

Shared Precariousness And Ethicality In Literary Discourse: An Eco-anarchist Analysis Of Kashmiri Anglophone Writings



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Abstract: *There has often been misrepresentation of Kashmir in literary discourse. The complex history and sociopolitical realities of Kashmir has often been overlooked by a plethora of literary production created from outside perspectives. Literature frequently presents Kashmir from an idealized, and exoticized perspective, ignoring the ongoing war's ecological implications in favor of highlighting the area's natural beauty and cultural diversity. This has perpetuated stereotypes and trivialized the realities of Kashmiri lives. Furthermore, an increasing number of works have started to link the impending catastrophes to the workings of corporate capitalism and the regimes that support and let it to continue unchecked but the cause of military intervention in Kashmir as a root cause of aggravating ecological as well as human cost of the damage has seldom been given attention. This paper seeks to highlight this underrepresented area in literary scholarship and argues that Kashmiri Anglophone writers are compelled by ethical concerns and explicate the mutual precariousness of nature and humans, illustrating how the protracted armed struggle impacts both the environment and its people and serve as clear reminders of the interdependence of ecological and human well-being. These literary works present a depressing image of Kashmir, illustrating how fields, woods, orchards, meadows become caught in the crossfire, resulting in the devastation of habitats and harvests thus impacting the ecological setup and also the people who live there. The study makes use of eco-anarchist lens and employs qualitative research, interpretivist paradigm and descriptive-analytical method to explore the shared precariousness exhibited by Anglophone Kashmiri writers Agha Shahid Ali, Basharat Peer, Shahnaz Bashir, and Mirza Waheed.*

Keywords: *Eco-anarchist ethicality, shared precariousness, misrepresentation, deforestation, militarization, interdependence, armed conflict*

ESTABLISHING THE BACKGROUND

Anarchism is a revolutionary way of thinking that aims to dismantle oppressive and divisive system on all fronts, from the individual to the collective. It is a theoretical position whose goals and assumptions are endemically ecological. An emphasis on environmental issues has always united anarchists of all stripes. Although anarchists have disagreed about how

exactly to distribute and grant access to resources, rejecting the use of land and all other means of production has long been seen as a necessary condition of anarchism. Moreover, anarchism has historically featured a push towards naturalism, in the sense of “firmly situating human ethics and sociopolitical institutions within the broader processes of natural systems” (Amster 38), following the preeminent writers like Kropotkin and Thoreau.

Anarchists have always been at the forefront of ecological thought, often foreseeing the deep feeling of widespread and growing crises that we are currently confronting. There are already a plethora of works outlining the serious and rapidly worsening nature of the environmental challenges facing humanity. Anarchists (Zerzan, *Future Primitivism Revisited*; Springer, *The Violent Neoliberalism*) have shown grave concern about climate change, soil erosion, droughts, pollution, toxicity, food scarcity, and other signs of global deterioration in recent years.

Modern anarchism has demonstrated conscientious interaction with the environmental dimensions of human life. As a result, critical discussions regarding praxis, teleology, ethics, and worldviews have been fruitfully rekindled within anarchism, along with concrete investigations into fields like technology and alternative economic models. Anarchism, as a philosophy of interactive debate, can bring together the ideas of different schools of thought; the growing field of eco-anarchism represents this tendency. The realizations have been even more evident in the last decade, as anarchists have taken greater interest in topics like resource warfare, animal rights, food justice, climate change, and grassroots efforts to protect biodiversity. It follows that, as Uri Gordon notes, variety is now “a core anarchist value” (78). Anarchists believe that cultural diversity is vital to the continuous existence of healthy societies, just as biological diversity is fundamentally a manifestation of both anarchist and mutual interdependence (Amster 30). Deconstructing privilege, doing away with hierarchy, democratizing decision making, and using a “diversity of tactics” are some of the ways anarchism attempts to address these issues.

The interdependence of humans and ecology has been explicated by Murray Bookchin in his theory of “social ecology”. “Social ecology” is a multidimensional concept that necessitates debates on interrelationship between social aspects and their ecological implications on a particular place. Bookchin presents a comprehensive and all-encompassing

understanding of the individual, community and environment, grounded in “mutualistic naturalism” and “interconnectedness” (TEF 3). He intertwines elements of modern environmentalism, humanism, and classical anarchism in his theoretical framework. According to him, the contemporary ecological crises are caused by social hierarchies and patterns of dominance, which are fundamental to nature’s dominance. Bookchin presents a critique of exploitative and repressive structures in modern society and claims, “Only a social order that eliminated these structures in favor of egalitarian and communal processes could achieve a sustainable, balanced relationship with the environment” (*Post-Scarcity Anarchism* 48). This viewpoint prioritizes society as the area for addressing ecological challenges, as noted by Bookchin, who states that “the idea of dominating nature has its primary source in the domination of human by human” (TEF 4).

