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Representation of Psycho-social crises of Kashmiris in Rather's *The Night of Broken Glass*

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ABSTRACT

This study offers a detailed examination of the psycho-social condition of the Kashmiri people as portrayed in the works of Feroz Rather. The narrative addresses the brutalities inflicted by Indian armed forces, which extend beyond physical violence to include deep psychological trauma and the erosion of communal bonds. Drawing on Fanon's theory of psychological violence, the narrator reveals the hidden emotional wounds of Kashmiris and shows how these injuries have fostered fear, deprivation, and despair within the population. Through vivid imagery and grounded realism, the text contrasts a Kashmir enduring severe repression yet continuing its struggle for freedom with the internal divisions shaped by socio-political realities. The analysis also draws attention to Rather's striking ability to juxtapose the ongoing horrors of the conflict with the region's natural beauty. Overall, the paper offers a fresh perspective on the human and social crisis in Kashmir, contributing significantly to scholarship on resistance, oppression, and identity politics.

Keywords: Psycho-Social Crisis, violence, Oppression, Resistance, India as Colonial power, Frantz Fanon.

Introduction

India's efforts to integrate Kashmir into its union failed due to the lack of cooperation from Kashmiri leaders and political groups. The people of Kashmir, citing UN Resolutions of 1948–49, have long demanded the right to determine their own future, a demand India has consistently

rejected, often responding with force. This has fueled an ongoing conflict between Indian forces and Kashmiris, marked by protests, crackdowns, and human rights violations. Heavy militarization has turned the valley into a site of suffering, while repeated bilateral and multilateral talks between India and Pakistan have produced no resolution. Pakistan continues to support Kashmiri self-determination, and resistance within the region persists despite India's attempts to suppress it.

Feroz Rather's debut, *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018), presents thirteen interconnected stories set mainly in southern, Indian-administered Kashmir. Through stark imagery and haunting narratives, the book portrays a landscape marked by violence, human rights abuses, and the enduring trauma of conflict, giving voice to both the living and the dead. Diplomatic historian Alistair Lamb alleged that Viceroy Mountbatten covertly facilitated India's control of Kashmir by ensuring Gurdaspur, a Muslim-majority district that provided the only land route to Kashmir, went to India instead of Pakistan. He argues this maneuver allowed Maharaja Hari Singh—expected to choose India—to secure accession. Indian leaders, believing Pakistan's survival uncertain and valuing Kashmir's strategic location, considered it vital to keep the region, also fearing foreign powers like the Soviet Union or China could exploit its position.

Under the partition plan, Muslim-majority regions were expected to join Pakistan, giving it a strong claim over Kashmir. In Junagadh—a reverse case where a Muslim ruler governed a Hindu-majority state—India intervened militarily, held a plebiscite, and rejected the ruler's decision to join Pakistan. Yet, in Kashmir, despite a Muslim majority and the people's preference for Pakistan, India supported Maharaja Hari Singh's accession to India and never held the promised plebiscite. During the 1947 Poonch rebellion against Hari Singh, Pakistan chose to give limited support to the rebels rather than aid the Maharaja, fearing India's intervention. Relations worsened after Pakistan imposed economic sanctions to pressure him into joining Pakistan. Hari Singh instead sought help from the Sikh ruler of Patiala, who, with Indian backing, sent troops and arms. Evidence suggests Indian forces entered Kashmir before the formal accession on October 27, 1947, raising doubts over India's claim that its military presence was entirely legal.

Kashmir remains a nuclear flash point between India and Pakistan, with India denying Kashmiris their right to self-determination and committing widespread human rights violations. Decades of conflict have caused immense physical and psychological suffering, as India continues to rely on military force rather than dialogue. Successive Indian governments argue that Kashmir's independence could trigger secessionist movements in other states, leading to heavy militarization of the region.

Feroz Rather's *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018) vividly depicts life under Indian occupation, portraying brutality, repression, and the deep scars left on Kashmiris. Through interconnected stories, he captures the violence, fear, and trauma that define daily existence in the valley. Feroz Rather's debut, *The Night of Broken Glass*, set in Kashmir during intense unrest, blends vivid imagery of Srinagar and Bijbehara with harrowing depictions of violence. The novel portrays daily oppression under Indian forces, where incidents like the killing of Ashfaq near an army cantonment reflect the constant fear and psychological trauma endured by Kashmiris. Such deaths have become routine, drawing little global attention, as life and death blur into one struggle for survival.

