



NATURE, WOMEN, NATION AND COLONIAL ECOLOGIES: AN ECOFEMINIST STUDY OF WAHEED'S THE BOOK OF GOLD LEAVES

Anmol Saeed Awan
Anmolsaeed79@gmail.com

Lecturer, Roots International School and College,
Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan.

Dr. Sonia Irum
Sonia.farooq@iiu.edu.pk

Lecturer, Department of English, International Islamic
University Islamabad, Pakistan.

Bakhtawer Batool Syed
Bukhtawarsyed1811@gmail.com

EST, Government Girls High School, Haveli Kahuta,
Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan.

Abstract

Weapons and military intervention in conquered nations constitute additional manifestations of colonialism. Weapons and conflict precipitate the deterioration of numerous aspects, besides human suffering. The latest documented impact of conflict is environmental degradation and the marginalisation of women. Mirza Waheed, a Kashmiri novelist, explores the same theme in his acclaimed works, *The Book of Gold Leaves* and *The Collaborator*. The link between women and nature is also present in *The Book of Gold Leaves*, which this study aims to examine. This analysis is conducted through a detailed textual examination employing the theoretical framework of ecofeminism. The conclusions of the study diverge marginally from conventional ecofeminist assumptions. The analysis revealed that women in colonial or post/neocolonial states lack an inherent affinity for the environment, contrary to the assertions of mainstream ecofeminism regarding their socialisation as caretakers and nurturers. Nonetheless, their connection to nature is shaped by their material and experiential realities, which diverge from those of Western women. The story highlights the connection between women and nature in Indian-occupied Kashmir (IOK) / Indian-held Kashmir (IHK), which is shaped by the region's sociopolitical and wartime realities.

Keywords: *Colonialism, Ecofeminism, Gender and Ecology, Kashmir, Mirza Waheed, War*

Corresponding Author: Anmol Saeed Awan (Lecturer, Roots International School and College, Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan).
Email: Anmolsaeed79@gmail.com

1. Introduction

For decades, weaponry and military actions, including bombing, shelling, and gunfire, have inflicted severe harm on individuals, animals, forests, the natural environment, and all surrounding entities. Numerous locations globally have been militarised, resulting in suffering for indigenous populations who have lost millions of loved ones. Stereotypes and inaccurate depictions culminate in war rhetoric that depicts individuals from rival nations as profoundly menacing, so justifying the annihilation of their populations and environments. This phenomenon is evident in contemporary debates over the Kashmir conflict and the War on Terror. Both discourses possess a substantial corpus of literature, which has significantly enhanced their widespread popularity and global reputation.

The Kashmir issue persists as a fragmented agenda reflecting the discord between India and Pakistan, exemplifying divided territory and shattered identities. Kashmir is an exquisite high-altitude region abundant in natural resources and beauty. Due to its natural resources and strategic position, both Pakistan and India want to acquire and govern the territory. Chatterjee (2010) contends that the governance of Kashmir parallels India's accumulation of power, distribution of authority, and exertion of dominance and influence over the territory. Kashmir is an area abundant in resources. India's governance of Kashmir solidifies a constructed narrative that is both authentic and emblematic of India's success. India governs Kashmir exclusively for its own interests. This form of colonialism includes the 'Othering' of several entities, including women, education, health, and the natural environment. Environmental Othering in Kashmir has persisted for generations through aerial bombardments, armaments, and military incursions. Kashmiri fiction writers, particularly Mirza Waheed, serve as prominent voices for the Kashmiri populace, situating their characters within the context of the protracted Kashmir struggle to examine the trauma and sorrow endured by the Kashmiri people in post-independence India. Nevertheless, few scientists acknowledge this aspect of degeneration; instead, they focus on the significance of human life.

