

DECONSTRUCTING ETHNICITY: A STUDY OF KASHMIR CONFLICT IN THE  
BOOK OF GOLD LEAVES

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**Abstract**

*The current research deals with the topic “deconstructing ethnicity” from the perspective Kashmir point of view in Book of Gold Leaves, written by Mirza Waheed. The story of the book deals with the Kashmir issues, an unending conflict between Pakistan and India that caused a serious damage to the ethnic position of the Kashmiri people. Therefore, the current research deconstructs the identity and ethnicity of the Kashmiri people. The research is qualitative and analytical in nature that intakes to show the original ethnic position of the people who are always distorted and represented with bleak images. Kashmiri people have never been given their true position in the context of conflict, showing them terrorist and extremist. They actually struggle to revitalize their original position. Therefore, Mirza Waheed’s Book of Gold leaves deconstructs the ethnic position of the Kashmiri people.*

**Keywords:** Deconstruction, ethnicity, identity, Kashmir, *Book of Gold Leaves*.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The French verb *deconstruire* means to break down or destroy, which is a meaning that the English word deconstruction carries with it. In contrast, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) came up with the term “deconstruction” in the late 1960s in reaction to Martin Heidegger’s (1889–1976) *destruktion*, which translated to destruction or de-building, and the concept of destructive analysis it rendered. The term deconstruction is thus traceable back to Heidegger. Derrida chose the word deconstruction to describe textual interpretations rather than Heidegger’s *destruktion* (destruction). Although the term “deconstruction” was already in use in grammatical and architectural contexts, it has now made its way into the philosophical, literary, and political vocabularies.

It is important to note that deconstructionism is the constructive endeavor to discourse about God from inside the context of our secular relativistic postmodern society and in a non-theological manner. Deconstruction should not be mistaken for this. Derrida became the first to use the term deconstruction to describe the process that Heidegger describes as the destruction of the philosophical tradition. Derrida aimed to substitute Heidegger’s destruction—which meant to explore the categories and conceptions that tradition has placed on a word, and the history behind them—with deconstruction when it came to reading texts. Only what occurs if it happens (*ce qui*

arrive si ça arrive) is Derrida's perspective when it comes to deconstruction; it is neither a philosophy, ideology, technique, or discipline. In conflictual and differentiated situations, deconstruction "is" only what it accomplishes and how it is used; it does not exist in a pure, legitimate, self-identical state outside of these contexts. It is impossible now to offer an univocal definition or an acceptable description of this taking place.

Deconstruction has a larger, more popular, and a narrower, more technical definition. The latter refers to a number of procedures for reading texts established by Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and others; these techniques in turn are tied to a set of philosophical statements about language and meaning. The widespread use of these methods and ideas has led to a wider usage of the term deconstruct to indicate criticism or the lack of coherence in a stance. Deconstruction made its earliest gains in the United States through departments of literary criticism, which explored new ways for reading literary texts. This led to reader response theory and other related movements, such as deconstruction, with the latter claiming that the reader generates meaning from a book as they interact with it.

One of the most significant and multi-faceted intellectuals of the second half of the twentieth century was undoubtedly the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who was born in 1930. Even though he wrote his debut book in the '60s, many still find him to be a challenging philosopher to understand. Jacques Derrida introduced a novel approach to literary criticism with the literary theory he laid forth in his 1976 book of *Grammatology* (1976:158). He explains in this book that the only way to utilize language is to give in to the system's control, which it does to a limited degree. If we are interested in literary theory, we should follow Derrida's ideas on how to interpret literary works. Derrida, as pointed out by Biesta (2001: 35), suggests that reading is an essential condition for a text to exist or develop into a text. Because of this, it's safe to say that misunderstandings are inevitable in writing and in human communication in general. According to Derrida, the distinction between logocentrism and phonocentrism lies in the fact that the former refers to the spoken word and the latter to written text. Derrida argues that writing becomes essential when verbal communication is unable to preserve presence (1976:145). Writing therefore becomes an auxiliary medium that stands in for spoken expression in this context (Derrida, 1976:144).

There are several facets to ethnicity. Speculating on the different routes of variation and outlining what might be considered the key characteristics of this phenomena is the job of the theorist. Researchers have a responsibility to indicate potential relationships between the many components of the phenomena they examine, even if they only choose to focus on one or two. There are many different methods, including four main ones and several sub-approaches, some of which overlap with the main ones. There are four ways to look at ethnicity: (1) as an innate quality, (2) as a result of environmental factors, (3) as a function of time, and (4) as an individual's subjective experience.

One of the first schools of thought in the fields of sociology and anthropology is the primordialist school. Ascribed at birth and originating in the kin-and-clan-structure of human civilization, it contends that ethnicity is something more or less stable and permanent (Geertz, 1963; Isaacs, 1975; Stack, 1986). The primordialist method gave rise to the other three schools of thought. Michael Hechter's and Edna Bonacich's theories of cultural division of labor and internal colonialism are the epiphenomenon approach's greatest examples (1972). According to

Hechter (1978), there are two halves to any society's economic structure: the core and the periphery. Workers on the peripheral do not produce insignificant goods for society (like those in agriculture), but they earn far less than those in the center. Immigrants find a home, form bonds, and preserve their traditions in this peripheral labor sector. Thus, economic inequality and its maintenance give rise to ethnicity (also see Nagel and Olzak, 1982).

