Beautiful Prison: Geopolitics of everyday life in Kashmir

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by

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हिरण्यमयेनपात्रेणसत्यस्यापिहितंमुखम्।

तत्त्वंपूषन्नअपावृणुसत्य -धर्मायदृष्टये॥१५॥

The face of truth is covered by the golden vessel, Oh Pushan,
Uncover it for the vision of truthful dharma
- *Ishavasyopnishad*

To my parents,

Amma and comrade J.P

DECLARATION

The work presented in this thesis titled ***“Beautiful Prison: Geopolitics of Everyday Life in Kashmir”*** has been carried out by me under the supervision of **Dr.AnuSabhlok**at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Mohali, Mohali.

This work has not been submitted in part or full for a degree, diploma or a fellowship to any other university or institute.

Whenever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly with due acknowledgements of collaborative work and discussions. This thesis is a bonafide record of original work done by me and all sources listed within have been detailed in the bibliography.

Yogesh Mishra

Date:

Place:

In my capacity as the supervisor of the candidate’s thesis work, I certify that the above statements by the candidate are true to the best of my knowledge.

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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic account of everyday life in a conflict zone. This ethnographic journey starts by analyzing the notion of 'normalcy' in Kashmir, one of the most contested places in the world; and, further moves to examine the geopolitics of everyday life in this region. The dissertation asks: if 'normalcy' is understood as an effect of regularly held practices in a repetitive and rhythmic way, then, what is normal in a disturbed area? If ruptures challenge the continuity of the routine, then, what about the everyday lives of the ordinary people where ruptures have become the routine? I focus on the mundane, prosaic, and ordinary aspects of daily life and draw attention towards the struggle and negotiation hidden beneath the apparent routine. Second, by focusing on historical narratives and experiences grounded in the local geography and in social relations, the thesis traces the links between history, memory and the everyday. Third, and more broadly, this study discusses the bodily struggles in everyday spaces accommodating geopolitical pressures and emotions like intimacy and fear. My research is informed by qualitative research methods. My focus as an ethnographic researcher was on participant observation with its emphasis on experience and the words, voices and lives of the participants. This approach combines the processes observed, with specific features of the context in which these events occur, which is itself linked to historical and cultural contingencies. Overall, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the lived realities and the everyday with its inherent ambiguities and contradictions dealing with a range of emotions, beliefs and the precarious nature of life.

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(Fig 1.1: Map of Jammu and Kashmir)[1]

[1] Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/68/Kashmir_region_2004.jpg

Chapter 1: Introduction

Our wounds are labelled forgettable, our life before death is imperceptible
Billboards proclaim, Kashmir: A Paradise, God has a reason to be chimerical
(Agha Shahid Ali)[2]

> I studied for three years in Bhopal. I had to leave the Valley, my home for a strange land. It was odd enough for me that I liked living in Bhopal, an alien land. However, I missed my family, my home, and the weather of course. The reasons for leaving were many. But everything is connected to one thing only that's the conflict amidst which we live. Bhopal is not as beautiful as my homeland; food is different and people have different opinions about us (Kashmiris). I should not probably say this…but I was happy there, living a completely new life. I was satisfied. In Bhopal, I could sense what a normal life means. I could think of something without worrying too much. Now I understand what normalcy means. People call my Kashmir as one of the most beautiful places on earth, but for us, it was a '*beautiful prison*' and still is! Now I am back here (Kashmir). This is my reality, to live here, waiting for good times… a better future (emphasis is mine).
>
> (Bashir, 24-year- old)

In one of the interviews conducted during my field stay in Kashmir, talking about the perils of life faced inside the Valley, and the experiences gained outside Kashmir, Bashir used the expression 'beautiful prison' to portray the contemporary image of Kashmir. His experiences outside the Valley made him believe that there can be a *normal* life out there which he had never seen before. Bashir's narrative also informs us about a context where militarization has become an ordinary feature of people's lives. The Kashmir conflict is a reality. But how does one capture this struggle, the politics and precarity of lives in a contested land? How do insecurities, fear, and violence find their ways into everyday life and remain submerged in the small details of routine? This thesis is about everyday life in a conflict zone and the precariousness that such a life carries with it. The mundane is invoked to recover the 'overlooked material' (Moran, 2004) so that the geopolitics of everyday life amidst socio-political turmoil can be understood. Connecting memory and history with the present every day, this dissertation examines how people adapt to,

[2] Retrieved from http://www.thekashmirwalla.com/2012/12/i-belong-to-a-valley/

negotiate with and challenge a militarized governmentality that surrounds them. I pay particular attention to spatial manifestations of this conflict and the spatial strategies used to lead everyday lives in such a milieu.

What could be more everyday than going to University, walking back home or finding one's daily bread? And what happens when this uneventful, dull, repetitive routine, focused on daily needs appears as political, disturbed and ruptured? Addressing such concerns, Kogl (2009) writes, "We may perceive everyday life as banal and apolitical, and we may see ourselves in our everyday guises as walking zombies, but only because we cannot see the politics of the everyday; it is too close" (p.515). Cowen and Gilbert (2008) examine how powerful political discourses seep into the everyday, and reveal that "the war on terror is not simply one that targets so-called terrorist acts, but the feelings of terror generated by a range of contemporary social and political insecurities" (p.49). Veena Das (1997, 2000) evokes a 'sense of ordinariness' to reflect upon the effects of the violence in the mundane. Her analysis of Partition of British India as a 'critical event' demonstrates the efforts which women make to recover and to come to terms with the 'normalcy' of life.

Azmi (et. al, 2013) explore the ways in which young people from war- affected Eastern Sri Lanka engage with politics in their everyday lives and how young people choose to exercise their political agency in the spaces of the everyday life. The study demonstrates, "that war-affected youths in eastern Sri Lanka are stuck in their everyday politics, which prevents their full political presence and involvement" (Azmi et. al, 2013, p.119). Saree Makdisi (2008) presents a detailed account of the everyday lives of Palestinians to demonstrate how the 'peace process' institutionalize people's lives and in this process, people lose control over their inner and outer

lives. Similarly, there are works that offer ethnographies of lived experiences and the ways in which ruptures, disruption, and daily life are interconnected (Pain et al. 2010; Kelly, 2008; Boehm, et al. 2011; Ibrahim & Shepler, 2011) and show the effects of sectarian violence (Lysaght, 2005; Hopkins 2007) and fear, insecurities and resistance embedded in people's routine (Scott, 2008; Vinthagen and Johansson, 2013).

Over the last few decades, Kashmiris have been living under constant threat of violence, facing crisis in day-to-day life and experiencing the 'denial of democracy'[3]. Writing about the lives of Kashmiris, Nitasha Kaul (2010) notes:

> An entire generation of young people has now grown up surrounded by guns, bunkers, barbed wires, curfews, searches, unmarked mass graves, torture and detention centres – and counting – those raped, those gone missing, those orphaned, those killed by the military and militants, those collaborating, those defecting, those crossing the borders, those being killed randomly as they go to buy chicken, play football, or visit their beloved. (p.44)

It is not an unusual sight in Kashmir when hundreds of thousands of demonstrators come to the streets of Kashmir defying government orders and demanding '*azaadi*' (freedom); or, when people attend militants' funerals and wave Pakistani flags raising anti-India slogans. Army searching households in the hunt for militants, or, *sang-bazan* (stone-pelters) throwing stones at the security forces – violent demonstration, wailing old parents many such descriptions that complicate the understanding of the events in Kashmir.

[3]Sten Widmalm (1997) argues that the poor record of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir is characterized by constant rigging of elections by the Central government that prevented a fair and autonomous competition between political parties and posed a threat to democracy.

(Fig 1.2: Protesters throwing stones and shouting pro-independence slogans, some carrying Pakistan's Flag. Photo: Reuters)

The imposition of curfews over entire towns and cities, sometimes for weeks at a time (Bose, 2003) along with mass protests and *hartals* (strikes) have continued to disrupt routine life in Kashmir. Restrictions have penetrated into the virtual space as evidenced by state actions like blocking the internet, messaging services and barring telecom networks. One of my respondents names it 'e-curfew'.

The land of Sheikh Noor ud-Din Wali and Lal-Ded, a seat of Adi- Shankara and Khanqah-e-Moula, which flourished like a saffron flower imbibing the traditions of Sufism and Shaivism, nowadays search for the metaphors that can explain the situation in Káśmīra. What happened to the '*Jannat*'[4] (heaven)? How is it that current descriptions of Kashmir pronounced

[4] *Agar Firdaus bar rōy-e zamin ast, hamin ast-o hamin ast-o hamin ast*. (If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here)It is popularly known that after seeing Kashmir's serene beauty, Jahangir, the Mughal emperor

through the metaphors like ‘manufactured peace’, ‘blinded paradise’ and ‘beautiful cage’ are antipodal to those who see it as a ‘paradise on earth’? This thesis examines the dynamics of everyday life where social, political, religious and other processes operate in a contested terrain and suggests that a careful and sensitive reading of the mundane enables a more humane story of the lives surrounded by conflict.

Research context

A whole history remains to be written of spaces which would at the same time be the history of powers from the great strategies of geo-politics to the little tactics of the habitat.
Michel Foucault (1980, p.69)

The conflict in the Kashmir valley is one of the prolonged conflicts in the world. Once known for its extraordinary and serene beauty, this valley has now become synonymous with violence, separatist movements, frequent curfews, mass graves and some obscure military operations. Since 1947, India and Pakistan have been failing to reach a consensus on an agreement for the territory of Kashmir, despite three wars (1948, 1965 and 1999). Guha (2007) mentions that in recent times the Kashmir issue has also been altered at times to portray as an ‘India- Pakistan issue’ rather than ‘Jammu and Kashmir question’. In the late 1980s, a sudden eruption of armed insurgency started an era of encounters, tortures, disappearances, surveillance, and exodus of Kashmiri Pandits; there was chaos in people’s lives troubled by both the state and militancy. The following decades witnessed a macabre opera of death and destruction which led to the ordeal of Kashmiri *awaam* (ordinary people). Oberoi (2001) reflects on the circumstances of that period and writes:

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recited Amir Khusrau lines in praise of Kashmir’s natural beauty. Since then, it has captured the people’s imagination as Jannat (heaven).

> No local person believes that normalcy has really returned. An air of anxiety pervades the whole city. The warrens and walkways of Srinagar and its environs remain scorched. A mother's heart skips a beat when her child fails to appear at the appointed hour. People avoid the cinema, preferring to stay close to family lest "something bad happen" while they are out. (p.1)

As a result of continued struggle and conflict, Kashmiri society stands fragmented. The violence associated with conflict leading to such fragmentation has now become deeply associated with Kashmiri society.

The title of this thesis includes the expression 'beautiful prison' which serves as a reminder of Bashir's emotions and suggests an intimate way of knowing his world. As Baviskar (2012) notes, "there are multiple realities, constructed by people in different ontological positions" (p. 3). This thesis is an ethnographic account of everyday life in a conflict zone. I look at the intricate tapestry of life in the conflict prone area of the Kashmir Valley. My particular emphasis is on the spatial aspects of everyday life amidst socio-political turmoil. I start my ethnographic journey by analyzing the notion of normalcy in Kashmir and further move to examine the intersections of geopolitics and everyday life in this region. I was particularly drawn in by the notion of 'normalcy' on the reading of media reports following the protests and restrictions imposed as consequences of the hanging of Afzal Guru[5]. After the restrictions had been lifted, newspapers were replete with headlines such as, 'returning normalcy in the valley' or 'normal life resumes in Srinagar'.[6] It is in this context that I ask if normalcy is understood as an

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[5] Afzal Guru was sentenced to death by the Supreme Court of India in 2002 after he was found guilty of facilitating the 2001 Parliament attack. Nine people including security men and officials of Parliament were killed when *Jaish-e-Mohammad* terrorists attacked Parliament in 2001. Afzal Guru was held responsible for conspiracy and helping the perpetrators.