Literary studies have increasingly engaged with ethical considerations concerning the environment and contemporary ecological crises through the lens of eco-anarchism. This field examines the representation of nature and environmental issues in literature reflecting on how these narratives shape our understanding and ethical responses to the current challenges faced by the world. Ecocritical writers acknowledge the importance of a more profound engagement of the literary scholars with ecological concerns. Eco-critics (Glottfelty) believe that environmental issues should figure more conspicuously in literary pedagogical practices. Attentive to the global catastrophe, she maintains that human practices have not only destroyed the beauty of the earth and exterminated numerous nonhuman forms of life, consequently steering us for an “apocalypse”; which necessitates that being students of literature “our temperaments and talents” should see deeply the “environmental problems compound”, and write for its eradication. Instigating literary writers, pedagogues and academics to engross with the environmental concerns that are jeopardizing the existence of various forms of life on earth, she comments, “If we’re not part of the solution we are part of the

problem (Glotfelty xxi).

Ecocritical ethicality is endemic to the literary studies as noted by Michael P. Branch. Highlighting the ethical commitment of writers and scholars, he opines that human and nonhuman forms of life are inextricably bound in an ethical relationship with their environment and the literary writers should give a push “towards a bio-centric world-view”. He believes that literary studies implies, “an extension of ethics, a broadening of human’s conception of global community to include non-human life forms and the physical environment” (xiii). Keeping in view the ecological catastrophes the planet is facing in contemporary times, it is incumbent upon scholars and writers alike to examine “how the narrowness of our culture’s assumptions about the natural world has limited our ability to envision an ecologically sustainable human society (xiii). He emphasizes the ethical liability of literary writers and readers in addressing socio-ecological concerns. He postulates that literature serves as a virile tool for breeding morality. In his estimation, the writers can use various literary genres to arouse sympathy and ethical sensitivity towards the natural world and its relation to humans. By pursuing literary forms that encapsulate the unbreakable kinship between various forms of life, readers can be prompted to reconsider their own ethical standing and judge their practices with regard to the environment. He also delves into the ethical responsibility of literary writers; he deems it incumbent upon writers to indulge in “ethical representation”. Critiquing the anthropocentric tendencies in literature that often write off non-human entities, he advocates for a life-centered approach, which acknowledges and honors the organic value of nature. Branch encourages literary scholars to broaden their vision and not just see nature “as a backdrop for human activity” but to consider its “intrinsic worth”.

Although narratives about Kashmir have been produced in various literary genres in the last century, but this representation has been centered on political and economic victimization, often writing down the ecological desolation that has entailed from uninterrupted

militarism and commercial enterprises taken up in Kashmir. The contemporary literature written by Kashmiri writers dismantle this one-dimensional depiction of Kashmir; it forces the readers to see the issues of deforestation, extinction of wildlife and defilement of hydrological resources and refuse to reduce conflict to “only” a political affair. In contemporary times, Kashmir has been spotlighted by a number of contemporary native writers who offer textual representation of Kashmir by indulging in a multifaceted depiction of the ravaged region who have made visible the intertwined plight of humans and nature as caused by the armed conflict. The writers like Agha Shahid Ali, Mirza Waheed, Basharat Peer, and many others refuse to give a traditional and romanticized depiction of Kashmir’s Edenic beauty; they engage with the conflict of Kashmir by exposing the shared precarity of the human and non-human lives situated in this once beautiful landscape with accuracy and depth. The focus of these writers is to spotlight human and ecological objectification by militaristic and developmental aggression. In the narratives weaved by these writers, the shared vulnerability of humans and nature is shown with the onslaught of Indian state’s intervention and native insurgents. They, in their writings, show the despicable face of war and violence.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Basharat Peer, a renowned Kashmiri writer engages with eco-anarchist ethicality in his memoir *Curfewed Nights*. For better economic opportunities and professional progression, Peer settles in Delhi as a reporter of a renowned newspaper but he is restless in the megacity. Peer recounts his motivation to return to Kashmir as he writes, “I might have forgotten Kashmir-it might have turned into a place I visited every two or three months- but I could not” (71). Kashmir is not simply a birthplace but “the text and subtext” of Peer’s “professional, personal and social worlds” (71). His birthplace is unforgettable because of “the almost daily death count” published in the newspapers. Afraid of reading names of his loved ones, in death count reports of Kashmir, Peer returns to

his native place and vows to give an authentic and nuanced representation to Kashmir. Sharing the narratives of Kashmir's suffering is problematic for the lack of "a proper narrative style". The painful memories of the violations hinder his speech as he finds himself "stopping in the middle of a sentence, choked, rendered inarticulate" (98).