The main Kashmiri politicians and parties fought against India's attempts to incorporate Kashmir into the Indian Union, hence these efforts were unsuccessful. The people of Kashmir believe that the United Nations Resolutions of 1948 and 1949 promised them the right to self-determination in matters of state. The Indian government disputes this and threatens to use force to repress the demand. Because of this, tensions between the Indian government and Kashmiris have persisted indefinitely. Human rights violations in Kashmir have occurred often as a result of India's dominance over the region through its security forces. Indian policy is based on the idea that it must retain control of Kashmir at whatever cost, including human rights violations. The Kashmir Valley has descended into a Human Tragedy due to India's aggressive use of security troops and governmental authority. In order to conquer Kashmir, the Indian government has relied on its security forces and intelligence community. They want to choose their own political destiny and break away from India, the people of Kashmir say. India takes this as a sign that it is ready to use force to keep the Kashmiris under control. Let us not forget the words of Sardar Patel: grant Jinnah his state, it would not survive in five years, the Muslim league will come pounding at their door crying for India's reunification (Collins & Lapierre, 2011).

This article greatly benefits from the interview that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah gave to "Daliy Hamdard" on February 3, 1946, on the situation in Kashmir. "Although I am currently engrossed in the British Indian elections, I have not lost sight of the issues in Kashmir," he declared. "I am acutely aware of the hardships endured by the people of Kashmir, and I am determined to lend them every assistance they need in their fight against oppression and repression." (Lapierre and Collins, 2011).

According to him, the 'merit of the case' was not an appropriate beginning point when looking for an innovative strategy to unravel the Kashmir knot. First, we may disagree on the merits; in fact, we were in disagreement for more than 60 years. Furthermore, it is crucial to note that complex situations are best tackled by recognizing shared causes rather than blaming one party or the other (Murshed, 2014).

*The Book of Gold Leaves*, published in 2014, has received considerable acclaim from readers and has just been included on the Long-List for the Folio Prize in the United Kingdom. This is the Mirza Waheed's second novel, set in Kashmir during the early 1990s. The novel centers on a romantic narrative involving Roohi, a young woman from the Sunni branch of Islam, and Faiz, a Shia artist specializing in Papier Mache.

### **Research Problem:**

Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves* examines the Kashmiri environment as a disputed heterotopia. The importance of language and discourse, examined via Foucauldian discourse

analysis and the prevailing narratives of postcolonial hegemony in accordance with deconstruction, shapes the formation of Kashmiri identities and ethnicity in the books, notably with religion, nationalism, and ethnicity is the task of the current research.

**Research Objectives:**

1. To show the representation of Kashmiri people in Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves*.
2. To analyze the traumatic situation in *The Book of Gold Leaves* which disperses the identity and ethnicity of Kashmiri people?
3. To deconstruct the ideniterian disposition and ethnic representation of Kashmiri people in Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves*?

**Research Questions:**

1. How does the writer represent the Kashmiri people in *The Book of Gold Leaves*.
2. How does the traumatic situation in *The Book of Gold Leaves* disperse the identity and ethnicity of Kashmiri people?
3. How does the writer deconstruct the ideniterian disposition and ethnic representation of Kashmiri people in *The Book of Gold Leaves*?

**Literature Review: An ethnic disposition of Kashmir**

The primary text within the Kashmiri context features characters grappling with identity in crucial roles, will be examined through a deconstruction framework. However, to attain a thorough comprehension of the subject, it is imperative to establish a specific sequence of discourse. Michel Foucault, the French postmodernist, has significantly influenced the comprehension of power, shifting the focus from the analysis of individuals wielding power as a coercive instrument and the specific structures within which they function, to the notion that power is ubiquitous, permeating and manifesting in discourse, knowledge, and regimes of truth which are used for the construction of reality developed with the help of powerful institutions (Foucault 1991; Rabinow 1991). For Foucault, power constitutes our identity, functioning on a distinctly separate plane than other theories. Gaventa (2003) is of the opinion that his work signifies a profound shift from earlier conceptualisations of power and cannot be seamlessly reconciled with prior notions, as power is dispersed rather than centralised, embodied and performed rather than owned, discursive rather than solely coercive, and forms agents rather than being wielded by them (1)

The research of Javed, Shabber, Muhammad Ayub Jajja, and Aamer Shaheen examines the themes of violence and resistance within the framework of Indian-occupied Kashmir. The writers examine Mirza Waheed's novel *The Book of Gold Leaves* and Basharat Peer's memoir *Curfewed Night* to underscore the atrocities inflicted by Indian armed troops on the Kashmiri populace and replace the original ethnicity of Kashmir. The research utilises the theoretical frameworks of Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon to analyse the power dynamics and violence in the area. The writers contend that the violence in Kashmir encompasses not only physical injury but also the psychological trauma and emotional suffering imposed on the Kashmiri populace. Their view is