The 2016 killing of Burhan Wani sparked mass protests, led largely by youth, against Indian rule. Security forces responded with lethal force, killing dozens, injuring thousands, and blinding many

with pellet guns—an act likened to colonial brutality. The militarization that intensified in 1989 continues, with young Kashmiris at the forefront of resistance. While authors like Mirza Waheed and Basharat Peer document this reality, Bollywood often depicts Kashmir as peaceful. Rather's work captures the clash between colonial power and Kashmiri resistance, revealing how military occupation has stripped the valley of both its beauty and its people's UN-recognized right to self-determination, pushing many youths toward armed defiance.

Literature Review

This chapter presents an overview of existing research related to the selected work. The discussion is organized into three sections, moving from a broad to a specific focus. The first section defines key terms and reviews literature on the Kashmir conflict; the second examines studies on violence in Kashmir; and the third addresses the limited scholarly work and reviews available on Feroz Rather's *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018).

Frantz Fanon (1963) argues that colonial systems are sustained through oppression and violence, with colonizers relying on violence as their primary means of control. He maintains that the colonized can only restructure their societies through counter-violence. Fanon's perspective is shaped by his own life: born in the Antilles under colonial rule, he later studied medicine and psychiatry in France, worked as a psychiatrist in Algeria, and eventually joined the Algerian liberation struggle. Drawing from this experience, Fanon explores both the benefits and costs of revolutionary violence.

In recent years, resistance literature has gained prominence globally, including in regions outside its traditional focus. Rather's work, *The Night of Broken Glass*, can be placed within this genre, offering a vivid and authentic portrayal of resistance shaped by his lived experience in Kashmir. His storytelling captures the realities of oppression with meticulous detail. The concept of "resistance" in literature was notably articulated by Palestinian writer and critic Ghassan Kanafani, who, in his studies on occupied Palestine, described it as the natural and inevitable expression of the desire for liberation—whether through the written word or the barrel of a gun.

While a substantial body of media coverage exists on Kashmir, much of the book-length literature has traditionally been produced by non-Kashmiri authors. In recent years, however, a new generation of Kashmiri writers—such as Basharat Peer, Nitasha Kaul, Mirza Waheed, Shahnaz Bashir, and Essar Batool—has emerged to challenge dominant Indian narratives and present the conflict from a native perspective. Their work offers the international community an insider's understanding of the lived realities in the valley. In contrast, much of the literature produced from outside the region, often shaped by hegemonic viewpoints, tends to present limited or one-dimensional interpretations of the situation.

Writers such as Agha Shahid Ali, Siddhartha Giggo, Basharat Peer, Sudha Koul, and Mirza Waheed have brought global attention to the deep human tragedies of Kashmir. Giggo's *The Garden of Solitude* (2011)—the first English-language novel by a Kashmiri author—explores the Pandit migration, the upheavals of the late 1980s, and the suffering of the Muslim majority. Peer's memoir *Curfewed Night* (2010) sheds light on the hidden realities of the conflict, while Waheed's debut novel *The Collaborator* (2011) depicts the brutal violence and mysterious deaths in northern Kashmir's remote villages.

In his article *Bullets and Carnage*, Infidelity and Revenge in Occupied Kashmir, Azad Essa discusses *The Night of Broken Glass* and its portrayal of religious oppression and daily struggles under occupation. The novel also addresses identity crises, showing how even intellectuals are forced to

abandon the pen for the gun in resisting Indian rule. Violence is portrayed as a routine reality, while opportunistic local elites align with Delhi for personal gain, often at the expense of ordinary Kashmiris, who continue to bear the brunt of political and religious exploitation. The novel further highlights the marginalization of women within a male-dominated socio-economic system. Female characters, except for a few, have little agency and remain dependent. Their oppression is compounded by the actions of Indian security forces—rape, sexual violence, and pellet attacks that have blinded schoolgirls—depicting a double marginalization both from society and from the occupying power.

