



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Violence and Resistance in Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves* and  
Peer's *Curfewed Night***

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**ABSTRACT**

The paper, analyzing Mirza Waheed's novel *The Book of Gold Leaves* and Basharat Peer's memoir *Curfewed Night*, attempts to highlight the violence by Indian military forces in Indian occupied Kashmir and the resistance of common Kashmiri folks. During the partition of the Indian Subcontinent, Kashmir decided not to affiliate with any of the newly independent countries (Pakistan and India) and remained independent. This study unearths the violence by a stronger force and the sufferings and resistance of weaker group in the selected texts by using the theoretical framework of power and violence by Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon. Violence, in the name of various factors, gives traumatic experience to its victims and obviously resistance occurs to oppose the dominant forces and violence. Violence and wrong utilization of power in a country of religious minorities, and different provisional and political statuses is not an unholy characteristic for developing and developed states. Such states do not hesitate to oppress minor voices arising from different parts of the state for some controversial demands. This research paper endeavors to put light on the oppressive actions by Indian armed forces against Kashmiri people to keep them away from demanding identity, free religion, self-determination and independence.

**KEYWORDS** Indian Occupied Kashmir, Kashmiris, Power, Resistance, Violence

**Introduction**

During the partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, it was declared by Radcliffe that Hindu majority states were to be affiliated with India and Muslim majority states with Pakistan. The last ruler of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh preferred to accede to India instead of Pakistan in lieu of certain promises from Indian government. Affiliation with India was against the wishes of Kashmiri Muslims, who wanted to be part of Pakistan. Kashmiri Muslims revolted against this decision of the Maharaja and consequently Pakistani tribals liberated some part of Kashmir. To normalize the situation Prime Minister of India Pundit Nehru promised a plebiscite. Many decades have passed after partition but Indian government has not fulfilled her promise of plebiscite yet. The conflict of Kashmir resulted in the demise of thousands of Kashmiri people and still it is unresolved. Indian state has used every possible tactic to crush the will of freedom of Kashmiris. It has utilized state power to make the Kashmiris silent from demanding self-determination and freedom. Indian state has been using

oppressive tactics and state power to crush the rising voices and organizations that demand for the basic rights of Kashmiri people. This representation has been depicted vividly in *The Book of Gold Leaves* by Mirza Waheed and *Curfewed Night* by Basharat Peer. Waheed and Peer have portrayed the tense situation in Kashmir in their literary pieces. *The Book of Gold Leaves* and *Curfewed Night* highlight the theme of political uprising in Indian occupied Kashmir. The leadership of Kashmir is ignored in defining the future and destinies of Kashmiri people. Kashmir, the natural paradise, has turned into a deathscape since the political uprising in the state. Native people (Kashmiris) are arrested and made prisoners for a long time; even they are killed in the prisons by torturing them. Some prisoners are made impotent by inserting electric wire in their private parts of the body; they even can't think of getting married and giving birth to children. Such misuse of power and violence automatically triggers resistance and native people struggle to defend themselves. They join different militant groups in the name of Jihad, even they cross the borders for the purpose of military training.

### Literature Review

Amrita Ghosh (2018) has discussed the horrified events of Kashmir witnessed by the native people because of the oppressions of Indian paramilitary forces. She highlights the value of Kashmiri people in front of Indian government that the government loves the land and beauty of Kashmir but denies to Kashmiris. She writes that Indian military and paramilitary forces never hesitate killing innocent unarmed Kashmiri people as she writes that a sixteen years old boy was "[shot] to death by the Indian paramilitary forces" (p. 32), who was protesting against the oppressions of Indian government. Payel Pal (2021) has discussed Peer's memoir *Curfewed Night* and claims that this work is a "perspicacious commentary on the violence, exile and dispossession that have wrecked the lives of ordinary Kashmiris since 1947" (p. 1). She writes that Peer talks about the loss of belongingness of Kashmiri people in last few decades that eventually condensed the sense of individual and collective selfhood. Pal says that the memoir artistically highlights the fact that Kashmiris are going through "an inexorable process of othering" (p. 8) in postcolonial India. Archana Sonia (2016) discusses about the artistic representation of pain, suffering, death, and psychological disorder of Kashmiri people under the suppression of Indian military forces. The author explains that Basharat Peer has told the stories of sufferings of Kashmiri people. Kashmir a paradise on the earth was known for its beauty and tranquility, people from all over the world loved to visit this place to enjoy the natural beauty. Now a days, the same paradise is witnessing the bloodiest game of death and it has become the most militarized place in the world. Khan (2015), with regard to Peer's memoir, observes that traditional Kashmiri literature is very old and presents themes of love, romantic scenes of land, cultural beauty, integration, and respect but current literature especially in English presents totally different themes. In current literature the themes of brutality, oppression, exile, psychological disorder, mental illness, violence, and resistance are found. Current writers talk about political discrimination, horror of the gun culture, torture and trauma, disappearance and deaths. In contemporary era Kashmiri literature depicts anger, helplessness, and sense of disconsolation. The whole tradition has changed from romantic poetry to criticism on political policies of State of India and the oppressive attitude of military and paramilitary forces. Naseer Khan (2017) says that Kashmiri women have been made victims of different atrocities by the military and paramilitary forces. They have borne more painful moments than men because the entire problems which have been seen by men have also been seen by women. Being women, they faced extra oppressions; they have been made victims of sensual pleasure by military and paramilitary forces. The author tells about the atrocities of Indian military and paramilitary forces on Kashmiri women and writes that they were "raped, tortured,

