

Morality and Identity in Conflict: An Analysis of Kashmiri Youths' Ideological Beliefs and Cultural Influences on Integration with India

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Abstract

The present paper intends to examine the nature and process of ideological beliefs and morality of individuals born and raised in one of the conflicted zones of the Indian territory and tries to uproot its psychic and cultural relationship. The work is oriented towards studying the morality of the masses to discern its influence on moral reasoning at the individual level, justifying or defending their stand towards the decision to integrate with India. The work adopts a top-down approach to analyse semi-structured interviews of five Kashmiri youths. It attempts to provide a new perspective for understanding the Kashmir conflict by analysing it as a collision of two opposing moral forces and the role of culture in contriving the contradiction.

Keywords: Kashmir, Kashmiriyat, identity crisis, secularism, nationalism, ideology, morality, conflict, militancy, partition.

Introduction

For a long time, Kashmir has existed in a state of contradicting realities. One can feel transcendental by interacting with the valley's natural beauty; simultaneously, the longstanding social and political tension in the valley prevents the possibility of the same. Similarly, the secular past of medieval Kashmir, which was marked by the richness of religious diversity, e.g., the co-existence of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam in harmony (Kaw, 2016), is now overshadowed by the image of an all-Muslim space. The root of the plight of present-day Kashmir can be traced back to 1846 when East India Company sold the valley of Kashmir comprising Jammu, Ladakh, Baltistan and several other hill stations to the Hindu Dogra ruler, Gulab Singh. The deal was signed under the terms of the Treaty of Amritsar and made Kashmir a multicultural and multilingual territory containing the majority of the Muslim population along with the existence of Hindu and Sikh communities in the minority (Schofield, 2010). Later, under the regime of Gulab Singh's great-grandson Maharaja Hari Singh, the dissatisfaction among the Muslim community started to grow as, despite their majority position, they were subjected to discrimination and biased treatment (Wani, 2013). It led to the emergence of the Muslim political movement in 1931 and resulted in the formulation of the Muslim National Conference a year later, backed by the Indian Muslim League (Puri, 2007). Initially originated as a political movement, it witnessed a paradigm shift when the Sheikh Abdullah-led party started promulgating a secular vision by addressing the welfare of all the religious community living in the valley. In this way, the earlier political movement was transformed into a national movement with the formulation of the All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference in 1939. This party was built on the vision of Kashmiri Nationalism, and from here, the term Kashmiriyat emerged (Arakotaram, 2009). Thus, originated with the secular vision of establishing a secular Kashmiri nation, the term Kashmiriyat has become a popular symbol for fundamentalism and plays a seminal role in political discourse.

The partition of India in 1947 (Butalia, 1998) caused irreparable damage to the peace of Kashmir. The invasion of Pakistan troops in October 1947 forced Maharaja Hari Singh to sign the Instrument of Accession with India on October 26 (Habibullah, 2004). The decision of accession to a Hindu majority nation left Kashmiris (especially Muslim Kashmiris) in a constant rebellion state which hurt their sense of social identity as well as social morality. From that incident, the majority of the Kashmiri Muslim population lived with a feeling of betrayal and non-belongingness because the opportunity to decide for their future as promised by then Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was never delivered (Abdullah, 1965). Gradually, the suppressed agitation took the form of communal tension and the insurgence of militant groups in the valley. With the help of Pakistan, the unexpressed desire for revenge found the platform for

the manifestation of suppressed anger and hatred in the form of the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits by militants between 1988-1990 (Evans, 2010). Later, the Indian government adopted the policy of extreme militarisation of the Kashmir valley to confront the problem of constant insurgency by militant outfits (Datta, 2016). The incident paved the path for ever-accelerating communal violence, militant infiltration, war between the Indian Army and different militant organisations, mass killing, violation of human rights, and other imagined forms of brutality in the valley. Thus, the earlier secular vision of Kashmiriyat gradually became a demand for an independent Muslim nation. The movement that started with the demand for secularism later started fueling its war from the ideologies of separatism. The controversial history of Kashmir explains why it is so hard for the natives to identify themselves as Indians, and the constant struggle for Kashmiriyat is not just for the ownership of the valley. However, it is a quest for a recognised and globally validated identity. The conflict in the region can be perceived as a reflection of inner conflicts experienced by individuals going through the phase of an identity crisis, which reflects in their moral stand for Kashmir's solution.