that the Kashmiri people's opposition to prevailing forces is an inherent reaction to the brutality and persecution they endure. The research seeks to illuminate the repressive activities of Indian military forces against the Kashmiri populace, particularly with their quest for self-determination, religious freedom, and autonomy. Utilizing the literary works of Waheed and Peer the researchers exemplify the interconnection between violence and resistance within the Kashmiri narrative. The narratives of violence and resistance in these works exemplify the tenacity and determination of the Kashmiri people against oppression. The primary issue centres on the employment of violence and the exploitation of authority, especially within an area characterised by religious plurality and diverse political perspectives. The author contends that the experience of violence frequently induces trauma in victims, prompting a natural reaction of resistance against oppressive powers. The misuse of authority and violence is a phenomena witnessed in states irrespective of their economic development status, not exclusive to either developing or developed nations. Moreover, it asserts that in nations marked by religious minorities and varied political contexts, repressive measures may be employed to silence advocates for contentious demands. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of particular incidents, historical background, and potential international ramifications of the Kashmir conflict. It employs several sources and approaches, including interviews, historical research, and maybe legal viewpoints, to construct a thorough picture of the issue. The primary objective is to highlight and examine the intricate dynamics of the oppressive activities in Kashmir, while contributing to the wider conversation on human rights, conflict resolution, and the effects of violence on communities. It focusses on actual events, highlighting the sociopolitical difficulties encountered by the Kashmiri populace owing to repressive measures by military troops. The paper focuses on the analysis of repressive activities, brutality, and human rights abuses committed by the Indian military forces in Kashmir.

The people of Kashmir are deeply involved in the persistent conflict through the active production of militants and weapons, employing a range of techniques that involve different forms of violence. On the other side of this conflict, the Indian forces have developed various strategies to sustain the atmosphere of war and terror. Unfortunately, this involves the misrepresentation of certain facilities as interrogation centers, which is a misnomer as these locations are, in reality, torture cells. Within these facilities, locals are subjected to severe forms of mistreatment, leading to tragic outcomes (khan et al. 2007: 214-218). The article employs Frantz Fanon's concept of neocolonialism to examine the representation of Kashmiri Muslims in Roy's novel, the proposed research topic suggests a Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore the manifestation of postcolonial hegemony and its impact on the construction of Kashmiri identities in both Roy's and Waheed's works. Additionally, the proposed study aims to undertake a more comprehensive and comparative analysis of the two novels, whereas the article focuses solely on the depiction of Kashmiri Muslims in Roy's novel, without the comparative element. By addressing this research gap, the proposed study could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationship between political history, postcolonial power structures, and the representation of Kashmiri identities in contemporary literature.

The control exerted by Indian soldiers over the Kashmiri population reflects the application of

neocolonialism methods. Neocolonialism involves the use of economic, political, and cultural means to maintain control over a region or nation, often through indirect forms of domination. In the context of Kashmir, it suggests that the Indian forces are not only using direct military control but also employing various socio-economic and political strategies to assert influence and dominance over the local population. The research focuses not just the Indian forces but also the larger context where many external forces are the reason for this genocide in Kashmir. Here we see a lack of productions on this medium. The literature produced on this issue is very biased. The world tends to see just one dimension of this issue whereas the hidden issues still need to be discussed widely and openly. The more productions would lead towards a more pronounced solutions towards this never-ending issue. It is more focused on the real-world conflict, the actions of the local population, and the strategies of Indian forces in Kashmir, while the research paper leans towards a literary analysis of Kashmiri identities within specific novels, employing a theoretical lens. They provide different perspectives on the Kashmir issue, one more grounded in on-the-ground realities, and the other delving into literary and theoretical nuances.

This article focuses on the immediate act of resistance between Pakistan and India to stop the violation but the paper focuses on the broader aspect. It not only has a great emphasis on the solution but also highlights the impact of the violence on the individual's identity. The loss of identity is not just one end but it is the beginning of the never-ending crises. The need of the hour is to take this issue seriously and take the measures to end this. It focuses on the Kashmiri people and their struggle for identity, religious freedom, self-determination, and independence. It's not just the minorities but the Kashmiri people as a whole. The force that makes them differ in the name of oppression. The footprints of post colonialism have left everyone in a state of constant struggle where the colonialists have moved out leaving their rules for the people left behind. Not just the minorities but each and every individual residing in Kashmir is facing equal humiliation and violence.

The study investigates historical grievances as a catalyst for armed resistance in Kashmir. It analyses the events of the 1947 partition of India, which instigated the territorial conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Through the examination of historical records, testimonies, and archival materials, the paper reveals the unresolved issues stemming from the partition that have incited resentment and resistance among Kashmiris, leading to the formation of armed groups advocating for self-determination.

The research paper proposes a trilateral negotiation model involving India, Pakistan, and Kashmiri political leadership to resolve the conflict. Previous peace initiatives, such as the unsuccessful Agra Summit in 2001, were hindered by the exclusion of Kashmiri representatives. It proposes a trilateral negotiation framework involving India, Pakistan, and Kashmiri political leaders to resolve the conflict. Conversely, the research topic centres on a literary examination of Kashmiri identities in selected novels, utilising a Foucauldian discourse analysis approach. It investigates the portrayal of Kashmiri identities in these works and the influence of postcolonial hegemony on such representations.

The complexity of an individual's survival is intricately linked to the interplay between memory and trauma. The return of any incident from memory laden with haunting effects, contributes to the traumatic nature of the experience. Survival becomes intricate when one grapples with the

distressing repercussions of remembering traumatic events. The effort to recollect and narrate the event is like challenging the conventional notion that trauma is indescribable. Narration becomes a way to relive the moment and revisit those traumatic sites in memory when places became distressing and time appeared to stand still. This article delves into the endeavor to attain freedom and identity amidst collective losses. The challenging circumstances of lockdowns and bombings play a role in shaping hollow identities. Therefore, the semantic analysis of words heightens the trauma of survival through the spatiotemporal spectrum (Siddique et al. 2021: 223-231). This article mainly focuses on the significance of narration and the way words heighten the trauma of the survival through the spatiotemporal spectrum. Research's main focus is on the unequal power distribution where one is given the authority over others and the rest suffer. Foucault's discourse on power serves as a main tool to highlight the injustice. The article primarily delves into the significance of storytelling or narration in this context and how language exacerbates the experience of trauma. Survivors often recount their experiences through words, and the act of narrating these experiences can intensify the trauma they have endured.