[6] Such headlines were reported by both local and national media after the ban was lifted. For instance, *India Today* published a news '*Life returns to normal*' and *Hindu reported 'Kashmir returning to Normal*.' Local newspapers

effect of regularly held practices in a repetitive and rhythmic way, then, what is normal in a disturbed area? If ruptures challenge the continuity of the routine, then, what about the everyday lives of ordinary people where ruptures have become the routine? I focus on the taken-for-granted mundane activities of people's lives to understand the meanings hidden beneath the apparent normal routine and the ways in which a geopolitical conflict manifests itself in the everyday lives of residents in that conflict zone. I seek to explore the connections between the seemingly mundane decisions of everyday life, geopolitical events, and national discourses.

The narratives about everyday routine also reveal that past-experiences and memories condition the present routine. Since narratives of collective memory and violence travel through public and private spaces, assuming multiple forms, I make an effort to see narratives grounded in local geography and in the social relations that play out in particular contexts. By paying attention to memory and its representation, I highlight the role of the meta-narratives encased in social memory. My emphasis is on how the recollections of narratives and discourses become a part of the collective memory, as Said (2000) suggests, "collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified and endowed with political meanings" (p.185).

The analysis of a conflict in its contextual, historical specificity demands attention to a multiplicity of scales from global and national discourses to embodied practices. In order to understand the Kashmir conflict, multiple scales ranging from the global to the body must be studied in relation to each other. However, I argue that bringing the everyday life and the voices

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like *Greater Kashmir, Kashmir Times, The Rising Kashmir* also emphasized on the returning of the normalcy and resuming of daily activities.

of its residents back into the debate is essential to a nuanced reading of this conflict. I contend that the geopolitics of everyday life goes beyond a nested scalar understanding and looks at the ways in which people negotiate with the existing structures. Simultaneously, this dissertation explores the ways in which "places are experienced through the body and how the body is experienced through places" (Nast and Pile, 1998, p.302). The present work pays attention to the body as a site of resistance and struggle amidst troubled geographies of fear, resistance, and violence**.** It discusses the bodily struggle in everyday spaces accommodating geopolitical pressures and emotions like intimacy and fear.

Objectives:

This thesis examines the dynamics of everyday life where social, political and religious processes operate in a contested terrain. In doing so, the thesis considers three broad research objectives which are as follows-

- To understand how everyday life is lived amidst ruptured routines and violent discourses. I pay attention to the mundane, prosaic, and ordinary aspects of daily life to reveal the struggles and negotiations hidden beneath the apparent routine.

- I attempt to understand how different narratives are produced, adjusted, maintained and circulated in the collective memory – then subsequently used by social and political agents to support or challenge (local, national, global) discourses.

- This research focuses on the bodily encounters in spaces of persisting conflict and also attempts to analyze how intimacy and violence interact with each other as a part of everyday existence.

Through these objectives, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the everyday and lived experiences as a part of the larger material and discursive structures in a conflict-ridden state. The research uses the everyday to reflect upon political struggles at the national and geopolitical scales. It, thus, contributes to the literature on everyday life by demonstrating how everyday spaces constitute and are constituted by political and socio-religious discourses at local, national and global scales. Further, this thesis attempts to bridge the gap between the politics of conflict and emotional and affective politics[7] to draw attention to the small pleasures, hidden fears and the taken-for-granted precarity of life in a conflict zone.

Methodology

LeBaron (2003) states that conflicts are not only about the territory, boundary, or sovereignty. However, linked with the cultural component, conflicts are also about "acknowledgement, representation, and legitimization of different identities and ways of living, being, and making meaning" (para 2). I revisit the social tropes depicting Kashmir's various images, sometimes contrasting each other. For an outsider, Kashmir is a tourist place, a landscape filled with green meadow surrounded by snow laden mountain 'as an object of the tourist gaze'[8] and for some a 'disturbed' state threatening Indian sovereignty. A lost paradise for a Kashmiri Pandit in exile, a 'tough' duty for an army man, and a "beautiful prison" for someone. These different and

[7]Sara Ahmed argues (2004) that emotions do generate and create meanings in the world, and emotions, as material rhetoric, have affective power. She argues that emotions have the power to create meanings through the histories and contexts that they invoke. For details, please refer to *Sara Ahmed. (2004). The Cultural Politics of Emotion. New York: Routledge.*

[8] Jeffrey Sasha Davis quotes this expression to represent radically different views representing Bikini Atoll, l an atoll in the Marshall Islands. In 1946, the U.S. military removed the people living on Bikini Atoll in order to use it as a test site for nuclear weapons. For details, please refer to Davis, J. S. (2005). *Representing place: "Deserted isles" and the reproduction of Bikini Atoll.*

contrasting images of Kashmir anchor my work. The representation of Kashmir, both as a sightseer and disturbed place, also generates a debate as to "whether places are wholly constructed by social processes or whether the spatial and social are mutually constitutive" (Davis, 2005a, p.608).

In order to understand how local Kashmiris envisage and inhabit this place, which now echoes pain and suffering, violence and separatist movements, frequent curfews, and mass graves; I reflect on the everyday life in Kashmir. In my ethnographic journey, I follow what Veena Das (2007) notes in *Life and words.* She statedthat her work is not about the events which have anchored her anthropological reflection:

> Rather, it narrates the lives of particular persons and communities who were deeply embedded in these events, and it describes the way that the event attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the recesses of the ordinary. (p.1)

I visited Kashmir for the first time in the year 2013 on a pilot field visit for my doctoral work. My initial idea was to look into the subjective experiences of violence of those who inhabit a contested place. I had two objectives: a) an understanding of violence as a tool used by various actors involved in the conflict and b) the outcomes of violence on bodies as sites of oppression and resistance. Initially, my objectives were informed by the academic discourses on violence and production of docile bodies. Having a related set of questions in mind, I interacted with several people from Srinagar town and other nearby districts. Though people shared their experiences about the perils of life embedded in violence and political turmoil, it was the routinely held activities of the people, which I saw, were affected the most. People discussed how conflict disturbed everyday settings. I consider these accounts as "lived category – one used

when constructing the lived experience of social reality and social practices" (Galasińska and Kozlowska, 2009, p.88).

Gradually, these lived experiences started to destabilize my understandings of life in a conflict zone and complicate the idea of 'normal'. The transitions from normal to disturbed and back to normal were like naturally occurring phenomena in this context. Perhaps, it was due to the prolonged conflict and its violent nature, that the dichotomy between mundane and extraordinary; and normal and disturbed seem blurred in their lives. While conceiving the research objectives, the field was a distant and an abstract notion, but after being in the field, it was my initial proposal which seemed far-flung and abstract. My observations went beyond my original objective to examine the production of docile bodies in a contested zone. I discovered that looking from the outside, everyday life may seem ordinary. However, hidden under the apparent routine, it carries a layer of meanings, concealing the tensions of being in a conflict zone. Everyday implications of geopolitics and the relation between event, narrative and the mundane encourage this study to analyze 'natural attitude' and apparent simplicity of the routine.

I am inspired by the concerns of feminist geographers in redefining political geography by asking questions about space/place tension, multilayered analyses of the body as a geographical site, and corporeal experiences of conflict embedded in the mundane. This research is influenced by feminist geographers in the ways in which politics is understood spatially, relationally, and at multiple scales. Feminist political geography has turned to an interest in the everyday and mundane exercise of power (Dowler and Sharp, 2001), my focus remains to highlight the hidden and mundane acts of power which structure identities and influence inter-community relations in the everyday. The everyday becomes more important because it is the site of 'inner world', a grid of representations, mundane activities giving meaning to their

actions. My efforts are to place the 'de-centered subject' at the heart of understanding the humane side of the conflict (Butler, 2004; Radcliffe, 2006). The analytical strategy, I use emphasizes subject formation in struggles embedded in everyday life and the exclusion within the power structure, where gender is seen neither as analytically central nor as the end point of critique and analysis (Fraser, 2004). 'Gender' is understood as a highly relational analytical concept for considering the workings of power, rather than as a descriptive term or categorization (Butler, 2004; Cornwall, 2007; Elmhirst, 2011).

In the following chapters, I ask, what do the following have to do with geopolitics: What a family cooks for their dinner and what conversations are possible during their meal? The route a student takes to go to college and what they wear? Who one marries and how a community chooses to grieve their dead? It is this connection between the seemingly mundane decisions of everyday life and geopolitical discourses and events that I seek to explore in my thesis. This work, therefore, involves a deep immersion into life in Kashmir. Ethnographic methods like participant observation and in-depth interviews are most suited to my query.

This thesis adopts ethnographic methods to present an insight into people's lives. By focusing on the experiences of the people from the Valley, this study illustrates the socio-political, cultural and gendered dimensions of Kashmiri people's lives rooted in everyday activities. While I do not claim that the narratives or the experiences cited here are the only valid experiences of the ongoing turmoil, I use them to highlight that people's lives are deeply embedded in various discourses enduring intersections of conflict and struggle for peace.

Moreover, ethnographic research on Kashmir is very limited even though the literature on history and politics of the region abounds (Sokefeld, 2013), primarily because of the apparent risks associated with doing such work in Kashmir and governmental surveillance (Shah, 2012; Sokefeld, 2013). However, I agree with Dowler (1999) when she writes about participant observation in a conflict zone. She notes, "The researcher not only observes the behavior of the group that she or he is studying, but also participates, as much as possible, in the daily lives of the community members" (p.195). I do not claim that this ethnography will provide a truer or complete account of life in Kashmir. I see knowledge production as co-constitutive process created by the interactions between the researcher and the researched. The participants are not passive information providers but actively construct and direct their relationships with the researcher. I, however, do see my work as very much grounded in the local as opposed to a top-down view.

Locations and Methods:

Ichose Srinagar as my primary field site mainly because it is the epicenter of various political and cultural activities and also a seat of the state-administration, the summer capital of the state. Apart from its importance as a capital city, Srinagar's importance is rooted in its historical legacy and cultural heritage. Furthermore, the presence of many educational institutes like Kashmir University, National Institute of Technology (NIT), University of Agricultural Sciences, etc., makes it an educational center. This city has been an important center for Kashmir's Sufi tradition and Shaivism. It is the home to various local and national media offices, major political parties and non-governmental organizations, civil society groups and some international

organizations (UNMOGIP). I conducted ethnographic work in Srinagar for over a period of nine months in the years 2013, 2014[9], and 2016.

During my field trips, I stayed in Srinagar most of the times from where I traveled to the districts of Pulwama,Ganderbal, and Anantnag, each of which had regular instances of curfews, protests and skirmishbetween public and paramilitary. At the time, I was in Kashmir; all these districts were under curfew at one point of time or the other. Here, I find it appropriate to cite Dowler's perspective on doing research work in conflict places, she notes:

(Fig. 1.3: Location Map)

> If academics insulate ourselves from the everyday experiences of war, do we not run the risk of perpetuating stereotypical images of life under those conditions? We need first hand research, not filtered, received material. We must conduct work in the places where conflicts are occurring. (2001, p.421)

The particular methods adopted to gain an understanding of the various aspects of the lives of Kashmiri people are: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. The methods chosen for the work are informed by the approaches of qualitative research.

