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RESEARCH PAPER

A Colonial Continuity in Postcolonial Kashmir: Questioning Nitasha Kaul's Poetry

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Nitasha Kaul depicts Kashmir in colonial and postcolonial contexts, focusing on how neocolonial discourse influences Kashmiri identity. The fascination with Western narratives is prevalent in Kashmiri writing, with writers employing colonial tropes to acquire credibility and sympathy. Kaul positions Kashmir as crucial to India's national identity, emphasizing its strategic role within India's biopolitical framework. The study investigates Kaul's portrayal of Kashmir and its people through a textual analysis of her writings, drawing on postcolonial and neocolonial theories. Although Kaul offers a new perspective, her depictions of Kashmir frequently romanticize colonial narratives and downplay the region's rich cultural agency and indigenous resilience in favour of reducing it to a place of violence and victimization. To oppose such oppressive images, future literary works should stress Kashmiri self-reliance, prioritize local perspectives, and transcend reductive tropes. Authors and scholars must prioritize powerful narratives based on Kashmiri voices and histories in order to counter neocolonial paradigms.

KEYWORDS: Nitasha Kaul, Mimicry, Subjugated Nation, Biopolitics, Neocolonialism, Kashmir

Introduction

Kashmir is a region fractured between three nations—India, Pakistan, and China. India administers the largest portion, while the remaining territory is divided between the other two countries (Masood & Muzaffar, 2019). This territorial division has left Kashmir embroiled in a long history of conflict, characterized by violence and political instability. The region has a history of bloodshed and conflict due to territorial disputes. In 1947, the Radcliffe Commission assigned Hindu-majority states to India; however, Maharaja Hari Singh controversially acceded Kashmir to India, despite widespread opposition from the local population. Although India itself was a colony of the West, its prolonged control over Kashmir is rarely framed as colonial in nature (Masood, et al., 2020). This paradox forms the core of the present paper. The analysis focuses on the postcolonial era of the Indian subcontinent, contending that Kashmir continues to experience colonial conditions under Indian rule. The question of whether Kashmiris are free or not is still up for debate.

The colonizers departed the colonized states with a route they had set for the indigenous population to follow, alluding to the colonial continuity of the previous colonial era. To maintain their authority, they developed an intellectual framework, established a particular pattern, and compelled the locals to accept that this was the only

way forward. They ensured their rule even after the locals left by spreading their intellectual infrastructure for them to follow. In other ways, they offer them a Rumpelstiltskin choice to establish indirect control and guarantee their dominion. The inhabitants of the subcontinent (Kashmir) were left with the belief by the West that the West is better and that the East must advance by following it. In the same vein, people from this region are conditioned to be obsessed with Western products, places, languages, and people. They devised this idea to maintain indirect control. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, natives blindly ape the colonists. Following them results in the re-centralization of the West, thereby solidifying its dominance.

Kashmir is portrayed in this context as either a conflict zone or as something different from other nations and countries. It is seen to have no identity of its own, the identity for which individuals have been fighting. The inhabitants of this region have been depicted as passive victims of global pity, a symbol of sympathy. Politicians are heavily involved in this due to their political concerns. Similarly, numerous institutions and agencies have been working on Kashmir to propagate a selective narrative. To achieve their social, political, or economic objectives, they present the discourse they want to be produced and capitalize on Kashmir for strategic advantage. Different departments convey a particular image of Kashmir to the world for various reasons, including social, political, and economic ones.

In addition to these three concerns, religious and ethnic issues are a major contributing factor to the conflict in Kashmir, as members of various religious groups continue to portray their preferred image of the region to strengthen their claims. Similarly, the politics of neighboring countries have been significantly influenced by those of Kashmir. Pakistan draws attention to the problems that denigrate India, and India seizes every opportunity to oppose Pakistan on any matter. Because of this, each of these nations tells its own story, leaving the real one unheard and untold. Furthermore, various agencies, groups, and individuals turn the conflict into a commodity, prioritizing their financial gain and negotiating their representation for material benefits.