Mirza Waheed is a distinctive author who highlights the effects of armaments and military operations on the natural environment in his writings, *The Book of Gold Leaves* and *The Collaborator*. He is an author originally from Kashmir, currently living in

London. He attentively observed the brutal armament and bombardment in his homeland, Indian-held Kashmir, and subsequently chronicled it in his artistic endeavours. Indian-held Kashmir is a region annexed by India, over which both nuclear powers, India and Pakistan, are in conflict. Both parties engage in intense shelling in the area and along the control lines of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Consequently, thousands of Kashmiris perish annually, accompanied by a widespread atmosphere of dread and alienation. They grow alienated from their customs, education, and sustenance, and are restricted to their residences. Research indicates that India's military has committed several human rights violations and engaged in terrorist activities. Torture, sexual violence, mass executions, and enforced disappearances of Kashmir's civilian populace, especially women, exemplify such atrocities. Bose (2003) observes that between 1989 and 2002, around 4,000 to 80,000 guerrilla militants, Indian security personnel, and civilians were killed during the conflict. During this period, several Muslims and terrorists were slain in occupied Kashmir.

Waheed's first novel, *The Collaborator*, was released in 2011 and is situated in his native Kashmir, a region entangled in a protracted battle between Pakistan and India. In this novel, Waheed portrays the destitute state of Kashmir. Beyond the rhetorical posturing of India and Pakistan, he reveals, with significant empathy and a frustration stemming from compassion, the experience of residing in a nation perceived as an internal adversary by its own leadership and a targeted entity by the adjacent state. Similar apprehensions are evident in his other work, *The Book of Gold Leaves*, which ostensibly narrates a romance between a Shia boy, Faiz, and a Sunni girl, Roohi; yet, the novel fundamentally addresses the themes of conflict—ideological, theological, and political—and the ensuing human suffering. The novel comprises four sections: *Shadows by the River*, *Echoes*, *In Another Country*, and *A Terrible Beauty is Born*. The book's parts delineate the evolution of the Kashmir Issue and associated activities. The characters in the novel are crucial to the narrative, particularly in their responses to the tumultuous environment. The narrative commences with the Mir family of Khanqah, a pivotal city. The Mir family adheres to Shia Islam. Faiz, the progeny of the Mir family, is a papier-mâché artist whose life has been marked by challenges, conflict, politics, familial dynamics, and romance. Roohi and her family are presented as Sunni Muslims, and then, the profound link between Roohi and Faiz is examined. The novel explores suffering and the relationship between nature and women within the theoretical framework of ecofeminism in a colonial context. The novel has garnered favourable responses from readers and has recently been long-listed for the UK's Folio Prize.

The narrative is set in early 1990s Kashmir, a region ravaged by conflict. It offers insights into everyday lives and matters of Kashmiris. It underscores the effects of military intervention and violence on several facets of life, including education, health, the

environment, places of worship, women's hardships, romantic relationships, and more. The narrative depicts the natural splendour of the earthly paradise Kashmir, with the degradation inflicted by violence and weaponry. It illustrates the disappearance of lakes, rivers, and streams, many of which have become uninhabitable, threatening the natural ecosystem and exacerbating the present floods that have devastated infrastructure and uprooted millions. It also examines the conflict between various sects, particularly Shia and Sunni, and elucidates the disparities faced by lovers from differing religions, as well as the impact of military conflict and violence on their suffering. The story illustrates the transformation of schools, especially those for girls, into military encampments, with the conversion of hospitals and cinemas into sites of torture.

Kashmir is revered as a Paradise on Earth due to its lush vegetation, rivers, streams, majestic mountains, scenic valleys, and pristine, cool air. Regrettably, Indian colonialism and armaments have resulted in the degradation of flora and natural beauty in the region of Kashmir known as Indian-held Kashmir (IHK) or Indian-occupied Kashmir (IOK). Azad Kashmir has also suffered due to India's recurrent gunfire and artillery bombardment. It not only diminishes natural beauty but also adversely affects tourism and, consequently, the economy. Ongoing shelling and gunfire produce fear and estrangement not just among residents but also among visitors and tourists, who grow reluctant to enter the valley. The conditions in Indian-held Kashmir are exceedingly dire and unpleasant. India's ongoing occupation and colonialism in the region have led to mass deaths, genocide, torture, the closure of educational institutions, and environmental destruction. Kashmiris have endured trauma and torture for generations and continue to resist Indian colonial control. The novel portrays analogous circumstances in 1990s Kashmir, a period marked by escalating turmoil.