Ideology and Morality

Ideology can be seen as the libido invigorating wars, conquests, invasions, rebels, or revolutions. A global vision is needed to mobilise or radicalise the masses. Similarly, moral reasoning is required to justify destructions, genocides, or exodus of masses. For example, when religion failed to explain the misery of the human condition in Europe, nationalism was introduced as an explanatory apparatus for the human way of life (Anderson, 1983). In this way, the world invented a new paradigm of moral meaning behind peace and war. Sooner, these nations constructed their imagined communities by categorising their distinctiveness not solely based on territorial boundaries but also at the level of the psychological domain. The psychological uniqueness of each nation was constructed by its constitutional and cultural ideologies, which in turn module the principles, ethics, duties, commitments and moralities of the nation and its citizens. Thus, asserting that human existence has always been subject to ideologically conditioned culture and culturally conditioned ideology will not be entirely incorrect. This statement aligns with the standpoint of Louis Althusser on Interpellation when he conceptualised the correlativity between ideology and culture by reducing human existence to the motif of ideological state apparatus (Rivkin & Ryan, 1998).

Morality can be best defined as the standard code of conduct based on principles of right and wrong. It is a relative phenomenon and dynamic in the process as the nature or codes vary depending upon the time and context. For example, the moral principles of an average citizen will advocate against the killing of others. However, these values and beliefs will take a different stance while explaining the moral reasoning behind the execution of a criminal by a judiciary system. Moreover, the defining

characteristics of the term 'criminal' depend on moral values. Thus, morality's attributes can be construed more appropriately under the paradigm of constructivism than essentialism. Presumably, Sigmund Freud meant the same when he emphasised the role of parenting in the development of the superego and asserted that a significant part of it is incorporated from parents (Baron, 1999). Further, as we grow and interact with society, we internalise cultural norms to develop our morality, ethics, and values. Later, these norms pilot us "in all we believe, feel and do" (Skorupski, 1993). So, the actual quest for moral righteousness is embedded in the culture that defines it, and the binaries of right-wrong, good-bad, and pure evil can be seen as a matter of deviating perspectives.

Further, morality can also be conceived as a byproduct of ideology or vice-versa, whose driving forces get their nature from cultural norms, values, and beliefs. Alvin W. Gouldner (1981), while distinguishing Marxism from morality, proclaimed that the latter is "conceived of as part of the ideological superstructure" (Kellner, 1981). For example, people living in a collectivistic society that gives more importance to community needs rely on collective rather than subjective decisions of their conscience to address moral dilemmas (Vasudev & Hummel, 1987). It could be better explained by considering the case of the Israelites' moral reasoning of national security behind the exercise of power and dominance over the Gaza Strip (El-Haddad, 2013). Also, the political claims of the division of Kashmir into Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) and India-Occupied Kashmir (IOK) had a profound effect on the moral development of Kashmiris as their persistent fight for the ideological concept of Kashmiriyat guides their moral reasoning and behaviours.

Method

Sample

Data was collected using a semi-structured interview schedule from five Kashmiri youths. Participants were recruited from Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi University, New Delhi, and Central University of Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir (Jammu and Kashmir was a state in 2018). Participants were contacted through the personal contacts of researchers and key informants. The scholars have asked the participants interviewed to recommend others to contact. All the participants in the sample were males. The average age of participants was 22 years. The participants were pursuing their education in different academic institutions. The average education of the participants was Master's level education in their subject.

Interviews

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview schedule. The interview was conducted in Hindi as well as in English. The translation and transcription of all interview recordings were done. Data was collected at the beginning and end of 2018

and before the abrogation of Article 370. While interviewing the participants on the Kashmir conflict, prior permission was sought from them, and the confidentiality of the data was explained. The researcher has focused on the participants' overall account of lived experiences, emotions for their nation and the reality, efforts and protests for freedom, citizenship, and their Kashmiriyat, interactions with the other states of India, and hopes for the future.

