

THE UNSPOKEN AND THE UNRESOLVED: AN EXPLORATION OF TRAUMA AND RESISTANCE IN THE BOOK OF GOLD LEAVES

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the underlying narrative structure in *The Book of Gold Leaves* by Mirza Waheed by drawing upon Roland Barthes' five narrative codes. The study focuses on how these five narrative codes, i.e. hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, symbolic and cultural are used to depict the themes of trauma, resilience and resistance in the novel. For this purpose, different lexias related to five narrative codes are identified and categorised according to different codes. Then different lexias are interpreted to understand how they help to dismantle the narrative structure and thematic depth of the novel. This study, by applying Barthesian codes on *The Book of Gold Leaves*, found that these codes, by constructing a perceptible and detectable web of narrative, lead the reader to an open-ended conclusion. An open-ended conclusion which is unavoidable under the present circumstances because the forms of trauma and resistance are not verbalizable. The unresolved ending also shows the complexity of the Kashmir conflict.

KEYWORDS: Barthes' five narrative codes; *The Book of Gold Leaves*; trauma; resistance; Kashmir.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present research carries out the narrative analysis of *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014) written by Mirza Waheed. The novel depicts the everyday reality of life in Kashmir during 1990s and portrays a love story flourishing amidst conflict, uncertainty, trauma and suffering. The study explores the underlying narrative structure used to depict the themes of trauma, resilience and resistance in the novel by drawing upon Roland Barthes' (1915-1980) five narrative codes given in his classic work *S/Z* (1974).

The study of narrative is called narrotology, term used and coined by Tzevan Torodov in 1969. According to Fludernik (1996), narrative is connected to the verb 'narrate' and it is all around us and narratives in one form or another permeate virtually all the aspects of our society and social experience not only in literature but also in the recollection of life events, in historical documents and textbooks, scientific explanations of data, political speeches, and in ordinary conversations (Bukhari, Gul, Bashir, Zakir, & Javed, 2021; Bukhari, Said, Gul, & Seraj, 2021; Gul, Ilyas, Gul, Riaz, & Khan, 2025; Gul, 2025; Gul & Khilji, 2021; Gul, Tahir, & Batool, 2021; Gul, Ahmad, & Tufail, 2022; Gul, Ahmad, Tahir, & Ishfaq, 2022). Narratology as a discipline helps us understand narratives and narrative structures and their impact on our perception of reality.

Narrotology is one of the outgrowths of Structuralism and Post-structuralism. The interplay of these movements with semiotics and cultural studies paved the way to the debates on nature of discourse and narrative in literary texts (Fulton et al., 2005; Onego, 2006). Roland Barthes witnessed closely and contributed to the theoretical discussion and developments of structuralism to post structuralism. Being progressive and dynamic, Barthes was able to formulate his narrative theory by combining semiotics and cultural studies. His work *S/Z* projects his narrative theory where he asserts that narrative text is "and open and multi-stranded texture linked with extra-textual context" cannot be studied as minimal units but as a texture. (Herman et al. 2005, 461) Barthes' new form of critical investigation not only focuses on intrinsic value of lexia but also incorporates extra-textual contexts. It is helpful for the reader to interpret fictional texts with different viewpoints and know cultural practices such as ideology and identity etc. Literary works are product of cultural and historical contexts. As contexts are encoded in literary texts, Barthes model of narrative codes help to explore and analyse cultural practices, symbols and signs which shape any literary text. Barthes explains his narrative codes by applying these codes to the story 'Sarrasine' by Honore de Balzac. He breaks the story into different lexias. Lexias are fragments of the text containing a few words to several sentences. Then he categorises these lexias into five codes (Gul, Ayub, Mazhar, Uddin, &

Khanum, 2021: Salameh, Akhtar, Gul, Omar, & Hanif, 2022: Tufail, Gul, & Ali, 2024: Zakir, Ansari, Khan, Butt, & Bareach, 2025: Zhou, Gul, & Tufail, 2022: Tohar et al. 2007). The five codes of Barthes' theory include hermeneutic code, proairetic code, semantic code, symbolic code and cultural code. The proairetic code, also known as action code says that any action initiated in the story must be completed by making the story an organic whole.