In *The Book of Gold Leaves*, all entities, whether living or inanimate, endure suffering, particularly women and the natural world. Girls' schools have been shuttered and converted into military installations. They are either prohibited from leaving their families to seek an education or, if permitted, are forsaken by the Indian army. Indian soldiers perpetrate sexual assault and homicide against females. Their education cannot equip them for employment amidst military intervention and curfews, while an environment of fear and oppression prevails outside, rendering home the sole sanctuary. For instance, the protagonist, Roohi, seems to have derived minimal advantage from her education. She is well educated, although she has spent many years merely awaiting Faiz. The text clearly emphasises discussions regarding Faiz, his artistic endeavours, and his challenges. Nonetheless, there exists a limited discourse concerning Roohi, who possesses a higher level of education than Faiz. Focus is directed towards Faiz as he descends into madness, while Roohi's parallel experience is mostly disregarded. We cannot observe her

plight at these perilous times. The narrative does not disclose her aspirations beyond desiring Faiz's affection and awaiting him. What is the purpose of her advanced education? This is the juncture at which women, like nature and the environment, may be regarded as oppressed and marginalised. Curfews, military intervention, bombardment, and violence exert a colonising and detrimental impact on both the environment and women. Hence, the narrative illustrates a relationship between women and the natural world.

2.Literature Review

Francoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "ecofeminism" in her 1947 publication, *Feminism or Death*. She asserted that women possess the potential to instigate an ecological revolution. This concept posits that the exploitation of the environment and the subjugation of women should be regarded as interconnected, as both women and nature are casualties of societal patriarchal standards. In *New Woman/New Earth* (1975), Ruether asserts that women must recognise the absence of autonomy and the lack of solutions to societal environmental issues, with domination as the fundamental structure of relationships. Consequently, the demands of the women's movement ought to be integrated with those of ecological movements to conceptualise a significant transformation of the fundamental socioeconomic relations and underlying values of contemporary society.

Ecofeminism integrates the environmentalists' focus on ecological restoration with the feminists' advocacy for gender equality, necessitating their concurrent examination. Ecofeminists seek to challenge an androcentric perspective on existence. Their focus is on nature's supremacy and the significance of women in the genesis of life. Ecofeminism, like traditional feminism and Marxism, uses a poststructuralist framework to analyse power relations and historical contexts. A core premise of ecofeminism posits that women's affinity for nature as carers and compassionate beings arises either from their inherent qualities, as articulated by cultural ecofeminists like Judith Plant and Starhawk (1989), or from their socialisation as nurturers, as claimed by constructivist ecofeminists such as Carolyn Merchant (1992) and Ariel Salleh (1997). Karen and Warren (1997) also emerged as ecofeminists, viewing the environment as a feminist issue.

Notwithstanding the endeavours of prominent ecofeminists, ecofeminism is subject to criticism. Agarwal (1992) critiques the concept of women as a unified category. It faces significant criticism in postcolonial nations, where the actual experiences of women and men are disregarded, and where gender, race, religion, class, politics, and geography all affect this relationship (Jabeen 2020). Jabeen designates this intervention as 'Postcolonial Ecofeminism'. This involvement in mainstream ecofeminism seems rational

to colonial states, such as Indian-held Kashmir, where *The Book of Gold Leaves* is situated. The interaction between women and the environment in the narrative is examined as political and militarised, rather than inherent or socialised. Women are disheartened by the Indian army's ongoing abuse of Kashmir's natural ecosystem through bombardments and curfews. They empathise with women when their educational institutions are closed, preventing them from going outdoors. Some assert that ecofeminism is a Western construct that fails to acknowledge the material realities faced by women in third-world feminism. The sociopolitical, theological, and economic circumstances of these women markedly contrast with those of their Western counterparts.

