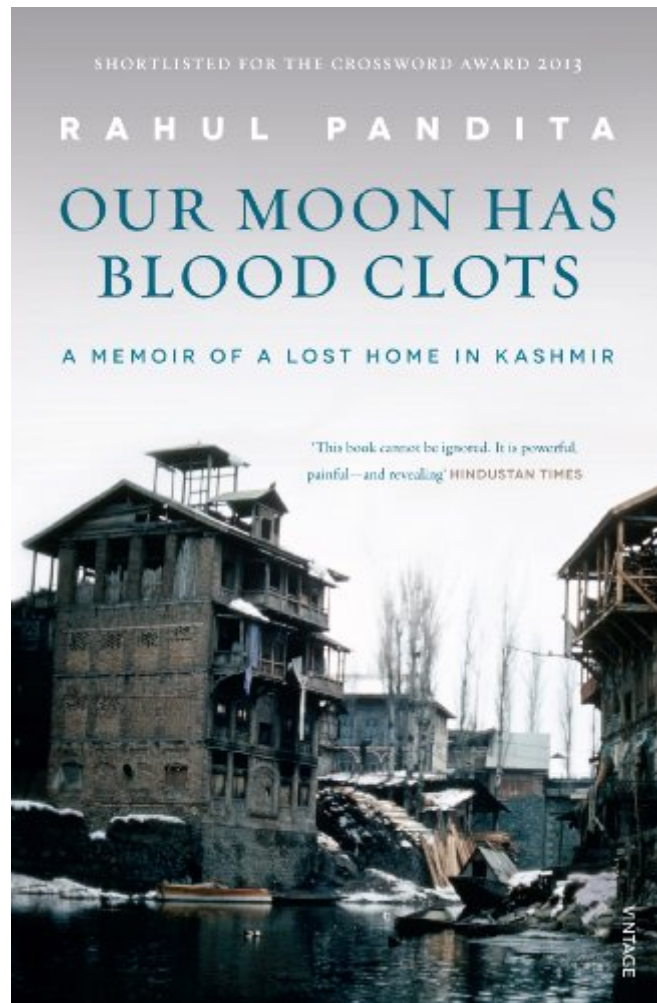


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Our Moon Has Blood Clots: The Exodus Of The Kashmiri Pandits



Synopsis

Rahul Pandita was fourteen years old in 1990 when he was forced to leave his home in Srinagar along with his family, who were Kashmiri Pandits: the Hindu minority within a Muslim-majority Kashmir that was becoming increasingly agitated with the cries of "Azadi" from India. The heartbreaking story of Kashmir has so far been told through the prism of the brutality of the Indian state, and the pro-independence demands of separatists. But there is another part of the story that has remained unrecorded and buried. *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* is the unspoken chapter in the story of Kashmir, in which it was purged of the Kashmiri Pandit community in a violent ethnic cleansing backed by Islamist militants. Hundreds of people were tortured and killed, and about 3,50,000 Kashmiri Pandits were forced to leave their homes and spend the rest of their lives in exile in their own country. Rahul Pandita has written a deeply personal, powerful and unforgettable story of history, home and loss.

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Customer Reviews

A book which made me cry. This hasn't happened to me in a long time. I was totally overwhelmed

by emotions through the book, and at the moment when writer takes his wheelchair bound mother around his newly acquired gurgaon "house" i actually sat-up in my bed and cried. Through my life I have known so many Razadans, Bhans, Mattoos, Kauls and Panditas as friends, colleagues and acquaintances and they never held any other identity for me. I was always curious but never intrusive about the sad chapter in their lives. Thanks Rahul for laying it out bare, cold and raw. I feel we must "forgive" but never - ever "forget" the chapter of Kahmiri Pandit's exodus. In remembrance we respect and through memories we heal. This is the non-fiction book of 2013 for me.