The plot of a story text depends on the series of different actions in it. Through this code every action/ happening in the story linked with narrative is explored. These actions may or may not be necessarily physical actions but they also include internal or emotional responses of the characters. Likewise, the hermeneutic code, also known as enigma code deals with mystery, obscure clues and confusion. It helps to build a sequence in narrative. This code makes the reader want to know more by raising questions like what will happen next in the story and why? The cultural code also known as referential code refers to the elements of the text which point towards external body of knowledge i.e. scientific, historical, and cultural knowledge like stereotypes, values, proverbs, literary and psychological knowledge which exist outside the world of narrative (Barthes 1974, 20). The semantic code also known as connotative code refers to the connotations within the text that suggest additional meaning. These meanings and interpretations can vary from situation to situation and culture to culture. Thus, themes, ideas and concepts are all connotative codes. Different characters can have connotative meanings when they are given the names related to their specific roles or actions in the story. The symbolic code is about symbolism in the text. It deals with the binary oppositions at micro and macro levels. The opposites play their role in showing contrast, creating greater meaning, tension, drama and developing characters. The five codes of Roland Barthes explain and help in understanding and interpreting the narrative structure of a literary text and the way it is shaped. These codes are considered significant tool in literary criticism and analysis.

The story is set in Kashmir. The conflict of Kashmir started with the partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947 into two countries, Pakistan and India. The status of Kashmir at that time remained undecided till now. The state of chaos, suffering and oppression in Kashmir has ignited the flame of revolt and resistance among its people. In context of the situation in Kashmir, many literary works have been produced, i.e. Paro Anand's *No Guns at My Son's Funeral* (2005), portrays the traumatic effect of prolonged violence, terrorism and militancy on the children growing up in Kashmir; Malik Sajjad's award winning novel, *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* (2015) portrays Kashmir conflict from the perspective of humanity instead of geopolitical problem. Shahnaz Bashir's novel, *The Half Mother* (2014), raises the serious issue of forced disappearances of Kashmiri people. Another writer Siddhartha Gigoo, gives voice to the sentiments of Kashmiri pandits in his novel *The Garden of Solitude* (2010) while *The Far Field* (2019) by Madhuri Vijay portrays the situation and life of Kashmiri women. Mirza Waheed, the writer of *The Book of Gold Leaves*, the focus this study, is a well-known journalist and novelist born in Srinagar, Kashmir. He wrote other famous novels including his famous best-seller work, *The Collaborator* (2011), and *Tell Her Everything* (2019).

The Book of Gold Leaves, is a love story, told by an omniscient narrator, about a multiplicity of lives in Srinagar, the capital of Indian Jammu and Kashmir. The novel follows the fortunes of two families; Shia and Sunni, those of Faiz, the male protagonist and a papier-mâché artist; Roohi, the female protagonist and Faiz's lover; and the teachers at Roohi's old school. There is also a military man, Major Sumit Kumar from the plains, whose empathy gets damaged by the demands of his duty after being appointed in Srinagar, Kashmir. The story depicts undergoing humiliations in Kashmir. It is a distressing depiction of a city and culture under siege from more than one occupying force. In Srinagar the old, peaceable ways of life and religious coexistence, begin to unravel.

The study applies Roland Barthes' five narrative codes to explore the narrative of trauma, resilience and resistance in *The Book of Gold Leaves* by Mirza Waheed. The study identifies each code and then analyses the role of each code in the development and depiction of the said themes of the novel. Barthes' five narrative codes highlight the similarities in all narrative texts. Barthes argues for the significance of the reader considering him an important part of the narratives. Many previous researchers have conducted studies using either all five codes of Roland Barthes in any narrative or only some of them. The researchers assert that Barthesian reading helps reader unfold the multiple meanings and untie the tightly woven structure of the narrative in the target texts. (Zaib 2017; Tanusy 2018; Ratika 2020 etc.)

The Book of Gold Leaves has been subject of studies since its publications. Being a native Kashmiri writer Waheed pours out his first-hand experience into his stories. Researchers have analysed the novel from different perspectives. For example, Rather (2017) in her study asserts that by writing this love story and by depicting a violent, turbulent period, full of drama and pain the author deserves appreciation. The novel portrays tragic violence becoming a norm, creeping into society.

Haque and Iftikhar (2019) in their study, 'The Fetishization of Forbidden Land in Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves*' regard Kashmir as a forbidden land for its natives. Atmosphere of terror prevails in the region. Sunni, Shia, Hindu and Muslim, all religions and sects have their holy places deteriorated and empty due to the fear. Hence, the fetishization of the land of Kashmir is growing daily and the situation is being tried to be controlled by banning the daily activities and the places of worship or daily affairs.

Rakhshan Rizwan (2020) in her 'Portable Pleasures and Papier-Mâché' finds a connection between the expression of local pleasure and literary text and discourse of human rights. She argues that Kashmiri writers through "somewhat unconventional narrative plots, which prominently feature representations of food, poetry, geographical beauty, and material culture, to talk about the desire for and the absence of human rights" (194).