Rahman (2011a), Yaqoob (2015), and Irum (2025), all Pakistani Anglophone authors, have done studies on environmental consciousness. Rahman (2011b) further examined the Pakistani film *Khamosh Pani* through an ecofeminist lens. Recently, numerous South Asian scholars and critics have initiated an analysis of the impact of mainstream ecofeminism on Anglophone Pakistani literature; for example, Jabeen (2018) argues that the relationship between women and the environment in a post/neocolonial context in Pakistan is influenced by practical realities rather than women's intrinsic capabilities or socialisation as carers and nurturers. Similarly, Irum (2025) states: "For ecofeminists, nature and women are planted and cared for; they also must be guarded to be eaten and relished; ultimately, they are used and possessed" (65).

The analysis of the novel under study reveals that multiple studies have been undertaken from various viewpoints, including love, trauma, post-partition conflict, and ecological readings. Butt (2016) posits that love serves as a unifying force and a beacon of hope in the context of violence and armament. Notwithstanding the animosity and brutality of war, a unifying force—namely, the love between Roohi and Faiz—maintains the coherence of the plot and serves as its focal point. Their love story is the compelling force that sustains the narrative of the book. The sorrow, hope, and love enveloping the key individuals are universally experienced by every Kashmiri ensnared in this tragic conflict. References to Dal Lake and River Jhelum highlight the enormous environmental destruction resulting from the imposition.

The river made the city, and the city has tried to unmake it over the centuries. While it brings the heavenly waters of the emerald Veering spring from the hem of the Pir Panjal Mountains, the city thwarts its dreams, pouring refuse, bad wishes and dark stories into it. Waheed writes: "Of late, it has also started carrying the dead many tales of cruelty drowning in its onward rush, and with them, the dark deeds of the oppressor, too" (23).

Muhammad (2014) underscores his investigation into the environment, featuring an ecocritical analysis of *The Book of Gold Leaves* and a concise examination of

ecofeminism. He examines the ecological crisis and finds that violence and militarisation in Kashmir adversely affect both the environment and the populace. Every natural element, including lakes, rivers, streams, flora, avifauna, and fauna, endures the consequences of such aggression and militarisation. He also asserts that the terrestrial paradise of Kashmir is in a precarious ecological condition, imperiled by species extinction and infertility, with the degradation of natural beauty and biodiversity. He emphasises the importance of preserving the ecological integrity of the terrestrial paradise for future generations. He provides a succinct analysis of the novel's connection between women and nature. Nevertheless, no substantial research has been conducted on this disputed facet of ecofeminism in *The Book of Gold Leaves*.

3.Methodology

This study employs a qualitative literary analysis method based on ecofeminism and postcolonial philosophy. It involves a close reading of Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves*, paying special attention to how women, nature, and the environment are shown in the text during the time of colonial rule in Indian-held Kashmir. It identifies important themes in the book that pertain to the harm caused by colonialism to the environment and the unequal treatment of women compared to men. These themes include the portrayal of nature, the emergence of militarized landscapes, and the presentation of the lives of female characters. Then, we use ecofeminist theory to determine how women and the environment are both seen as things that colonial and patriarchal powers may control. Vandana Shiva and Val Plumwood (2002) are two of the authors who helped shape the theory. We place the work in the larger perspective of postcolonial studies, focusing on how Kashmir is portrayed as a colonized and militarized region. The study draws on the work of scholars such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak to examine how colonial power structures influenced both gender and environmental oppression. The data includes details from the main text and scholarly critiques on Kashmir, ecofeminism, and conflict literature, which are sourced from other studies. The focus remains on interpretation rather than facts to illustrate how colonial brutality simultaneously affects ecosystems and women in the story. This research combines ecofeminist and postcolonial literary analysis to illuminate how *The Book of Gold Leaves* portrays environmental and gendered trauma in the context of ongoing military occupation and colonial rule.