Among these actors, writers have a crucial role in presenting the identities of many states and countries. One way to characterize this identity is as a subjective perception and image associated with a specific group of individuals. Through historical occurrences, tales, folklore, and other forms of cultural expression, literature shares its history with that of a particular country. National representation and identity are significantly influenced by literature, which also helps shape a nation's language, traditions, and customs. Nitasha Kaul, for example, discusses the state and its citizens in contrast to other affluent nations, giving a sympathetic image of Kashmir. Her empathetic portrayal and reference to Kashmir give her a privileged status in the local community, and the contrast between Kashmir and the West makes her popular in the West. It represents a significant step towards the re-centralization of the West.

Furthermore, writers hold a prominent role in society, influencing people more than anyone else to shape public consciousness and social discourse. By reviving the Western fixation through their narratives and cultural frameworks, these writers play a crucial part in re-centering the West and influencing the race in this colonial continuation. As a novelist, poet, economist, and advocate for social and political justice, Kaul is in a special sociocultural position to have an impact on others. She engages deeply with the themes of ecological, political, and social relevance to this state. Her prominence stems mainly from the sociopolitical critique of Kashmir. To her, Kashmir is

a war zone where there is an unresolved demand for freedom. Her symbolic and metaphorical representation of Kashmir is questionable. She discusses Kashmir, but in a tone that is agreeable to colonizers and the West.

This paper aims to challenges the limited and conflict-centric image of Kashmir as reflected in Kaul's "Kashmir: A Country of Many Names and Numbers" (2020a) and "The Stones of Kashmir" (2020b). These poems are examined through the lens of neocolonialism, situating Kaul's perspective within the larger framework of colonial continuity, wherein a postcolonial subject continues to reproduce narratives shaped by former colonial structures. The study is co-authored by two researchers who were born and raised in Kashmir and have personally witnessed the complexities of its socio-political landscape. While Kashmir is undeniably a region marked by conflict, it is also a land of rich cultural, social, and ecological diversity, dimensions often eclipsed by dominant political discourses. The researchers argue that Kaul's depiction, particularly the metaphor of Kashmiris as "stones," contributes to a reductive narrative that aligns with colonial discursive strategies, emphasizing suffering while silencing vibrancy.

In contrast, scholars like Sehgal (as cited in Gyawun, 2017, para. 1) emphasize the unmatched warmth, hospitality, and resilience of the Kashmiri people—elements largely absent in Kaul's poetry. Her portrayal focuses almost exclusively on political strife, neglecting to acknowledge Kashmir's multifaceted identity. Beyond being a contested space, Kashmir is home to the majestic Himalayas, mouth-watering *dam aloo*, Srinagar, a city rich in history and diversity, a vibrant cottage industry, as well as a wide variety of languages, Persian-influenced culture, people, art, landscapes (including snowy hills and beautiful flowery valleys), and more. Known as "Heaven on Earth," Kashmir's beauty, linguistic richness, and lived joy deserve recognition alongside its struggles. Therefore, this paper advocates for a more balanced, optimistic representation that does justice to the region's complexity and spirit.

Literature Review

The term "postcolonial" generally refers to the period following a nation's independence, during which it begins to establish its own legal systems, institutions, and development agendas. Since these are the first stages on the path to progress, all of this is done to pave the way for future prosperity and growth. However, Kashmir's situation is somewhat different because it cannot claim to be free. The ongoing discussion over the freedom of Kashmir and Kashmiris has taken a long time and appears to be taking longer to finish. Its postcolonial status remains contested; the region is still controlled by different groups and experiences continuous political tensions.

This state experienced a series of tragedies and hardships following the withdrawal of British colonial authorities in 1947. Three distinct powers—China, India, and Pakistan—assumed control when the British left. According to BBC News (2019), 55% of the land is currently under Indian authority, 30% under Pakistani administration, and 15% under Chinese control.