In addition to that, a sense of "shame" overcomes him as he walks into bookstores. Peer realizes that the ravished people from almost every infringed area of the world had shared narratives of misery: "Palestinians, Israelis, Bosnians, Kurds, Tibetans, Lebanese, East Germans, Africans, East Timorese, and many more" (98) had told their stories to the world. The absence of "written word" about the incessant assault on Kashmir incites Peer to give voice to Kashmiri experience. He feels that "if unwritten and unspoken, the memories of Kashmir" could fade away. Determined to "save memory from the callous varnish of time" he decides to follow his "impulsive heart", who has "voted for home" (99) to "return and revisit the people and places that had haunted [him] for years" (98-99). *Curfewed Nights*, becomes a blend of memoir with reportage based upon a poignant but personal experience of Kashmir conflict.

Peer's memoir illustrates the psychological wounds caused by the armed conflict by narrating the stories of trauma, loss, and fear that Kashmiris have experienced since the onslaught of military intervention. In addition to depicting the human cost of the conflict, the book also raises questions about the war's significant environmental effects, which exacerbates the problems of the native Kashmiris. He records a wide range of violations of human rights, such as extrajudicial executions, torture and disappearances of Kashmiris. He highlights the massive militarization of the region, as the militants are replying the Indian military in kind which is equally daunting for the villagers. He recalls an incidence when his villagers urge a group of militants against attack on Indian military convoy and try to make them see the consequences of such an attack in these words: "Is burning your own village what you want?"

They also make him realize that they have "little daughters" and the act will unleash soldiers to "storm [their] houses" (43).

The prolonged armed conflict causes mass exodus of people who are compelled to leave their land, as he recounts an experience of villagers migrating to the nearby village of "Numbul". The "first shot" is fired from close to the river which makes people run for their lives. Some of these migrating people lie down in the fields to evade the flying bullets, whereas others try to pick up speed. Peer recounts the unforgettable "crackling of bullets" (45) which can be heard every few seconds. The villagers are faced not only with the aggression of Indian military, but also violations done by militants as "the insurgents' Kalashnikovs also show their distinct presence in comparison with soldiers' "machine guns". He recalls when at the arrival of a military patrol, all the residents of the village reach "instinctively for their identity cards" because they know that means the villagers are subjected to an "identity check" which often means beatings, or being taken to "the closest army camp". The soldiers can force the people to bring bags of goods to their camps and usually force the villagers to work for them.

Peer draws attention to the human cost of continuous fighting as well as the lasting wounds caused by the oppression and dehumanizing treatment through personal tales and the accounts of others. He writes a great deal about Kashmiris' widespread sense of humiliation and suffering at the hands of Indian forces. He details incidents of beatings, torture, and arbitrary detentions to highlight the severe physical and psychological suffering the local populace has suffered. Crackdowns in Kashmir is a part of painful memory; these crackdowns are accompanied by "the rumble of military trucks that blur their duels" (51). During these crackdowns the Indian soldiers "yell at" the villagers to "pick up pace" and "raise hands" and "take out identity cards". The villagers have no choice other than following orders. Peer recalls a harrowing memory of "two parallel rows of uplifted hands, the left hand empty and the right hand firmly grasping the identity card a few inches higher" (52). The violations are

indiscriminate as “the judge and the farmhand” (52) are merely subject nation with no differentiation between them.

The Indian military intervention has caused deforestation in Kashmir. Peer’s Srinagar has been completely transformed into a military camp, as more such camps are established by bulldozing the forests. The extensive military presence of India in Kashmir, complete with check posts, searches, curfews, is described in depth. These metrics have a more pronounced effect on day-to-day living, demonstrating how they disrupt routine life of people and maintain an atmosphere of anxiety and tension. Peer recalls his visit to Pari Mahal, which was formerly the captivating pinnacle of the Zabarvan Mountains; beneath it, the verdant expanses of a forest, once known for “unruffled water”, are transformed into an “expansive golf course” that is manned by armed guards, politicians, bureaucrats, police, and military officers. The natural setting has been transformed into military halls, big chambers near the entryway that are divided by stone arches and are used as barracks. In the dimly-illuminated area shaped like a dome, automatic guns are positioned on charpoys behind them. Hence, Peer comments that the “Modern Srinagar begins with the largest military camp in Kashmir” (102). Badami Bagh, “the garden of almonds”, is surrounded by “high concrete walls, rows of iron barricades, sandbag bunkers, and alert soldiers in bulletproof jackets” (103). The area used to have “the bluest of skies that cradled a glacier of clouds over the browns, greens, and blues of the peaks of million-inch Himalayas,” but now it is completely different (102). Military trucks, armed men, and machine guns sticking out of sandbag bunkers are ubiquitous in contemporary Kashmir.