4.Analysis

The Book of Gold Leaves illustrates the connection between women and nature as Roohi mourns the pollution and desecration inflicted upon the lake by state weaponry and militarisation. She considers it: "a gift preyed upon by all, violated over the years by ruler

and ruled alike. Still, it is tranquil, like an aging seer, trying every spring to purify itself of the poison that men have hidden in its green folds” (140). She also feels distressed about the situation in the city:

On some days, I can smell fresh blood in the air, sometimes even in my food, especially at sunset. The sky across the river turns scarlet and I can smell it, trust me, and then I feel terrified and think of you, and everyone else, my father and brother and my poor sad mother, and Farhat—oh, she’s such an angel, isn’t she? (221)

She further says: “I have seen her cry at the mere whisper of tension in the city. I have seen her panic and turn pale at the sound of gunfire these days. I have heard her pace for hours in her room at night” (255). Roohi explains the condition to Faiz:

People are dying again. People are being killed like flies. I mean these are actual people killed on street every day ... it seems the angle of death is taking away our people ... The city is a lightless prison now. No one can stir without the permission of a soldier. I sometimes imagine we are in a vast coop with thousands of them ... the soldiers kill every day. (210-211)

In this instance, it is evident that Roohi does not experience sorrow regarding the lake’s pollution due to her inherent affinity for the environment or her upbringing as a caretaker, as posited by conventional Western ecofeminist discourse. She contends that the city’s incessant violence and suffering are annihilating both the environment and humanity.

Mainstream ecofeminists assert that women and the environment are perceived similarly due to their reproductive capacity, leading to a natural affinity between women and the natural world. In the novel, Roohi is not inherently attracted to nature and land; rather, the circumstances of Kashmir compel her to be so. Due to the pervasive violence, rape, and torture, she seeks solace and companionship in nature. For instance, Roohi and Faiz meet secretly “either under the decaying wood inlay ceiling of the balcony by the river, or in that dark basement” (56). Objectification of women and oppression of nature by associating women with natural objects is also a common practice in the oppressed/colonized societies, and women are often likened to natural entities (Warren 1996; 2000). In the narrative, the same happens when Farhat tells her father that a soldier calls her a Kashmiri Apple, “He is like a giant, he is so tall, his name is Rathi. Calls me Kashmiri Apple, ...” (Waheed 75).

Farhat, Faiz’s sister, is also affected by violence and colonialism. Her school has been transformed into a military camp, with smashed windows and other changes. Waheed writes:

They remind Farhat of floods. They remind her of piles of rice sacks at the ration depot on the bank of the river she used to visit with her eldest brother when she was a child. They also remind her of where she is, of what is happening in her city, of what is being done to her city. Until now, Farhat has veered between two states of mind. (61)

It demonstrates her concern for the environment and the city. It is also owing to the city's weapons and militarisation. She is distraught about her city's current circumstances because they are unable to leave or even attend school. She is particularly concerned about the situation's impact on their education.

There is another scene in the text where Roohi imagines her future in the natural world. It's also because she's concerned about her and Faiz's future in the city, given the curfews and violence. Waheed writes:

Roohi, on the other hand, has not only been on the lake—it is the river she hasn't sailed on—but also visited almost all of the tourist spots, the ones bordering the city and the pieces of paradise in the mountains, too. She has composed many a sad poem looking at the city from the ramparts of the bookish Mughal prince Dara Shikoh's library, the Abode of the Fairies, Pari Mahal, in the belly of the mountain. She has imagined lying under the ageless chinars in the Nishat Garden, always stopping short of etching 'Roohi +' into the supple bark of the maples, and sighed at numerous sunsets by the Shalimar.