Anubhav Pradhan (2019), in his review “A Tortured, Troubled Nightscape” has argued that the state is present only through figureheads of brute repressive power: civic life and civil society, the necessary illusion of representative democracy are conspicuous only by their stark absence. The Indian armed forces appear consistently as agents of atavistic brutality throughout the text, as do functionaries of the local police. “*The Nightmares of Major S*”, for instance reveals the lasting storm and tumult within a mind torn asunder by the excesses of militaristic power; Major S is a man perennially out of place, perennially at war as much with the world as with himself. Force 10, similarly, always appears high with the tremendous power he exercises over the lives of his fellow Kashmiris: the vertiginous, unquestionable power to beat, maul and kill as he pleases, when he pleases. Assault, rape and death shadow every individual, every family at every stage of their lives. Nature too is not left untouched, as occupation transformation the beauty of Kashmir into ‘creepy vegetation’: under Major S’ command, living, breathing emblems of Kashmir’s natural heritage bleed white and reddish as they are cut to make coffins.

The predicament of women in Kashmir is discussed by Natasha Kaul in her essay “Everything I Cannot Tell You About the Women Of Kashmir” (Koul, 2013). Living under continual military and militancy threats is their tragedy. They have been through a lot in the 1990s and now. During the war, they lost their loved ones. Kaul states:

You must know that the women of Kashmir today are also victim of mass rape in villages whose names have become shorthand for uninvestigated crimes. The women of Kashmir are the tens of thousands of widows and half-widows; wives of killed and disappeared men; as well as mothers and grandmothers of missing children. Vulnerable often, impoverished, the sorrows, struggles and humiliation of these women of Kashmir is a catalogue of charges against the occupation of Kashmir. (p. 252)

Adil Bhat makes the case that the people of Kashmir are under military siege in his article “Fiction: Elegy for Humanity” (Bhat, 2018). The harsh army rule forces them to avoid the way to freedom. *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018) by Rathar is similar to *Curfewed Night* (2010) by Basharat Peer and *The Collaborator* (2011) by Mirza Waheed.

Bhat writes:

The art of storytelling is an interface with reality that has the power to transform perception about people and places. Feroz Rather’s debut novel, *The Night Of Broken Glass*, peeks into the dark, festering heart of Kashmiri society while dramatizing the spectacles of military violence inflicted from outside. A novel written in 13 short stories, it turns a broken mirror on memory that itself is fissured and brutalized. (Bhat, 2018)

Adil Bhatt emphasizes in his piece that Feroz Rathar's first book provides us with a suitable and unambiguous depiction of the Kashmiri saga. Their living conditions are extremely unpleasant. They are subjected to violence in all of its manifestations, including rape, kidnapping, murder,

physical and psychological torture, and more. For the people who live there, Kashmir has turned into a hell on earth. Rathar accurately depicts the wretched living conditions of Kashmir's innocent citizens in his book. Bhatt focuses on the physical torture that the people of Kashmir endure in his article.

The Kashmiri people lack a sense of self. Identity is a constant struggle for the colonized people. Initially, the colonizer attempted to take the native people's recognition. *The Night of Broken Glass* instigate new dimensions in the field of Kashmiri literature, but it doesn't provide any fresh, clear cut understanding of the trauma caused by occupation in the collective psyche. The novel's thirteen interconnected chapters are also short stories. Naturally, the characters appear again and again in the stories. Some of them advance, such as the cynical cobbler Gulam, the rebellious stone-throwing Tariq, or the permanent members of a struggling populace like Major S and Inspector Masoodi. Others, however, continue to be merely caricatures—such as the ambivalent and opportunistic boss or the baker Misreh, who receives little more than sexual encounters with no explanation of why. She has an affair with Gulam, a cobbler who is a member of the hated outcast class, and Syed Aslam Shah, the scion of the firmly elite Shah family.