The examination of language alongside an awareness of power relations offers significant insight into the manifestation and continuation of trauma within society. Investigating the interplay between language and power enables academics to understand the intricacies of victim experiences and strive to rectify the injustices present in the aftermath of trauma. This thesis primarily base on the narrative of Kashmir, deconstructing the true identity of Kashmir, whereas the research study concentrates on the broader context of literature's influence on identity and ethnicity formation and the institutions that contribute to the emergence of both identities and literature.

Violence inflicts damage on its victims, prompting resistance against dominant forces and aggression. Violence and the misuse of power in a nation with religious minorities and varying legal and political statuses are not uncommon traits in both emerging and established countries. Such regimes readily suppress dissenting voices from various regions of the state about contentious requests. This study article aims to illuminate the repressive acts of Indian military forces against the Kashmiri populace to suppress their demands for identity, religious freedom, self-determination, and independence.

### **Research Methodology**

The research technique use Postcolonial discourse to examine Kashmiri ethnicity from the perspective of deconstruction. The research shows how Kashmiri identity has been envisaged grounding on different discourses. The research opts post-colonial power structures, approached through qualitative research. The researcher adopts the perspective of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and Derrida's concept of deconstruction (See introduction), which have been used as theoretical framework. *The Book of Gold Leaves* by Mirza Waheed has been selected as the primary source for data collection and sampling. This qualitative research conducts a thorough examination of the literary works to ascertain the power and structural processes that influence Kashmiri identities. The investigation encompasses the effect of governmental authority, colonial legacies, and geopolitical situations on the formation of Kashmiri ethnicity, as well as the

representation of these factors in the book. The inquiry establishes a theoretical framework, focussing specifically on postcolonialism, Foucault's concept of discourse and Derrida's deconstruction.

further, the selected text will undergo critical reading and textual analysis using Foucauldian discourse analysis to examine the power systems and their influence on the development of Kashmiri identities. Despite being external, these forces were still capable of influencing the lives of the Kashmiris confined in a state of captivity. These forces not only presented the image they want to project to the external world, but also transformed the life of every Kashmiri according to their intentions. Furthermore, it encompasses a comparative analysis of the two texts to discern key discrepancies and connections in their portrayal of Kashmiri identities. This research aims to elucidate how these components intricately create and define the characters' identities and ethnicities inside the narrative. The research also considers the historical and socio-political contexts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricacy involved.

### **Deconstructing Ethnicity in *Books of Gold Leaves***

*The Book of Gold Leaves*, authored by Mirza Waheed, is an intimate narrative of love and passion set against the tumultuous backdrop of the Kashmir rebellion. The author uses the essential human emotion of love as a foundation when addressing the significant dimensions of human activity in the swiftly evolving postcolonial landscape. The narrative centres on the concept of conflict—whether ideological, religious, or political—and the ensuing human suffering, reflecting the identity of the already oppressed and marginalised Kashmiri people to stand with the original ethnic position of the Kashmiri people. The narrative unfolds in the downtown area of Srinagar, a densely populated city characterised by its many religious practices. The book starts with a portrayal of Faiz, an artist specialising in Papier Mache, and his clandestine romance with Roohi, a Sunni woman. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that the insurrection in Kashmir is escalating, prompting the deployment of a substantial contingent of Indian paramilitary soldiers to restore order. The narrative presents three unique perspectives: the militant uprising, the clandestine executions between Hindus and Muslims, and the military's counteractions, which distort the original disposition and identity of the Kashmiri people. Throughout the narrative, these three strands are intricately interwoven beneath the central plot. The atrocities of warfare are uniformly experienced by all these diverse groups of humans embodying various political ideologies. These factions are engaged in war to preserve their respective status quos. All of these groups are, in various ways, driven to participate in a sad human enterprise that has exacerbated the suffering of the populace both within the state and outside its boundaries. It is significant that all three groups are experiencing traumatic situations, despite the fact that those in power also stand a substantial risk of the same attacks encountered by the oppressed groups.

It is unfeasible to sufficiently articulate the tribulations and hardships that common individuals were compelled to withstand. Their lives, education, and civil rights have been disregarded and oppressed. This protracted struggle, characterized by a stalemate, has yielded no advantages for any party during the previous thirty years. Nonetheless, it has culminated in the fruits of deception, animosity, and reciprocal disdain among many ethnic groups inside the state and throughout the nation. During the 1990s, when the Indian Army takes the school building, Mir