Analytic Method

Narrative enquiry has always been a critical contributor to the academic field of knowledge. It has played a vital role in widening the understanding of specific phenomena and formulating social problems. From Sigmund Freud's case studies to Renato Rosaldo's anthropological research, the significance of narrative analysis remains uncontested. The methodology assumes that every human being is a storytelling organism. Thus, the study of narrative provides the tool to study how humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). One of the most essential tools of narrative enquiry is thematic analysis, which has recently been increasingly used in educational experiences. Thematic analysis can be understood as a configuration of a thematic network (web-like structure) that summarises the main arguments into constituting themes and explains the same to propose a concept, theory, or argument (Stirling, 2001). For the present paper, the data were subjected to a thematic analysis (Clarke & Barun, 2014). Themes are coded and formulated based on comparing theme frequencies, identifying theme co-occurrence, and tabularly displaying relationships between different themes.

Even though the interviews brought out most of the lived experiences, in data analysis, the authors have primarily focused on the model they constructed for the study. The analysis mainly focuses on the cultural ideologies, nature of morality, ideological differences which shape moral reasoning, category for inclusion and exclusion, and identification with an identity they perceive best defines their national belonging.

Results and Findings

Table No. 1- Global themes, Verbatims and Explanations based on interviews.

Themes	Verbatims	Explanations
Denied democratic rights invoked feelings of betrayal among Kashmiris.	Extract 1. <i>Let the people of Kashmir decide the future of Kashmir. If you look at the history, we were not given a chance</i>	The majority of Kashmiris feel that they have been denied democratic rights, which range from the right to vote for an independent nation (as promised by the first Prime Minister of India) to the right to the

	<p><i>to decide our future. We were promised, but that promise was not fulfilled.</i></p> <p>Extract 2. <i>When India got its independence, then Kashmir was a separate country; it was a blessed state. So we have a right to stay free from India and Pakistan.</i></p>	<p>freedom of expression. They allege that all forms of democratic rights are absent in Kashmir (Wani et al., 2013).</p> <p>A sense of betrayal induces a fear of trusting a nation again. This loss of faith pilotsthe participants to resist the national identity andideologies of nationalism propagated by their nation, India and struggle for a separate nation.</p>
<p>Kashmiri nationalism is to fight for independent Kashmir.</p>	<p>Extract 3. <i>The idea of nationalism is totally related to the idea of independent Kashmir.</i></p>	<p>To fight oppression and dominance is one reason among many for the origination of nationalism. Nationalism is also a struggle for self-determination. Along these lines, nationalism is a deep-rooted sentiment which harbours values of equality, justice and self-expression. Ironically, these sentiments/movements sometimes adopt the same methodology of persecution, tyranny, or injustice to fight against the same (Sharma, 2018).</p> <p>Thus, it can be concluded that the Kashmiri sense of nationalism comes from fighting against the injustices towards their community and establishing independent, justifiable nations. Nationalism is a sentiment that drives people to</p>

		<p>fight for the nation with the rival nation. However, in the case of Kashmir, the fight is between a state (which considers itself a nation) with its own country.</p>
<p>Perceived injustice and group commitment.</p>	<p>Extract 4. <i>About 5000 people were in jail, 100 or more people lost their lives, and many people were blinded. So the anger and alienation increase and it continues to grow. I particularly feel that by suppressing by force, it just backfires.</i></p> <p>Extract 5. <i>So there are many cases that go on and on and on about those atrocities. So when these things are done in the way what happens is the alienation and the anger among the people increases.</i></p>	<p>When a group or an individual starts to comply with a radical belief system, their trust towards authority begins to faint, and they perceive these authorities as illegitimate (Buijs et al., 2006; De Wolf & Doosje, 2010; Loza, 2007). These standpoints chiefly originate from the experiences of mistreatment, discrimination, violence, or domination, lead to mistrust of the authorities (Doosje et al., 2013).</p>
<p>Consequentialism or Consequential morality.</p>	<p>Extract 6. <i>But if there is something bad happens which is not morally good or which is not politically good or politically incorrect I will never support that very thing.</i></p>	<p>Consequential morality or consequentialism judges an act's moral righteousness by evaluating if that act maximises the good. It is measured by subtracting the total amount of bad from the total amount of good and then judging the act based on the net amount of goodness/badness. (Cf. Moore 1912, chs. 1–2.) (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).</p>