Kashmiri writers highlight the inhumanity of violence by examining how the military’s presence affects civilian life on a larger scale. In addition to taking many lives, this long drawn out struggle, over Kashmir’s resources, has also damaged the socioeconomic structure of the society. The memoir’s most moving element is how education and student’s rights are compromised, a topic that highlights the

conflict’s wider effects on everyday life. One terrifying aspect of the entire militaristic existence is the closing of educational institutions as a result of curfews and violence. In addition to accurately portraying the devastation of educational infrastructure, Peer also captures the psychological effects of this disruption on both instructors and students. School buildings are the most compromised sights in Srinagar which have been transformed into military camps. Peer recalls that Indian military has constructed sandbag bunkers and watchtowers around the school fence. The rectangular firing slats of the bunkers, which are covered with wire mesh, intend to deflect any explosives; there are adorned with “several machine gun nozzles” and “stern-looking troops staring” at the students. A big portion of the main school building is declared off-limits for the students and they have to show their identity cards on entering school every time which is followed by a humiliating procedure of “physical search” (58).

As school buildings are used to host military, so as part of their “area domination” duties, the soldiers leave early in the morning to carry out crackdowns in nearby villages. Military trucks coming from raids and crackdowns carrying “young suspect boys bound with ropes” is a routine matter; these suspects are carried into the “military occupied portion” of the school building. “The cries of these inmates being tortured” terrify the students who congregate outside “the torture camp” and conjecture about the kind of torture that their “uniformed neighbors were putting their victims through” (59). The majority of schools stay closed for the most part of the year as protests against the death or arrest of Kashmiris, or gunfight and crackdowns go on in Kashmir.

Mirza Waheed, another writer from Indian-administered Kashmir is influenced by Kashmiri plight in his “literary choices and sensibility, in both tangible and subliminal ways” (Wani). Through evocative descriptions and symbolic usage of nature, the author elaborates on the complex relationship that exists between humans and the natural world in his work, highlighting the close affinity that exists

between the people of Kashmir and their surroundings. His novel *The Book of Green Leaves* is a heartbreaking tale of an inextricable bond between humans and natural world. The novel depicts a region that is rife with violence as a never-ending cycle of killings and curfews occurs and an armed conflict between freedom fighters and Indian military takes place. Hundreds of protestors are killed as paramilitary opens fire on large-scale independence demonstrations in Srinagar. Since then, the valley has been changed into a combat zone. Faiz, a youth, who wanted to pursue art as a career, changes his priorities and fights for the rights of Kashmir.

Waheed's narrative depicts psychological plight of people due to militarization of Kashmir. The protagonist Roohi, is unable to comprehend what is happening to her city and school when she notices hundreds of "sandbags hanging everywhere on the façade" (Waheed 52). Military in-charge Major Sumit Kumar studies a chart the size of a boat that illustrates his strategy for taking control of Srinagar. Based on this chart, he believes that a bunker must exist "at the mouth of every street and alley" (Waheed 59). The death tools, "machine guns" are like "a pack of malevolent jinns, following everyone and either shadow wherever they go" (Waheed 68). The people are disturbed extremely by this devastation brought at their place, as Roohi smells "fresh blood in the air, sometime even in [her] food" (68).

The state of politics has a direct negative impact on the environment in the area. Since curfews and lockdowns have become commonplace, violence also disrupts Kashmir's social and political life. People are scarred to leave their houses because they don't know if they will ever return their homes. In *TBGL*, the military vehicle Zaal, is omnipresent; it abducts numerous young Kashmiri men from the road and transports them to an unidentified location thus increasing people's fear. Waheed writes, "people now leave the streets and the shrine to the dogs at night" (Waheed 106). The life is stranded in Kashmir and cultural activities are stopped as Kashmir's "garrulous poets and satirists" who used to hold "conclaves on the river bank" now

stay in their houses and leave only to get life's essentials.