Farhat, Faiz's younger sister, and other females are confined to a single classroom, encircled by armed troops. Consequently, they entirely forsake the notion of education when the military converts the structure into a barracks. Waheed depicts this sombre image with realism. Mouj, Farhat's mother, earnestly prays to God for the swift return of the Army personnel to their homeland and for the reinstatement of normalcy in Kashmir. She is weary of the incessant aggression exhibited by others towards her. "In one of her prayers to God, she invokes a curse upon nearly all members of the governing elite, from the cunning and deceased Maharaja to the traitorous lion, the present downtown MLA, and the sitting president of India" (45). "She invokes a curse onto nearly all individuals within the governing classes" (45). The weather, which can sometimes cause an overabundance of mud in the front garden, is partially responsible. A considerable segment of the monarchy failed to foresee the repercussions stemming from this military occupation. One adage asserts that "persecution fosters oppression" (45). The younger members and relatives of mistreated families, fuelled by fury and frustration, abandoned their longstanding tradition of nonviolence and exalted the armed independence cause. The initial occurrence of an armed terrorist assault on a military bunker, followed by a retaliatory response from security forces, led to a revision of Kashmir's non-violent history, which historians deemed to be overstated in order to shape the nation's 'grand narrative' along communal divisions.

The story documents the fictitious response to the Army's counter-insurgency act as follows: "he utilised machine guns originally aimed at the lane from whence the rocket seemed to come, subsequently directing fire to the right and left, and ultimately everywhere" (85). Upon sighting the school minibus, he ceases to halt. Even the heavens are not exempt from his fury. At the outset of the book, Major Sumit Kumar, a spokesman of the Indian troops, expresses significant worry on the occupation of a school building and the establishment of further bunkers within the city. He feels uncomfortable about his involvement in such an action. When Shanta Madam reminds him of the assurance that he will vacate the school premises in a few months, he experiences a mixture of embarrassment and anger. He possesses a desire to vacate this room now and never return; but, another voice suggests he might effortlessly have this woman ejected from the premises or possibly prohibited from reentry entirely. Despite being divided into two distinct organisations, he is obligated to adhere to the directives of the superiors who have come from Delhi and the local headquarters (153). The dialogue between Shahida and Faiz encapsulates the predicament of troops tasked with waging war against their own populace. "What actions have the unfortunate troops taken against you?" The subsequent inquiry posed in the discourse is (46). The responsibility does not rest with them. "They are only doing their responsibilities" (46). The eldest sister, Shahida, expressed the following. How can you assert that it is not their responsibility? In essence, their presence here is unwarranted. Faiz expresses indignation: "It is beyond their control, Faiza." Is that your assertion? Decisions on these things are made by government officials. They are only a collective of destitute sepoys, the offspring or sibling of an individual, like to yourself... they simply obey orders "My beloved sister, at the beginning, the army arrived! At a later time, the guys took up arms (46). As time went on, Major Sumit Kumar gradually expanded his military empire within the city. His grid will encompass twenty-six bunkers, and the idea of six grids of the same kind covering the entire city gives him a sense of unease. Nevertheless, he is compelled

to embark on such a catastrophic journey. As a consequence of this, there will be destruction and the loss of lives that hold vital importance. This location has been transformed into a very attractive prison as a result of the extraordinarily huge deployment of military and paramilitary forces. It is conveyed through Roohi that Waheed concocts the historical mass killings and reconstructs the history as follows: “The soldiers make sure that there is a blood-soaked headline in the papers every day”. Two weeks before, they were responsible for the deaths of seventeen teenagers who were crossing Zaine’s Kadal Bridge (211). They had shot all of them to death after trapping them in a lane. The troops were so overcome with hatred that they continued to fire even after the youngsters had been slain and were lying close to dirty drains. Zaitun’s younger brother, Uzair, was wounded in the face as they continued their firing until there was no one left standing. Over the course of three nights, Zaitun slept by his tomb in the Martyr’s Graveyard. The atmosphere here is absolutely insane (212). The internal displacement of the minority pundit population from the valley to other areas of the country is depicted in another side of the story that is hidden beneath the surface. It is a well-known truth that the majority, or dominant class, is the one who always constructs the national identity, while the minority groups continue to be on the periphery of the nation as outsiders, even when they are physically present within it. Throughout its history, India has consistently been characterized as an upper caste Hindu nation that has failed to incorporate the experiences of Dalits, Muslims, and other minority groups into its great narratives. The quotation was made by Gyanendra Pandey in the book *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*. As is the case with pundits, who made up a minority community in Kashmir, the situation remains the same. They were compelled to leave their homes as a result of the indifference of the government as well as the fact that they were easy targets of the ongoing conflict between the two parties. The following exchange between Master Dinanath and Mir Zafar demonstrates both the shared brotherhood that existed among the people prior to the conflict and the unjust treatment that this community has been subjected to. Before he hands over the keys to his house to Zafar, Dinanath had this to say: “But why is there no need for it?” Dinanath, I solemnly pledge that no one will threaten or hurt you in any way. Why would someone want to cause you or your family any kind of trouble? I don’t understand. Nobody has been hurt as a result of this. All of them have been put to death, Zafar Saeb. Without a doubt, you do not wish for me to wait until it takes place. Must you punish all of us for the transgressions of a select few? Ought you to? While I still have the ability to do so, I must protect what I can. You are aware that no one desires to leave their residence, but I am compelled to do so” (262). Mohd Nageen makes the observation that Kashmiris have been denied the right to take pleasure in life, which is a more accurate statement. They were unable to travel to the locations that were their own. The people who lived in their own country considered them as foreigners and treated them with distrust. In his depiction, Waheed has shown that people, particularly romantic partners, were not allowed to enter areas of amusement. This demonstrates how Kashmiris were made to suffer in every possible way. There are other places that we are not permitted to see, including the Palace of the Faeries and the Royal Spring, the Shankaracharya Temple, and Takht-e-Sulaiman. Roohi is quite sad to report this. According to Rumi, soldiers also live there, and the only people who are permitted to visit are government officials, army officers, and VIPs from Delhi, as well as their families (213). The preceding discussion and textual references indicate that the conflict in the state is instigated

by the militarisation of Kashmir, which skews perceptions of the Kashmiri populace and the ethnic position of Postcolonial factors obscure the combative dimensions of the conflict, wherein authority is conferred upon the powerful, manifested through discursive practices. This is illustrated in the research section, demonstrating how the Kashmiri people have descended into a state of anarchy and undergone a transformation of identity.