According to recent discussions in the field of postcolonial research, the derogatory remarks made about the colonizers re-centralize them by creating a great deal of discussion and controversy around them. Because of this, several scholars believe that implementing postcolonial initiatives and patterns reinforces colonial continuity in the regions and lives of people who are already oppressed (Parashar and Schulz, 2021, p. 869). Yet again, colonial continuity is a Western goal that allows the West to control

Eastern politics and statistics. Natives become alienated when they adopt the customs and policies of others. They begin to dislike their people, language, traditions, places, and products. Mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, the erosion of indigenous identity, and other issues are ultimately brought about by it (Zohdi, 2012, p. 146). In this regard, Bhabha states that imitation is a metonymy of presence. It occurs when various colonized individuals or a group of them start copying the colonizers' culture (p. 86). It is in its prevalent form when it begins to incorporate other elements, such as politics. Mimicry, when applied to domains such as politics, literature, and the economy, demonstrates how the colonized individual may inadvertently sustain colonial power structures while attempting to oppose them. Therefore, the obsession with the West and its products perpetuates a notion of development that equates progress with the replication of Western policies, values, and politics. This mindset aligns closely with the framework of neocolonialism, which refers to an indirect form of domination wherein control is exerted not through direct political or military means, but via cultural, economic, and ideological influence (Go, 2015, p. 1). In this regard, Bhabha also refers to the third space as a transitional zone where hybrid identification and representation occur, as well as a space for transformation. It describes a space where hybrid identities and meanings are created between two identities and meanings. Negotiation, change, and potential resistance are all happening here.

The concept of misleading representation also exists in the world of economics. An economist or business dealer who engages in a false or ambiguous representation exhibits the traits and makes assertions that entice the customer to maximise profit on their products or services ("Misleading Representations," 2020). In addition to businesspeople and politicians, writers are known for their ambiguous portrayals. Particularly important in the creation of intriguingly enduring narratives are the identities that are ambiguous and subject to interpretation. These representations, open to broad interpretation, often serve the dual purpose of artistic appeal and market success. When such narratives repeatedly emphasize trauma, violence, or marginalization, they risk commodifying the suffering of communities for global consumption. In doing so, these writers become, in a metaphorical sense, business dealers capitalizing on the emotional economy of conflict and trauma literature. This phenomenon may be understood as a "season of scam" (Barasch, 2022), wherein distorted or sensationalized portrayals gain commercial traction, despite their ethical ambiguity. By consistently portraying Kashmir as a site of horror, oppression, and instability, some literary and media discourses attract audiences seeking emotional stimulation and catharsis. Psychological studies suggest that readers and viewers are often drawn to stories involving violence or fear because such content triggers a dopamine release, associated with pleasure and a heightened sense of engagement (Ringo, 2013, para. 2). Consequently, this creates a feedback loop where trauma becomes a marketable commodity, and nuanced or positive representations are overshadowed by what sells.

What remains deeply problematic is the long-term impact of such representations. While they may appeal to international audiences, they often reinforce reductive stereotypes and strip the represented communities, like Kashmiris, of their multifaceted identities, lived realities, and cultural richness. In the pursuit of emotional and economic capital, the ethical responsibility of writers to portray their subjects with care and integrity is frequently compromised. In this model, power operates subtly through structures and narratives that sustain the dominance of former colonial powers over once-colonized nations. Among the agents of this influence are not only politicians

and economists but also cultural producers such as writers and intellectuals. In this regard, Salleh (1991) argues that writers hold a unique position in society, one that enables them to shape national consciousness and identity. Their words can both construct and deconstruct civilizations, cultural traditions, and collective memory (p. 85).

Material and Methods

This is qualitative research that employs textual interpretation as its primary method of analysis to examine Kaul's poems. The analysis is framed through the postcolonial theoretical lens of Homi K. Bhabha, particularly his concepts of mimicry and the third space as articulated in *The Location of Culture* (1994). According to this study, Kaul is a writer who finds a way to balance her Kashmiri identity with what a Western audience desires from her (either consciously or unconsciously). During her attempt to do so, she enters a third space. The primary texts selected for this study are Kaul's two poems, "Kashmir: A Country of Many Names and Numbers" (2020a) and "The Stones of Kashmir" (2020b). Scholarly articles, theoretical books, and archival data obtained from academic institutions and e-libraries serve as secondary sources of information and analysis in this research.