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[9]In September 2014, Kashmir was hit by one of the worst floods in the history of this region. I was there during that time and I had to cut short my six months field work because everything had collapsed in most of the Srinagar – there was no access to drinking water or food. However, I was present in Srinagar for the first week and witnessed moments of both despair and hope amidst the Kashmiri people. Some reports claim that this flood left 460 dead and displaced almost a million people.

Specifically, my fieldwork involved on-site observations, reading local media and 70 interviews. My focus as an ethnographic researcher was on participant observation with its emphasis on "experience and the words, voices and lives of participants" (Skeggs, 2001, p.430). I combine the processes observed with an understanding of the specificity of spatial and temporal contexts in which these events occur. This enabled me to make sense of my observations within their historical and cultural contingencies.[10] Interviews were in-depth and semi-structured and perhaps more like deep lengthy conversations. They were conducted mostly in Hindi except when people chose to speak in English. In the case of Kashmiri language, simultaneous translation from Kashmiri was provided by Naveed Bhat[11], one of my key respondents.

In order to understand the background of the conflict and its current nature, I reviewed the existing academic literature on Kashmir history, and its socio-political structure. I also looked for online resources like blogs, memoirs, websites, reflecting the Kashmir's past and the ordeal of its people. I also read online versions of some of the local newspapers like *Greater Kashmir, Kashmir Times, Rising Kashmir* along with online magazines and blogs like *Kashmirfirst*, *Kashmirlife* and *Kashmir Kaleidoscope,* etc. I went through the website of JKCCS[12] (Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society) and Panun Kashmir[13], a website maintained by Kashmiri Pandits' organization by the same name. Besides this, the University of Kashmir allowed me to access the University Library (Allama Iqbal Library) for the purpose of

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[10] Isabelle Baszanger, Nicolas Dodier, Ethnography: Relating the Part to the Whole. In David Silverman ed., (2004) *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, 2nd ed. London: Sage, p.12.

[11] I have used pseudonyms of the respondents, except for those who insisted their real names be used.

[12] www.jkccs.net. The website cites its objective as "JKCCS through its constituents seeks to speak truth to power whether through reports, programmes, systematic documentation, litigation or other engagements in Jammu and Kashmir and outside".

[13] http://www.panunkashmir.org. Home page of the website shows the headline 'A Homeland for Kashmiri Pandits' and cites "Kashmiri Hindus (Pandits) are in exile since early 1990 after Islamic religious fundamentalists in the valley of Kashmir took to armed subversion and terrorism and drove them out of their centuries old habitat (np)"

the literature review. This helped me to explore a vast range of research material and some of the old dissertations available in the library.

The primary data for the research comes from my own writings and observations during my stay in the Valley. Participant observation forms a significant portion of my time in the field.I took several bus and local taxi rides to Lal Chowk, Nowhatta, Khanyar and Maisuma to gain familiarly with the local areas. To record the observations and interview details, I maintained a field journal. Recording the interviews was not possible because the people I interviewed were not comfortable in getting their voices recorded. Hence, I took extensive notes of the interviews conducted. Hand-written field-notes were made immediately after the end of each day in order to document observations and impressions.

Interviewees and other details:

All the interviews were long, unstructured and informal and helped me to gain thorough understanding of the issues. As Chowdhury (2014) notes, "far from being supplemental explicatory means, oral history interviews can become resources with which to understand the complex relationship between memory and experience, between events and their representation, and between oral traditions and oral history" (pp.58-59). Furthermore, insights from the in-depth interviews and observations of minority communities (in this case Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs) revealed levels of diversity and heterogeneity arising from the narratives of respondents (Ryan et.al, 2011). Initially, it took me some time to establish the connection with my respondents. It was only through contacts established at the Kashmir University that I was invited into homes and communities to interact with people. Discussions at research scholars' hostel in Kashmir University with some students helped me to shape my understandings of contemporary Kashmiri

society and facilitated meeting with various people. Students who became friends at the Kashmir University helped me gain access to Kashmiri communities, and I conducted 70 interviews (55 men and 15 women), out of which 40 interviews were in-depth. The contacts established were mostly acquired through snowball sampling. The interviewees come from different religious and social backgrounds. The male respondents belong to the age group varying from 19 to 80 years old, and the female respondents are between the age group ranging from 22 to 60 years old.

I found people were open to discuss various issues ranging from secularism to fundamentalism. Youngsters were not hesitant to broach upon sensitive and controversial issues, for example, their frustration about Islamophobia and anti-Islamic media campaign or criticism of particular ideologies. Since, I was from a different cultural background, lifestyle, and religion, some respondents explained things in great details assuming that I knew little or nothing about their context or the 'real story' of Kashmir.

During the interviews, I also talked about my background and the reason for conducting the research. I always felt more comfortable discussing with my respondents in mundane settings, like having long conversations in tea-stalls, get-togethers in the university canteen, and visiting my respondents in their working spaces like fields or orchards. Gathering data through interviews is not only limited to verbal communication or mere observations but also through the bodily gestures and expressions that remain unsaid. As Berger (2011) writes:

> In following a story, we follow a story, we follow a story teller, or, more precisely, we follow the trajectory of a storyteller's attention, what it notices and what it ignores, what it lingers on, what it repeats, what it considers irrelevant, what it hurries towards, what it brings together. It's like following a dance, not with our feet and bodies, but with our observation and our expectations and our memories of lived life. (p.72)

My interest throughout the field work was in the narratives or what Wertsch (2012) calls 'stock of stories'.[14] I also acknowledge the fact that sometimes people use generic narratives to make sense of the present reality by reducing complex information into simple stories (Wertsch, 2012). These simplified narratives make sense of the past and are used to introduce a specific perspective, to support a particular ideology or a political ambition. The narratives consist 'individualized experience' which encompass "abrupt changes in the qualities of social relationships. Previous feelings of safety and security are replaced by the perceptions of danger, chaos, and a crisis of meaning" (Neal, 1998, pp.3-4). Neal suggests that "national trauma shared collectively and frequently has a cohesive effect as individuals gather in small and intimate groups to reflect on the tragedy and its consequences" (Neal, 1998, p.4).

The individualized memories of personal injury and national trauma aid the construction of 'memory of resistance'. These voices hidden in the obscurity of macro politics are, in the words of Homi Bhabha, the way "to historicize the event of the dehistoricized" (1994, p. 198).

Reflection on self-reflexivity:

As an 'outsider' and a non-Muslim, my position as a researcher was added by a complicated relationship between religion and ethnicity. Given that I was from 'mainland India'[15], and a Hindu Brahmin; these markers were added to the layer of the outsider/insider perspective and to my identity tag as a researcher. My identity as an outsider sometimes resulted in the role reversal

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[14] Wertsch (2012) mentions the works of Bruner and MacIntyre and writes that 'stock of stories 'make sense of the social world and our place in it (p.9). Please refer to: Wertsch, J. V. (2012). *Texts of memory and texts of history*

[15] This was an expression which was used by many during my interactions with people while they refer to India. Even in my very first visit, I was introduced as "meet my friend Yogesh, he is from India". It was a clear reflection of differentiating between us and them as Kashmiris and Indians.

too. For example, on many occasions, my intentions and understandings were questioned by the locals. People were interested to know my observations and perspectives on Kashmir. Though my language knowledge (Hindi/Urdu) and my physical appearance[16] created a certain shared cultural references and a sense of identification, I had to be very careful while using certain words like '*Bharat Mata'*, 'democratic India', etc. I was also advised by my key respondent that I should not interact with soldiers, at least not in the open as this may create problems for me. Most of the time I felt like an insider–outsider at the same time. For example, on the night of 6th Sep 2013, some University students held a protest to oppose Zubin Mehta's show '*Ehsaas-e-Kashmir*'. I was also present there at that time. In the protest, people were shouting anti-India slogans which made me conscious of my identity as an outsider. But then, two students who knew me came to me and said: "It's only for the Indian government and armed forces. We have nothing against you, don't worry. Just try to understand our position".

During my field stay, on several instances, I was asked to produce my credentials like identity card or a letter from my institute verifying my status as a Ph.D. student. On one such instance, a senior professor remarked: "How can we judge your intentions? You can be a state agent doing a random check". However, I never felt that people hesitated to share their experiences. Instead, people were willing to share their stories. Though sometimes it brought back sorrow and pain to them, they never stopped sharing stories, and this probably made them "feel heard", as expressed by some of my respondents. I would like to mention here that this ethnography is not apolitical in nature as I believe, and as Mohanty (1988) also notes that there is no scholarship that can be completely apolitical. This research is shaped by the relationships between me, as a researcher, and the people I communicated and stayed with. However, I also

[16] Often, I was told that I look like a Kashmiri, a fair skinned guy with a beard.

realize that developing friendships in the field can also carry a challenging aspect in presenting sensitive information. Equally, such alliances in the field may also lead to the enrichment of research process and establish a more equitable level of communication between the researcher and the researched.

In the summer of 2014, Srinagar witnessed a massive flood, the worst in more than 60 years. The entire city was flooded; roads and house were under water. All communication lines were down, there was no way to contact the outside world. We were not sure about the food supply and access to simple things like safe drinking water was challenging. My immersion into life in the Kashmir Valley, therefore, came to an abrupt end and I took an emergency flight out of Srinagar after spending ten days stranded in a flood. The experience, however, was extremely powerful and stays with me even as I physically exited my field. It raised questions for me: How can I give gory details of the shocking events which occurred during my stay there? More importantly, what does it mean to give such an account? An article published in *Rising Kashmir*, a local newspaper, reveals another facet of writing about conflict. In this article a rape victim shares her views about journalists from international media and NGOs and says, “They would come, ask us questions, take our pictures and leave. Today when our children and grandchildren see our pictures on the internet, it’s humiliating for them as well as for us”. (“Kunan Poshpora Mass Rapes”, 2016, para 78).

I seem to swing from one position to another and in-between space about writing the stories, and sharing their accounts. This, I feel, is a burden which I carry while I write this thesis. Following is a poem titled: ‘*Voices from the field*’ that emerges out of my interactions with some young Kashmiris. It was a collective feeling amongst them that there was too much focus on the

conflict, and as residents of the contested terrain, they became mere subjects for researchers. As one young student quotes a slogan used during many civil and political movements, it was '*Nihil de nobis, and sine nobis' ("Nothing about Us without Us"!)*. Their intent was not to accuse anyone but to question the ontology of the subject and object dichotomy; or in simple words, who can represent whom? This poem is an attempt to reflect upon the idea of representation and inclusion of voices from the field.

Cashmere, Káśmīra, or Kashmir
A contested land, barge into imagination as a 'living hell'.

O Researcher! People from your tribe
Often come here, talking about our bane,
Discussing scholarship and commitment,
Talking about ethics, ontology and epistemology,
Vowing to record our plight and pain.

And now it's you,
You want to record, transmit and convey our stories.
Tell me, what is your gain?
Or it is just for a name?
We are always under the 'gaze'
Today it is you, otherwise, it's the State.

Let me tell you,
I am a body, a mere object
For some, a geographical scale
Now, define this space, pick your theory
Add some words like critical, radical, subaltern, and geopolitical
Fit it in a framework, and present your story
Write a thesis, paper or a monograph.

Let me tell you
We are 'children of conflict'
Who live in a cage, a beautiful jail!
Do me a favor, don't expunge any word,
Ignore my wailed eyes and trembling hands.

Listen - what I say,
India is a symbol of opulence and muscles,
We live among draconian laws like AFSPA, and PSA,
Our voices are crushed, eyes shut, and pens are shackled,
But don't reduce it to 'bare-life';
Life may seem disturbed or losing its rhyme.

But we don't give up.
We aspire to be free,
We laugh, smile, croon and go out to dine
Without her (India), we will be fine!

