

# Socio- Political Issues and Resistance in Mirza Waheed's "The Book of Gold leaves"

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## **Abstract**

*The war continually turns standard morality and nearly everybody and every one social establishment the wrong way up. During this case, the Jammu and Kashmir conflict is not any exception; everybody living during this conflict zone has intimate the harshness of destroyed from their own eyes. Kashmir is a land with many military forces, suffering terribly and its people suffering terribly as a result of military action. Mirza Waheed who is one of the traditional writers of modern times talking about Kashmir is captures the tragic lives of traumatized people who are forced to live difficult lives. He gives a voice to the indescribable wonders that are part of the Kashmir war. Waheed writes about the passionate love of Kashmir and its people and gives a glimpse of many people of their fragile, amazing lives tragically wounded in this way by the conundrum. A book of gold leaves It is associated with the violence and violence that is rampant in Kashmir and illustrates the pain and suffering of the oppressed Kashmir is who have suffered since the beginning of the uprising, uprisings, and so on. We have a love story in the middle of the narrative. Set in the heart of the city of Srinagar, the novel focuses on how a better and more peaceful way of life ends for Faiz and Roohi, two lovers who dream of a happy life. The events and events around them represent modern-day Kashmir. This paper looks at various events and episodes in the novel, focusing on Waheed's attempt to give a voice to the oppressed and the oppressed and to create a counter-argument to expose Kashmir's elaborate stories.*

**Keywords:** -Kashmir Conflict War, Love, Violence, Post-Colonial

## **I. Introduction**

"The Book of Gold leaves" written in 2014 received a good response from the readers and were recently long-listed for UK's Folio prize. It is the second novel by the author set in the early '90s of Kashmir; the book revolves around a love story between Roohi, a young Sunni (a sect of Islamic faith) woman and Faiz a Shia (another sect of Islamic faith) peppier Mache artist in Srinagar.

Najeeb Mubarki rightly says that "The Book of Gold Leaves" largely deals with Kashmir human experience during the darkest periods in the 90's when violence was so peaked, was so nakedly savage. Mirza Waheed takes the responsibility to protest the flagrant oppression in his homeland Kashmir. His protest is strong, vehement and effective. His novel puts on display very intense stark realities of everyday life. He keeps

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up the strands of tenderness stemming from the land of Kashmir and fury, boiling out from the intruders, in his input down able novels in this book of *Gold Leaves* and *The Collaborator*.

The contemporary Kashmir writers traumatized by the horrors of war and bloodshed have slowly emerged to capture the suffering, internal displacement agony of the works of art. They no longer sing songs of love, romance, nature and beauty but are compelled by circumstances only after memorial dirges to commemorate the dead. It is in these turbulent times, art shoulders the burden to mirror the actual agony of the people. The artistic response to any calamity is always with the sole aim to discover the untold truth to propagate common brotherhood among different section of the society.

Mirza Waheed, a Kashmiri born British novelist take the Kashmir conflict as the background to portray the trauma and sufferings to the common people. Mirza Waheed is a novelist who is born and raised in Kashmir but now lives in London. Mirza has written for the BBC, The Guardian, Granta, Guernica (magazine), Al Jazeera English and The New York Times. Mirza Waheed is a journalist, author and novelist.

His first novel "*The Collaborator*", was published in 2011 was a finalist for the Guardian first book award. It takes place in his homeland of Kashmir, torn in between the conflict of India and Pakistan. Novelist Kamila Shamsie reviewed it for The Guardian and called it "gripping in it... narrative drama" Waheed gives us portray of Kashmir itself.

Waheed's second book "*The Book of Gold Leaves*" was published in 2014. A love story between a Sunni and a Shia in troubled 1990's Kashmir. It was reviewed by Alice Albania in Financial Times. "A haunting illustration of how, at the end of the last century, normal life became impossible for many of those who call Kashmir home. His third novel, "*tell her everything*", was released in January 2019. It is a story of a father who is preparing to reveal to reveal his unsavoury past to the new-grown daughter that he sent away to boarding as a small child.

Mirza Waheed won several awards to make his homeland proud, 2011 "Book of the year" for "*The Collaborator*" in The Telegraph New Statesman, business standard and telegraph India.

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- : - 2011 Guardian First Book Award Finalist for "*The Collaborator*".
- : - 2011 Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize finalist for "*The Collaborator*".
- : - 2012 Desmond Elliott Prize longlist for "*The Collaborator*".
- : - 2016 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature shortlisted for "*The Book of Gold Leaves*".
- : - 2019 The Hindu Literary Prize for "*Tell Her Everything*".