### **Traumatic effects on ethnic and identitarian disposition**

Taking into consideration the fact that trauma is a mental condition that is the result of traumatic experiences having occurred. It is also possible to refer to it as a sort of suffering that causes the brain to develop impulses of pain or discomfort. Personal trauma and group trauma are the two types of trauma that are typically experienced, whereas the novel is the clear example conflictual situation, the Kashmiri people have been oppressed and marginalized that caused the traumatic position of the people. However, when compared to the latter, which is concerned with bigger communities, societies, or regions, the former is related to people. Personal trauma, on the other hand, can be both mental and physical. During the mental level, traumatic experiences manifest themselves in the form of flashbacks in the mind and produce a sense of agitation to permeate the mind of the individual. This trauma causes a person to remain confused because they may measure the future in terms of the painful events that occurred in the past or in the present. As a consequence of this, the individual loses consciousness, and the majority of their ideas persist without being voiced, which leads to mental paralysis. In a similar vein, collective trauma is a result of the collective actions that lead to the occurrence of an event. This particular type of trauma causes damage to the social structure, which is accompanied by a loss of identity, deficiencies in trust, and the impending onset of depression. In the context of the novel individuals come across with individual and collective trauma, revolving in the lives of protagonists and the Kashmiri community, as well as the effects that these traumas have and the outcomes that they produce. Through the daily burden of living a life that is torn apart by violence, Mirza Waheed has made an effort to depict similar horrific events and experiences. Waheed portrays the life of the suffering of the general populace as well as the soldiers who are on duty. A story of terribly romantic love is used in the screenplay in order to amplify the sorrow of being apart from one another and being restricted. Furthermore, the visual of the River, the City, the air, and the general environment connects with the feelings of sadness, separation, anxiety, and hopelessness that are ingrained in the minds and souls of In addition to the said, and Waheed investigates the role that resistance plays in the culmination of trauma in the lives of the people of Kashmir. This statement, which indicates the effects of devastating individual, political, psychological, and societal behaviors, states that “Kashmir and Kashmiris are now almost cornered in a siege where militarism of the most vicious kind is an everyday, routine affair”. Taking into consideration the fact that Pakistan and India continue to have disagreements on the border region in question. As a result, the process of achieving political stability in the region has been one that never seems to finish. For the time being, war may start and end at any moment. The survivors, on the other hand, are left with an unending sense of the loss and uncertainty that it brings about. On the other hand, the grief that survivors experience cannot be undone and forms an enduring component of their subconscious. According to Waheed, “not

having a truly known fear of death in the past, the survivor is forced, continually, to confront it, over and over again” (7), leading to memory until it takes the form of trauma. This means that even if they survive, the suffering will continue to be experienced. In the meantime, the characters in the novel go through a dual trauma, which can be described as “the oscillation between the crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of survival (Caruth, 1996: 7). First and foremost, Faiz is confronted with the intolerable anguish of having to give up his vocation. The second thing that happens is that the murder of his godmother, who was absolutely innocent, dramatically alters the reality of his life, and he falls into a state of sadness and hopelessness. It is just Faate that he can recall. When she stared at him, Fatima, who was his godmother and the person he loved the most, was unable to catch her breath (87). The fact that Faiz was content with his life, routine, matters, and profession is demonstrated by this circumstance. On the other hand, the struggle compels him to avoid taking responsibility and to search for a new entry point through which he can justify the means of existence. As a result, the traumatic experience bears with it the potential for transformation, as Faiz experiences a yearning to awaken the absolute necessity to survive.

Faiz has reached a point in his life where the golden gates of innocence have been shut on him. He has entered his life and made a decision to pursue a job that is diametrically opposed to his values and convictions. It is clear that Faiz was a good-natured individual who had a compassionate outlook on life. This is because he is unable to survive the mental exertion of trauma, and the painful experiences push him to pick up the firearms. Faiz is both a victim and a survivor of the trauma because of his extraordinary ability to persevere in the face of the most difficult circumstances. As a result, in order to rid himself of the burden of recollection, he relocates to a new life that is not only difficult but also rewarding for him in terms of his comprehension. In the context of the theory of the conservation of resources, Faiz suffers the consequences of trauma, which cause him to lose his resources and his ability to survive. The amassing of resources to combat the fear of death and invasion is the means by which he is able to triumph over the traumatic stress that he has experienced (Hobfoll, 2001). These kinds of inner disasters leave wounds and memory scars that are difficult to erase, and they have the ability to impact later behavior in ways that are unanticipated and unpredictable (41). This may be seen in the instance of Roohi, who is seen to be suffering from the trauma of isolation from the very beginning of the story and who attempts to find sanctuary in the memories of his friends who have long since passed away. The story is told by Waheed, who says, “Roohi humbles herself before God, praying that the boy of her dreams will come true and take her away.” A love story is what Roohi desires” (8). Roohi's situation is sympathetic; nonetheless, it is overshadowed by a perilous conflict that threatens an otherwise idyllic romance. In Roohi's thoughts, this situation engenders a sense of panic, subsequently accompanied by the anxiety of losing Faiz and being emotionally estranged from him. In the third section, titled “In Another Country,” Kashmiris endure brutality, but Roohi appears indifferent and only longs for Faiz's presence. In her correspondence, she articulates her need for Faiz, stating, “What I miss most is you. As I await your return, I find myself yearning for you. Upon your return, I shall apprise you of all that has transpired (175).