O scribe,
We may seem to be struggling to find our voices,
Which is stifled and gagged.
We want to reach to those,
Who not only speak but act;
Who listen, imbibe and react.

Let me spit, what is our bane
It is injustice, violence, grief and pain,
And some memories buried in graves, bearing some numbers, not even a name.

Do me a favor
Just don't represent me,
Do not make claim over my subalternity,
Share your space with me,
Let me put some fight
And then I shall arise to write what is right!

Conceptual frameworks:

There has been a steady flow of literature on the changing socio-political, religious and legal discourses shedding light on the Kashmir 'problem'[17] (Lamb, 1991; Bamzai, 1994; Schofield 2010; Bose 2003; Sikand, 2011; Rai, 2004; Zutshi, 2004, 2014, Noorani, 2013, 2014; Kaul, 2015). Existing scholarship sheds light on various accounts about the conflict situation in Kashmir. Some produce the discourse of victimization representing the 'bare life'. Others portray Kashmiris as ideologues of Kashmiriyat, representing an ideology of independence or self-determination. This section outlines the theoretical framework for this dissertation. The proposed framework grounded in feminist geography and geopolitics argues for a discussion at micro scale as an alternative way to analyze a contested place.

Understanding the everyday

The routine: waking up, morning chores, breakfast,
out on the streets to hurl stones and abuse at the visible symbols of occupations
no lunch, more stones, more abuses, getting chased, hurt, tear-gassed, shot…
The Next morning, the same routine.
-Yirvun Kreel[18]

The attributes of everyday life have been equated with routinely performed acts, mundane and trivial aspects of social life. While appearing transparent and straightforward, the meanings rooted in social practices are both complex and inconsistent depending on its context.

[17] I concur with Kaul (2010a.) when she writes that 'calling a place an 'issue' in international relations is euphemism for restrictions on the human rights of the inhabitants of that area, using excessive force, perpetrating violence, and condoning bloodshed.' (p.45). Places become a problem when state exercise its uncontrolled power over its citizens in order to maintain a hegemonic position to maintain 'national integration' and state interests.

[18] Yirvun Kreel is an anonymous activist, active on social media like Facebook. This quote is taken from Kak, S (2011) (eds). *Until my freedom has taken*. (p.97).

Sociologists like Goffman, Simmel, Agnes Heller, and Habermas have all addressed enormous variations in human lives to understand both abstract and concrete patterns of the everyday.

There is no dearth of literature available on Kashmir issue highlighting the nature and the consequences of the conflict. This literature includes scholarly articles, books, monographs and research reports. These writings covering geo-politics, socio-religious, violence and nationalist discourses, help to understand the various dimensions of the Kashmir conflict and provide insights into its contested history. However, in all this, everyday life remains unnoticed containing "broken patterns, non-rational and duplicitous actions, irresolvable conflicts and unpredictable events" (Silverstone, 1994, p.7). This apparently simple and straight-forward everyday life that exists in open also carries the multiple aspects of life that lie hidden (Highmore, 2002). This reaffirms my concern for an analysis of the everyday to understand 'normalness' or the apparent reality of human lives in a conflict. In this effort, ethnographic accounts help to comprehend negotiations, resistances, and power in spaces of persistent conflict. I offer narratives from my ethnographic fieldwork to argue that everyday life needs to be put in a context, particular to its location and surroundings to understand its nature and various attributes attached with it. My focus here is also to bring to light the voices of the Kashmiri women which remain buried in the labyrinth of household chores and embedded in the mundane. These are the voices which otherwise remain absent in the dominant narratives. The stories from my fieldwork shed light on the precarity, politics, and power embedded in the mundane and offer ethnographies of lived experiences. I pay particular attention to the spatiality of routinely held practices, albeit with an intention to avoid a compartmentalization of daily life or fixing its activities into binaries like disturbed and calm; simple and complex. Rather, I am seeking to

enter into the inner world of experiences through a situated understanding of the quotidian that contains the multitude of emotions, fragments of violence and space for a hope.

History and memory

Edward Said (2000) proposes, “Only by understanding that special mix of geography generally and landscape in particular with historical memory” (p.183), we may comprehend the persistence of conflict and a difficulty that is far too complex and grand. By demonstrating the role of memory in a contested place, I want to present that “memory, is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to eternal present” (Nora, 1989, p.8) and creates a ‘meaningful location’. In doing so, memory accommodates and nourishes those facts which suit the recollections. As a result, this refashioned memory in its collective form attaches particular meanings, discourses to provide a coherent identity and a sense of place.

Memory and its representations touch very significantly upon the questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and of authority (Said, 2000, p.176). Several scholars like Edward Said, Pierre Nora, Connerton and Maurice Halbwachs have argued that social memory is generated and reproduced to invoke the collective identity, and, the past is reconstructed and re-appropriated to serve the current needs and attitudes of society’s members (Halbwachs and Coser, 1992). In order to understand the relation between place and everyday life experiences, the attempt is to investigate the material circumstances of daily existence and the intersection of collective memory and place. As Connerton (1989) points out that “our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. We experience our present world in the context which is causally connected with the past event and objects” (p. 2).

By focusing on historical narratives[19] and experiences grounded in the local geography and in social relations, my thesis will trace the links between history, memory and the everyday. Since the everyday is used to refer to a broad range of mundane activities performed by ordinary people, the idea is to explore the ways in which history is experienced and articulated through narratives in the everyday setting. The narratives from my field work are not intended to provide a historical account but to describe how the historical and current events unfold in people's lives. For example Hilal Mir (2011), a seasoned journalist from Kashmir, writes about 'occupation of memories'. He notes "For me, the bunker represent an occupation of memories. It was built on the spot where a man sold *phirni* and children would line up for the sighting of the crescent, a harbinger of Eid" (p.40). I pay attention to how people recall their past (contested past/history in this case) through their interaction with the aspects of material culture, sites of commemoration and symbols of identity like Kashmiriyat.

Places through body

In this part of my work, I argue for a spatial analysis of the body politics. I demonstrate how bodies, beliefs, and feelings become sites for contestation and reproduction of geopolitical agendas. Although, there has been excellent work on the Kashmir conflict and its genealogy dealing with many tensions (Bose, 2003; Schofield, 2010; Rai, 2004; Behera, 2007; Kazi, 2010; Zutshi, 2014), we have yet to develop, however, an account that traces out the ways these

[19] Historical narratives are defined as "social constructions that coherently interrelate a sequence of historical and current events" which "are accounts of a community's collective experiences, embodied in its belief system, and represent the collective's symbolically constructed shared identity" (Bruner, 1990, p. 76).

tensions are normalized in everyday practice, especially in respect to bodily regulation. Nast and Pile (1998) write,

> We all have bodies, but the idea that we have bodies—that bodies are a possession that the individual has—is culturally, historically and geographically specific. Further, the impression that the individual is located in a body and that being in a body is also about being in a place warrants further scrutiny. (p.1)

I begin with a narrative of Amir from Srinagar city, who said: "It seems that a script is written all over my body which proclaims my 'otherness' as a Kashmiri, a potential threat".[20] This narrative of Amir highlights the role of the body to analyze what happens when human bodies are the territories through which geopolitical strategies play out. In this direction, Sara Smith (2011) also writes: "when the population becomes part of a territorial struggle, the body itself becomes a geopolitical site" (p.456–7). Further, looking at "the body as a gendered public space and the site of socio-political representation" (Fluri, 2011, p.523), this section attempts to articulate the proliferating bodies of geopolitics based on temporal and spatial experiences of the people of Kashmir.

It has now been long recognized that clear-cut distinctions between the public and private, personal and political do not hold. Scholars are now pointing towards connections between international geopolitics and the intimate scale of our bodies. Rachael Pain and Lyn Staeheli (2014) have called this intertwining "the intimate outwards" and the "Geopolitical inwards". Using narratives from the field, I discuss how personal memories, intimate relationships, feelings, and bodies become terrains through which the geopolitical is constituted. I approach intimacy, fear, and violence through lived experiences and embodied practices. I aim

[20]Excerpts from field notes.

to expose the relations that operate through and upon bodies, the narratives from my fieldwork posit a demand to push the understanding of both violence and intimacy and its relations with geopolitics in a contested zone. This chapter adds to an apparent growing interest in the geopolitics of intimacy and interconnections between practices such as politics, religion, and gender.

I attempt an understanding of violence and intimacy as two aspects of the life under the everyday framing, in a particular context. However, my aim is neither to provide some grand theory of violence nor to present a comprehensive interpretation of lives under the framing of intimacy-geopolitics. My efforts are simply drawn by an imagination to (re)present the spaces through an understanding of emotions like violence, fear, resistance, and affection.

Thesis outline

The organization of the research is as follows:

The first chapter is the introduction to the thesis, its theoretical framework, contribution and the methodology deployed. The second chapter begins with an examination of the selective survey of the literature on Kashmir's history and struggle of its people that serves as a background of the study. This leads to the understanding of various movements[21] and ideologies of Kashmiri nationalism and struggle. The literature review provides an understanding of Kashmir's 'contested history', taking into account various issues like nationalism, ethnic-identity, and militarization of the space and position of gender in this process. It is, however, asserted that no single discourse can summarize Kashmir's history and contemporary debates around the conflict,

[21] Ranjit refers to Yoginder Sikand's work on various movements in Kashmir and writes "each of which is shown to have a set of conceptual propositions, a theoretical model as it were, about the region" (Sau, 2001).

or can explain the persistent presence of the conflict in society, including separatism; let alone this chapter.

The third chapter focuses on one of the key contributions of this thesis - understanding of everyday spaces in a contested zone. This chapter is interested in looking at everyday as a problematic, contested and an opaque terrain, where meanings are not found to be ready-made (Highmore, 2002). I argue that in order to gain a deeper understanding of impacts of the persistent geopolitical conflict in Kashmir, it is important to study the seemingly ‘normal routine’ of the people of Kashmir carefully, and often against the grain to see ruptures and fissures. I seek to tell the stories of people whose lives are embedded in an ongoing geopolitical conflict and yet not wholly defined by the conflict. I focus on the experiences of individuals and through their narratives show that along with violence, everyday life also bears marks of resistance, repression and a struggle that is not always visible.

The fourth chapter focuses on the relations between memory and place making. In this chapter, I demonstrate the links between collective memory and history to highlight the changing nature of narratives accommodating certain political or socio-cultural opinions. This chapter also focuses on personal narratives and shows how memory turns outwards in forms of the graffiti, writings memoirs, and novels, etc. For example, in the words of Wani:

> “I chose to write the book after being haunted by the nightmares after the uprising in 2008. The images of the boys who were killed continued to haunt me even when I left Kashmir,” (“Kashmiri youth talks of agony”, 2015,para 9).

The fifth chapter focuses on the scale of the body and its enactment in a conflict zone. It provides a close reading of emotions, intimacy, and violence as these are lived and felt within a structure. I explore intimacy and violence as two aspects of geopolitical practice articulated through

restrictions on interaction, and governmental strategies impinge on personal decisions, beliefs, and emotions.

Overall, my thesis has important implications to understand the grounded 'real' processes of geopolitics and relations of 'power through the histories'[22]. It is then a people's history of Kashmiri geopolitics. It contributes by bringing in the everyday with its inherent ambiguities and contradictions dealing with a range emotions and beliefs and precarious nature of life.

[22] By power through the histories, I mean stories and their changing meanings about spaces and their uses mediated through various spatial relations of power.