Mirza Waheed's novel, "*The Book of Gold Leaves*" is an intimate tale of love and romance in the turbulent times of the Kashmir insurgency. The novelist takes the fundamental emotion of love to deal with much larger aspects of human enterprise in the fast-changing postcolonial world. The core of the novel rests on the issue of conflict-ideological, religious, political and subsequent human suffering.

“Roohi is prostrate before god. Crewing of the aged velvet to the prayer not with her forehead, eyes and finally her lips, she begs Khoda Saab to make her one wish come true, for the boy of her dreams come and take her away. Roohi wants a love story. (Waheed 8)

While taking these historical facts in the broader perspective, post-colonial theory embraces various aims such as to re-examine the history of colonialism, to determine the economic, political and cultural impact of colonialism on both the colonized people and the power.

Apart from analyzing this, it advocates for equal access to material resources and the contestation of forms of domination, extending over dominions of gender, race, ethnicity and class by participating in the goals of political liberation. The partition fiction of the sub-continent takes these historical events as a starting point to deal with the larger issues associated with the physical as well as psychological divisions. It traces the roots of the conflict, the forces behind it, the form and nature of separation and more importantly social and psychological ramification of this division from a different perspective.

The setting of the novel is the downtown area of Srinagar, a densely populated place with multi-faith residents. The novel begins with the description of Papier Mache artist Faiz and his secret romance with Sunni girl Roohi. As the story unfolds, we find the rise of the Kashmir insurgency and the larger Para development Indian Paramilitary to control the crisis. The narrative can be viewed from three perspective – militant uprising, Hindu – Muslim secret executions and the armies counteract. These three standards are interwoven underneath the main plot, throughout the story. The horrors of conflict are equally experienced by all these groups of all people requesting different political ideologies each fighting with one another to maintain their respective status go. All these groups are by one or other way to undertake such a disastrous human enterprise that added only misery to the common people within the state across the borders. The suffering and hardship that common people faced are beyond recognition.

Their lives, educational and civil rights have been crushed to the ground. The continued war, neither won nor lost, by either of the group profited none denying the loss. Three decades, but yielding the fruits of deceit, hatred and neutral disrespect between different ethnic group political ideologies, each fighting with one other to maintain their respective status go. All these groups are by one or other way forced to undertake such a disastrous human enterprise that added only misery to the common people within the state and across the borders. The sufferings and hardship that common people faced are beyond recognition.

Mirza Waheed has written two novels now, and though both are set in Kashmir in a rural, ‘on the edge of the borders’ area in the first one, ‘*The Collaborator*’, and squarely in predominantly almost new part of Srinagar (which, as happenstance would have it, is the general area of birth and childhood of this reviewer) in the second, new one, ‘*The Book of Gold Leaves*’ – and though both books largely deal with Kashmir human experiences during the darkest periods of the 90s, when violence so peaked, was so nakedly savage as to make the shattered Kashmir beings in both of these books utterly possible, and so while both books thus occupy, for Kashmir’s that space where fiction is lived as reality, they are still quite different books

Waheed realistically portrays the gloomy picture of the 1990’s when the Indian Army occupies the school building, leaving Mir Farah, Faiz’s younger sister and other girls first crumble in a single classroom

surrounded by men in arms and later abandon the very idea of education when army transformed the building into a military camp. Farah's mother in her heartfelt pleas urges god for the earliest return of the Army to their homeland and the restoration of normal life in Kashmir. She is fed up with the daily siege of the people. He is divided into two entities, but he has to follow the instruction of the superiors arriving from Delhi and local. The Convention between Shahida and Faiz sums up the plight of soldiers, tasked to wage a war against their people.