The existing studies on *The Book of Gold Leaves* largely focused on exploration of themes, identity, trauma and political conflict. This study makes use of Roland Barthes five narrative codes to reveal the underlying narrative mechanism that shape the readers' understanding of the story. For this purpose, the study first identifies the lexias and categorise them according to codes, and explains the meaning and application within the cultural and linguistic context. Thus, to ensure that all aspects of narrative are considered, the study offers a systematic and rigorous analyses of *The Book of Gold Leaves*' narrative through Barthes five narrative codes. However, as some of the lexias overlap in narrative of the novel, these are explained simultaneously to avoid repetition. Barthes' codes provide investigating tool for different aspects of narrative discourse. These codes can work independently as well as in connection with overall narrative web of the story. Here is the analysis of narrative codes in *The Book of Gold Leaves*. use this for the first paragraph in a section, or to continue after an extract.

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1 Hermeneutic Code:

Hermeneutic code refers to some unexplained contents in the beginning or at any point of the story to create narrative ambiguity. Sometimes, the writer consciously adds these ambiguities and riddles to create suspense in the story. These riddles and ambiguities are explained and resolved with the course of the story or towards the end of the story. Even the stories which do not contain narrative complexities, have hermeneutic codes in the web of narration. *The Book of Gold Leaves* offers some enigmas which the reader encounters at different stages of the story. Starting from the title of the novel, "*The Book of Gold Leaves*" which can be interpreted in two ways; one, gold leaves refer to precious and beautiful leaves which ought to offer a beautiful story (of golden time), the other one, gold leaves may also refer to the leaves during autumn, and the book of gold leaves is the story of those autumnal leaves yet having positive connotation as harbinger of spring. The writer, however explains the title in 'A Cover Story', "I'd been slightly doubtful about the title of my new novel at first. I had liked it but, as so often happens, I still felt slightly uncertain. When I saw my own great grandfather's 'Book of gold', I knew it could not be called anything else. It has created an extra ordinary connection between past and present" (Waheed 2014, 295). Thus, the title offers a glimpse of a beautiful past and the artisan of Kashmir, the story of the art and the artist, Faiz. The book of gold leaves was made of "light weight material like paper pulp, paper board or wood and further embellished with hand painting of traditional motifs and designs" by artists known as naqash. (Mir and Ain 2010, 222)

In the first chapter of the novel, another hermeneutic code appears, which is Faiz's aim to complete his dreamwork or 'secret personal work, *Falaknama*'. As a breadwinner of his family and extended family of his brother through his art of papier mâché, completing his own work as his total focus seems like an adventure. *Falaknama* (literally meaning about the sky or story of the sky) itself is a kind of riddle or enigma. "The earth and the world contained in it, in all its detail and glory, in all its life and light, reflected in a saucer-shaped sky, is how Faiz has imagined *Falaknama*" (Waheed 2014, 11). Will he be able to make his work of dream? This question takes the reader to go on to find out the completion of Faiz's marvellous work of art.

The second chapter titling *Roohi* is about *Roohi*'s prayers and 'wish for the boy of her dreams to come and take her away' (Waheed 2014, 6). *Roohi* is known for her exceptional beauty among her college friends. This is the time when *Roohi* has completed her education; the education, her family thinks is enough for her. The prayer and wish she repeats day and night is another hermeneutic code. It raises question in the mind of the reader, i.e. Whether her dreams would come true or not?

The local girls' school is turned into a military camp. The arrival of an army unit in the girls' school, is an unusual thing, makes the students anxious and angry. This also foreshadow happening of something unusual through the presence of soldiers in the girls' school, especially when they start checking the bags of school children at the gate. Initially, the Principal, *Shanta Koul* allows military as she thinks it is government's decision so it must be for the good of locals and it will be temporary. But the stay of army becomes troublesome when during the cross-firing between local fighters and army, some innocent school children and Faiz's godmother, *Fatima* gets killed by the army.

Thus, first part of the book, presents the situation/ circumstances in which the main characters, i.e. Faiz and *Roohi* are dreaming of something romantic and blissful. These circumstances include the stay of army in Girls school, Principal's concerns over army officers use of her office and school space, *Roohi*'s father's assignment from the newly appointed DC to collect the data from his area. Amidst all these circumstances *Roohi* and Faiz meet, exchange letters and promise for a life together. "I'll take you to *Gulmarg* in the snow, I promise, *Roohi*," "say that again," "I promise" (Waheed 2014, 59). Faiz belongs to a Shia family whereas *Roohi* belongs to a Sunni one and their different religious sects also revealed here which serve as hermeneutic code, as Faiz also raises question, "The elders, my people, your people. What will they say?" (Waheed 2014, 60) This question comes to the mind of the reader too. What would be the end of this story? As a cultural code also, it is about the differences of different religious sects of Muslims. *Roohi* belongs to the Sunni while Faiz belongs to Shia sect. Normally people from both of the sects do not agree to have any relationships.