Chapter 2: Background and Context: From Jannat to cage

> I am charmed with Kachemire. In truth, the kingdom surpasses in beauty all that my warm imagination had anticipated. It is probably unequalled by any country of the same extent... (Francois, 1891, p.400)

The state of Jammu and Kashmir has a unique mix of distinctive identity and religious amalgamation- Jammu, a Hindu-dominated region; Kashmir, a Muslim majority land; and, Ladakh is known for its Buddhist culture. The Valley of Kashmir is surrounded by Himalayan Mountains. Two mountain ranges separate Kashmir from the other parts of India. The Himalayas divide the Kashmir Valley from Ladakh, and the Pir Panjal range separates the Valley from the Great Plains of northern India. Furthermore, the Kashmir Valley is surrounded by Karakoram Range in the north, Pir Panjal Range in the south and west, and Zanskar Range in the east. No other Indian state has such physical characteristic as natural geographical barriers with an exception of north-eastern states[23]. The geographical isolation of the Valley has been considered as a barrier to the total integration of Kashmir within the Indian Union and used to counter political discourse of one integral India. Many of my respondents said that because of its unique geographical features, the Valley never was a past of Bharat (India).

The Kashmir conflict is a mix of complex and multifaceted factors. Bose (1999) points out that the sources of conflict, while interrelated, are multiple and complex. These sources are both exogenous and endogenous in nature; exogenous sources are in the form of the broader regional conflict between India and Pakistan whereas, endogenous sources are in the form of the

[23] It is the eastern-most part of India, connected to East India via a narrow corridor squeezed between two nations Bhutan and Bangladesh. North-eastern states comprise the Seven Sister States (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura), and the Himalayan state of Sikkim.

existence of several fundamentally different political allegiances and preferences among the socially heterogeneous population of Kashmir. Viva Bartkus (1999) argues that secessionist movements are most common where separate ethno-religious groups are concentrated in border areas.

Three wars between India and Pakistan are evidence that "ethnic, religious and territorial division has given rise to irredentist claims on both sides" (Ganguly and Bajpai, 1994, p. 402). Equally strong were the internal factors which added fuel to the existing movement to oppose Indian control in Kashmir. It is not easy to scan the issue under a fixed lens of the investigation. An understanding of Kashmir's socio-political structure, social relation and affinity between various groups is required to understand the context of the conflict. It is necessary to appreciate the multiple dimensions of Kashmir's history, culture and geography (Kazi, 2007) and Kashmir's importance in Indian national discourse. Navnita Chadha Behera (2000) in her book, *State Identity and Violence: Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh*, argues that the present crisis in Jammu and Kashmir is a result of identity clashes. She elaborates, "a dominant identity seeking subjugation, assimilation or submergence of other identities and self-assertion of a non-dominant identify seeking a share in state power controlled by the former, is inherently imbued with the risk of violence" (p.25).

My primary concern in this chapter is to summarize and present a brief history of Kashmir. A general history of Kashmir within a context of the conflict will serve as a background. In an interview, Mahmooda Ali, a renowned educationist and social activist, says, "History had never given the Kashmiris the luxury of deciding their political fate. It was always decided by the 'outside' rulers, the Muslims, the Mughals, the British, the Sikhs, the

Dogras…the list was endless" (Khanna, 2015, p.46). There are many sources of the Kashmir conflict whichmark Kashmir's history. For example, a well-known authority on South Asian affairs, Professor Sumit Ganguly (1985) talks about the sources of the conflict as institutional failures and India-Pakistan quarrel over nation-building and regional order. Bose (1997) opines that the present crisis in Kashmir is a net result of the denial of democratic rights and institutions. The callousness on the part of the Center towards the state of Jammu and Kashmir often aggravated people's alienation from the mainstream political parties, and the elections of 1987 which was massively rigged by National Conference at the connivance of center created an enormous negative impact on the democratic processes in Kashmir. The secessionist movement in Kashmir is a result of anti-democratic and authoritarian policies of the center (Bose, 1997). These policies turned out to be counterproductive to the democratic aspirations of the people of the Valley.

This chapter's focus is to present an overview of the history and contemporary situation in Kashmir. I have divided this chapter into three time periods, a.) Pre-1947 era, b.) From 1947 to start of militancy and c.) From the 1990s to contemporary times. While I try to present a brief sketch of Kashmir's history, I avoid including contested interpretations and ownership claims of Kashmir's history.[24] I do this by focusing on the chronological order of the main events that brought several significant changes in Kashmir's socio-political landscape. Though the aspects of contested claims are important to the overall understanding, I am careful to delineate the individual/group staking that particular claim so that a subjective reflection is possible and

[24]Zutshi, C. (2014). *Kashmir's Contested Pasts: Narratives, Sacred Geographies, and the Historical Imagination* is a fascinating work which examines the history of Kashmir across several centuries. Another book, Rai, M. (2004). *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir* analyzes historical accounts of marginalization of Kashmiri Muslims.

generalization is avoided. I start with popular imagination of "*Jannat Kashmir*", a picturesque and magnificent natural setting and an *atoot ang* (integral part) of India. I then shift to the contemporary phase of the on-going conflict and struggle for self- determination. These two frameworks help to understand the materiality of the place and the symbolic marking of spaces associated with various discourses of nationalism, religion, ethnicity, democracy, etc.

Kashmir: Pre-1947 period

Kashmir is considered as a repository of cultural mix of Sufism and Shaivism. Furthermore, Kashmir's history is also subjected to various claims constructed on the basis of literary texts like *Nilamata Purana*, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir, Lokapraksha, Baharistan-i-Shahi,* etc.*Rajatarangini* (Chronicle of Kings)is one such historical account which has been considered as a literary heritage of all Kashmiris, a book written by a Kashmiri Brahman Kalhana. This work consisted eight volumes and was composed during 1148-1150 C.E. This book covers a long period of the history of the Kashmir region from the earliest times to the date of its composition. Talking about the spirit of Kashmir, Kalhana writes: "The country may be conquered by the force of spiritual merit, but not by the forces of soldiers. The inhabitants are afraid only of the world beyond." Similarly, commenting on complex picture of Kashmir, Nyla Ali Khan (2016) notes in a news article, "I have always enjoyed teaching translations of Kashmiri short stories because some of the stories represent the mythical beauty of Kashmir, on the one hand, and the stultifying atmosphere created by murky politics, on the other" (para 6). The diverse history and a blend of socio-cultural aspects of Kashmir have also given birth to a unique Kashmiri identity called *Kashmiriyat*. Kashmiriyat has been defined as a feeling shared by a community and its people who lived together for ages, and developed their own distinct identity. Some believe that Kashmiriyat is a product of the social relationship between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri

Pandits as Prof. Riyaz Punjabi (1992) explains that people from different religion like Muslims, Pandits, Sikhs and even Christians contributed to the emergence of the feeling of Kashmiriyat. Ashutosh Varshney (1991) calls *Kashmiriyat* an ethnic nationalism of Kashmiris. Riyaz Punjabi (1992) explains *Kashmiriyat* and its features. He says:

> The lineage of Kashmiri people has given them distinctive looks; the fusion and assimilation of varied faiths and cultures has resulted in their peculiar and specific ethnicity, shaped by the climate and geographical compactness of its land. Common racial, social and cultural traits bound them closer into distinct regional grouping. (p.137)

As many of my respondents conceded that Kashmiriyat had become a quintessential feature of Kashmir's past, though defined ambiguously in contemporary times. Sadiq, a political activist, who has allegiance with Hurriyat (G), expressed his opinion that the ideology of Kashmiriyat once was a unique amalgam of traditions drawing upon local Muslim and Hindus, but now it has been used by India as a part of the nationalist project to impose a secular Kashmiri identity. According to him, the word *Kashmiriyat* does not refer toan attachment or affection between the people of Kashmir, the Kashmiris. In fact, it is the political parties who have been using this term to serve their own agendas. The attribute of *Kashmiriyat* has been reduced to solely a word.

Dogra rule and Quit Kashmir movement:

Kashmir is a part of the Indian state called Jammu and Kashmir. The state has been ruled by various rulers of different faith and belief from time to time. This state, once, was a part of the great king Asoka and has also been a part of Hindu kingdoms and Mughal sultanates. The Valley became a part of the Mughal Empire in 1586 under the command of Akbar, and then it was ruled by Afghans till 1819. In 1820, Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave the territory of Jammu over to Gulab Singh of Dogra dynasty. Raja Gulab Singh began his rule by conquering the neighboring

territories and consolidated his kingdom through his autocratic rule (Rai, 2004).The state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) was created for the first time by the British administration in 1846. The Treaty of Amritsar was signed between the then Dogra ruler, Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu, and the British East India Company on March 16, 1846.[25] The sale deed under this treaty amounted for Rs.75, 00,000 for the transfer of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to Raja Gulab Singh. The newly created state became a sovereign entity. However, all internal matters with defense and foreign affairs were being supervised by a 'political agent' of the British administration. The year 1931 witnessed a strong movement against the repressive regime of Maharaja Hari Singh. Maharaja Hari Singh was a part of the Hindu Dogra dynasty. The state forces brutally suppressed the movement. The protest of 1931 gradually led to the Quit Kashmir movement against the Maharajah under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah. Eventually, this movement gained momentum over the coming years. In the year 1946, Sheikh Abdullah addressed the Kashmiri people in his famous 'Quit Kashmir' speech. He said:

> The tyranny of the Dogras has lacerated our souls. The Kashmiris are the most handsome people, yet the most wretched looking. It is time for action…Sovereignty is not the birthright of a ruler. Every man, woman and child will shout 'Quit Kashmir.' The Kashmiri nation has expressed its will. (Jagmohan, 2006, p.79)

Moreover, The Muslim Conference adopted the Azad Kashmir Resolution on 26 July 1946 to end the autocratic rule of the Dogra ruler in the region. The resolution entailed the demand to elect their own constituent assembly. The Dogra rule lasted for almost a century (1846 - 1947) and for the most part, people of the valley witnessed repressive regime and dictatorship causing resentment and protest and improvised conditions of Muslims (Akbar, 2002; Rai, 2004).

[25]It is an addition to the Treaty of Lahore signed one week earlier on 9 March 1846. This condition sets the terms of surrender of the Sikh Durbar at Lahore to the British. Gulab Singh paid Rs. 7,500,000, for the Kashmir Valley, to add to his Kingdom already having Jammu and Ladakh the rule.

(Fig- 2.1 - Map of India)[26]

Partition, Tribal raid and the Instrument of Accession:

Along with several other issues, the partition of India always emerges as a critical issue in the background of Kashmir conflict. Several questions can be raised and answered in this regard.

[26] Source: Behera, NC (2007).*Demystifying Kashmir*, p.5

However, one fundamental question which arises is: Why partition? Ramchandra Guha (2007) offers an explanation in this regard. He writes:

> There have been three rather different answers to offer. The short-sightedness of Congress, Jinnah's ambition, Britain's amorality and cynicism – all these have played their part, but at least by the early 1940s, Partition was written into the logic of Indian history. (p.38).