Muhammad Tahir examines the effects of the physical violence that Indian security forces inflict on the innocent people of Kashmir in his article "Novel Depicts Kashmir Conflict Through Short Stories" (Tahir, 2018). These words from "The Old Man in the Cottage" describe the rebel's mental illness. Tahir contends that Rather's book *The Night of Broken Glass* is comparable to Shahnaz Bashir's short story *Scattered Souls*. The conflict in Kashmir is also discussed in the book through short stories.

In his 2011 book *The Collaborator*, Mirza Wadeed makes the case that the Indian army routinely murders Muslims in Kashmir. The Indian army treats them brutally because they believe they are not loyal to India. The situation in the valley has gotten worse as a result of young Kashmiris going missing. Kashmiris live in a place where they can be killed and tortured at any time without knowing why, and Indian security forces constantly instill fear in the region. There is currently only one way for the people of Kashmir to oppose Indian oppression.

Theoretical Framework

This study outlines Frantz Fanon's theory of violence and related ideas that are the guiding ideology of *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018) and help to better understand the context of the Kashmir conflict revealed in Feroze Rather's work.

Research Methodology

The present study employs textual analysis as its primary method, since this approach is most suitable for the objectives of the research. Textual analysis involves a number of stages, and for this work, Frantz Fanon's theory of psychological violence serves as the main analytical framework. The methodology focuses on examining Feroze Rather's *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018) through a qualitative content analysis. The novel itself functions as the principal source, while secondary materials such as scholarly books, journal articles, reviews, dissertations, theses, and newspaper pieces are also consulted. A close reading of Rather's text, along with critical responses from established scholars, is undertaken to explore the representation of psycho-social crises. The study further adopts a qualitative approach to ensure clarity in addressing the research questions and adheres to the stylistic and citation standards outlined in the APA Manual.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is clearly defined. As indicated by the title, it is confined to Feroz Rather's *The Night of Broken Glass* and employs qualitative content analysis as the main methodological tool. The study investigates the psycho-social violence experienced by the central characters, offering fresh interpretations and extending current understandings of the text. By doing so, it contributes to literary criticism and adds valuable postcolonial perspectives to the broader field of literary studies.

Frantz Fanon in Socio-Historical Context

Frantz Fanon was a distinguished intellectual, philosopher, Marxist theorist, psychiatrist, and revolutionary activist closely associated with the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN). Having endured the realities of colonial oppression himself, Fanon devoted his life to advocating for the rights of the colonized and became a powerful voice against imperial domination. During the Algerian War of Independence, he served as a psychiatrist, treating patients whose psychological conditions were deeply shaped by the violence of colonialism.

Fanon authored four influential works—*Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *A Dying Colonialism* (1959), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), and *Toward the African Revolution* (1964)—in which he rigorously examined the destructive effects of colonial systems. Central to his thought is the idea that colonialism functions through violence and repression, and that the colonial order recognizes only the “language” of violence. Consequently, he contended that the oppressed could only transform their social reality by responding with revolutionary violence.

Fanon's personal history is often viewed as essential to understand his theories. Born in 1925 in Martinique, then a French colony, he attended the Lycée Schoelcher in Fort-de-France, where he was taught by the renowned poet and politician Aimé Césaire. Later, despite experiencing racial prejudice while serving in the French army, Fanon actively supported the Free French forces in their struggle against the Vichy regime and broader French fascism.

Data Analysis

Comparison of Frantz Fanon and *The Night of Broken Glass*:

Feroz Rather's *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018) is a widely recognized novel that portrays the turbulent history and lived realities of Kashmir through thirteen interconnected short stories. Narrated from the viewpoint of a journalist, the work exposes the brutalities of occupation while tracing the suffering and resilience of its characters. Rather's achievement lies in the way he intertwines Kashmir's historical and cultural past with its contemporary struggles. The novel spans diverse themes, fictionalizing significant historical events and reimagines historical figures to reflect the collective memory of the region. It addresses aspects such as Kashmir's colonial past, the legacy of Sufi traditions, the influence of the Sayyids, the shifting role of political leadership, and the ongoing cycles of violence marked by extrajudicial killings, repression, and the resistance movement. This section of the study examines how *The Night of Broken Glass* presents Kashmir's history within its narrative framework. It also investigates how the novel situates cultural and historical identity at the heart of Kashmiri experience. Furthermore, the analysis focuses on how the characters—particularly the central figure—demonstrate resilience, self-determination, and a steadfast commitment to Azadi (freedom), even when confronted with relentless adversity.

