

## Short Story 'Zaan Ded' – A Critique

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Post migration period saw Kashmiri literature reaching its new heights. This era created many writers of fame, whose literary creations not only proved to be contemporaneous in theme but these creations have been highly thought-provoking and up to the standard. Present genre of writers present a native, nostalgic and a real picture, that reflexes our great values and ethos. These writers have been playing a vital role in our cultural and social renaissance that marks a new beginning after ninety. We can not afford to forget the contribution of our writers to social and cultural development. A sensitive writer, with his non-partisan approach is not only an ambassador of peace and harmony, but he creates awareness among the masses. Writer like M.K.Raina sees around some corners and then reveal it in his medium. He wants to know his motherland, he wants to preserve the great culture that we had. But our 'Vasmath', the 'treasure-trove' is on the verge of losing its existence because of the onslaught of some forces. He is not at all pessimistic but a quiet optimist. An engineer by profession, Shri Raina is settled in Mumbai and has been actively involved in literary activities. He has been doing pioneering work in the field of Kashmiri literature and language. An editor of prestigious 'Milchar' and 'aalav' (KP Magazines), he is the main architect of the Project Zaan, a joint project of Kashmiri Pandits' Association, Mumbai and Lalla Ded Educational and Welfare Trust. This Project is dedicated to preservation, propagation and dissemination of Kashmiri language, and cultural heritage of Kashmir. Besides co-authoring the 'Basic Reader for Kashmiri Language', Shri Raina has uncovered some valuable information about the Love Loris and Mystic Poetess Arinimal. Some books are also to his credit. His latest collection of short stories 'tsók módúr' too has got rave reviews, and now another much talked about Kashmiri short story 'Zaan Ded' has come to the fore. The story is dedicated to Project Zaan.

The whole story revolves around Zaan Ded, an imaginary character who holds Vasmath, which symbolises the great legacy inherited by aboriginal Kashmiris. Zaan Ded, as the name suggests itself, is a symbol of our great culture, civilization, uniqueness, justice and what not. Its symbolical expressions makes it a distinct anecdote. A symmetrical short story Zaan Ded has got a big plot. Characters are lively and woven artistically. The writer has succeeded in his statement when he says, "Before

starting a story, I spend a lot of time on fixing and structuring various aspects of my characters.” It depicts the situation which forced the native Kashmiris to leave their homes and hearths for no fault of theirs. Its different stages describe different aspects of Kashmiri psyche. The peaceful co-existence among communities is defined with examples. For instance, “Qadir Kak could forget his meals but he would never forget *Phalahar* (fruits) for Zaan Ded..... Ali Mohd. would never forget to get special gifts for Zaan Ded ... etc. etc. A plain story without any kind of ambiguity, attracts reader’s attention in total. However, brevity at some stages could have generated more curiosity. Chronology of events is like beads and good treatment has been meted out to characters. It does not seem that the story has been devised but it speaks itself, thus making it a worth reading short story. As regards the language, colloquial usage has made this story more interesting and catchy. Typical Kashmiri words, proverbial expressions and spontaneous flow are other highlights of the story. ‘Kasheer’ and ‘Kashmiriyat’ seem to be the favourite subjects of Raina. His short story collection ‘tsók módúr’, Zaan Ded and other literary works mainly focus on ‘Kasheeriyat’. Zaan Ded is a tragedy, a human tragedy, that actually portrays the hapless and wretched life of people, who are being hounded out from their own land. These hapless people going through a great trauma never show any pessimism but wait for the ‘Punim’ to come. ‘Punim’ symbolises optimism. The people who fled to Bharatpur are compelled by circumstances to give in to people, who enjoy the rule. Zaan Ded takes society with her, that is around and individual reality of the characters has been taken seriously. Narrative in Zaan Ded is a class of its own, howsoever it needs contemporary style that has come to stay now and is inevitable. Nevertheless, the narrative has shown boldness and this boldness has proved the writer’s sincerity in giving vent to his feelings and emotions. The portrayal of real-life tragedy, especially with the similes, maxims and dictums, has brought before, a live picture that still haunts us. Zaan Ded, being nostalgic, is a mix of all kinds of emotions.. It touches a hidden chord with powerful emotions. Globalisation has been the greatest enemy of our culture. It has made our societies consumerists. Culture has become only a product, which does not have any identity. If this trend continues, then the day is not far away when we shall be stripped off of this heritage and it will be difficult to percolate our great cultural legacy to our younger generations. Zaan tries her best to preserve it, come what may. Its simple diction and sensuous language make it worth reading. Shri Raina deserves commendation for his powerful insight.