Results and Discussion

Nitasha Kaul is a writer, speaker, poet, and activist who produces and publishes her work on various social, political, and ecological issues related to Kashmir. She was born and raised in the Kashmir region. She relocated to England at the age of twenty-one. Kaul has authored works in the field of economics following the completion of her education in this discipline. However, she is renowned for her contributions to Kashmir. She was shortlisted for the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2009.

To her, Kashmir is a war zone and an area where people are still living in a state of sympathy because of the lack of freedom. The question of whether Kashmiris are free is another argument, influenced by the region's demographic divide and political dynamics. The paper examines two of her poems to demonstrate that Kaul, in conjunction with other ecologists, exploits the name of Kashmir for her economic benefit. She presents a perplexing depiction of this location. The rationale for this ambiguous portrayal lies in the colonial continuity of her personality. Having been exposed to Western society for an extended period, she appears to be profoundly influenced by its civilization and political structure. Consequently, she seems disinterested in referencing authentic experiences and lived realities. She demonstrates a hybridity in her being by mimicking Western discourses while marginalizing Kashmir and reinforcing the Western gaze. This paper explores how her poetic language both reveals and obscures the realities of Kashmiri identity and resistance in the selected poems.

In "The Stones of Kashmir," Kaul invokes a metaphor that dominates the entire poem—Kashmir as a place of stones. She writes that the people have lost their voices and have "turned into stones" (2020b, line 3). This metaphor, while powerful in evoking suffering and silencing, raises critical questions. It suggests a kind of static victimhood, confining Kashmiris to a position of passive mourning rather than dynamic resistance. The metaphor of stone can signify endurance, oppression, or voicelessness, but also implies inanimacy, which potentially erases the active political agency of Kashmiris fighting for autonomy.

The historical and political context of Kashmir is essential here. Since the Partition of British India in 1947, Kashmir has remained a disputed territory, divided between India, Pakistan, and China. While Pakistan and China have administered their portions with relative autonomy granted to local populations, Indian-administered Kashmir has witnessed some of the harshest restrictions, especially after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019. This constitutional amendment revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir (Indian-occupied/Indian-held Kashmir), intensifying the already volatile political climate and imposing severe constraints on the civil liberties of the population. While Kaul's poem (2020b) laments this oppression, her failure to identify the perpetrator, namely, the Indian state, creates a moral ambiguity. By not explicitly naming the source of violence and repression, her work risks depoliticizing the Kashmir struggle and presenting it as a generalized condition of suffering.

The oppressive conditions and nostalgia that the people of Kaul's homeland are experiencing seem to be causing her grief. She asserts that Kashmiris have become "stones" and have lost their voices (p. 23). Kashmir, a disputed territory split between three nations, has seen war and bloodshed throughout its history. It continued to be a hotbed of brutality, torture, and bloodshed as a result. China and Pakistan have granted basic freedom to their respective regions of Kashmir. The rights to property, education, and other fundamental freedoms are granted to residents of the areas governed by these two nations. However, Kashmir, which is occupied by India, has just gone through a crucial period following the constitutional reforms. The day on which the Indian Constitution was amended to alter Kashmir's status is August 5, 2019. But implementing a change seems like the wrong thing to do. However, it should be made very clear that the current occupation, not Kashmiris, is responsible for this flawed behavior. The fact that Kashmir has never been a part of China, India, or Pakistan must be made very clear. The only people who reside in this region are Kashmiris; it is Kashmir. Their quest for a distinct identity is genuine. However, there is absolutely no justification for forcing people to live in nostalgia. These people have undoubtedly been using stones to combat the cruelty. But limiting them to stones is not necessary to help them overcome this fear.