Basharat Peer depicts realistically the carnage perpetrated by all the stakeholders including the military, the political parties from both the sides, and the militant groups. His memoir highlights the devastation of physical environment of Kashmir by the armed conflict. This gives a poignant depiction of "the desecration of the land" through "land mines, detonations and pollution" caused by indiscriminate use of armament. Peer describes a violent episode involving Indian forces that result in "the entire town burning in one hour" after the soldiers throw "gunpowder over the houses and fields" (18). Mirza Waheed (*The Collaborator*) also presents realistic depictions of decay and devastation affecting the region, which is known for its enduring beauty and tranquility. The narrator bemoans for the devastation done where, "bright yellow outlines of human forms enclosing darkness inside" (14). The weeds are invading the area of "the ever-shrinking human remains" and the narrator laments that "in some cases the outlines have started to become fuzzy" (Waheed 14).

In *TBGL*, the increasing frequency of clashes between Indian military and militants disturbs the quiet and serene atmosphere in Roohi's neighborhood. The novel depicts the ecocidal savagery of both armies that bomb the area. Roohi can smell "blood and sulphur in the air" in her surroundings. In *The Collaborator* the air smells like "once-green canopies giving way to dark plumes of smoke" (15). The magnificent "dark green spreads" of the past are turned into "umbrellas of crumbling flame, smoke and ash" (15). Expanse of pine forests are pillaged and destroyed for a number of purposes. This profuse use of ammunition and weapons have shown to be extremely deadly to the calm environment and has hastened environmental degradation. The protagonist Faiz finds a lot of weapons and explosives that are extremely dangerous for both human lives and the ecosystem of the valley when he joins a training camp. Shafts, adhesive tapes, piles of "electrical objects that he guesses must be detonators", polythene "bags of gunpowder", and enigmatic

“blue, red, and yellow wires” (Waheed 131) are discovered in a warehouse by the narrator.

Kashmiri writers highlight significant changes in the region’s ecological constitution before and after the start of hostilities. Nearly every character bemoans the changing ecosystem of both urban and rural landscape, or is impacted by it. *Curfewed Nights* provides a thorough account of the valley’s prehistoric natural configuration, which is subsequently upset by the onset of the prolonged conflict. The contemporary life has become dismal and a very few people enjoy the stunning scenery of wide meadows, cascading waterfalls, and snow-capped mountains of Kashmir. Peer recalls watching TV during a night of crackdown, when he peeped through a curtain and is appalled by the ominous “silence” and “an indifferent moon reclining over the clouds” (Peer 51).

Kashmiri Anglophone poetry also depicts the ecological imbalance forced on Kashmir by the prolonged conflict. Nature plays a major role in almost all these poetic writings, both for its aesthetic value and for its exploitation and destruction, which has transformed one of the most beautiful places on Earth in an ecologically unbalanced place. The poets give voice to the worries of the underprivileged, who are unable to stop the oppressing forces that commit ecocide. The rise in violent conflict, the brutal slaughter and loss of wildlife, and the pollution of lakes is a predominant theme of contemporary Kashmiri Anglophone poetry. One of the pioneers of Anglophone poetry in Kashmir is Agha Shahid Ali who skilfully addresses the representational crisis that had concealed the actual character of the Kashmiri dispute from public view. His poetry captures both the natural beauty of Kashmir and the violent wave that has enveloped the entire valley. *The Country without a Post Office*, a collection of poems by Agha Shahid Ali, is a moving examination of the unrest in Kashmir that blends individual loss with community anguish. Several poems in this book address issues of ecological degradation and the effects of human activities on the natural world. The way that nature and violence interact, highlights the profound wounds that the land and its people have sustained. The peaceful beauty

of Kashmir’s nature is frequently contrasted with the brutal realities of the conflict in Ali’s painted picture. He describes, for example, how violence and neglect have tarnished the once symbolic landscapes of mountains, rivers, and gardens. Ali’s mourning for the vanished splendor of his own place reflects the wider story for environmental devastation.

Ali’s poetry combines images of Kashmir that are normally associated with greenery and heaven, including paisley, saffron, and paradisiacal gardens. The fragility and sufferings of women and the natural world at the hands of violent forces on the rampage in Kashmir are also highlighted in Ali’s poetic expression. In one of his poem he writes: Each fall they gather chinar leaves/Singing what the hills have reechoed for four hundred years/ the songs of/Habba Khatun, (Ali 2). These lines convey the sense of environmental devastation, with “rain with ash for face” symbolizing polluted rainfall and “flood” metaphorically representing the overwhelming destruction caused by the conflict. Ali also touches upon water pollution indirectly by portraying the grief and chaos that affects every aspect of life, including the environment: “No prayers, no remains/in waters curfewed/for now, forever/the children’s cries” (Ali 94). The aforementioned quote highlights the polluting impact of militarization that has invaded city’s waterways and bridges and subsequently has affected the mental health of the locals. Agha Shahid uses lyrics like “Every evening I die/ for every evening you return as rain” (79) to depict the barren and dirty nature of the area. He continues, writing, “Mad heart, be brave/ this is the flood that will suffocate you” (79). His expression, “waters curfewed” alludes to limited and tainted water sources as a result of war actions, emphasizing the militarization’s wider environmental impact.