mutilated and killed" (p. 255). Javed Ahmed Raina's (2018) eco-feminist analysis of *The Book of Gold Leaves* shows that how nature and women have been made as commodities in a conflict dominated by males. He finds similarities according to the behavior of male dominated society and their behavior towards women and land. The land which was once the place and home for natural birds and animals is now occupied by males with guns. Instead of voices of birds this land experiences the sounds of bullets. The male dominated society has exploited and annihilated the land as well as the women, as the women are considered the source of child bearing and the land as the source of food for males.

### **Theoretic Framework**

The employed theoretic framework for this research is the conceptualization of power, violence and resistance by Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon. Power according to Foucault (1978) is "the multiplicity of forced relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" (p. 92). Foucault posits that power must be dissected as something which circles, or as something which just functions as a chain. People are the vehicles of power, not its purpose of use. Power is not a structure, a foundation or a specific force with which certain individuals are supplied; it is the name given to complex vital connection in a society. Power is considered as a net or a chain which is not only present between the oppressor and the oppressed but can be found throughout the society. Individual cannot be seen as the receiver of power, but should be seen as a point from where power is sanctioned and resisted.

Fanon (1963) inter-relates the idea of violence with power. For him the act of colonization remains incomplete without violence. Settlers (colonizers) use violence against the colonized to maintain their hegemonic presence in native places. For Fanon the process of decolonization is all upside down. In *The Wretched of The Earth* Fanon claims that "decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature [...] their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence together" (p. 36). The exploitation of the native by the settler was carried on by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons. Violence is only possible when there will be two opposite forces one powerful and another suppressed one. Violence creates restlessness in common people who unconditionally engage themselves with the phenomenon of resistance. Colonized do not find any other possible way through which they gain independence from the violence and wrong utilization of power. Fanon further argues that violence has the power to cure the wounds of oppressed people "the native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms" (p. 21). It is in the light of these views of Foucault and Fanon that the research paper at hand endeavors to analyze the chosen texts of two Kashmiri writers: Waheed and Peer.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Violence in *The Book of Gold Leaves* and *Curfewed Night***

Violence has been defined in different ways as World Health Organization defines violence as the use of physical power in order to threat person or group may cause death, physical harm and injury (Krung, 2002, p. 5). Foucault has defined violence as "the physical exercise of a completely unbalanced force" (2006, p. 14). Foucault further asserts that when violence is exercised it loses its relationship with power and it is no more under the category of power because power depends on the wills of people as they get ready to change their behavior. Violence on the other hand is an intentional

action against anyone to harm physically or psychologically. Fanon declares that violence is the basic tool used by colonizers because without violence colonizers cannot sustain their hegemony. Colonizers do not care about the gender, age and family they only know one thing that is to oppress the colonized and to rule them. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) he says that decolonization is only possible when two forces oppose each other, and the force used by colonizers for oppression is violence.

In the selected texts the authors have depicted the oppression on Kashmiri people by military and paramilitary forces by utilizing state power. Military and paramilitary forces have violated all the basic principles of life. They made victims of all kinds of people whether they are Muslims, Sikhs, or Pandits, they killed males, females, children, and aged people. Due to their oppressions people face psychological issues. Due to Physical and psychological unrest people of Kashmir left their homes and started living in different camps. The selected texts present a true picture and highlight that youth of Kashmir faced every type of violence as they were captured and sent to different torture cells, in those cells they were treated inhumanly. Authors of the texts have shared the stories of violence by presenting different characters in their writings. In the memoir of Peer, a detailed account of real experiences of people highlights the sufferings of the dwellers. Peer has drafted the real stories of people who face the violence of military and paramilitary forces. The characters of the texts are the true embodiments of military and paramilitary forces as whatever they have done with innocent people of Kashmir. Violence is categorized into three types as Physical, Psychological and Gender violence and authors through their writings portray all the three categories. Violence by military forces not only disturbed the lives of victims but they have destroyed the whole family structure. Family is a basic unit of society and the whole family structure is shattered by violence. They violated basic norms of society and entered into the homes of people by using state power.