<p>Pro-Social Aspect of Kashmiris.</p>	<p>Extract 7. <i>People started arranging langar (free community feast) for them (the migrant workers). They knew, that those people couldn't go back home they had come here to work and they would have a shortage of money and used to arrange langar for these people.</i></p>	<p>The history of Kashmir cannot be studied in isolation from Indian territory, as it was always a part of India and the community was integrated by the secular vision of composite culture. Kashmiris loved Indian culture, and the valley existed in harmony with the neighbouring regions. Their sentiments always prioritised peace and harmony over materialistic goods. Their values and moralities originated from the philosophies of Saivism and Sufism. It gave Kashmir a deeply felt touch of spiritual tradition. In the valley, the confluence of Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism shared the common vision of establishing a human-centric culture. Sages such as Lalleshwari, Nund Rishi, and others provide the torchlight for the love and brotherhood of humanity. (Bhatt 203).</p>
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Discussion

The findings from the study provide a comprehensive insight into the intricate dynamics of the Kashmir conflict, offering a multifaceted understanding of the underlying causes, socio-political implications, and ethical considerations. These insights prompt a thorough exploration of the complex interplay between historical grievances, identity politics, nationalist aspirations, and humanitarian concerns in shaping the conflict landscape in the region.

The denial to hold a plebiscite has evoked profound feelings of betrayal among the Kashmiri populace. The withholding or restriction of democratic rights (as the participants treat the decision for self-determination as their democratic right) further exacerbates the sense of betrayal and non-belongingness felt by the people of Kashmir about the Indian state. Further, when these individuals perceive they are denied the opportunity to participate in the democratic process, they relate it to the principles of justice and equality and that further fosters a deep-seated sentiment of betrayal. The

desire for self-determination and the ability to shape their political destiny is intrinsic to the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, and any perceived denial of these rights intensifies the already existing tensions in the region.

Consequentialism, as a moral framework, evaluates the morality of actions based on their outcomes rather than the intrinsic nature of the actions themselves. In the context of the Kashmir conflict, a consequentialist perspective would analyse the ethical implications of various courses of action by considering the potential outcomes for the people involved. For instance, proponents of consequential morality might argue that resolving the Kashmir conflict through diplomatic dialogue and negotiations, considering the aspirations of the Kashmiri people for self-determination, could lead to long-term stability, peace, and improved human rights. On the other hand, critics might contend that certain approaches, such as military interventions or unilateral decisions, could result in increased violence, displacement, and human suffering.

Consequentialism prompts a careful examination of the potential consequences of political decisions, considering the well-being of the Kashmiri population. It encourages a holistic analysis considering immediate impacts and lasting effects on the region's social, economic, and political fabric. Ultimately, in pursuing a just and ethical resolution to the Kashmir conflict, a consequentialist perspective emphasises the importance of outcomes that promote human flourishing and minimise harm. The moral stand of the interviewed participants on the issue of the Kashmir conflict is presumed to be in alliance with the ideologically ethical norms of social and political affairs in times where the democratic process is treated as the most righteous way to resolve a conflict.

At the heart of the Kashmir conflict lies a profound sense of betrayal among Kashmiris, rooted in the perceived denial of their democratic rights, particularly the right to self-determination. The failure to fulfil the promise of a plebiscite, which was made during the accession of Kashmir to India, has engendered deep-seated feelings of mistrust and disillusionment towards the Indian state. This betrayal resonates deeply with Kashmiri's identity and has become a rallying cry for autonomy and independence. The denial of democratic rights exacerbates the existing tensions and fuels the desire for political agency and self-governance among Kashmiris.

Moreover, the study highlights the pivotal role of nationalism in shaping Kashmiri aspirations and resistance against perceived injustices. Kashmiri nationalism is portrayed as a collective identity deeply entrenched in the struggle for an independent Kashmir. However, it is imperative to recognise the complexities inherent in nationalist movements, particularly in ethnically diverse regions like Kashmir. While nationalism is a unifying force, it can also breed division and conflict, often exacerbating intergroup tensions. The assertion of Kashmiri nationalism underscores the quest for dignity, justice, and self-determination. Yet, it also underscores the

challenges of navigating identity politics in a region marked by historical complexities and external influences.