Mirza Waheed, a fiction writer from Kashmir, is mainly concerned with the ecological harm caused by deforestation, which is partly caused by military conflict and is a major ecological problem. His fiction illustrates that for a number of reasons, the ongoing conflict has resulted in forest damage. Forested areas are frequently

cleared in order to build highways, bunkers, and other military structures. Furthermore, the presence of military personnel in the area raises the demand for firewood, which in turn fuels unchecked illicit logging. Due to the clearing of forests for military bases and other such militaristic activities, the protracted conflict has resulted in considerable deforestation. Waheed brings to light the problems facing the valley's biodiversity which is crucial to the ecosystem. Following the valley's militancy, there have been massive deforestation, which has resulted in the loss of many other food sources. The reason for this deforestation is clear; check-posts have been established in the dense forests of the valley. Furthermore, as a result of land erosion brought on by deforestation, floods have increased in frequency and are uncontrollable.

Kashmiri writers highlight water contamination in addition to its relevance and importance for the local people. Kashmir is gifted with high altitude lakes, streams, waterfalls, ponds, rivers and springs; these water resources are being exhausted and polluted because of military installations and commercial purposes. In addition to being crucial for the preservation of plant and animal genetic resources, these diverse fresh water bodies are valuable from aesthetic, cultural, socioeconomic and ecological purposes. Waheed's disturbance over the misuse and overuse of these water resources is visible in his fiction. The Neelam River which was seen in past as "tumbling down" in the center, and "the scenery is truly emerald", a shimmering "green carpet" that swept down the "terraced hills" (Waheed 228) cannot be seen now. One of his characters is disturbed to see man-sized subterranean sewage pipes from the hospital, medical school, sub-divisional police headquarters, and the other topnotch establishments continuously releasing their harmful waste into the canal. Going on boat trip is tantamount to "paddl[ing] through sheets of shit... guts, ears, and intestines of goats shot into the air, only to drop on the gloomy water and scuttle away like every other bit of filth that enters this once-golden arm of Jhelum" (186-7). The poisons from explosives, fertilizers, herbicides thrown in water also poses threat to

fish life. In addition to that commercialization that has seeped in Kashmir has also imperiled ecological stability.

Emphasizing interdependence between humans and nature, Bookchin writes that in organic communities, people lived in "kinship relationship" with nature. He writes, "Nature is named even before it is deified; it is personified as part of the community before it is raised above it" (48). The people of these organic societies did not distinguish between "aesthetic sense and "functional approach" to the natural world, because "natural beauty is there to begin with- in the very cradle of the individual's experience" Bookchin believes that this "harmonization with nature is consequent upon re-harmonization with humans" (48). Prior to military intervention in Kashmir, the people lived in close harmony and unity with the natural world. For those who are grieving over the deteriorating state of the environment, nature offers comfort as "tall trees grow on either side of the river and the world outside is not visible except for the blue sky that has no moon but a multitude of stars" (Waheed 7). Faiz and Roohi often feel mesmerized by the "murmurs of the river in the dark" (Waheed 61). Following their marriage, Faiz flees the Indian army, and the couple finds comfort in each other's companionship in the calm natural surroundings. Roohi is captivated by the "clear air and light of the meadows, so unlike the city, so free of dust and the world's ways", when she is away from the busy life of the city (Waheed 288). The river is the pivot of their future planning. Faiz imagines them in the midst of the natural world; he longs to "go as far as the river courses, through the heart of their country" and has fantasies of "floating on the Jhelum". In the face of violent world around and chased by Indian military, he longs to have nature as a sanctuary. He believes firmly that the "river and the fields and the forests, will give them shelter, and create havens for their children" (139).

But this harmony with nature has been disturbed; the scope of human violence on other human beings has extended to the waterscape. Refuse and dead bodies are defiling river's sacredness as life-giving body. Dead bodies,

blood, and chunks of fish travel to Pakistan along with the contaminated water. The assault of militarism, economic operations, and automobile mobility in the area has badly disturbed the aquatic environment. These authors show how marine life has been impacted by the never-ending cycle of violence and pollution. The clear lakes of Kashmir used to brim with different kinds of fish in the days preceding the unrest. The fish provided valuable food that the humans needed; but with military intervention, the number of fish is bound to decrease as the demand rises. One of the characters reports that the stream “is dirty, unfriendly, the contamination from the city beginning to kill the river life” (Waheed 83).