Then the second part of the novel, shows the turmoil when the soldiers are attacked by the 'boys' and capturing of common people by a 'gigantic *Leyland* truck, a twelve-wheeled beast truck' called by local people as '*Zaal*'. "we have never seen it before. They have sent some new kind of truck that drives very fast and grabs people. It is like

a net that arrests people on the street. No, not arrests, it captures them. Sort of swallows them. It's a Zaal" (Waheed 2014, 69). 'Zaal' is a Kashmiri word used for the net used to catch the fish. The way a fish-catching net catches fish, the people see this big vehicle catch the citizens. They just disappear captured by the Zaal. The connotative function here is to show the use of force and imprisonment of the people of Kashmir. The killing of the 'Godmother' named Fatima who was a teacher of Faiz' by soldiers and 'the Zaal', a mysterious and enigmatic figure itself add up more to hermeneutic code in the story. These two actions bring an upheaval in the life of Faiz as he changes the course of his life. The story continues to unpack the venture of Faiz, Roohi's wait for Faiz, their reconciliation and Kashmiri peoples' sufferings, resistance and struggles for freedom and yearning for romantic, paradise-like past.

2.2 Proairetic Code or Code of Action:

The actions narrated in *The Book of Gold* can be analysed by Barthesian Proairetic code or code of action. According to Barthesian explanation action of the narrative can be categorised as cardinal and catalyst actions. Cardinal actions are the main actions which open and close anxiety and suspense while catalysts indirectly help to promote significance and importance of the action to intensify the situation by adding different details, events and dialogues to the story (Barthes 1975).

The main or cardinal action of story of *The Book of Gold Leaves* is divided into perusing personal duty and romantic love and dream to complete his artistic work *Falaknama*. On one hand, there is Faiz, the protagonist's sense of obligations and responsibility and on the other hand there is his quest for his artistic dream work and romantic love. Each of the cardinal action encounters different challenges under the specific political, cultural and religious circumstances. For Faiz perusing personal duty is his priority:

He goes still at thought of Roohi. But he cannot sleep...who will end it? Then again, how will he make a difference? But what about Fatima? Who will stand up for her? She has no one. People have already moved on; there's hardly a mention of her. With this Zaal thing prowling around, I may not last long here anyway. I might as well put myself to some use. I will be back soon and Roohi will surely wait for me (Waheed 2014, 95).

These lines as *lexia* stimulate the action. The restlessness and insomnia after Fatima's death forces Faiz to decide taking up arms in order to take revenge of her blood and save other innocent citizens in future. It also implies that the situation in Kashmir forces everyone to stand up for their nation. They feel guilty if they carry on with normal routine life in such situation.

2.2.1 Faiz's Expedition:

The killing of Fatima by soldiers and disappearance of different young boys was signalling something more to come. Here Faiz's expedition start as his brother tells him:

'The boys they took away had nothing to do with anything, either. And even if some of them were involved, this is no way to find out. Hunted like cattle. Snared like chickens. Caged as if they were mad dogs. Even Hari Singh's reign was better than this...anything may happen here now.' "You need to run."

But where I will go?

Anywhere?

Yes, anywhere (Waheed 2014, 99).'

Mir Zafar Ali, Faiz's elder brother's suggestion works as catalyst. Zafar Ali is the one who luckily escaped from the capturing from the Zaal. Now he is asking everyone to flee from the place. And Faiz, who already, was thinking to 'make use of himself' to get rid of the situation, goes to "Alaqa Ghair" (forbidden area) to get military training. The chapter titling 'At Home' is about the situation after Faiz's sudden absence from his home. "Some think that the young papier mâché artist might have been taken by the Zaal" (Waheed 2014, 127). The sudden disappearance of Faiz leaves the people in uncertainty. They think, like many other young boys Faiz might have been taken to some investigation or torture cell. This also depicts hundreds of other disappearances of men in the region that leave the people with questions like where they can be or whether they are alive or dead. This implies the high level of uncertainty among the people of the city.

2.2.2 Letter exchange

When the life is limited for Kashmiri people, there is no freedom to go outside of their home. "... Both kinds of armed men, the uniformed and the non-uniformed, patrol the city's gardens of Eden" (Waheed 2014, 139.) This is how they keep observing the activities of people. The places for the tourists are also surrounded by the soldiers. Kashmiri people, who were used to sit in the shrine, gather around different shops for discussions are now bound to stay at their home.

