



WWJMER 2023;1(03): 1-2  
www.wwjmer.com  
International Journal  
Peer Reviewed Journal  
Refereed Journal  
Indexed Journal

Irfan Bashir  
University of  
Kashmir, Srinagar, India.

## A Study of Akhter Mohi-ud-din's Novel "ZU TI ZOLAAN"

**Irfan Bashir**

### **Abstract**

The paper entitled "A Study of Akhter Mohi-ud-din's Novel Zu Ti Zolaan" (*Life and Shackles*) attempts to discuss the *projects* the complexities of human situation through various characters and his main theme are social as well as emotional. Zu and Zolaan (*Life and Shackles*) is an ore of our social milieu. The novel is embodied in typical Kashmiri rural society of pre-independence days when common Kashmiri villagers were gripped by the fear of bonded labour which was commonly known as *Gilgat Begar* by Kashmiri masses. Though the miseries and the terror of begar is not the main focus of the narrative, yet its impact on the lives of the characters of this novel is distinct.

**Keywords:** Zu Ti Zolaan, Dood Te Dagg, Jhelum, Kashmiri, Begar, Ramzan Raja, Gafar, Mugla Haanzini, Malla Kabir, labour.

### **Introduction**

*Akhter Mohi-ud-Din* is the prominent and representative fiction writer of Kashmiri Language. He has contributed immensely to enrich the fiction of his language. He showed considerable narrative power in drawing an ironic comic, yet sympathetic portrait of the middle class of the society. The stories of this writer present the life of the common people in different walks of life, their hopes and aspirations, small sorrows and joys, their afflictions and inner conflicts of day-to-day life. Akhter is a harbinger of modernism in Kashmiri short story and has a marked influence on the fiction writers of later period.

Zu Ti Zolaan is mainly story of complex relation of three characters of Shilvat village in north Kashmir. These are; a young man *Ramzan Raja*, old widow *Mugla Haanzini* and dreadful middle aged man *Malla Kabir*. *Ramzan Raja* has become a spoilt child after his father's death who was professional thief. We see violence in *Ramzan's* makeup. Village children are afraid of him and often try to avoid him. Circumstances lead him to a situation where he has no love or respect for his mother. *Malla Kabir* is so wicked that parents hide their young ones on his appearance in village. Village people think that he is a demon or some evil being who entices village boys and take them to unknown lands where from they never return. *Kabir* becomes fond of *Ramzan* and by his association *Ramzan* too becomes attached to *Kabir*. *Kabir* was like cordless kite with no ties and relations in this village society. New found attachment with *Ramzan* lends his life some purpose. These three characters, at one stage or the other severe their relation with civilized human society. Society also rejects them. For *Malla Kabir* and *Ramzan* human relations and conventions of the social life have no value. They strive to come out of the system for some time. But the man has to be part of it as there is no escape from it. If social system rejects a person, he loses the existence and if a man rejects it, result is the same. Through the course of action, they come close to each other and enter into a new web of relation. Thus, the main message of the novel is that for a man there is no escape from human relations. *Zolaan* or chains of relations are same as anchor is to a ship. This is the theme the novel brings forth. Story of the novel is:

After her husband's death *Mugli* for her subsistence is completely at the mercy of the band of thieves which her husband headed when he was alive. They help her with cash and kind to make her living. *Ramzan* is un-obedient to his mother who insists him to learn some craft for earning his livelihood. On the other hand, thieves insist him to join them and lead their band

Irfan Bashir  
University of  
Kashmir, Srinagar, India.

like his father did. But all this pursuance and advice falls flat on Ramzan. Instead, he runs from his home and joins Kabir Malla, the laborer agent for British Army. He returns in spring with a visible change in his dress and appearance.

Now on very year, by the onset autumn Ramzan would go with Kabir and work as labour in British army camps of Northern Hills. He would return in spring every year thus earning sufficient sum of money. He develops a helping attitude. He helps the needy people of his village but at the same time he becomes detached with his mother. She too had no love lost for him after his association with Kabir who is a frightful and mysterious figure for the village folk. He was born after the death of his father. His mother too had died when he was a child.