Similarly, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema (1990) states that the Kashmir problem was the result of the hasty and surgical partition of British India and the Lord Mountbatten's biased approach. Though Lord Mountbatten, the then Governor-General of India, had announced, "Normally geographical situation and communal interests and so forth will be the factors to be considered" (Hajni, 2009, p.12), he has also said:

> In consistence with their policy that in case of any state where the issue of accession has been subject of dispute, the question of accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people of the state, it is my government's wish that as soon as the law and order have been restored in Kashmir and her soil cleared of the invaders, the question of the state's accession should be settled by a reference to the people. (Lamb, 1991, p.137)

Moreover, it is also said that the people of Kashmir should have determined their nationality and their political affiliation based on their religion (Singh, 2001). Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the first governor general of Pakistan in his speech, said: "The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and literature. They neither intermarry nor inter dine together and, indeed, they belong to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions".[27]Kashmir was in a slightly complicated situation because it had a Muslim majority population, ruled by a Hindu king, Maharaja Hari Singh. The state had

[27] Excerpt from the Presidential address by Muhammad Ali Jinnah to the Muslim League Lahore, 1940. Full text available at http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_jinnah_lahore_1940.html, accessed on 12th March 2014, and may also refer to Jinnah, M. A. (1960). *Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah* (Vol. 1). Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf.

close geographical, economic and demographic links with Pakistan. Maharaja Hari Singh was reluctant to join either of the two dominions, India or Pakistan. The Maharaja of Kashmir delayed his decision to remain independent. He was under the impression that his interests would be served best if he remains independent (Bose, 2003). Maharaja Hari Singh's deputy Prime Minister R.B. Batra made a public statement which made Hari Singh's intention clear. The statement was:

> We intend to keep friendly relations with both Pakistan and the Indian Union. Despite constant rumors, we have no intention of joining either India or Pakistan…the Maharaja has told me that his ambition is to make Kashmir the Switzerland of the East - a state that is completely neutral.[28]

However, after the release of Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference colleagues from prison on September 29, 1947, the National Conference decided to approach the Kashmiri people to determine Kashmir's future. Meanwhile, party leaders entered into a standstill agreement with both Pakistan and India so that Kashmiri people could have time to decide. During this period,Muslims in Jammu were massacred by the Hindus and Sikhs aided by the state forces.[5] Muslims were killed in large numbers and twice as many migrated to Pakistan.[29] At this juncture, seeing an opportunity with the support of Pakistan's army, tribesmen from Pakistan entered the area to wage a holy war against the Dogras to save their Muslim brethren from the tyranny of the Hindus and Sikhs.

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[28]R. B. Batra, quoted in Sisir Kumar Gupta (1966). *Kashmir: A Study in India–Pakistan Relations*. p.106 . Also in Guha (2007). *India after Gandhi: The history of the world's largest democracy*.

[29]The number of killings varies from source to source. Number 2, 00,000 has been cited in works like *Aatash-e-Chinar* (an autobiography of Sheikh Abdullah); Lamb. A (1997). *Incomplete Partition*; Bhattacharjee. A (1994) *Kashmir theWounded Valley*.

(Fig 2.2-The invading Lashkar: Orakzai tribesmen on their way to fight in Kashmir[30])

On October 22, 1947, the tribesmen attacked the Valley road and reached Baramulla, a town 40 kms from Srinagar. Thousands of Pashtuns from Pakistan's North West Frontier Province were recruited covertly by the Pakistani Army to invade Kashmir. Raiders' army also recruited Afridis, Wazirs, Masuds and Swatis, this army seized Muzaffarabad, Baramulla and headed towards Srinagar to capture its airport. These tribesmen killed scores of people including some Europeans. On the way to Srinagar, they plundered public property and were engaged in loot and arson (Akbar, 2002).

[30] It was taken by Frank Leeson in Rawalpindi on 13th November 1947. Source: http://www.andrewwhitehead.net/kashmir-47-images.html

Unable to control the attack, Maharaja Hari Singh turned towards the Indian government for help. On October 24, 1947, the Maharaja sought help from the Government of India for help. He thought that he could keep Kashmir under his grip with the help received from India. However, before sending any help, Lord Mountbatten on the behest of the Indian government, suggested Maharaja Hari Singh the accession with India. The accession was considered temporary before a referendum, plebiscite, and election or even if methods were implantable, by representative public meetings (Campbell-Johnson, 1951). Meanwhile, waiting for help, the Maharaja fled to Jammu with his family and valuables. At last, on October 26, 1947, the Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession and handed the document to V P Menon, a representative of the Indian government.[31] Soon after the Instrument of Accession was signed, on October 27, 1947, the Indian troops were airlifted to Srinagar and the tribesmen were driven away with the help received from Sheikh Abdullah and his militia of local Kashmiri, both men, and women.

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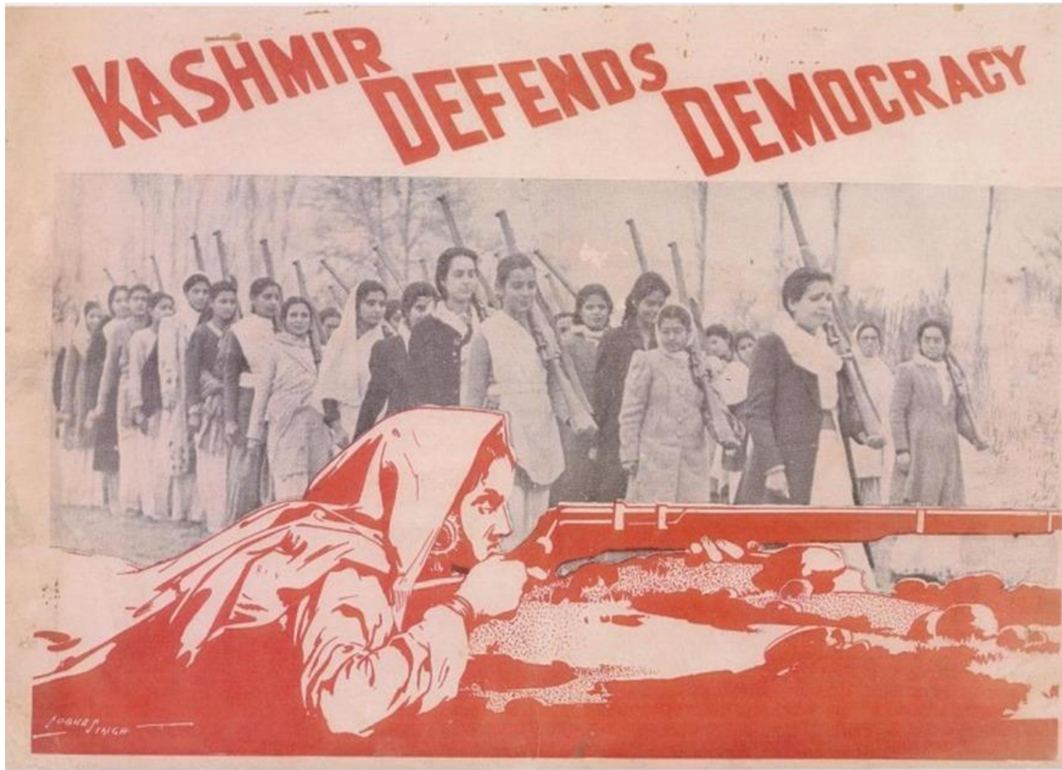
[31]Some scholars challenge the validity of the Instrument of Accession. Alister Lamb in his books '*Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1846-1990*,' and '*Birth of Tragedy: Kashmir 1947*, mentions that the Instrument of Accession was entirely fraudulent and claims that it was not signed by Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of Kashmir. The Instrument of Accession is still discussed and debated among youths in the Valley for its authenticity as a forged document.

(Fig- 2.3- The people militia)[32]

During this time, under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, Women's Self-Defence Corps (WSDC), a women's defense corps was also formed. A revolutionary step in the conservative society of Kashmir. This volunteer force of women was planned to train women for self- defense and to resist invaders. Mahmooda Ali Shah, Sajida Zameer Ahmad, Begum Zainab, and Sumitra Inder Mohan were some of the WSDC leaders. Zooni Goori (Gujri), a milkmaid, became famous as a WSDC volunteer; dressed in traditional Kashmiri clothes and carrying a gun around her shoulders, she symbolized the WDSC (Khan, 2010). Krishna, one of the members of WSDC, told Prof. Shanti Ambardar: "We were taught target shooting with .303 rifles, stenguns and pistols at the Chand Mari – an open area on the outskirts of Srinagar city. We learnt the use of firearms. When our instructor fired the first shot, most of us were very scared and frightened" (Whitehead, n.d., para 29).

[32] Source: http://www.andrewwhitehead.net/kashmir-47-images.html)



(Fig 2.4: Women fighters)[33]

After the partition of British India in 1947, the accession of Kashmir was Nehru's plan to establish a secular and pluralist India (Behera, 2007). The fate of a Muslim majority state was decided by Hari Singh, a Hindu ruler. In the words of Sheikh Abdullah, "Kashmir, unfortunately, is the root cause which deeply embitters the relations between India and Pakistan and in any conflict this State is bound to be the first casualty" (cited in Khan, 2014, p.17). This 'unfinished business of Partition' now has now become a 'great suppression story' (Ali et al., 2011). Yasmeen (2002) provides insights about Kashmiri's discourse in Pakistan; she notes that the majority of Pakistanis see Kashmir as "a prize that was denied to Pakistan due to machinations of the departing British colonialists" (p.611).

[33]The pamphlet was in 1948 by the Kashmir Bureau of Information in Delhi. The designer is Sobha Singh. Source: http://www.andrewwhitehead.net/kashmir-47-images.html

Sheikh Abdullah had endorsed the accession with India. His decision to stay with India was due to the democratic, secular, and federal polity of India in comparison with the feudal state of Pakistan (Behera, 2007). Although Sheikh demanded a plebiscite for a permanent and stable government, Prime Minister Pandit Nehru confirmed this. He announced in his broadcast on 2nd November 1947:

> We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given, and the Maharaja has supported it not only to the people of Kashmir but the world. We will not, and cannot back out of it. We are prepared when peace and law and order have been established to have a referendum held under international auspices like the United Nations. We want it to be a fair and just Reference to the people, and we shall accept their verdict. ("Thus Spake Nehru!", 2010, para 9).

On 1st January 1949, India takes the Kashmir problem to the United Nations (UN) Security Council after the tribal invasion and the subsequent war with Pakistan. Due to weak representation and deliberations from the Indian side, the issue before the UN council was changed from "The Jammu and Kashmir Question" to "The Indo-Pakistan Question". Akbar (2002) calls it a blunder on the part of the then Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru because the issue of Kashmir now had become an international issue. In the subsequent years, a plebiscite was suggested by the United Nations and on January 20, 1948, the UN Council passed a resolution to establish the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan. The objective of the Commission was to investigate the facts of the dispute between the two nations. After a deliberate mediation by the UN Council, both countries signed a resolution for a plebiscite. The resolution includes the text that "the question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial

plebiscite".[34] The discourse of demanding a referendum and Indian government's denial still dominates the popular sentiments in the Valley.

Sheikh Abdullah's regime: Between India and Independence of Kashmir

Sheikh Abdullah was appointed the head of the interim government of Jammu and Kashmir. He introduced '*Naya Kashmir*'[35], a manifesto based on the idea of sovereignty, and socio-economic upliftment of the Kashmiri society. Through this manifesto, Abdullah expressed a possibility of an independent state with a distinctive identity. According to Widmalm (2002), the roots of modern Kashmiri nationalism emerges from this *Naya Kashmir* proposal, not a part of Indian or Pakistani nationalism but a unique identity entailing *Kashmiriyat.*

In early 1951, the National Conference government stepped up to have a Constituent Assembly in Srinagar. Pakistan raised an objection to this move and took this matter to the United Nations. However, the Security Council resorted to the idea of the plebiscite and mentioned that the people of Jammu and Kashmir would choose their representatives through the democratic methods under the auspices of the United Nations. Some nominations from Praja Parishad, a party representing Jammu's Hindus, were rejected. Consequently, Praja Parishad boycotted the elections (Lamb, 1991). In the elections, the National conference emerged as a clear winner with a huge margin with

[34] 3 Basic Principles for a Plebiscite were proposed by the United Nations Commission to the Governments of India and Pakistan on December 11, 1948. Available at http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300020944

[35]The National Conference had adopted the *Naya Kashmir* (New Kashmir) program as its agenda and gospel. Inspired by the Marxist approach, this manifesto gave a socio-economic orientation. The slogan *Zamin Greesti Sinz* (Land to the Tiller) was called for the abolition of the *zamindari* (landlord) system but without compensation for the landlords.

minimum opposition. It was after the elections that slogans like ‘one leader’ (Abdullah), ‘one party’ (National Conference) and ‘one program’ (Naya Kashmir) surfaced on the political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir (Bose, 2003). Sheikh Abdullah delivered a speech at the Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar talking about the complete transfer of power to the people of Kashmir. He said: “It will not be a government of any community. It will be a joint government of the Hindus, the Sikhs, and the Muslims. That is what I am fighting for” (Korbel, 1966, pp. 70-71).