Kaul moves forward and refers to the monuments being pelted with stones. According to her, "eyes of the people are stone", "the hearts of the soldiers are stone", stones are growing on trees, "the flowers are stones", "the children are stones", houses, and even "some gods" are stones (2020b, lines 5–10). Because they are as hard and feel less like stones, the troops of the invaders in Kashmir can be compared to stones. However, it is erroneous to associate stones with anything in Kashmir, including children and gods. Every religion believes that children are endearing, and every law must take into account religious views. Kashmiris have never been involved in a religious battle, despite being compelled to fight for the region. Under these conditions, the act of restricting both the people and the gods to a level of stones appears to be an attempt to assert that nobody will ever be able to restore Kashmir's prosperous past. Like the gods of Kashmir, the children of Kashmir will be turned into stones. Kaul still identifies the symbol of "stone" with everything, including the eyes of people, the hearts of soldiers, flowers, trees, gods, and their homes, tombs, tears, and more. She is perplexed as to who is entitled to be innocent of both the natives and the invaders. Although she portrays the intruders as being as cruel as stones, she also places the Kashmiris in the same category. She seems to live (consciously or unconsciously) in a third space where she is neither entirely with Kashmiris nor able to back the intruders publicly.

Furthermore, there are other ways to interpret this poem due to its unique composition. This could be a conscious decision to ensure that her work is reliable in both situations so she can benefit from both. However, the association of innocent children and divine entities with the same imagery crosses into problematic generalization. Children, across cultures and faiths, are symbols of innocence and hope. As a diasporic writer with Western academic and activist affiliations, Kaul may be consciously or unconsciously shaping her poetic expression to align with Western literary expectations, which often favor narratives of trauma over resilience. Such a portrayal, while emotionally resonant, occludes the everyday beauty, resistance, and humanity that persist in Kashmiri life.

The West's interest in Kashmir is not a new phenomenon. The region's geostrategic position, natural wealth, and cultural richness have long fascinated colonial and postcolonial powers. At the time of British withdrawal in 1947, Kashmir was left in political limbo, arguably by design. The unresolved status of Kashmir, alongside the religious divisions it precipitated, suited the colonial policy of "divide and rule." As Edward Said (1978) argues in *Orientalism*, colonial powers often sought to control not only land but also ways of seeing and thinking, manipulating representation to maintain influence long after physical occupation ended (p. 322). This legacy continues through intellectual and cultural agents—politicians, bureaucrats, and writers who, knowingly or not, perpetuate colonial narratives under the guise of liberal critique or humanitarian concern. In this context, Kaul's metaphor-heavy depiction may be seen as part of a broader discourse shaped by colonial epistemologies and diasporic privilege, wherein Kashmir becomes a symbol of eternal tragedy rather than a living, breathing homeland. While her poetry draws attention to pain and silencing, it risks reinscribing a colonial gaze—one that aestheticizes suffering while omitting the lived complexities, hopes, and dignities of the people it seeks to represent.

Writers such as Kaul, particularly those situated in diasporic or Western contexts, often insert themes of sympathy, oppression, and voicelessness into their representations of Kashmir. While these sentiments can raise global awareness, they can also foster a sense of helplessness among those represented, reducing them to either passive victims or reactive rebels. In Kaul's poetry, the symbol of the stone is central; it is the only weapon the people of Kashmir possess to resist armed repression. Yet paradoxically, Kaul's tone suggests a discomfort even with this form of retaliation. She laments that ancient monuments have been exposed to the "rain of stones," implicitly placing the sanctity of architectural heritage above the lives lost under the rain of bullets. This raises a disturbing question: Is the damage to a monument more grievous than the massacre of thousands? In reality, as Ganie (2020) notes, the stone becomes the last symbolic and material line of defense for a population confronting militarized occupation. For Kaul to emphasize the damage done by stones while underemphasizing the state-led violence that precipitates such retaliation may appear as a misplaced moral critique—one that risks equating victim and oppressor. Her continued use of the stone metaphor—applying it to the eyes of the people, the hearts of soldiers, flowers, trees, deities, homes, graves, and even tears reflects a pervasive ambiguity. It creates a flattening of moral distinctions: both the occupying forces and the oppressed civilians are collapsed into the same inert, unfeeling category.