The emotional stress that Roohi experiences is detrimental to both the physical and mental health of those who are affected by it. Freud's definition accurately describes the nature of emotional trauma. According to Erikson (1994), who describes the symptoms of trauma, those who have been through traumatic situations experience a variety of emotions, which can vary from "restlessness and agitation to numbness and blankness". According to Erikson, those who have experienced trauma typically "distrust the world and they do not hope for any good from the world". He also notes that these individuals have a strong awareness of the harmful potential of the people in the world. In the case of Roohi, the recollection of wonderful times is closely linked to the traumatic experience that she has had. Faiz and Roohi ultimately decide to wed each other in the middle of a slew of personal tragedies. Both of them experience a collective trauma as a result of the tensions between Hindus and Muslims in the region. The story comes to a close with Major Kumar pulling his trigger and "seeing two shadows standing in a window a few hundred feet away". This is the moment when the terror of death begins to shake the legs of their shadows. It is stated that "the shadows move, do strike for a moment, but do not separate" (330). The three emotions of love, hope, and despair continue to remain in the lives of Roohi and Faiz, and they transform into an unending and traumatic vision of Kashmir at the center of a dispute. According to the report, "pandits have been leaving their homes at night". This is a recent development. The act of permanently abandoning their houses (212). The departure is evidence of the severity of the suffering that was experienced by the Hindu people as well. Hindus who have lived in Kashmir for centuries are leaving because they are afraid of death and because they do not know what the future holds. Mir Zafar, who is another victim of military acts, is the one who falls prey to the infamous Zaal trap. In spite of the fact that he survives the catastrophe, he continues to experience mental disturbance and a loss of identity continuously. It is possible to observe him chatting when he is sleeping, yelling at other people to save their life, and sneaking around the house in various corners.

In addition, the degree of the physical stress that he experiences as a consequence of the escalations is expressed by the fact that his hand is paralyzed. The circumstances surrounding Mir Zafar's health shed light on the fundamentals of chronic trauma, which occurs when a person or living entity is subjected to a period of violence that is either repetitive or continuous. Mir Zafar suffers from hyperactivity condition as a result of the memories that the traumatic experience brings to him. He also has a desire for peace that is impossible. In the end, he is a great example of traumatic neurosis because he forgets who he was before he was transformed. As a result of the security forces' decision to restrict the freedom of movement, speech, and thought of the Kashmiris who were being threatened, a collective sense of trauma was also developed. "The soldiers make sure that there is a blood-soaked headline in the papers every single day" (212). The incident occurred two weeks ago. They continued firing until there was no one left standing... then they stopped. Uzair, Zaitun's younger brother, was shot in the face. Zaitun slept for three nights by his tomb in the Martyr's Graveyard despite the fact that it is so angry here (212). According to Erikson (1991), the horrifying acts of violence impress the stamp of never-ending societal unrest, which is a sort of collective trauma. Not only is it a symbol of the deterioration of civilization, but it also exemplifies the contempt that is directed toward

Kashmiri ways of life, which were once vibrant and colorful. The trauma that occurs in educational places is brought to light by the fact that forces have taken control of the school building and have converted it into a bunker. All of the windows on the first three floors have turned into square sandbags with dark slits in the center (p.52). Kashmiris, who are desirous of regaining their identity, experience a sense of anguish because of this condition. This is a statement that is found interesting. Students go through the experience of being terrified of being pulled away and drowning in the walls of schools that are drenched in blood thanks to this. According to Erikson (1991), the students go through the process of listening to stories of loss every other day, which in turn filters their brains with collective pain.

The novel sheds additional light on the pain that the people have experienced as a result of the Zaal truck tragedy. Performing an investigation into the zaal is a strategy employed by the security forces. As a result, they make use of a truck to gather the majority of individuals and then transport them away for further investigation. In Kashmir, the occurrence causes people to vanish, which contributes to the perpetuation of a sense of dread and aggressiveness among the Kashmiris. The pain is so brutally powerful that it robs people of their voices and their ability to think while at the same time “no one speaks” about it. People are always plagued by the worry that they will be kidnapped. In light of this, rather than coming up with creative ways to build Kashmiri culture, the indigenous are continuously thinking about how to avoid falling into the “perfect trap”. Zaal also denotes an effort to keep the Kashmiri community in a state of unending and unforgettably painful anguish that serves as a constant reminder of their inferiority and their subordination to the authoritarian regime over the course of their lives. The distressing circumstance is encapsulated by Waheed. At this moment, it is the citizens of Khanqah who are going to scream with their lips dry as the truck rushes around (98). The poignant images of degradation and mistreatment expose the true essence of the suffering endured by these individuals. Consequently, these folks may endure the tragedy; yet, they are unable of articulating the horrors they face. As a result of the traumatic experiences they have endured, they ultimately become the least productive members of the community.