Innumerable “unidentified bodies” disposed of in water also contribute to the contamination of river. Basharat Peer retrieves many violent episodes from his childhood memories in which BBC World service’s correspondent in Srinagar used to broadcast stories of numerous killings in Kashmir. Through the radio, the correspondent’s voice could be heard saying, “I hear gunfire”, and the radio would play the deadly sounds of the bullets, followed by the correspondent’s impassive voice, “yet another unidentified body has been found in the river Jhelum in Srinagar” (Peer 42). In Waheed’s narrative Roohi’s father’s dead body found in river also speaks volume of the violence done to both people and ecology of Kashmir. The dead body of Principal Koul is discovered near his home alongside a canal. The corpses of the militants in *the Collaborators* also represent the decay that the armed conflict brings to the environment. The narrator desires “the putrid trench” disturbs Indian Captain Kadian (Waheed 2011: 52). The valley has been transformed into a mass grave by Indian military as, “the people have recently started collecting the withered corpses dumped by the soldiers, which get tangled in the metal barricade in the river” (256).

Agha Shahid Ali does not represent environmental devastation in a way that is divorced from human experience; in his poetry, the deterioration of customs, identities, and histories is entwined with the devastation of the environment, offering a moving commentary on

all-encompassing effects of war. The poet expresses grief for both the people and the devastated soil that provides for them, demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the conflict’s effects. He highlights the critical need for preservation and repair by drawing attention to the destruction of Kashmir’s natural beauty. Readers are urged to understand the significance of preserving the land by the poet’s depiction of the environment as both sufferer and a witness to the fight. In addition to lamenting the loss of Kashmir’s natural beauty, Ali uses his poems to advocate for a greater comprehension of the close relationship that exists between human life and the environment. He laments the ruin of Kashmir’s landscape and the burning of the region, which stand for the annihilation of the ecology and culture. He writes: I see Srinagar burning/Raining embers/On the ivory-boned Hari Parbat (65). In his work nature serves as a witness. He writes further: In the rain-shadow of the Himalayas/ in the evergreen prairies/The lone heron is hunched like a monk (68). The solitary heron becomes a witness to the environmental desolation brought about by the conflict. In his work environmental decay is used as a metaphor as he writes: The soldiers light fires/Cold metal glints in the sun/Beautiful; and the young brides lose their ornaments (68). The “soldiers” setting fires symbolize the damage they do to the environment, while “ornaments lost” signifies the disappearance of tranquility and beauty. In the poem “Postcard from Kashmir”, he writes: Kashmir shrinks into my mailbox/my home a neat four by six inches (Ali 94).

Ali wails at how Kashmir’s wide and breathtaking scenery has been limited and weakened by governmental limits and personal loss, becoming only a distant memory. The images of a shrunken Kashmir allude to both environmental degradation and the loss of cultural legacy. The poet uses Kashmir’s mountains, rivers, and other natural characteristics as a metaphor for people’s sense of disarray and exile. In “Snowmen”, he writes: My ancestor, a man/ of Himalayan snow/Came to Kashmir from Samarkand/Carrying a bag/of whale bones/ Heirlooms from sea funerals (Ali

94). By connecting the poet's past with the natural world, this verse shows a deep, inherited relationship to the ecosystem that is threatened by ongoing violence. The anthology as a whole offers nuanced critiques of the way in which humans impact the environment. Because it contrasts the horrific reality of political unrest with the spectacular natural beauty that draws attention to the disastrous impacts of human activity on the ecosystem. Ali uses his poignant views on relocation and striking pictures to highlight the issues of ecological damage. His poetry encourages readers to consider the interconnected fate of natural and cultural surroundings and emphasize the necessity for greater environmental and cultural preservation in the face of political upheaval.