What is Resistant Literature?

Resistance literature has become one of the most significant literary forms in the postcolonial era, serving as a medium for writers across languages and regions to challenge systems of domination and oppression. It gives voice to marginalized communities, reflecting their struggles against

colonial and authoritarian powers. Defined by its connection to liberation movements, resistance literature often emerges from societies under military or totalitarian control. Feroz Rather's *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018) exemplifies this tradition, as it portrays the lived realities of Kashmiri people under occupation. In recent years, resistance literature has not only gained popularity but has also established itself as an independent and rapidly developing field of study. Within this framework, Frantz Fanon's ideas remain crucial. Fanon, who dedicated his life to expose the psychological and political violence of colonialism, provides a valuable lens for interpreting the condition of Kashmir. His insights into colonial violence—comparable to French brutality in Algeria—resonate strongly with the experiences of Kashmiri people under Indian rule.

The historical and contemporary struggles of Kashmir underscore the relevance of resistance literature. Once a princely state under the Sikh Empire, Kashmir was later handed over to Gulab Singh after the British defeated the Sikhs, marking the beginning of prolonged external domination. More recently, the 2016 killing of Burhan Wani, a 22-year-old Kashmiri militant leader, sparked widespread protests and a renewed wave of resistance in the Valley. His funeral drew thousands, symbolizing both collective grief and collective defiance, while the state's violent response deepened the crisis. Rather's choice of the title *The Night of Broken Glass* intensifies this resonance, as it alludes to "Kristallnacht" in Nazi Germany—a night of mass violence against Jews. By invoking this historical atrocity, the novel highlights the brutalities faced by Kashmiris, drawing a parallel between their suffering and that of persecuted communities elsewhere. Yet, the text also underlines the silence of the global community in responding to Kashmir's plight.

Manichean Aspects of Indian rule in Kashmir

The concept of a Manichean world was popularized by twentieth-century postcolonial theorists to describe the rigid binary structure imposed by colonialism. Manichaeism here refers to opposition categories such as good versus evil or colonizer versus colonized. Fanon (1961, p. 6) characterized colonialism as inherently Manichean, where the imperial powers constructed themselves as embodiment of civilization, justice, and knowledge, while portraying the colonized as barbaric, uncivilized, and inferior. This binary system created not only two opposing worlds but also a Manichean mentality that shaped relations between the oppressed and their oppressors. Within Fanon's framework, this mentality explains the roots of dehumanization, racism, violence, and systemic oppression—issues that, he argued, must be confronted to achieve decolonization and psychological recovery. In the Kashmiri context, this mindset is visible in the conduct of the Indian armed forces, who justify indiscriminate killings by perceiving Kashmiris as less than human. By stripping away compassion and moral responsibility, the army sustains its dominance through a Manichean lens that legitimizes brutality.

Rather's *The Night of Broken Glass* reflects this dynamic by exploring the psychosocial crises faced by Kashmiri society. Through the character of Ghulam, a low-caste cobbler, the novel exposes deep-seated caste prejudices. Ghulam's son Jamshaid is mocked for belonging to a "dirty" caste despite his father's identity as a Sheikh (Rather, 2018, p. 84). Similarly, the love story between Rosey, a Syed, and Jamshaid highlights entrenched social hierarchies. Rosey's defiant words—"I'm going to burn down this whole damn society that believes that because you're a Sheikh, your soul is black clay; and because I'm a Syed, my soul is made of white and gold feathers" (p. 44)—underscore Rather's critique of discrimination within Kashmiri society itself.