One day in spring when Ramzan had returned home from winter long labour, Gafar, a frail and poor boatman, comes to meet him. He had come to know of the helping attitude of Ramzan. For him Ramzan was not benevolent but foolish and prodigal. He narrated him the tale of his suffering and vows. His biggest worry is that his two daughters are unmarried as he has nothing to spend for their marriage. Ramzan is moved by the worries of Gafar. He promises to help Gafar with cash or kind. Even when he is in hills, he sends him little amounts. One winter when Ramzan was far away in hills, his mother died at her home. Ramzan returned in spring. He did not lament on her death as if nothing had happened. Instead, he felt free from any ties with his home and society. He spends money lavishly on Gafar. But Gafar dies in same spring and now Ramzan stays in Mugli's boat. Now onwards he earns for her. Ramzan even sold his ancestral house to get the daughters of Mugli married.

This unnamed relation between aged Mugli and young Ramzan becomes the talk of town. For villagers this relation is illicit one. But no one could dare to tell this to Ramzan on his face. Because of his aggressive behavior people are afraid of him. Fed up with the accusations of villagers Mugli makes up her mind to forbid Ramzan from living with her. She tells Ramzan about these accusations but could not gather the courage to tell him for leaving her alone. Angry Ramzan resolves to take the old lady as his wife. In the morning Ramzan and Mugli left the village and sailing their boat on the waters of Jhelum reached in the outskirts of Srinagar city. Next morning Ramzan called Imam from nearby locality for performing Nikah.

Meanwhile Kabir comes to know from a village boy that Ramzan has eloped with Mugli as he wanted to marry her. Kabir is amazed and searches for them. Next morning, he locates the duo and their boat near Srinagar and before the Imam comes to Mugli's boat to get them tied in wedlock, Kabir is there in the boat with Mugli and Ramzan. In the end instead of Ramzan, Kabir marries Mugli and the trio lives together like a family. In this way they once again come in the civilized fold of society.

The story is so constructed that it cannot be regarded as a mere sequence of events. As we begin to read the novel the action is already approaching to end. Compared to "Dood Te Dagg", his first novel, Akhtar in this novel shows better analytical skill in his characterization. The flash back technique of narrative linking past to present makes the plot of the novel a plot of revelation. The same method of narration has made "Dood Te Dagg" ill structured but in this novel the method attests the expertise of the novelist in sustaining the interest of the reader and suspense as well. Akhtar as a fiction writer recognizes the primary importance

of making his reader eager to discover what happens next. But the novel presents a minor parallel with "Dood Te Dagg". The character of Kabir shows some similarity with Ab. Gani of "Dood Te Dagg" as both are detested and despised by society. While the female folk are scared of lustful Ab. Gani, appearance of Malla Kabir is also fearful scene for village people. Though in case of Kabir his wickedness is the result of the circumstances he has gone through. But both the characters have ability to change. In this novel as compared to "Dood Te Dagg" Akhtar shows better analytical skill in his characterization.

The interplay of the events expressing human attachments, hate, compassion and anger of novel is absorbing. One can have the glimpses of the life and lore of yesteryears of the land with all its miseries of poverty, economic hardships, and social problems and psychological stresses the people of rural area. The author has a grip on the characters who reveal themselves as the situation develops. The balanced movement of the prose and particularly of the description brings the novel to a close on a note of calm and completeness.

### References

1. Aash Mohan Lal: Takhliq Ti Tanqeed, J&K Academy of Art Culture & Languages, Srinagar, 2001.
2. Akhter Mohi-ud-din: Zoo Te Zolaan, Srinagar.
3. Autar Krishen Rehber Ti Gh. Nabi Khayal: Koshur Nassar: Lekh Gond, Sahitya Akademi, 1966.
4. Hajni Aziz: Pantsahan Variyan Hund Koshur Adab, Sahitya Akademi New Delhi, 2004.
5. Lubbock, Percy: The Craft of Fiction, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1926.
6. Muzmar Majid: Kashmir Drama Aur Fiction, Book media Srinagar, 1999.
7. Naji Munaver and Shafi Shauq: Kashir Zabaan Te Adbuk Tawareekh, Ali Mohammad & Sons, Srinagar, 2018.
8. Raina, Triloki Nath: A History of Kashmir Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 2002.
9. Shaant, Rattan Lal: Kashur Afsaana: Az Te Pagah, Nihaar Publications, Jammu, 2000.
10. Anhaar: File. Deptt. Of Kashmiri, University of Kashmir, Srinagar.
11. Sheeraza: File. JK Cultural Academy Srinagar.