The areas are curfewed and abducted. The censorship of letters is a normal thing. The chapter "Country with Post Office" as referential code reminds the poetic work of Agha Shahid Ali *A Country without Post Office* in which he highlights forbiddance on communication and expression of Kashmiri people. It optimises the situation, especially for the captivated hearts of Roohi and Faiz who can exchange letter via Nepal post. In *The Book of Gold Leaves* Waheed projects that how letters are dispatched to Nepal post and then sent to Pakistani training camps where Faiz gets military training. This is cardinal action which moves the love story ahead. Through letter exchanges, Roohi comes to know whereabouts of Faiz and Faiz is informed about the worsening situation of the homeland. "Faiz, look what has happened here. Please come back soon. No, do not come back now. They are taking the boys away" (Waheed 2014, 186). Roohi's heart is unable to endure long separation from her beloved. She pleads him to come back and then asks him not to come back. If he comes back to her, there will be no

guarantee that he will be safe in the bad circumstances in the city. Again, the connotative function here, is to show the yearning of a lover as well as the possible threat for men especially those who joined resistant groups.

2.2.3 The Resolution of Love Story:

When Faiz manages to come back and brings the proposal of marriage to Roohi's father, which is not a normal thing for a Shia boy. But under the situation of Kashmir now the differences of religious sects are not important, as Roohi's Father says: "I am aware that these are hardly times to think of such things, you know, Sunni, Shia et cetera, but, you will understand, this man has just returned from there and -how- do I say this? – if it were a traditional marriage proposal, as a father I would ask, ask the matchmaker, for instance, wouldn't I, what does the boy do, how old is he, does he have a regular income, is their house nice, will she be very far from us, you know what I mean?" (Waheed 2014, 244)

This lexia is also cultural code. The father surrenders the sectarian differences because this marriage is not the traditional marriage. Now they are to follow no traditional/ cultural ways but have to decide according to the situation. Faiz's sense of duty and responsibility becomes the concern of everyone and it leaves no space of religious differences. The father announces, "There will be two clerics, one Sunni, one Shia, at the Nikkah" (Waheed 2014, 276). For this unusual inter-sect marriage, the presence of the clerics of both sects signifies further the unity and consensus of the community put aside the differences aside. As in the beginning of the story Faiz worried about their families concerns about their religious differences. this is the resolution of the one of the main action/conflicts of the story that they happily married. Whether they live happily after that or not? The burning situation in the backdrop of the story brings more upheaval in the lives of the community people. To know whether Faiz is able to carry one his duty as a freedom fighter in the narrative of the story or not. We will look at some other actant of the story which play a role to take the narrative of the story to the end.

2.2.4 Intrigues and Manipulations:

Kabir Khan Roohi's father, was assigned a task of providing data of the employed and unemployed youth to the government. Apparently, the data was meant for the Chief Minister's Employment and Income generation Scheme for Downtown Srinagar. But low key the data was collected for the purpose of raids. It is an opposition between what is actually being done under the cover of something else. The data collection for the employment and income generation is something for the benefit of the society, but it is used for police raids. As a catalyst action, it is the manipulations and deception by the authorities.

Meanwhile, Rumi, Roohi's brother and unknowingly a member of pseudo freedom fighter group's member, is told that his father conspired with the Indian government to raid on the locals. He discusses the thing with Roohi who reacts this stupidity fiercely and both think about a solution. Kabir Khan, somehow, also gets to know that he is being suspected. He becomes restless as he had only done a job assigned by government. "What if some people think I had something to do with it.. that I was part of the plan? (Waheed 2014, 156)" Kabir Khan, expresses his worry in front of his wife and daughter. He gets worried after knowing that all those houses were raided whose data he had provided for the governments' income generation scheme. He dutifully did a task assigned by government officials for the betterment of the local youth. But after raids, he fears that people would think he was part of the conspiracy against his own people. He feels entangled in a trap. This implies the conspiracy and fear in the city, people serving government with intentions are also vulnerable. His action as a catalyst action contributes to the cardinal action of violence which resulted in his own killing by the freedom fighters. His killing towards the end of the story is another catalyst towards more unforeseen terrible situation. How his dead body is taken by a procession amidst enchanting slogans of freedom, signalise the uncontrollable resistance of Kashmiri people.