Roohi has entrusted many a prayer to the dream-green Sar at Harwan, the reservoir
blinking only to talk to the pines at its edge. (155)

Roohi is particularly drawn to the River Jehlum and wishes to swim in it peacefully while also taking in the metropolis below. But her father interrupts her, saying that it is not for girls and that only strong boys can do it. He offers that she tries something else, such as knitting with her skilled aunt Naseem, or join the school handball team. She is upset by this rejection, but accepts her father's advice with a heavy heart, condemning the Indian army for torture, maintaining unfavourable conditions in the city, particularly for girls, and robbing her of her basic delight. It has become so internalised that even her mother bans her since she has lived under such conditions with awful wolves outside in the form of men. She asks:

'Why do you want to bring shame to us?'—. 'You are my daughter. I didn't even play hopscotch with the boys when I was your age. Understand this, my dear, swimming in the river with all kinds of men around brings shame.' (240)

Roohi feels so oppressed at this denial that she starts scolding all the men and thinks to herself that she will do it solo someday: "when the world of men has gone to sleep, when all the fathers, uncles and brothers, those mean custodians of that order, are snoring

in their smug beds” (240). Roohi is also disgusted to learn that the issue of her marriage will be discussed by the elders of both communities rather than by her parents alone. She asks: “‘How low do I have to lie? Do I have to become completely invisible just because I’m a woman in love?’” (278). It also depicts the situation of women in Kashmir, where women are persecuted not only by colonial powers but also by their own males. This is why women in a colonial state are referred to as “doubly colonized”. As a result of their material circumstances, third-world women’s relationships with nature differ significantly from those of Western women. Another example of such repression can be seen in the novel, as Farhat answers, when her father asks where Faiz goes in the evening: “He goes to the shrine, Abba. He said he likes to sit by the river. I like it too, but I can’t go” (75). Her father also says: “‘No, you can’t. These are not good times, with policemen and soldiers everywhere. They had even come to the printing press ...’” (75). It demonstrates how women are suppressed on two levels and how much they desire to visit natural locations, not because of their innate ability, but because they are unable to do so freely and autonomously. As a result, such places become objects of interest and delusion for them. It demonstrates that the sociopolitical situations of colonised women are very different from those of Western women, who can go outside and enjoy nature without having to deal with cultural or structural barriers. For women living in colonial or militarised areas, on the other hand, nature becomes an impossible ideal—a place of imagined freedom that is always out of reach because of social, political, and cultural limitations. Because of this, their relationship with nature is shaped more by longing and loss than by actual enjoyment or agency.

The Book of Gold Leaves clearly shows the subjugation of Kashmiri women, who are seen as ‘Subalterns’. Spivak (1988) refers to all inferior, muffled, and downtrodden beings as subalterns, and women in Kashmir can also be described as ‘subaltern’ since they are repressed. The oppression and enslavement can be seen in the novel’s subsequent passages, which depict different human rights violations in the occupied valley, such as the occupation of girls’ schools by forces, heinous violence, and enforced disappearances. The Miss Koul School has been occupied by the forces because it is involved in campaigns that highlight the deprivation of girls’ education, as their parents refuse to allow their daughters to attend school owing to the presence of forces at the school. All of this occurred in the Kashmir valley throughout the 1990s. In the novel, *The Zaal*, “with its hound shaped nose” is a portrayal of the violence and horror. Elder brother of Faiz forces him to leave, with the fear that Zaal will also take Faiz like others since it grasps people and makes them fall in the terrible lands as: “no one walks on the road anymore, lest the Zaal may appear again and swoop them away” (213). Readers can recall enforced disappearances that were held in Kashmir in fairly enigmatic ways:

There was a raid on the street. They took away people ... It was strange. I don't know what it was. I can't describe it ... There was some new kind of military truck, very big, very fast ... They have sent some new kind of truck that drives very fast and grabs people. It is like a net that arrests people on the street. No, not arrests, it captures them.

Sort of swallows them. It is a Zaal. (101)

Women in colonised Kashmir are so marginalised that they are fascinated by their independence and natural refuge because, as Suleri (1992) points out, these women from colonised or postcolonial countries are marginalised within marginalised. They are marginalised not only because of their gender, but also because of their location and political situation. As a result of the city's constant violence and agony, people romanticise nature as a buddy and safe sanctuary. They do not feel comfortable in their homes, shrines, or other physical locations. So, they fantasise what they are unable to do because of the city's militarised and colonised state. For example, when Roohi says: "The weather is so, so beautiful now. The kind of weather that must bring down angels to the gardens. Pari Mahal must be full of laughter and music, I think" (199). Shanta ma'am, the principal of girls' schools, is likewise outraged by the transformation of girls' schools into military camps, telling Summit:

'There is nothing for me here now. I couldn't even see all the classrooms. There are men everywhere. Someone was changing in the little girls' washroom. He saw me from the window as I approached. He took off his vest as he looked out. I turned back. It's my fault, I shouldn't have come. Sometimes I forget the school is not here anymore.