Sheikh Abdullah was loyal to India. However, he never lost sight of the ‘third option’ – the idea of independence. In his speeches, Abdullah stressed that the people of Kashmir were free to choose their own government and that there were possibilities of an independence nation. In a meeting with the US Ambassador Loy Henderson, on September 1950, Sheikh Abdullah expressed his opinion and remarked:

> The overwhelming majority population desired this independence; and that he had a reason to believe that some Azad Kashmir leaders desired independence and would be willing to co-operate with leaders of the National Conference if there were reasonable chances such co-operation would result in independence. (Bhattacharjee, 1994, pp. 196-197).

The leadership at New Delhi became suspicious of Abdullah’s ideological commitment to India. Moreover, India’s concerns about Abdullah grew especially after his notorious speech in April 1952 at Ranbir singhpora, Jammu, in which he expressed his doubts about Kashmir acceding to India because of increasing communalism in India (Bazaz, 1954). Turning the demands of Jana Parishad as unrealistic, Abdullah said,

> We have acceded to India regarding defense, foreign affairs and communications to ensure a sort of internal autonomy…. If our right to shape our destiny is

> challenged and if there is resurgence of communalism in India, how are we to convince the Muslims of Kashmir that India does not intend to swallow us.[36]

In July 1952, Abdullah met the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Nehru, and this meeting resulted in an agreement named Delhi Agreement. This agreement confirmed the retaining of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, having the *Sadr-I-Riyasat* (Head of the state) of Kashmir elected by the State Assembly, rather than appointed by the President of India, and a clause which declare Kashmiris as citizens of India. Praja Parishad, a Hindu party from Jammu, advocated for the complete integration of the state with the Union of India, and abrogation of its special status granted by the Constitution of India under Article 370. The slogan raised by the activists was "*ek daish main do vidhan, program daish main do the, ek desh main do pradhan ... The post-1953 chalengay*." (In one country two constitutions, in one country two flags, in one country two prime ministers are unacceptable). However, Pandit Nehru repeated his pledge on August 7, 1952, in Lok Sabha:

> Ultimately, I say this with all deference to the Parliament the decision will be made in the hearts and minds of the men and women of Kashmir; neither in the parliament nor in the United Nations nor by anybody else. (Datta, 2010, p. 37)

As a result of Abdullah's week positioning and doubtful political allegiance with India (not able to determine between integration with India), his credibility was diminishing. In May 1953, Abdullah was again discussing independence, his ambivalent and on-off like stance on accession especially with foreign delegates was most disturbing to the Government of India (Lamb, 1991). Finally, in August 1953, Abdullah was arrested.

[36] *Khidmat,* Srinagar, 13 August 1952.

Talking about the issue of Sheikh Abdullah incarceration, Pandit Nehru said to Balraj Puri:

> We have gambled at the international stage on Kashmir, we can't afford to lose it. At movement, we are at the point of bayonet. Till things improve, democracy and morality can wait. National interest is more important than democracy Nehru has said. (Puri, 1993, p.47)

Another Indian journalist, Ajit Bhattacharjee (1994) notes about the disbelief generated among the Kashmiris about Indian democratic processes and political rights of the Kashmiris, especially after the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah and Kashmiri leadership. Bhattacharjee further notes that democracy and secular characters of the India which motivated Sheikh Abdullah to join India after the Partition started to fade away.

The Post-1953 era marked a new turn in the politics of Kashmir. After the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah, the Valley witnessed massive protests, and the brutal policing methods suppressed the protests. The main charge against Abdullah was inciting communal disharmony, fostering hostile feelings towards India and treasonable correspondence with foreign powers (Malik, 2005). The successively installed state governments altered people's perception of Indian government's intentions. During the new regime under the leadership of Bakshi Gulam Mohammad, many constitutional changes were made to integrate the state of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian Union (Lamb, 1991; Bose, 2003). In a decisive move, the Bakshi government approved a draft of the constitution for Jammu and Kashmir which stated that: "the State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India" (Varshney, 1991, p. 1013). A provision was also added in the draft where the Indian Parliament can take the cognizance of a wider range of subjects and can interfere accordingly. It was a change in the basic tenet of Article 370 that the central government would limit its authority in all the matters

except the three listed in Article 370 which were defense, communication, and foreign affairs. This action was heavily criticized by the people of Kashmir. The Plebiscite Front challenged the accession with the Union of India and demanded withdrawal from the Indian system. In this effort, the Front got the support of Awami Action Committee, *Jammat-e-Islami*, and People's Conference.

The demand for plebiscite then was supported by various religious and political groups and people demanded the withdrawal of the armed forces of both nations from Kashmir, restoration of civil liberties and unbiased elections (Bose, 2003). However, the elections in the following years, in 1957, and in 1962, as alleged, were massively rigged which again betrayed expectations of ordinary Kashmiris. In the year 1964, Sheikh Abdullah was released from the prison, but only to arrest again after his meeting with Chinese Prime Minister Chou-en-Lai. In the elections of March 1972, the Plebiscite Front was banned by the Indian government for its alleged association with the militant group Al-Fatah.

The people who seemed critical of Abdullah's policies are of the opinion that due to his personal interests to regain Premiership, Abdullah made certain adjustments. Further, the defeat of Pakistan in the war of 1971 and the Shimla agreement were the other two main reasons which forced Abdullah to rethink his options (Akbar, 2002). Making a remark on Abdullah's decision, one of the members of the Front said: "Defeat of Pakistan broke the back of all pro-self-determination individuals and Sheikh Abdullah was no exception, though as a leader he should have stood firm" (Khalid, 2009, p.11), Sheikh Abdullah compromised on several issues to yield power after remaining out of power for more than 20 years. This new partnership between Sheikh Abdullah and the then Prim/e Minister Indira Gandhi developed in the form of the

Kashmir Accord. Although Kashmir's special status was retained under article 370, the state was termed 'constituent unit of the Union of India' (Schofield, 2010). This accord was an important point in Kashmir politics, sometimes called a grave mistake by Abdullah and betraying his people. Bazaz (1978) writes about the agreement:

> The protracted negotiations were carried on secretly and the Kashmiris were taken into Confidence till the deal was struck early in 1975. The outcome in the shape of an agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Mrs Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister is known as Kashmir Accord. (p.23)

The accord was resisted and opposed by many in Jan Sangh party, Mirwaiz Farooq of Awami Action Committee, and also from across the border (Azad Kashmir and Pakistan). The leadership supporting Kashmir's accession to Pakistan was a pro-independence group led by Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhat who also criticized the accord. The group, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), led by Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhat later became one of the prominent groups to wage armed struggle against India. In the subsequent years, the National Conference again tried to capture people's imagination by symbolically exhibiting '*sabzrumal'* (green handkerchief) and rock salt as symbols of Pakistan or independence. In the year 1977, National Conference managed to win a clear majority in the elections, and Sheikh Abdullah came into power.

After the demise of Sheikh Abdullah on September 8, 1982, his son, Farooq Abdullah, was declared his political heir. Commenting on the crowning of Farooq Abdullah, Bose (2003) said that Farooq was declared the new the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, following the dangerous tradition of combining democratic and dynastic politics. However, the subsequent years were not easy for the new Chief Minister. His position was threatened by the local parties and other socio-religious groups. In the meantime, the emergence of *Jamat-i-Islami*, a religious

organization supporting a merger with Pakistan, aggravated the demand of plebiscite. As a result, discontent among Kashmiris grew, and people started to protest against the state government. In 1984, the Farooq government was dismissed by the then Governor Jagmohan, when 13 MLAs withdrew their support from the government. According to Mir Qasim (1992), this act of Jagmohan was unconstitutional and dismantled the faith of the Kashmiris in the Indian democracy. The new government led by GM Shah proved to be a dangerous one, involved in high level of corruption and money making. Kashmir was rife with protests and was put under indefinite curfew many times for which Shah earned the name of 'Gulcurfew'. The situation led to the communal riots in 1986 in the district of Anantnag. As a result, Shah was dismissed from governance. Meanwhile, Jagmohan facilitated an understanding between Farooq Abdullah and the then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi which culminated in the National Conference-Congress alliance also known as Rajiv-Farooq Accord of 1986. In November 1986, Farooq was reappointed as the Chief Minister. This coalition made the people of Kashmir react strongly. Tavleen Singh (1995), talking about the same, writes:

> Overnight, Farooq was transformed from hero to traitor in the Kashmiri mind… the people could not understand how a man who had been treated the way he had been by Delhi and in particular by the Gandhi family, could now be crawling to them for accords and alliances. (p.98)

The resentment and feeling of betrayal paved the way for the emergence of new parties and religious-political groups like the *Muslim Mutahid Mahaz* (Muslim United Front - MUF). The primary objective of MUF was to fight against the NC-Congress alliance. Bose (2003) comments on the role of MUF and says: "Muslim United Front (MUF) was a diverse group with no real unifying ideology, consisting of educated youth, illiterate, working-class people and

farmers who express their anger at Abdullah's family rule, government corruption and lack of economic development" (p.48).

The notable leaders who emerged in this phase were people like Maulvi Abbas Ansari, Syed Ali Geelani, and Prof Gani Bhat. Schofield (1996) writes that the MUF was working with an explicit objective achieving Islamic unity and against the Indian government.

Emergence of Armed Insurgency

In the early 1980s, the chasm between the state and its citizens was getting wider; reasons were multiple like the rigged elections, rupture in the state and the Center relationship and mainly the contempt for Kashmiri nationalist aspirations. Other factors which contributed towards the resistance against the Center and state government were the erosion of Article 370, installation of puppet regimes, denial of civil liberties, and curbs on the democratic urges. Eventually, these factors led to the emergence of militancy in the Valley. In the rise of armed insurgency, *Jammat-i-Islami* played a crucial role. Some believe that the religious fundamentalism was one of the underlying dynamics behind the call of the struggle for freedom from India, popularly called jihad. Major General Arjun Roy, in his book (1997) *Kashmir Diary: Psychology of Militancy*, criticizes this stance and argues that religion (Islam) was not in any way the prime motivation for a Kashmiri to pick up the gun. Rather, it was the political and economic alienation which led to the militancy.