2.2.5 Army officer:

The character of Major Sumit Kumar is a significant character in the story of The Book of gold Leaves. Initially, he is shown a sympathetic character who really feels sorry to use the school class rooms and offices as a residence for his unit. Mr. Kumar represents the Indian army. He is also not happy with whatever he has to do. "Yet a niggling shadow of guilt is far from Kumar's mind" (Waheed 2014, 91). He finds himself dangling between a guilty officer whose soldiers killed innocent citizens and a dutiful officer whose soldiers needed to retaliate the attack on the bunker. The connotative function here is to show the war between good and evil in the mind of the officer. "The images in his room are now questions. He thinks about the children and old woman but has no answers" (Waheed 2014, 92). The restless mind of Major Kumar is shown here after killing of innocent children and old women (Fatima). As he is staying in the science laboratory of the school, there every skeleton and skulls seems to him asking questions about it. But he has to follow the instructions from the army headquarters. (Waheed 2014, 153) But who is to blame here. Which action is the stimulator of the violence, as Shahida and Faiz argue about the army's presence, "My dear sister the soldiers came first! The boys took to arms later (Ahmad & Gul, 2021: Ahmad, Gul, & Zeb, 2022: Ahmad, Gul, & Kashif, 2024: Ali, Gul, Khan, & Karim, 2021: Ali, Gul, Khan, & Karim, 2021: Ayub, Gul, Ali, & Rauf, 2021: Waheed 2014, 46). The lexia of Faiz views on the dynamics of the conflict especially role of local community. He is in the view that locals are respondents, not the initiators of trouble and they are motivated by their desire only to protect themselves. that the local residents did not initiate the trouble. They only responded and resisted the presence of military in their home. Here, the connotative function is that picking up arms for defence is justified for locals. Mr. Kumar, is a constant reminder of oppression and violence that becomes the part of the daily lives of Kashmiri people. Though Mr. Kumar has his own motivation, emotions and conflicts. His internal conflicts shows that those who involve in conflict and violence are not always immune

to moral complexities. Thus Mr. Kumar's narrative adds up to different perspective to see the ongoing conflict in Kashmir.

The role played by Mr. Kumar at the end of the story is particularly leaves many questions.

Kumar first raises the machine-gun skyward, etching a glistening arc with its steel in the moonlight as he rotates it. He has decided he will fire a few warning shots into the sky at first. And he turns away from the crowd, the shrine, towards the roofs of the houses opposite. He pulls the trigger just as he sees two shadows standing in a window a hundred feet away. The shadows shift, shake for a moment, but do not separate (Waheed 2014, 290). This lexia is the closing of cardinal action of the story where Mr. Kumar inadvertently opens the fire on the two shadows (of Faiz and Roohi) ...but the story actually never ends, rather it more likely seems boosts up the violence. This way Mr. Kumar's action though not intentional but it is malicious act proving the senseless brutality of war. It marks no end rather and by leaving the story open-ended Waheed gives a stark reminder and indicator of the continuity of conflict where there would be no winner, only victims.

How the ending of the story is merging the both cardinal actions, i.e. personal duty, and romantic love and dreams. It is an open-ending and it is kind of poignant and haunting conclusion to the whole narrative though not unexpected. Faiz and Roohi are presented as shadows...they are nameless and faceless... but they are generalised... Faiz is no more a militant; Roohi is no more a Militant's wife. Their presentations as shadows implies the killing of all countless innocent people without knowing their identity. This is human cost of the conflict and it poses threat to unknown individuals. The 'shadows do not separate' suggest that dreams of being together is fulfilled and the dreams of Falaknama is drawn by the rotating movement of the machine-gun of Mr. Kumar. Ironically, for Kashmiri artist, instead of artistic dream work machine-guns are rotating from sky to earth shooting fire, no matter what and who becomes the victim.

2.3 Semantic or Connotative Code:

Semantic codes add meanings through connotations. It can be connotative value or meaning of different names, characters, titles, actions and contexts etc. The Book of Gold Leaves presents a clear picture of the happenings/actions in the story. But there are many examples or lexias which express connotative meanings. For example, the title of the novel, which has already been discussed under hermeneutic code has connotative meaning. Apart from the title, some of the lexias are presented here.

"Not all the uniforms are welcome in school" (Waheed 2014, 52).

These words are written in a note that a student of the girls' school, Shireen Shah, slipped in Sumit Kumar's room from under the door. This note meant that schools are meant for students and education not for army setups or camps. The connotative function here, is to show the awareness, attitude of boldness and retaliation by the students.

- "And sweat smells sometimes, especially that of politicians" (Waheed 2014, 18).