The motif of broken glass recurs throughout Rather's stories, culminating in the final narrative that interweaves themes and characters into a haunting climax. Here, the title alludes to both

Kristallnacht in Nazi Germany and atrocities in Kashmir. Rather parallels the 1993 Bijbehara massacre, in which at least 37 demonstrators were shot dead by Border Security Forces during protests against the blockade of Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar. By naming a key eyewitness “Ghulam,” Rather fuses historical testimony with fictional narrative, symbolically amplifying the voices of survivors while highlighting the trauma that continues to shape Kashmiri collective memory. Much critical attention has focused on the characters in Rather’s *The Night of Broken Glass*—Major S and his ruthless violence, the militant Ilham and his pursuit of vengeance, or Ghulam with his awareness of conflict. Yet the true protagonist of the narrative is arguably the city itself: a space rendered stagnant, a silent witness to chaos and destruction. Rather’s poetic sensibility and his preoccupation with history are captured in the epigraph from Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska: “History does not greet us with a trumpet of victory, it throws dirty sand into our eyes.”

Comprising thirteen interconnected short stories, the novel reconstructs the painful trajectory of Kashmir’s past and present. Each story contributes to the collective whole, and removing one disrupts the intricate web of connections. For instance, the killing of a young man who attempts to meet his militant brother recalls the real-life death of Khalid Muzaffar, brother of Burhan Wani, a prominent resistance commander killed by Indian forces in 2016. Similarly, the account of a student struck fatally by a tear gas shell resonates with the tragedy of Tufail Mattoo, whose death in 2010 triggered widespread unrest that left over 130 civilians dead and many others injured.

The novel also situates Kashmir within a broader critique of postcolonial states. India, despite its independence, continues to employ colonial-era laws to suppress dissent. Under the Hindu nationalist government led by Narendra Modi, such laws have been expanded, further marginalizing tribal communities, religious minorities, Dalits, and women. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) draws ideological inspiration from early twentieth-century European fascism and maintains strategic alliances with other colonial powers such as Israel and the United States, nations whose histories are marked by dispossession and systemic violence against Indigenous and Palestinian populations.

For readers far removed from such struggles, the extent of Kashmiri suffering may be difficult to grasp. Rather’s novel serves as an attempt to bridge this distance, offering a vivid portrayal of life under occupation. Through its thirteen stories, *The Night of Broken Glass* presents fragmented yet interconnected experiences, giving readers a sense of community life where individual fates are entwined. Characters frequently reappear through each other’s perspectives; reinforcing the notion that collective trauma binds them together. The collection opens with “The Old Man in the Cottage,” a story grounded in the theme of revenge. Here, the narrator confronts Officer Masoodi, the man who once tortured him, now frail and struggling for breath. In this moment of reversal, the narrator experiences a complex mixture of emotions as he stands over his oppressor. The story sets the tone for the collection—one of vulnerability, reckoning, and reflection—that echoes through the rest of the book.

The opening story, “*The Old Man in the Hut*” (Rather, 2018, p. 1), portrays the final moments of Inspector Masudi, once a powerful figure in India’s colonial machinery in Kashmir. Once feared for his cruelty and complicity with the Indian army, he is now reduced to a frail, dying man. The narrator recalls Masudi’s violent interrogations and the torment he inflicted (Rather, 2018, p. 3). At the height of his career, Masudi betrayed his own community by collaborating with the occupiers, embodying the colonial strategy of divide and rule—a method Britain applied in South

Asia, France in Africa, and India in Kashmir. As the narrator reflects: “Here he was on the verge of death. The same man who had captured me and handed me to Major S. Would he ever know the pain of being sold by a fellow countryman to an outsider? What kind of shackles were these which withheld me from hacking his body to pieces?” (Rather, 2018, p. 5). Through this moment, Rather reveals how colonial violence reshapes the psyche, turning men like Masudi into oppressors of their own people. This insight echoes Frantz Fanon’s diagnosis of colonialism’s psychological impact, where internalized oppression and betrayal become tools of domination.

For Kashmiris who grew up in the 1990s, the occupation was not an event but a lived reality—characterized by torture, enforced disappearances, custodial deaths, sexual violence, and mass killings by Indian forces. These atrocities have been extensively documented in human rights reports and literary works such as Basharat Peer’s *Curfewed Night* (2010). Yet Rather chooses fiction as his medium, believing it allows for deeper reflection on trauma and violence. As he once remarked, the challenge for a writer is how to fictionalize “limbs, stones, and broken glass” (Rather, 2016). His debut novel takes fragments of memory and documented violence and reassembles them into narratives that capture both terror and fragile beauty. The Old Man in the Hut encapsulates this aesthetic by dramatizing unfinished revenge. The narrator, who was once tortured by Masoodi and Major S, confronts the inspector’s mortality with conflicting emotions—rage, grief, and restraint. On a symbolic level, the story dramatizes the enduring conflict between colonizer and colonized, showing how decades of occupation corrode psychological stability and fracture social life.