This ambiguity raises the question of Kaul's positionality. She appears to be writing from a liminal or 'third space' where cultural hybridity and dislocation obscure fixed allegiances. She seems neither wholly aligned with Kashmiri resistance nor openly

critical of state violence, a stance that may be strategic rather than accidental. The poem's interpretive openness—its ability to be read in multiple, even contradictory, ways may serve a dual purpose: to retain credibility within activist discourse while maintaining a safe distance within Western literary and academic circles. In this sense, Kaul's work potentially mirrors a form of mimicry that, as Bhabha warns, both reflects and reinforces colonial power structures.

Kaul's preoccupation with Western geographies and cultural symbols becomes even more evident in her poem "Kashmir: A Country of Many Names and Numbers" (2020a). In this piece, she describes Kashmir as "an Icelandic novel, an American song, an English warship, and a paisley bikini" (lines 3–4). This seemingly whimsical collage of metaphors functions as more than poetic play; it reflects a deep entanglement with Western imaginaries, suggesting that Kashmir's meaning is legible only through foreign referents. The irony here is stark: while Kaul identifies Kashmir as her homeland and speaks from a place of nostalgia, her symbolic associations privilege the West. Kaul universalizes her experience by comparing Kashmir to Western cultural artefacts such as novels, songs, warships, and fashion, while also diminishing the region's original identity. In this poem, an Icelandic novel outranks a Kashmiri story, and an American song overrides a Kashmiri folk tune. This prioritization of Western aesthetics suggests a hierarchical valuation, where Kashmir's beauty or tragedy is significant only insofar as it resembles something Western.

For the native Kashmiri reader, such metaphors might appear to be expressions of solidarity or shared pain. However, a deeper reading reveals that Kaul's nostalgia is filtered through a Western lens, rendering Kashmir secondary, metaphorical, and even exoticized. Rather than affirming the region's unique cultural and political identity, she reimagines it as a composite of borrowed geographies, thereby veiling its specificity.

Kaul continues the poem by reviewing the numerical statistics related to the partition, constitution, wars, Line of Control, and decisions concerning Kashmir. The information about this state "haunts" her, she declares (Kaul, 2020a, lines 5-7). Once more, it is absurd that someone who loves their country is still troubled by the fact that there are 504,000 hectares of irrigated land and that 72.4% of students in school are between the ages of 11 and 14. However, in the list of data she is citing, she has not mentioned the irrigated area or the literacy rate. And such selective portrayal raises critical questions about Kaul for not being an optimist activist of Kashmir. Rather than bringing a counter-narrative to affirm the agency of the region, Kaul seems to perpetuate a neocolonial gaze she intends to criticize.

Similarly, politically and emotionally significant holidays commemorated in support of Kashmir include symbolic days, such as August 5. Every country and state has the right to a public voice and the act of congregating at a specific point for a certain objective. The degree to which Kaul is a nationalist and patriot can be readily evaluated, however, if the day commemorating the sacrifices made by Kashmiris is reduced to a Halloween-like scenario. This undermines the gravity of the suffering of Kashmiris and shows a disconnect between Kaul's diasporic position and the lived realities of Kashmiris she represents.