These words are spoken by Naseem, Roohi's aunt, about a minister who puts his arm around her while she was receiving her prize from him. At literal level, the statement simply means that minister was just sweating and his sweat smells bad. However, through Barthes's codes the deeper connotations can be drawn from the quote. Firstly, it can be seen as an example of Semantic code. Naseem's statement has deeper meanings. As she emphasizes that the politicians' sweat smells bad especially, it suggests that she actually makes a commentary on the filthiness of politician who are corrupt and immoral. It also indicates people's distrust and dislike for politicians. Secondly, as an example of cultural code, the statement depicts when she asks him to take off his arm from her shoulder after receiving her prize. This remark does not only show the fearlessness of a young Kashmiri woman, but also is a fitting ironic expression to unfold the filth and corruption of local politicians. The connotative function here is to show the hatred of people for the politicians.

- "The soldiers came first; the boys took arms later" (Waheed 2014, 46).

This line is spoken by Faiz during the siblings were discussing the arrival of army in the city. Faiz believes that the local residents did not initiate the trouble. They only responded and resisted the presence of military in their home. Here, according to semantic code, the connotative function is to show Faiz's idea that picking up arms for defence is justified for locals. In terms of symbolic code, the soldiers are representatives of government and its authority who want to get control over the area and locals are just showing their resistance against this control. As a Cultural code, it suggests that oppressions lead to the rise of resisting movements in any conflicted area.

- "I wish someone had burnt the school down. She should have said no, but why should she care? Her own relatives are in the Convent, aren't they?" (Waheed 2014, 54)

These are the words spoken by a student, Beenish, when the students discuss arrival of the army in their school. Nobody likes it. Beenish blames the principal Shanta Koul for the presence of army in their school. This shows the students' misperception of the situation, as a mere principal has not much power to decline the government orders. The girl also declares that the principal agreed to the army's camp in the school as they were Hindus, thus her relatives. The connotative function here is to show the lack of trust and frustration among people in the war-stricken region. Symbolically, the school is the place of learning and grooming but it became the living place of oppressive army. Thus, Beenish's wish shows the destruction of hope and innocence amongst conflict. Culturally, the statement represents the prejudice and mistrust among different religious groups. Beenish blames the principal for accepting the presence of army only because the principal belongs to Hindu community and that's why helping the army. Thus, the dialogue highlights the complexity of the conflict and the divisions amongst common people on the basis of religion.

- “He finds himself dipping into his indigo pot, even though he should be using crimson and pink for this flower” (Waheed 2014, 84).

The flashes of the sight of his godmother, Fatima’s dead body make Faiz lose control over his hands while painting. Innocent Fatima and school kids get killed by the machine-gun fire fired by the army. At Rangrez shop, a foot of Fatima’s dead body gets indigo colour on it. That sight flashes into Faiz’s mind. The connotative function here is to show that while working Faiz is overwhelmed by the sight of Fatima’s death scenes that he deviates from the proper use of colour for his painting. This can be applied to the whole story of Faiz, that he has to leave his art and join the movement of freedom fighters.

- “I will prove to you that you are wrong and the only thing that stops you preaching austerity is personal gain and kebabs” (Waheed 2014, 102).

These are the words spoken to a religious cleric by Mahraaze, a dervish. Mahraaze boldly hits him verbally in front of a huge crowd. These words are an irony on the religious clerics that divide people and preach falsehood to run their business of selling religion for their own benefit. The connotative function here is wake up and do practically something for the people.

- “At times, she feels guilty for being the only mother in the neighbourhood with none of her sons in custody or dead” (Waheed 2014, 126).

Farhat explains the feelings of her mother to Roohi. These words not only depict the feelings of their mother but also the feelings of all those people in the city who are still somehow safe from the claws of circumstances. They feel guilty in front of the people whose sons and relatives are taken away or killed for fighting and resisting the oppression. The connotative function here, is to show the people who blame themselves for being useless, as they find themselves guilty of not being the subject of torcher and death during the struggle.

2.4 Symbolic Code:

As it is explained earlier that the symbolic code of Roland Barthes refers to the binary oppositions are antithetical ideas in the text. The Book of Gold Leaves present the narrative of a love story in a chaos-stricken region of Kashmir, which itself is binary oppositions. The story starts from a peacefully living people living in Khanqah Muhalla of Srinagar city. Where there are sound of music coming from the windows, prayers from shrines and people sitting in different groups in markets to discuss. How and in what circumstances this love story develops provides many binary oppositions and antithetical ideas, which are given below:

- The basic binary opposition in the novel being the main character Shia and Sunni sects of Islamic religions.
- Mahraaze, called as a mad man, a dervish, records the voices of the local men in the torture cell. He once unfolds the bitter reality of the local religious cleric. He speaks about the ills being done to the Kashmiris by the Hindustan and Pakistan. A mad man talking sense is an antithetical idea.
- “Which was the Paradise Hotel until two summers ago, but is not uses as detention, torture, and processing centre called a Paradise one” (Waheed 2014, 80).
- Presence of bunkers in the school is antithetical because the schools are meant for education not for arms.
- Rumi thinks that he has joined a freedom fighter’s group, but the group secretly works for Indian army.
- Kabir Khan agrees on Shia Sunni marriage whereas in past Mir Zafar Ali had broken many hearts by not agreeing to Shia Sunni marriage.
- Panther is apparently head of a group fighting against the army but in the end, he turns out to be an informant and facilitator of army.
- Kabir Khan expects payment from the government for doing the assigned task dutifully but gets killed by the people he worked for.