Foucault defines violence as the physical utilization of unbalanced power; in the context of Kashmir the powers which are opposite to each other are totally unbalanced. Military forces have the power of state and Kashmiris have nothing to oppose them. On the one hand are common folks of Kashmir who protest for basic political rights and on the other hand are Indian armed forces with modern weapons. Indian armed forces use military power only to make the Kashmiri common folks silent. Even they snatch the right to live a peaceful life by introducing different tactics and strategies. Those people who want a peaceful solution for the conflicts also face the same violence. Frantz Fanon endorses the utilization of same tactic used by colonizers, as colonizers have used violence as their first and strong weapon, in the same way Fanon wants the common people to behave violently. Fanon believes that decolonization is only possible by adopting the tactics used by colonizers to colonize the native people. Colonized masses can break the chains of slavery by breaking all the existing structures made by colonizers. Native people need violent behavior to shatter the already made system of colonizers in which colonizer is in the center, colonizer is privileged, and colonized is nowhere. Colonized are treated inhumanly and they are even not considered human beings.

Presence of military forces in any region of world results in different types of violence. In militarized regions women are most affected members of the society. They bear all types of pain, they even do not participate in any type of conflict but they face the most brutal conditions. Women are killed, women are wounded, women are shot down by bullets, and more panic they are raped. Fanon says in *Black Skin White Masks* (1952): "When a soldier of the conquering army went to bed with a young Malagasy girl, there was undoubtedly no tendency on his part to respect her entity as another person"

(p. 32). According to Fanon the native girls are not even treated as human beings, they are not considered members of a society and whatever the soldiers do is the privilege of the soldiers. No one asks what the women feel and bear when they are made victims of the lust of soldiers. Soldiers do not care whether the native women live or die; they only want one thing that is to fulfill their physical desires. Fanon says that the women of color does not deserve any respect in the eyes of white men as it makes no difference for them that the color women also deserve respect.

In both the selected texts the depiction of Kashmiri women is harsher than men because women are facing unbearable circumstances. Basharat Peer shares the real stories of women that the women have faced in their real life. Women are already suppressed members of society and the women in militarized regions are doubly suppressed. Women bear the pain of deaths as they see the dead bodies of their husbands, sons, and brothers. More than this they are also made the victims of brutalities and oppressions by military forces. Basharat Peer tells about the behavior of soldiers towards women during different crackdowns and oppressions. He says: "Kashmir was rife with stories of soldiers misbehaving with women during crackdowns" (Peer, 2008, p. 52). During crackdowns multiple women are made victims of rape by military forces, as the military forces enter into the houses of the people by using state power. Military forces not only search the houses but also misbehave with women present in the house. Misbehaving with women is not rare in militarized regions, it is common as Fanon says that the soldiers sleep with color women and forget about them. Soldiers never think about the honor of the females, they only fulfill their physical desires and leave the place. Soldiers never care about the status of the women, whether she is married or not, pregnant, young, underage, or aged? They only listen and follow their own desires. Peer narrates the story of the arrest of three men and a pregnant housewife during the crackdown by Indian police. Such incidents depict the inhuman behavior of military and paramilitary forces.

Fanon says that color women have no value in front of colonizers. They only sleep with young girls and forget about them. In the same way Peer depicts a story of marriage that the people following the traditions of Kashmir arranged a marriage according to the norms of Kashmir. The marriage comes to its final customs beautifully and the bride's vehicle moves towards grooms home. The military forces have already given them the permit to travel at night time. During their journey towards groom's home on the way military forces stop the bus, without asking anything they start beating the companion male members. Military forces do not end up their brutalities only by beating the male members but they open fire towards the bride's bus. During the firing the bride gets injured and the groom too. The BSF officer orders the passengers to leave the bus and when the passengers leave the bus soldiers start beating them all. Military forces enter into the bus and drag the bride along with her chambermaid out of the bus and drag to the side of the road. The two girls have been injured inhumanly by the bullets of military personnel. The military personnel drag the bleeding groom and the chambermaid towards mustard field. An unknown number of BSF men rapes the two injured women. Peer says: "My first thought about Mubeena Ghani. In May 1990, a few hours after her marriage, she had been raped by a group of Indian paramilitary soldiers" (p. 154). This very incident of Mubeena Ghani changed the whole tradition of Kashmiri marriages. Now Kashmiri people started to avoid celebrating their marriage ceremonies in night times and also they left the tradition of night travelling. Peer himself meets Mubeena Ghani and her husband to listen to this inhuman atrocity of Indian paramilitary soldiers. Peer says that he failed to write about Mubeena and her husband Rashid. He wants to visit a village in Kupwara District but fails to go there. He says that "the Indian army raped more than twenty women in 1990" in the said manner (p. 160).