Slowly, Major Sumit Kumar extended his military Empire in the city and his grid will cover twenty-Six bunkers and the thought of six similar grids covering the entire city makes him somewhat uneasy but he forced to take such a disastrous adventure. The outcome of which is destruction and the loss of vital human lives. The Extremely large development of military and paramilitary force has made this beautiful prison. Mirza Waheed through the mouth of Roohi fictionalizes the historical mass killings and reconstructs the history as:

“The Soldiers ensure there is a blood-soaked headline in the paper every day. Two weeks ago, they killed seventeen boys across Zaina ‘Kadal Bridge, shot them all dead after trapping them in a lane .... The Soldiers were so blinkered with a range that they wouldn't stop firing even after the boys were all dead, mown down next to filthy drains. They Continued shooting until no one was left standing.... Zaitun's little brother uzair was shot in the face... Zaitun's slept for three nights by his grave in the Martyr's graveyard ... it is so mad here” (Waheed- 211-212)

Another underneath strand of the story shows the internal displacement of minority pundits community from the valley to the other parts of the country. The *Book of Gold Leaves* is both a gripping history as well as a passionate tale of the human predicament from a place marked by a prolonged violent conflict. It is a novel which unearths love, Relationship, Suppressed dreams and desire being lost to violence and war. Through its reimagining of the 1990's Kashmir, the novel provides both direct and indirect amount of the oppression and violence, the immeasurable pain of dislocation and the agony and human loss arising out of a situation in which society is a fragment and home and homeland are lost time who mostly wished to see the synergetic culture remain intact. It is a fact that national identity is always constructed by the majority, dominant class, while the minorities remain on the finger of the nation are outsiders even when they are inside. ‘India’ has invariably been an upper-caste Hindu India that did not include the Experience of the Dalits, Muslims and other minorities in its grand narratives.

The same is the case of pundits that constituted a minority community in Kashmir. They became easy targets of both groups fighting with each other, as well as government apathy, forced them to leave their homeland. The following conversation between Mir Zafar and Master Dinanath shows the common brotherhood of the people which existed before the conflict as well as the unjust treatment faced by this community. Dinanath before handing over the keys of his home to Zafar has this to say:

“People are being killed like flies. I mean, these are actual people killed on the streets every day.... They read out the toll on the evening news as if they were talking about the amount of rainfall during the day” (Waheed-210).

Mirza Waheed is at his best when he delineates the historical and political facts especially considering the place it is written about. The Novelist is a Kashmiri and this adds value to the variation of local truth and makes his character and stories shine. The plot of “*The Book of Gold Leaves*” is clear and the language is

simple. Apart from tracing the resistance movement of Kashmir part of the brilliance lies in crafting the love story of Faiz and Roohi which is flagrantly romantic. The Book of Gold Leaves has been received very warmly by the critic. The Guardian wrote that the Kashmir conflict has finally found its storyteller in these tense novel of love and war.

## II. Conclusion

A Mirza Waheed present a photographic war town of Kashmir Valley. He impersonates the Indian maniac fertilization into a physically apprehended phenomenon. The materialisation of their mania necessarily ends up deprivation of the people. In the novel, each move to occupy the land of Kashmir takes away the freedom of its people. The occupation of land and ultimately the deprivation of freedom kick off with the taking over the girl's school. The first move to materialize their maniac yearling robs girls of their rights to education. The army bunkers sprout to curtail the activity of people during the day and no cultural vigils are kept up to rule the roost at the night. Downtown to Srinagar is raided and prowled by a monstrous and snouted truck, the either impair or capture its human prey. As control of the land expands with overwhelming security at all sin grids deployed by Major Sumit Kumar, activities of the people are truncated drastically to a short sphere.

“There are a thousand quiet heartbreaks, amid the loud ones that we hear about. She sometimes thinks. Some carry on quietly, over a lifetime.”(Waheed 109)

In “*The Book of Gold Leaves*” a culpable apathy towards people turns glaringly callous when occupies massacre children and an old woman Fatima indiscriminately with no qualms. Indian fascination does not stop at the possession of the land: the army renders the land essentially forbidden to the unliveable for the people of Kashmir. In the novel, Mirza Waheed canvasses the reverberation of Indian desire for Kashmiri land. The serene and science natural landscape appear to be entering pated while married by incessant violence. The Book of Gold Leaves sketches out never Jhelum awash of corpses. The beautiful forbidden resorts of Mahal and Mughal Garden are militarized and are barred to native Kashmiri visitors. The pristine scenery of the valley gradually transforms into a valley of decay. A culture of peaceful coexistence is quashed as the Hindu community exits the valley in fear of radicalized militants. Last but not the least; artistic developments fizzle out as artists are driven to join militant groups. In the novel, Faiz a professional artist of papier-mâché becomes a trained militant, a Kalashnikov always on his shoulder, to free his forbidden country from the occupiers. To recapitulate, the novel holds out the centrality of the Kashmir narrative and scuppers Indian maniac fetishization of the forbidden Kashmiri land.

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