Kaul complains in the last lines of the poem that it appears hard to get in touch with anyone in Kashmir. As an example of disrupted communication and wider isolation, she claims that every time she attempts to phone someone in Kashmir, she encounters difficulties due to the distorted or lost connection. According to various

discussions produced in this state and on social media, the majority of Kashmiris own their own cellphones, and a sizable portion of homes have landlines. It is undeniable that Kashmir, a region riven by conflict, frequently experiences connectivity issues, yet it is not warranted to declare the state and its residents inaccessible. Due to various security concerns, Pakistanis experience communication blackouts, shutdowns, or intermittent connectivity during various political or religious protests. The situation in Kashmir is the same. The division and dissension among neighboring countries have transformed it into a place where numerous security concerns arise daily. This poem was published in 2020, in the aftermath of the revocation of Article 370, a moment that sparked intense surveillance and suppression. In such a politically fragile climate, communication blackouts, while condemnable, were not unexpected. Yet Kaul's narrative framing suggests an enduring, absolute silencing of Kashmir, which overlooks both the resistance and resilience of its people. Albert Einstein once stated, "Freedom, in any case, is only possible by constantly struggling for it" (2013, p. 111), and this paper argues that such a struggle must originate from within.

There is a distinct difference between changing history and merely narrating it for the sake of being a part of it, and Kaul seems to reside in the latter category. Kaul's poetic vision seems more concerned with preserving memory than inspiring transformation. She appears to reside in a space of elegiac nostalgia, chronicling trauma without directing her voice toward imagining a more empowered future. Her depiction of Kashmir, on the one hand, makes it seem less like an eye-catching sight and more like a place designed to evoke pity or a geographical structure of stones. The natives warmly welcome this, as it taps into the human psyche's desire to be the center of attention. That is why the local community appreciates Kaul's intensified work.

On the other hand, she contrasts Kashmir with other Western countries, such as Iceland, America, England, and others. Kashmir has experienced less development than many other states due to its conflict-ridden nature. And it is absurd to compare such a territory to a developed country. It exhibits a Western fixation and a sense of alienation, not belonging in certain domains.

Such framing situates Kaul in "third space"—a liminal zone between belonging and estrangement. Her conflicted affiliations blur the lines between homeland and hostland, and in doing so, she seems to conflate nostalgia with critique and sympathy with satire. Kaul desires for Kashmir a kind of global connectivity and freedom akin to that of London but fails to recognize that her responsibility, as a diasporic intellectual, is not simply to mourn the region's failings, but to constructively amplify its agency. Unlike Londoners, who do not look to Kaul for affirmation of their identity, the people of Kashmir place their hope and scrutiny on writers like her to carve a pathway toward cultural dignity and political recognition.

Conclusion

While Kashmir may be geographically and politically divided across three regions due to complex religious, ethnic, and territorial conflicts, the collective identity of the Kashmiris remains resilient and indivisible. No Line of Control can fragment the emotional and cultural unity that binds Kashmiris across borders. Often referred to as 'Heaven on Earth,' the region is known not only for its breathtaking landscapes—its towering mountains, lush valleys, and glistening lakes—but also for its hospitable people, abundant natural resources, and rich cultural heritage. At the same time, the representation of this state is purely based on the sufferings that have occurred in the

region. Because of territorial issues, Kashmiris' continual struggle for identity continues. In these circumstances, our intellectuals have attempted to disillusion people by informing them that they have been existing in a state of sympathy and will continue to contend with 'stones' until the very end. Nitasha Kaul appears to be a prominent actor in either nation-building or nation-breaking. She asserts verbally that she is Kashmiri, but her lyrical contributions reveal her Western identity. This puts her in a position of transition where she is unable to decide whether to be the "Queen," who can formally claim the land and its suffering, or a "Rumpelstiltskin," who creates hope from trauma. A sense of ambiguity characterises her voice, as it is both sympathetic and distant, critical and uncommitted. She has played an important role in instilling in Kashmiris a sense of deprivation, but she must work with other stakeholders to signal to the natives that they have far more than others.

Recommendations

In order to reclaim the narrative, Kashmiri writers, artists, and intellectuals must emphasize the cultural richness, solidarity, and resilience rather than victimization. The literary and historical reimagining of Kashmir should be led by authentic voices, those rooted in lived experiences. The goal should be to empower young people through education and technology, by bringing means of progress, such as digital media and a pen, to replace symbols of resistance, like stones. This change may inspire a future based on self-determination rather than suffering.

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