Military forces never care about the worth of native people as they plunder, rape, kill, kidnap, and beat brutally anyone from the native places. Soldiers even beat women when they resist fulfilling their desires. Waheed writes about the wife of Ibteda; a postman who collects and distributes letters, she died after being touched by a soldier during search operation. Waheed says that in a search operation, a soldier finds himself alone in the kitchen, tries to touch Ibteda's wife while she is busy in her prayers. Waheed writes: "The soldier had searched their houses and one of them, finding himself alone in their kitchen, had decided to put his hands on Ibteda's wife's prostrate form" (Waheed, 2014, p. 158). Wife of Ibteda breaks her prayers and slaps the soldier. The soldier starts kicking the woman to the floor. According to the neighbors, after that day something has come to Zulekha and she often complains of weird suffocation in her chest. She died due to cardiac arrest because she could not bear the shame. Ibteda is unable to do anything for his wife and even he is not capable of taking revenge from that soldier. Such brutalities and violence are common in the militarized Kashmir. Women are compelled to fulfill physical desires of soldiers and if they resist they are killed or raped forcefully. Kashmiri men have been watching the dishonoring of women at the hands of Indian military and paramilitary forces. They are unable to stop the soldiers. What they can do is to pick up the gun and shoot the Indian soldiers which leads towards the death of men and also more violence action against everyone.

In the memoir *Curfewed Night* (2008) Basharat Peer tells the real stories of people who suffer from psychological issues. He shares the story of a shopkeeper who is used to selling different things to the village people. He is so much psychologically disturbed that he cannot bear to face any military personnel because whenever he sees a soldier coming towards him he loses his control. He requests the people not to let any soldier towards his shop. Mirza Waheed depicts the psychological issues of his characters too and says that the people after facing an incident cannot sleep and they need sleeping pills for rest. The protagonist of the novel *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014), Faiz, faces psychological issues as he cannot sleep after the murder of his godmaid. He cannot forget the incident of firing towards school bus full of school children. Mir Zafar also faces psychological issues as he advises everyone to run from Kashmir: "Run for your life, Faizâ, run" (p. 129).

### **Resistance in *The Book of Gold Leaves* and *Curfewed Night***

In both the chosen texts the authors have depicted the passion of common people to join militants and to fight against Indian military forces. Most of the Kashmiri youth is compelled to join militants because they see humiliating incidents in Kashmir, which are unbearable for them. They have no other option except joining militants and to kill Indian military forces or to die for the people of Kashmir. Mirza waheed's protagonist Faiz; a paper mache artist, leaves school and joins handicrafts. Faiz is very keen in making different artistic designs on the paper and he wishes to make a large beautiful painting. He calls the painting Falaknuma and in his spare time, he works on it. He earns food for his family. Meanwhile the Indian army starts showing violent attitude towards the protesters, who protest for the political rights. The military forces open fire in multiple places on protesters and kill them. Though this incident changes Faiz' life, still, he never takes part in any anti-military action. However, this incident changed his mind. One day the military forces open fire towards a school mini bus which results in multiple deaths of school children and one of Faiz' favorite maids Fatima also gets victim of that firing and dies in Faiz' arms. He cannot forget this incident and spends many sleepless nights. He is very disappointed from the behavior of other people that no one talks about her innocence and the brutality of military forces. Waheed depicts it in the words: "You know what makes me angry? It's that no one's responsible, as though she has died a

natural death" (p. 93). Within few days another incident takes place. Faiz' elder brother is captured by the Zaal. Mir Zafar gets injured and suggests Faiz to leave Kashmir to live his life. Faiz cannot decide what to do but finally he takes a decision.