The consequentialist perspective offers valuable insights into the moral calculus guiding decision-making in the context of the Kashmir conflict. Consequentialism evaluates the ethical implications of actions based on their outcomes rather than their intrinsic nature. From this vantage point, proponents of consequentialism advocate for solutions that prioritise long-term stability, peace, and human rights. Diplomatic dialogue and negotiation, grounded in an acknowledgement of the aspirations of the Kashmiri people for self-determination, are proposed as viable pathways towards a just and sustainable resolution. Conversely, critics may highlight the risks associated with certain approaches, such as military intervention or unilateral decisions, which could escalate violence, exacerbate displacement, and perpetuate human suffering. Thus, a consequentialist analysis underscores the necessity of considering the broader ramifications of political decisions on the well-being of the Kashmiri population and the region.

Additionally, the study underscores the presence of pro-social aspects within Kashmiri society despite the ongoing conflict. Acts of compassion and solidarity, such as assisting migrant workers, exemplify the resilience and humanity of Kashmiris amidst adversity. These pro-social behaviours testify to the underlying humanity and interconnectedness that transcends the divisions and animosities perpetuated by the conflict. Moreover, they underscore the importance of focusing on humanitarian concerns and fostering a sense of community amidst the turmoil.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of the Kashmir conflict, encompassing historical, socio-cultural, and political dimensions. The unresolved status of Kashmir has far-reaching implications for regional stability and security, necessitating a holistic approach that addresses the underlying grievances and aspirations of all stakeholders. Any sustainable solution to the Kashmir conflict must prioritise dialogue, inclusivity, and respect for human rights while acknowledging the complexities and sensitivities involved.

Thus, the discussion elucidates the multifaceted nature of the Kashmir conflict, highlighting the interplay of historical grievances, identity politics, ethical considerations, and humanitarian concerns. A nuanced and holistic approach that integrates these various dimensions is essential for charting a path towards lasting peace, stability, and justice in the region. By addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and respect for human rights, the international community can play a constructive role in facilitating the resolution of the Kashmir issue and the realisation of the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this study provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the Kashmir conflict, shedding light on the intricate web of historical, socio-political, and ethical factors that shape the dynamics of the region. By analysing themes such as betrayal, nationalism, consequentialism, and pro-social behaviour, this research offers valuable insights into the complexities and challenges inherent in resolving one of the most protracted conflicts in modern history. At the core of the Kashmir conflict is a pervasive sense of betrayal felt by Kashmiris, stemming from the perceived denial of their democratic rights, particularly the right to self-determination. The failure to fulfil the promise of a plebiscite, coupled with ongoing restrictions on political freedoms, has engendered deep-seated feelings of mistrust and disillusionment towards the Indian state. This betrayal has become a rallying point for Kashmiri's aspirations for autonomy and independence, fueling tensions and perpetuating the cycle of conflict in the region.

Furthermore, the study underscores the role of nationalism as a driving force behind Kashmiri aspirations and resistance against perceived injustices. Kashmiri nationalism, rooted in the struggle for an independent Kashmir, reflects the quest for dignity, justice, and self-determination. However, the complexities of identity politics in a diverse region like Kashmir highlight the challenges inherent in navigating nationalist movements, which can often exacerbate intergroup tensions and perpetuate conflict. From an ethical standpoint, the consequentialist perspective offers valuable insights into the moral calculus guiding decision-making in the Kashmir conflict. By evaluating the ethical implications of actions based on their outcomes, consequentialism provides a framework for assessing the potential consequences of various approaches to conflict resolution. Proponents of consequentialism advocate for solutions that prioritise long-term stability, peace, and human rights, emphasising the importance of diplomatic dialogue and negotiation in addressing the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Conversely, critics highlight the risks associated with certain approaches, such as military intervention or unilateral decisions, which could escalate violence and perpetuate human suffering. Despite the challenges posed by the conflict, the study also reveals the presence of pro-social behaviour within Kashmiri society, underscoring the resilience and humanity of the Kashmiri people amidst adversity. Acts of compassion and solidarity serve as a testament to the underlying values of compassion and community that transcend the divisions perpetuated by the conflict. These pro-social behaviours offer a glimmer of hope amidst the turmoil, highlighting the potential for dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual understanding in pursuing peace and justice.

In conclusion, the Kashmir conflict represents a complex and multifaceted challenge with far-reaching regional stability and security implications. By addressing the root causes of conflict and prioritising dialogue, inclusivity, and respect for human rights,

the international community can play a constructive role in facilitating the resolution of the Kashmir issue and realising the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Ultimately, a holistic and collaborative approach is essential in charting a path towards lasting peace, stability, and justice in the region.

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