity to the memoir.

The title 'Rumours of Spring' is a crucial element that shouldn't be overlooked in this review. Some book titles possess the remarkable ability to convey a wealth of meaning in just a few words. In the case of 'Rumours of Spring: A Girlhood in Kashmir,' it skilfully sets the stage for the haunting narrative of a young girl living under constant siege, a theme the book masterfully explores. The title 'Rumours of Spring' draws inspiration from the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali. In the tumultuous 1990s, his poetry served as a refuge for those grappling with the challenge of expressing their emotions. Many found solace in his verses, connecting deeply with the pain they conveyed. Within this contrast, spring symbolizes hope, change, and the promise of better times ahead.

'Rumours of Spring: A Girlhood in Kashmir' is a literary masterpiece that transcends borders and boundaries. Farah Bashir's memoir is more than just a book; it's a testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable challenges. It offers readers a rare and invaluable perspective on life in a conflict zone, highlighting the power of hope, resilience, and the unwavering human connection.

This memoir is not just a recounting of events; it's a powerful narrative that demands to be heard. It's a poignant reminder that amidst the darkest of times, the human spirit can shine the brightest. 'Rumours of Spring' is a must-read for anyone seeking an immersive, eye-opening, and deeply moving literary experience.

References:

Bashir, Farah. *Rumours of Spring: A girlhood in Kashmir*. Harpercollins.co.in India 2021.

Biographical Note:

Ms. Qurat ul Aen Malik is from Jammu and Kashmir and has pursued graduation and post-graduation at University of Kashmir. She is currently a Ph. D. Scholar at Sharda University in the department of English, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Greater Noida Uttar Pradesh, India. Her research interests are based on Woman and Trauma in Select Contemporary Kashmiri Fictional Narratives.