Faiz finds a single option that is to resist the military forces, he chooses to go to Pakistan for military training and spends more than six months in Pakistan, where he learns how to make handmade bombs. During training session Faiz meets with different people and all of them share their stories and purposes with each other. Faiz says: "I want to do is finish off those evil bunkers in our area. May be a few more after that. Then we'll see. All I know is, what they're doing is wrong. That's all" (p. 114). Presence of military bunkers in his area irritates Faiz therefore he has decided to resist against the military and he wants to send them away from his soil. Initially Faiz bears but when he sees the death of Fatima, innocent killing of protesters and the incident of Zaal, he is unable to bear anymore. During his training session, Roohi informs him about the condition of Kashmir through letters. The information he receives makes him more and more furious and he wants to take revenge from Indian military forces. To be in a Pakistani military training camp and to learn fighting is a holy activity for Faiz. He says that to be here and to learn fighting is actually Jihad. Sometimes he thinks about his family and Roohi but his main focus is to sweep all the Indian military forces from Kashmir. Waheed depicts the wish of Kashmiri youth through his character of Faiz who wants resistance and wishes to die instead of bearing the brutalities of Indian army.

The next character, through which Mirza Waheed shows resistance, is the character of Engineer who has completed his study in engineering and now works as a collaborator to train Kashmiri youth for fighting. Being an educated person, he does not opt for a job, but presence of Indian military and their oppression compels him to join militants. The character of Engineer depicts that Indian military forces have not only compelled common people to join militants but also the well-educated people of Kashmir. Engineer helps and takes Kashmiri youth to different parts of Pakistan and even sometimes the boys do not know where they are taken. Faiz asks Engineer about his destination and the Engineer answers him that it makes no difference where they go but the important things is why they go: "I don't know. Balakot, Ilaqa-e-Ghair, Afghanistan – does it matter, my friends? We are here now and we know what for" (p. 111). Indian military and paramilitary forces create such a mess in Kashmir that even children start opposing their parents. Rumi, brother of Roohi, gets ready to oppose his own father, when Panther tells him that his father is a collaborator and helps Indian military to find young men of Kashmir. In Kashmiri culture parents are given more respect but when Rumi knows that his father works for the Indian military, he forgets the respect and promises Panther to keep his own father away from such activities or will be the first to punish him: "then I'll be the first to say we should ... er, er ... punish him" (p. 207). Rumi is persuaded to go and keep an eye on his father and the papers which he collects and gives to DC office. Panther tells Rumi that in those papers his father mentions the names of all the young men of village and with the help of those papers Indian army conducts raids on different homes and arrests young men. Roohi, the second main character of the novel and lover of Faiz, also wants to fight with Indian military forces. She sees the daily killings of common people in the streets and roads. She cannot bear the brutalities on common people and wishes to fight against Indian military. Being an educated woman, Roohi thinks about suicide bombing. This depicts the situation of Kashmiri people that even the educated Kashmiri people are exhausted. She forgets about her gender and wishes to join Faiz in resisting the Indian military forces. According to Fanon colonized are not tamed but oppressed, he is patiently waiting until the settler is off his guard to fly at him. In the same way Kashmiri youth wait for right time to attack on Indian military forces. Indian military forces, using the

state power, try to suppress Kashmiris but they get ready to fight and die instead of accepting military presence in their land. Kashmiris are killed, tortured, kidnapped, and made physically paralyzed but military forces are unable to stop them from resistance. Initially, Kashmiris resisted using the weapons as the means of their violent resistance but with the passage of time they have learnt to resist through their literature too. Kashmiri authors depict the real brutalities of Indian army in the valley which was known for its natural beauty. Now it is known for the brutalities of Indian military forces and is the most militarized region of the world. Indian government uses every possible tactic to suppress the Kashmiri people. The Indian government has been killing the Kashmiri leadership and if a leader is not killed then he is sent to prison. Leaders of Kashmir spend their lives in exile or in jails, even they are not given chance to meet their families.

### **Conclusion**

The historic events in Indian occupied Kashmir since 1990s, especially the brutalities of Indian military forces, are the main reasons to convert local and common Kashmiri youth from simple folks to militants. Events of military oppressions changed one of the beautiful tourist destinations of the world into a battleground. The volatile situation provokes the idea of national consciousness in the society to fight for self-determination and freedom. People of Kashmir prefer to die instead of accepting the government based oppression. Military occupation creates violence in the valley and people choose either to leave the slaughter house or to resist. Indian military forces are sent to Kashmir for the purpose of stopping anti-state activities but what they do in the valley is horrible. They kill innocent Kashmiri people demanding their basic rights. The military enters into the houses of the inhabitants and misbehave with women. They detain local boys and make them victims of their brutal punishments. This dark side of Indian military forces provokes the sense of rebellion in the minds of local Kashmiri people and they join militants. Youth of Kashmir cross Line of Control and move about different parts of Pakistan for military training. The concept of jihad provokes everyone to be a militant and to die for the valley. Thus the Kashmiri resistance against Indian military forces' violence is an example for the maxim: violence breeds violence.



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