The last chapter, entitled “A Terrible Beauty Is Born,” examines the combined effects of quotidian tragedies, interpersonal violence, unforeseen incursions, and senseless conflicts among rivals. Kashmir has evolved into a painful sanctuary where individuals are born, struggle, and perish for their convictions. Memories are juxtaposed due to fear, wrath, and retribution. Collective trauma is a devastating event that dismantles the essential structure of society. Furthermore, there is the lamentable loss of humanity. Hysteria is widespread in the streets of Kashmir, resulting in individuals being imprisoned in a tormenting condition of suffering. Waheed, via Faiz, illustrates the catastrophe that has transpired: “the city is a lifeless jail now” (211). In the absence of military authority, no individual has the capacity to incite action. At times, I envision being in a large coop encircled by several entities that assault my hand whenever I seek to breathe (p.211). Suffocation serves as a metaphor to depict the mental health struggles of Kashmiris seeking an escape from their present circumstances. Nonetheless, “individuals are being exterminated en masse, we are informed.” These are real individuals who are murdered on the streets daily. They announced the toll in the evening news as if discussing

the day's rainfall totals" (p.210). The persistent death toll, frequently reiterated by Faiz, underscores the profound connection the Kashmiri people have to this notion. The aforementioned discussion and textual references indicate that the traumatic conditions in the region are a result of the militarisation of Kashmir, which has distorted the perceptions of the Kashmiri populace through power dynamics. Personal and collective traumas in the novel stem from various circumstances imposed by Indian troops, particularly the oppression and marginalisation of the Kashmiri people, which has resulted in a traumatic state. This indicates that their original identity has been altered, reflecting a deliberate rather than subjective transformation which is of the great concern of the current research deconstructing identity and ethnicity of the Kashmiri people. Consequently, the identity and ethnicity of the Kashmiri people has been altered; it can also be stated that this identity and ethnicity fluctuates in accordance with the circumstances and demands imposed by the Indian troops who perceive it.

### Conclusion

In Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves*, the primary factors contributing to the metamorphosis of ordinary Kashmiri youth into militants are the historical occurrences in Indian-occupied Kashmir since the 1990s, especially the atrocities perpetrated by Indian armed forces. Due to military persecution, one of the world's most exquisite tourist destinations was converted into a battleground. The perilous situation engenders the notion of a national consciousness throughout society, aimed at advocating for independence and self-determination. The people of Kashmir prefer death than submission to governmental persecution. The valley is witnessing bloodshed due to military occupation, and the locals have the choice of either leaving the slaughterhouse or resisting and retaliating. The Indian military is sent to Kashmir to terminate state-hostile operations; yet, their acts in the valley are condemnable. In asserting their fundamental rights, they perpetrate the killing of innocent Kashmiri individuals. The military personnel enter the residences of the local inhabitants and exhibit improper conduct towards the ladies. Young males from the neighborhood are apprehended and subjected to severe penalties by the authorities. The oppressive actions of Indian military troops instigate a spirit of resistance among the residents of Kashmir, prompting many to align with terrorists. To obtain military training, youth from Kashmir traverse the Line of Control and relocate to various sites in Pakistan. Individuals are coerced into becoming militants and sacrificing their life for the valley upon encountering the term "jihad." The Kashmiri resistance to the atrocities committed by Indian armed forces exemplifies the cliché that violence begets further violence.

During the protracted conflict in Kashmir, which shows no signs of resolution, the concept of "nationhood" has consistently been used by political elites to achieve electoral advantage through vote bank tactics. These myths have been infused with societal divisions and have been exploited for the gratification of unyielding authority. The secular fabric of the nation is further undermined by media outlets fixated on advertisements and television rating points. They exacerbate tensions by promoting communal enmity, disregarding the fact that war zones globally are the most volatile areas for racial and religious disparities. They are exacerbating the situation. Edward Said's postcolonial perspective emphasizes the necessity of reading literary and other materials contrapuntally, against the grain, to reveal the embedded racist and imperialist discourse, so enabling its rejection. We shall do this by constructing an alternative

historical narrative, apart from the colonial rhetoric inherited from the past. This method may be used to the contemporary conflict in Kashmir and can also serve to commemorate the loss of life impartially, rather than attributing it to pro- or anti-national factions. One may conquer an empire with force and weaponry, however true healing of wounds necessitates a holistic approach. Consequently, it is important to recognize that conflicts, instead of facilitating social equality, exacerbate and reinforce social differences in several ways. To counteract these tendencies and promote reconciliation, rehabilitation, and justice for all groups entangled in this seemingly interminable conflict, it is essential to implement well-informed social policies that address the complex social realities.

The author endeavors to present instances of personal suffering experienced by the Kashmiri populace and their ethnic position has been transformed into a rigid one. The author has diligently sought to highlight this pervasive anxiety, which has been a persistent element of both personal and communal existence over the years. Inhabitants of the Kashmir valley, especially those facing daily hardships, are increasingly scrutinizing the Indian security apparatus, leading to a widespread erosion of faith in the democratic system. The lack of accountability has fostered a frightening and tense workplace, exacerbating feelings of pessimism about the prospect of a better future. The overwhelming awareness of inhabiting an uncertain future has led a substantial segment of the population to cultivate a persistent state of discontent.

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