Rahul Pandita has described his family's struggle to survive in Islamic Militant infested Kashmir in early eighties as a minority Hindu Pandit community. He describes how ordinary Kashmiri Muslim neighbours conspired with Islamic Militants to drive Hindus out of Kashmir, loot their properties and illegally occupy them. His family was dislocated several times since 1947 from their ancestral villages. He describes how on the night of Jan. 19, 1990 Mosques in the entire Kashmir Valley directed Hindus to leave Kashmir or face death. His family had no choice but to leave their home and hearth and become refugees overnight. The Author was just 14 years old and had to endure the life of poverty and penury as the family struggled against many odds, with few resources or connections. He describes the deplorable conditions in the refugee camps in Jammu and on the on going killings of Hindus in Kashmir by Islamic Terrorists aided and abetted by the populace. His account of the murder of his brother Ravi in Gool in Jammu province is very touching. Ravi had a Ph.D and was a professor in the local college. He was targeted because he was a Hindu.

The exodus of Pandits from the Valley is an aspect of the Kashmir conflict that has received scant attention. In a book just released, Rahul Pandita, who was 14 at the time he and his family left their home in Srinagar forever, gives a searing account of the displacement, struggle and survival of the community. This book is in form of a memoir. Some of the most moving sections of the book deal with his mother's great initial shock at being called a refugee and her consequent compulsive need to tell strangers that her home in Kashmir had 22 rooms. As someone critical of state excesses in Kashmir and put out by reports of the discovery of unmarked graves and the detention of children, you are not sure you want to pick up Rahul Pandita's *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* about the exodus of the Pandits from the Kashmir Valley. What was left to say about that story so often held up like a badge of hate by the Hindutva brigade? Perhaps it was the memory of a visit in the mid-nineties to a crowded Pandit transit camp that made you flip through the first few pages - pages so strong that you keep reading - and arrive at a nuanced understanding of a people in the unenviable position of

having been victimised by a more powerful victim.- HT

As someone who never went through the migration of 1990 but saw my family go through it, this book gives me a clear picture of how things occurred. The stories match what my parents, uncles and aunts have related to me over the years but it goes in to details that my family probably found it too painful to talk about. My father refuses to read this book...it's probably too difficult for him. And after reading the book myself, I understand. It's bare and raw and does not use euphemisms or try to soften the stories by leaving out details. Even though it is a story of an exodus and of a long history of persecution of the Kashmiri Pandits, it has connected me to my roots in an interesting way. A must read...especially if you are a pandit...if you can bear it.

It was a difficult read and I had to take several breaks to let it sink in, the amount of pain people had gone through in Kashmir. I was in Srinagar in 1987, less than a year old and I have heard several recollections from my mother on how difficult life had been in the Air Force campus with dad always away in duty for months. We could not switch on lights in the rooms and had to keep the windows covered with thick blankets. I heard from mother similar instances of waiting for trucks of rotten vegetables and then for days there won't be anything. But after reading the memoirs here I know that what we were going through inside the defence campus was nothing in comparison. I am going to read this book to my parents when I visit them next.

This is an important book for many reasons - if you ask the families affected by Nazi holocaust or those affected by the Chilean coup on Sept. 11 73, one thing that they all agree on is that the first hand personal reports of significant events are very important and need to be recorded in the interest of history so that future generations have an accurate account. Another reason why this book must be read is to understand the level and intensity of atrocities that have been committed against a small group for no reason except that this group lived in their ancestral home and associated region. It is equally essential to note that this book is NOT anti-Islam and includes accounts of many friendships between people of different faith. The story did highlight to me how easily a group can be manipulated into becoming a terrorizing mob. Of course, the perpetrators have caused horrific crimes and must be brought to justice, no matter how long it takes. I appreciated that the author has unhesitatingly highlighted the cowardice and the bureaucratic aloofness of the Indian government (at the time of these atrocities). The book is not perfect in every way - no book is. Some of the content is more meaningful to those familiar with Indian culture and some western readers

may find some aspects confusing (such as, for example, how the mantra given to the author by his grandfather has been helpful to him). The scope here is more of a personal narration and will not give the reader a large sociological study nor an analysis of psychopathic behavior by the aggressors. It is still a powerful book and written in first person, brings in details - some of which are quite painful. Having been to Shrinagar many times, having visited the Shankaracharya temple and with a handful of Kashmiri friends and colleagues, I feel really sad that this beautiful place has been the backdrop of such horrible acts.

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