Kashmiri authors also challenge the idea of "development" in general. In his collection of stories, *the Scattered Souls*, Shahnaz Bashir forcefully exposes the political persecution that the Indian state conceals under the mask of "progress". By usurping Kashmiri's fundamental rights, unscrupulous military agencies and private corporations protect their entrenched interests. The Indian government disregards the needs, goals, and aspirations of the native Muslim population of Kashmir. As Roy notes, "these projects are a brazen means of taking water, land, and irrigation away from the poor and gifting to the rich" (Roy, *The Algebra* 57), this entails uprooting thousands of people from their homeland and paying them no compensation. The "land grab" practiced by land mafia has been severely criticized in his story "The Ex-militant". The Ex-militant, being interviewed, is Ghulam Mohiuddin who is distressed over high fever of his small daughter Insha. His house is situated at a "... noisy, overpopulated, cheaper, forlorn place" which is "threatened by occasional floods" (Bashir 89). Since his place is situated on the river band, it turns out worst in summer. The protagonist laments that the public utility lands, where he once played football "have been usurped by construction mafia"; consequently the entire land adjoining his shanty is ransacked and "everything old and beautiful is slowly vanishing". He complains of the local "land

brokers" who sell plots to moneyed people coming from anywhere from India and they "even throw attractive baits to the revenue officials and get an abysmal, meter-wide sewage canal dug around the one-roomed shanties of the area" (89). The character is dismayed at the diverse problems caused by overflowing drainage as, he finds, "eggshells, orange rind, chicken entrails, bloodied cotton, insulin syringes or discarded condoms" (89) spilling into his shanty.

The resultant problems of the land-grab have further been highlighted by Ghulam Mohiuddin where the local people have to adjust their "olfactory senses to the stink of the overflowing sewage". But the problem exacerbates in evenings when "mosquitoes begin to throng the gutter" (90). The protagonist wails that all his efforts to "stick strips of newspaper over the windows to keep those bloodsucking creatures away" are futile and a "bumbling gnat manages to feast on Insha's toe and leave her sleepless, restless" through night (90). Through the protagonist's observation, the writer wails at commercial enterprises that have ruined the landscape and endangered lives of people living in such downtrodden areas. He recounts that the whole area has been turned into an "uninhabitable" place in a couple of years, as commercialization of the land has taken place by the developmental authorities. He laments, "Many things had changed. New things have happened and many old things have vanished. New realities have to be accepted, like the obscenely opulent hotels that had sprung up in the swathes of land that had once been orchards" (94).

In another story, "Psychosis" Shahnaz Bashir explicates the trauma of the wife of an Ex-militant Ghulam Mohiuddin. The ex-militant Ghulam who is missing for over than eight years and is allegedly murdered in an unknown torture center. Sakeena is thirty two years old woman who earns the status of "half-widow" and does not qualify for compensation from the oppressive state. In the absence of her husband, she has to grapple with diverse problems, including the land-grab exercised by the development authorities. Sakeena is disturbed

by “a notification the government has sent to the squatters” (Bashir 134). The notice directs the residents of one-roomed dingy shanties to vacate the riverbank “before they are hauled away”. The government has decided to “clear the area and make hanging parks along the bank to entice tourists” (134). Sakeena is further subjected to precariousness when after a few days she “finds a bevy of policemen and a giant yellow bulldozer” in the neighborhood. Although, all the squatters have gathered to protest against callous state policies, the protest goes unnoticed by the bulldozers which are “being readied to shove the shanties of the riverbank” (135). Shahnaz Bashir has particularly emphasized the ramifications of unplanned development and the resulting depletion of resources and turmoil caused in the lives of battered Kashmiris. The river played a crucial role in the lives of the people inhabiting riverbanks; apart from providing clean drinking water and fish, it was a source of solace for the people. But the state policies like urbanization, and pseudo-development changed it to toxicity for the locals. The developmental activities, carried out by the government in Indian administered Kashmir, have disturbed not only the wildlife but also displaced thousands of Kashmiris who have nowhere to go and settle for the lack of economic means or rehabilitation provided by the government.

CONCLUSION

The examination of ethicality in environmental discourse by eco-anarchists emphasizes the critical role that literature plays in influencing how the readers perceive and react to the challenges faced by multiple forms of life in Kashmir. The Anglophone literature produced by contemporary Kashmiri writers pushes us to reevaluate our moral duties to the environment and to use literature as a means of encouraging environmental care. These representative literary writings have been examined for how they depict the increasing environmental conditions in the region, which are a result of the militarization of the valley. The paper concludes that once a beautiful terrain and crystal clean waterspace have been contaminated as a result of the armed conflict in Kashmir. The selected

writers for the project emphasize that military intervention in the region has resulted in exploitation and destruction of biodiversity, unsustainable development, egregious mismanagement on the side of the people and the authorities. The paper has examined ecological anomalies and their impact on the native population of the region. By highlighting the abnormalities promoted by violence and mal-development, the literary writings plead for the integrity of the physical and living environment and demand a re-harmonization of nature and humans to overcome shared precariousness faced by ecology and humans of Kashmir.

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