The second story, “*The Pheran*” (Rather, 2018, p. 8), turns attention to the manipulation of media in Kashmir. Like other colonial regimes, India maintains strict control over journalism, shaping narratives to its advantage. Mariam, a bold and passionate journalist, seeks to uphold truth in her profession, while her colleague Safir writes for *Informer* magazine and simultaneously markets a cigarette brand called Lit Revolution (Rather, 2018, p. 9). Yet their work is undermined by corrupt superiors secretly allied with the Indian military. These figures meet Major S and Inspector Masudi at Café Barbarica (Rather, 2018, p. 19), a space known for concealing dark political dealings. The satirical name recalls the real Café Arabica once established in Srinagar, which was promoted under leaders like Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti as part of a “café culture” meant to distract youth from political resistance. By weaving this into his fiction, Rather critiques the complicity of Kashmiri politicians, exposing them as collaborators who traded loyalty to their people for allegiance to the Indian state and personal gain.

In *The Stone-Thrower* (Rather, 2018, p. 60), the narrative foregrounds both physical brutality and psychological trauma, underscoring the omnipresence of the colonial machinery in Kashmir. Rather exposes the cruelty of the Indian military through the tragic fate of Amir, a young schoolboy shot dead on a bridge by security forces. The harrowing description of his fractured skull and lifeless body captures the devastating reality of daily life under siege, where even children are not spared. The story also recounts the ordeal of Mohsin, who is arrested for refusing to wash the car of the 10th Police Force and then tortured in the so-called “Old Colonial House,” a site masquerading as a police station but functioning as a chamber of brutality. Beaten until his hand breaks, Mohsin awakens at home to find his grieving mother, whose suffering is intensified by the disappearance of her husband during the 1989 military crackdown. Muhidin’s grim reminder—“Don’t they realize that an entire army is out there to break their bodies” (Rather, 2018, p. 65)—captures the perpetual terror weighing on Kashmiri families. Such experiences reflect Fanon’s

assertion in *The Wretched of the Earth* that colonial violence leaves behind enduring psychological scars, necessitating decolonization to address the disorders of the colonized (Fanon, 1961, p. 181). For Kashmiris, humiliation and mental distress have become inseparable from their lived reality, demonstrating the destructive influence of colonial domination on both identity and psyche.

Similarly, in *The Cowherd* (Rather, 2018, p. 68), the extreme poverty of Kashmiri society is revealed through Sultan, a sixty-year-old shoemaker forced by hunger to consume the flesh of dead cattle. Fanon (1963, p. 4) emphasizes that under colonialism, the native longs desperately for the most basic necessities—food, clothing, and dignity. Sultan's plight exemplifies how systemic exploitation ensures that the colonized suffer deprivation while the colonizer extracts without recompense, a process India replicates in Kashmir.

In another chapter, *A Rebel's Return* (Rather, 2018, p. 27), the figures of Major S and Inspector Masudi illustrate the cyclical nature of violence. Once infamous for their ruthless actions against civilians, they become tormented by the very violence they inflicted. Inspector Masudi, portrayed as an embodiment of brutality, is abandoned even by his own son in his dying moments, left only with relatives who themselves were victims of his cruelty. Rather's portrayal blurs the line between fiction and reality, making it appear as though these characters are drawn directly from the streets of Kashmir. Across the text, the recurring motif is clear: colonial oppression manifests as endless physical and psychological violence, leaving Kashmiri lives in a state of perpetual suffering.