Can you understand that?'. (275)

Ecofeminist research also suggests a distinction between nature and culture. Women are often connected to nature and emotions, whereas men are often associated with civilization, dominance, and reasoning. In the narrative, Summit responds: "'Shanta Ma'am, you see, this is the difference between you and me. I am not sentimental about my work'" (275). It can be seen how women are associated with emotions and sentiments by men. Similarly, the threatening stares of the soldiers inflict misery and oppression on the women of occupied Kashmir. They are compelled to refrain from venturing outdoors to evade the sordid scrutiny of soldiers. For instance, when Roohi conveys to Faiz the remarks made by soldiers against her or any other woman on the street, she states: "'Terrible, terrible, unspeakable things. So vile, I want the earth to open up and swallow them'" (281).

5. Conclusion

All these instances in the novel, as examined through an ecofeminist lens, indicate that in a colonised state, Indian-held Kashmir, nature and women are treated and demoralised equally through armament and militarisation. Although women and nature are treated similarly as objects of suppression and oppression, the premise that women are drawn to nature because of their intrinsic ability or socialisation as nurturers does not appear to function in colonial or post/neocolonial governments. The lived realities of third-world women differ from those of women in the West. As a result, it is possible to conclude that women's living conditions in South Asia are deplorable. They have numerous constraints in all aspects of their lives. Militarism and violence have an impact on their education, personal lives, festivals, and wedding ceremonies, among other things. Under curfew and militarised conditions, women in Kashmir would undoubtedly seek refuge in nature and imagination, rather than via socialisation or intrinsic ability. Suleri also addresses this issue in her essay "Feminism and Post-colonial Conditions", arguing that we must be conscious of blind spots in our positionality as postcolonial feminist subjects. So, she proposes that "I am more than the Western academia defines me" (761). And, in the instance of women in Indian-held Kashmir, the world must recognise their position as colonial feminist subjects. The global community, particularly the two nuclear states, India and Pakistan, must address the Kashmir issue. Both powers must refrain from exploiting nature, women, and all of Kashmir for gain. Rather than employing guns and military force, they should address the issue through dialogue. Otherwise, the circumstances would deteriorate more for subsequent generations. The military intervention in Kashmir has a significant impact on both humanity and the environment, encompassing fauna, avifauna, rivers, landscapes, lakes, and streams. Women have emerged as the principal targets of these acts of militarisation and violence. Nonetheless, as previously articulated, mainstream ecofeminism is a Western construct that advantages women in certain contexts, although diverges significantly for women in colonial or postcolonial nations due to regional, religious, economic, and sociopolitical influences. The same applies to the women of Indian-held Kashmir, who are disheartened by the plunder of natural resources, as these are their sole means of refuge and sustenance. Kashmiri women are concerned about their education and future owing to environmental deterioration exacerbated by conflict and militarisation. Prolonged conflict and military presence in schools transform them into barracks, so depriving girls and young women of secure environments for education. Curfews and security lockdowns significantly impede movement, rendering attendance at school hazardous or unfeasible. Moreover, environmental degradation resulting from shelling, deforestation, or landmines adversely affects roads, infrastructure, and agricultural livelihoods, exacerbating poverty and compelling families to deprioritize girls' education. Collectively, these elements foster an atmosphere of dread and uncertainty, rendering Kashmiri women apprehensive over their educational prospects and

broader futures. Consequently, it is essential to amplify the voices of women and the situation in Indian-held Kashmir to alleviate their dual marginalisation while concurrently fostering regional peace and development.

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