2.5 Cultural Code or Referential Code:

Words of different local languages used in the text of the novel depict the existence of multi languages in the region. Some of those words like mouj, kangri, Ghazal, Chinar, chillum, zaal, Brahmin, Mahraaze, Pandit, Kali and zulm depict the cultural diversity of Kashmir. Each of these words has cultural significance as it reflects the local customs and traditions. For example, Ghazal is form of Urdu poetry, Chinar is tree in Kashmir. Chillum is a traditional smoking device. The use of these words gives a realistic touch to the overall narrative of the novel.

- “What is she going to do with another degree? And who gets job without a big sufارش or bribe now a days.” (Waheed 2014, 17)

These are remarks of Shameem, Roohi’s aunt depicts the typical patriarchal views of the society that women education is not much important. These lines also refer to the common culture of using references and bribes to get a job in India. The word ‘Sifarish’ implies to the use of personal connection to get a job. It shows the corrupt practices in the system where youngsters face obstacles to get jobs. In these circumstances, it is not considered even to try for a job. If a female is not destined to get a job, so it is suggested not to get educational degrees.

- “He remembers Dada’s face when he had asked him what people had put in their food when Gandhi had gone on salt strike.” (Waheed 2014, 90)

These words refer back to the incident in Indian history when Gandhi led a non-violent civil disobedience. He refused to buy and use the expensive salt produced and sold by British. The protagonist learns about this historical even from his Dada (grandfather) which depicts that how history is passed down from generations and how the political movement impact on the lives of the common people. As a referential code it highlights the struggles of Gandhi, another figure of resistance in subcontinent.

- Faiz is named after a famous Pakistani poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz (1911-1984) known for his revolutionary views.
- Painting of Umar Khayam, serves both as referential and symbolic code. Umar Khayam, a 9th century Persian poet, is known for his poetic work, Rubaiyat (poems having four lines) which is about love and loss. The painting is reflection of the protagonist's journey to find romantic love during adverse situation. The painting also serves as the loss of cultural heritage of Kashmir.
- The shrines in the narrative of the story, in the opening of the story is also opening of love between Roohi and Faiz, Shrine is community's gathering place while towards the end it becomes a space for resistance a reprieve for protestors and a place of calm during the turmoil in the city.

3. CONCLUSION

This study has found out that Barthes' five narrative codes play an important role in understanding the development of the thematic meaning within a story. Each of these code-- hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, cultural and symbolic--individually and collectively, as some of the codes very often overlap in different lexias, provide the reader not only a greater insight into narrative itself but also the cultural, social and political contexts also in which the story develops. These codes also contribute to readers' insight how different character are shaped and modelled in particular context, allowing them to get transformed and motivated. This study, by applying Barthesian codes on *The Book of Gold Leaves* by Mirza Waheed found that these codes, by constructing a perceptible and detectable web of narrative, lead the reader to an open-ended conclusion. An open-ended conclusion which is unavoidable under the present circumstances because the forms of trauma and resistance are not verbalizable.

The hermeneutic and proairetic codes, in particular, have a great effect on readers comprehension of narrative. These codes create a sense of mystery by taking the reader into the dreamworld of the protagonists' and their search strive for fulfilling their dreams push the reader to uncover the enigmas, and unresolved questions which ultimately bring the reader in a reflexive manner, to discover multi layers of meaning within the narrative. The semantic, cultural and symbolic codes help reader to understand the contexts of the story. The semantic code unfolds the connotative meanings of words and expression, cultural code highlights the social and cultural norms while symbolic code deciphers the deeper and metaphorical meaning of certain expressions, words and events. Thus, the application of Barthes' five codes on *The Book of Gold Leaves* not only help readers uncover multi layers of meanings by a reflexive manner but also makes their perception of narrative resolutions.

Data Availability Statement

This is a literary analysis and the information is taken from existing literary work. The authors make it clear that no additional data was used in this study.

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All authors contributed to prepare the manuscript. The manuscript is discussed and revised by the authors to get it ready for the submission.

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