In Chapter Four, *The Souvenir* (Rather, 2018, p. 32), the narrative highlights the constant fear that defines parenthood in a militarized society. Tariq learns from his mother that his father once collected spent bullet casings from the streets and concealed them in the cellar. When she asked him why, his reply was simple: "I don't want Tariq to see the bullet shells when he goes out to play" (p. 33). This small yet powerful statement reflects a father's anxiety about shielding his child from the violence that surrounds them. Ironically, he would even string these shells into a rosary, transforming instruments of death into tokens of prayer. One day, during a curfew, Tariq slips out to feed pigeons at the shrine of Shah-e-Hamdan, only to be forced by soldiers to shoot a bird. Arriving home late, the sound of gunfire terrifies his parents, who believe their son has been killed. This scene conveys how the looming threat of death has haunted Kashmiri families for decades, leaving civilians traumatized by the relentless killings around them.

In chapter *The Nightmares of Major S* (Rather, 2018, p. 73), the focus shifts to the psychological emptiness of the oppressors themselves. Major S, once responsible for inflicting horrific violence on civilians, now suffers from deep mental torment. Haunted by the spirits of those he murdered, he is unable to sleep, plagued by paranoia so intense that even the crack of snow-laden branches unsettles him. His breakdown exposes the corrosive effects of colonial violence not only on the victims but also on the perpetrators. The tactics employed by Indian forces in Kashmir, Rather suggests, are a direct continuation of the brutal strategies used by the British during colonial rule in India.

The broader history of Kashmir remains saturated with violence, and ordinary lives continue to be marked by psychological decline. During the 2010 summer uprising, Rather notes, curfews were so prolonged that even prayer became a dangerous act. The muezzin, Ali Mohammed, recited the call to prayer with a trembling voice, stripped of its usual beauty and resonance, as fear of being shot invaded his worship (Rather, 2018, p. 51). Alongside such ordinary figures, the text also portrays corrupt characters like the journalist who exploits his profession for power, as well as

symbolic spaces such as tunnels and “Café Barbarica,” the sinister military hub where men exchange horrific confessions. Characters like Saphir, trapped within the labyrinth of cantonment walls and unable to locate even the direction of his own home, illustrate the disorienting psychological impact of militarization.

Through thirteen interconnected vignettes, rather captures the cruelty of life in Kashmir with disturbing intimacy. His stories portray fractured psyches, broken families, and haunted memories, making the valley’s suffering painfully visible. The prose, though poetic and richly imagistic, leaves the reader unsettled, forcing them to confront the brutal reality of Kashmir. For anyone seeking to understand the human cost of the conflict, this book offers a profound and unforgettable insight.

Conclusion

The Kashmir conflict has grown increasingly severe with the passage of time, leaving the local population subjected to relentless violence at the hands of Indian armed forces. India has imposed a colonial order in the valley, and Feroz Rather’s fiction provides a powerful exploration of its psychological consequences. Through a nuanced literary analysis, it becomes evident that Rather compels readers to confront the despair, suffering, and precarious existence of Kashmiris. His collection, *The Night of Broken Glass* (2018), depicts the deep psychosocial turmoil experienced by the people and offers a strikingly realistic portrayal of life under occupation. Comprising thirteen interlinked stories, the text amplifies the silenced voices of the colonized, giving expression to their collective pain and resistance. The title itself symbolically recalls “Kristallnacht,” the 1938 pogrom in Nazi Germany, drawing a parallel to the unchecked brutality faced by Kashmiris under Indian rule. Although India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, pledged the right of self-determination to Kashmiris under the United Nations Resolutions of 1948–49, this promise has never been realized.

At the same time, *The Night of Broken Glass* underscores the resilience and determination of the Kashmiri people. Despite massacres, torture, and repression, their struggle for freedom persists across generations, with each new wave ready to carry forward the demand for self-determination. Rather’s narrative engages with multiple layers of Kashmiri history and society—addressing issues of caste, questions of identity, the trauma of colonization, gender dynamics in a patriarchal setting, religious life, economic struggles, and the failures of political leadership. Through these themes, he succeeds in presenting a multidimensional view of Kashmir’s plight under Indian domination. Ultimately, his characters, though trapped in violence and oppression, embody endurance and the unyielding pursuit of freedom, allowing readers to grasp the lived reality of the conflict in a profoundly human way. India completely established herself as “colonial power” in Kashmir.

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