Balraj Puri, one of eminent scholars and journalists from the Valley, explains different features of insurgency in his book *Kashmir Insurgency and after* (2008). He explicates how the democratic institutions failed miserably to connect with the people and were never allowed to acquire roots in the Valley. Democracy, according to Puri, and the demand for the election was

projected as an impossible option and the need for the same was labeled as anti-national. Moreover, in the purview of the central government, "Kashmiris were unfit for democracy and that they either did not deserve it or that democracy and national interests were incompatible" (Puri, 2008, p.58*).* The denial to elect their own representative government closed the doors for Kashmiris for a peaceful political struggle. It was a huge blow to the efforts to restore faith in a democratic system. Mohammad Yusuf Shah was one such resentful candidate who contested in the 1987 elections and was defeated. After the election, he chose a different path, away from democratic processes. He is now popularly known as Syed Salahudeen, head of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, a militant organization[37]. The cultivation of radical Islamists and patronage was provided to disgruntled groups by Pakistan. This nexus encouraged by mujahidin victory in 1992 in Afghanistan motivated the Kashmiri youth to choose arms over democratic means (Sikand, 2001). Widmalm (2002) quotes Abdul Ghani Lone who summed up Kashmiri anger against 'democracy' in Kashmir:

> It was this [subversion of democracy] that motivated the young generation to say "to hell with the democratic process and all that this is about" and they said, "lets go for the armed struggle" (2002, p.80).

Inspired by Kashmiri nationalism and with the cry to resist 'illegal occupation' of Kashmir, the armed struggle was projected as a jihad between Islam and non-believers.

As stated above, there were multiple factors responsible for the insurgency. It was not a sudden outburst of the uprising. Kashmiris were demanding complete political, social and economic rights. According to Bose (1997), the central policies which were anti-democratic and

[37] Salahuddin now operates from Pakistan and is projected a symbol of Kashmir militancy by Pakistani media. Now He is not only heading Hizbul Mujahideen but is also chief of MUJ Council—a united platform of over a dozen militant groups based in Muzaffarabad (PoK).

authoritarian in nature curtailed the aspirations of Kashmiris. In addition to the waned efforts to elect a democratically chosen government, the rigged election of 1987 forced the population to resort to militant activities to achieve the desired political goals. People had lost faith in the Indian democratic system and its institutions. Along with the internal sources, there were other factors also which influenced Kashmiri people to wage a war against the state. The Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran, and fight against Soviet Russia in Afghanistan (1979-1989) played a significant role to provoke a section of the Kashmiri society to support the secessionist ideology reinforced by militant groups. Sikand (2001) explains that jihad in Kashmir was projected by some religious organization "not as a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan, nor even as a clash between cultures, but as nothing less than a war between two different and mutually opposed ideologies: Islam, on the one hand, and disbelief (kufr)" (p.225). During this period, some new developments were also taking place in the political landscape of the Valley. For instance, people across the party affiliations supported and joined the militant outfits with large enthusiasm for carrying out its programme. The people had come to streets in defiance of the government and in open support for militants. Youngsters were eager and keen to join jihadagainst India. Initially, only a few individuals crossed the border, but gradually youth from all corners of Kashmir went to Azad Kashmir (Pakistani Administered Kashmir) for arms and guerrilla warfare training. A common saying that prevailed in the Valley those days was *Sopore Kupwore te Apore (*First destination is Sopore then Kupwara and you cross the border).

The first incident of terrorist activity happened in July 1988. Two powerful bombs were blasted at two locations-the Central Telegraph Office and the TV station. Subsequently, there was a rise in anti-India sentiments, calls were made to avoid Indian Independence day and Republic Day, the militant groups enforced a bandh. The people's movement had taken the

shape of militancy, a way of confrontation with the state, opposing the Indian state and its control over Kashmir. With the Gawakadal massacre[38], militancy entered a new phase. The insurgents used violence to counter state-sponsored acts of violence and challenged state's authority over Kashmir. Moreover, it was no longer a fight between militants and army. It had become the people of Kashmir versus the state (Puri, 2008). There is now a 3-decade long history of armed insurgency in which militants, army personnel, ordinary men, and women were killed alike, many tortured and thousands disappeared. It was also the time when Kashmiri Pandits, who were always considered an integral part of the Kashmiri society, fearing threat to their lives migrated to other parts of India. As Sumantra Bose (2003) writes, "the *azaadi* movement has never been able to live down the taint of the Pandit exodus" (p.124). Another version as put forward by the local Kashmiri Muslims about the Pandit migration is that the Pandits were encouraged by the government to migrate as some believe it was a conspiracy to malign the Muslim community and isolate them.

What had started in 1989, brought an era of blood and tears. This phase of armed insurgency created chaos and brought havoc for the Kashmiris; gun battles between the Indian armed forces and militants had become a routine. Streets of villages and cities witnessed firings, cross firings, bomb blasts, and killings; nobody was safe, and no house was safe. In such situations, the central government took charge of the situation as the state government was struggling to keep its machinery intact and functioning. After the 1990s, Kashmir witnessed a battle between the militants and the government forces, and the Valley had become a battlefield.

[38]As per a report "on January 21, 1990, a big crowd raising anti-India slogans was heading towards Lal Chowk and the security forces tried to stop the crowd near Gaw Kadal bridge in Srinagar. Instead of dispersing, the unruly crowd started pelting stones at government buildings and security force personnel. In response, the Indian paramilitary troops of the Central Reserve Police Force opened fire on Kashmiri protesters killing 50 people. Though the casualties are have been higher by the eyewitnesses. Please refer to http://archive.indianexpress.com/oldStory/69437/ accessed on 4th January 2014

Consequently, the Indian government restored to violent means to crush the militancy by giving arbitrary powers to defense forces and imposing legislative rules like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and the Public Safety Act (PSA) declaring Kashmir a 'disturbed area.' These steps resulted in a brutal form of the extreme militarization of the landscape. Today Kashmir stands as one of the most densely militarized zones in the world. Further, the situation is aggravated by the use of undemocratic laws like the armed forces special powers act (AFSPA). The AFSPA gives the Indian Security Forces extraordinary powers to maintain law and order in the region. There are numerous examples which make it clear that the security forces often abused the power bestowed upon them.

Imprisoned Kashmir: The old and new

I am incarcerated, in these dark walls
I see nothing, coerced to smell
Filthy, dirty, plagued floors
You caught me by my collar
Dragged me to these walls
Which I would not call a 'place'
Some days ago
Just the sore words I whispered
'We want freedom!'
(From 'As I die' by Jasim Malik)[39]

The existing body of work on the conflict sheds lights on various narratives of Dogra rule, Partition, the accession of the state, the Kashmiri national movement, and militancy leading to the contemporary situation in Kashmir. These stories capture various dimensions of the conflict like human rights discourse where people are victims of direct and indirect violence; Kashmiris demanding *azaadi*, and rise in religious sentiments to be part of *ummah*, etc. Akbar (2002)

[39]Available at https://soskashmir.wordpress.com/2011/08/02/kashmir-the-forgotten-conflict/ accessed on 2 February 2014. Also quoted in Anjum, A., & Varma, S. (2010). *Curfewed in Kashmir: Voices from the valley*. p. 11

summaries that the present conflict is a result of poor decision making, abuse of the power by the state and the Center's antagonistic role in the affairs of the state.

As a result of insurgency and counter-insurgency practices, thousands of people including army personnels, militants and ordinary men and womenhave lost their lives, and as many are missing. Hundreds of people are traumatized, or, are facing depression and under posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Varma, 2012). Frustration building over the decades due to economic deprivation, the restrictions imposed on the people, shrinking political spaces, colluding propaganda of Islamist and secular forces have turned this Jannat into a cage like place.Asif Rashid (2015) writes about Kashmir and what it is to be in Kashmir. He says:

> Killings have become a routine in Kashmir. Just like there are daily household tasks, schoolings, traffic jams, power cuts, there are killings daily in Kashmir. Every day in Kashmir is a martyr's day. Now my people do not mourn any more. They don't even feel strange about it as they are used to it. More than one lac people have died, thousands have disappeared. Unmarked graves, orphans, widows, are numberless. Kashmir has become a living hell for its people a concentration camp of killings, rapes, curfews, protests, disappearances, crackdowns, stone-pelting, fake-encounters, etc. (2015, para 3)

The levels of violence and oppression of Kashmiri *awaam* (general public) differ from time to time. However, in recent times, the conflict seems to have become more about internal sources. The demand for freedom is gaining momentum rather than looking for ways of reconciliation with the Indian state. The inner dimension of this conflict includes human rights abuses, administrative failures, collective violence which have given rise to the current turmoil. Aggressive Indian Army patrolling and hot pursuits of insurgents added more misery to the already agonized Kashmiri people. Constant struggle, surveillance, controlled territory and the feeling of betrayal created a vacuum for young Kashmiris. In such times, Kashmir struggle

movement sought to express itself through armed revolution. Ganguly and Bajpai (1994) observe that young Kashmiris chose armed revolution because they were frustrated and depressed:

> Politically aroused but frustrated young men and women were increasingly drawn to incipient separatist and insurgent movements, ranging from the largely secular Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) to the more religiously oriented and pro-Pakistani Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), which sent their recruits across the border to Pakistan where they were provided with training, organization, and weaponry. (p.405)

After witnessing a short-lived peace for about five years i.e. from 2003 to early 2008, the two mass agitations of 2008 and 2010 created a new wave of the resistance movement in Kashmir. In 2008, Kashmiri people participated in the demonstrations in a peaceful manner over the Amarnath land row[40]. But, somehow, the hasty and impatient response of the Indian government pushed the youth to resort to violent means. However, as a departure from earlier gun revolution, this time, the young people of Kashmir find stone pelting as a 'new metaphor of resistance.' The following year, 2009, witnessed another wave of protests and demonstrations demanding justice in the Shopian rape and murder case, where two young women were allegedly raped and killed by Indian security forces. These two incidents - Amarnath land row, and Shopian double rape and murder case developed communal divide and failure of justice and legal system to subvert the truth. In 2010, another series of revolt erupted over the Machchil fake encounter killings[41]. In

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[40]On 26 May 2008, the Indian government in consultation with the state government decided to transfer 100 acres of forest land near Amarnath cave, a Hindu pilgrimage site, to the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB). The purpose was to set up temporary shelters and facilities for Hindu pilgrims. This caused a controversy, with demonstrations from the Kashmir valley against the land transfer and protests from the Jammu region supporting it. Initial opposition came from environmentalists. Later, several politicians from Kashmir mainstream and separatists joined the protest. Six killed in police firing in Srinagar. Issue snowballs into a major confrontation in Valley.

[41]On 29 April, 2010 the Indian Army claimed to have foiled an effort by militants to infiltrate the Machil sector of Kupwara district near Line of Control (LoC). The army killed three militants in a gun-battle. However, later when the corpses of the 'militants' were exhumed, it was found that they were locals from the nearby areas, who had been lured with the offer of jobs. "Later handed over to the Army personnel for Rs. 50,000 each." See: http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/court-martial-sentence-in-machil-fake-encounter-confirmed/article7625081.ece and http://www.firstpost.com/india/six-get-life-in-machil-fake-encounter-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-2010-incident-2425576.html

order to tackle the street unrest the state followed fixed methods and used brute force to counter the people's movement. The death toll rose to 120 within a span of five months, transforming people's patience and accumulated frustration into rage. Between 2008 and 2010, scores of youth were reported turning to militancy. Moreover, during this phase a new change occurred. The young people of Kashmir joined militancy. What I could gather from some conversations in the field was that the 2010 turmoil brought a sea of changes in youngsters' attitudes towards the state. "We are disenchanted now; we have seen the real face of the Indian democracy and our position within its structure," said one of the respondents, who was once arrested by the police for his involvement in stone-pelting. "Democracy provides a veil to cover up the wrongdoings of the state, it means nothing more than the right to vote" he adds. Some of the reasons which made the youths in Kashmir more agitated wereregular raids at odd hours which put family members, especially women, in uncomfortable situations; incidents of direct firing on peaceful protests; frequent ruptures in the routine. Meanwhile, the Public Safety Act (PSA) was imposed forcefully and was used liberally as a repressive measure by the state.[42] Many people called India's role the same as the colonial masters with a colonial attitude.In the words of a 30-year-old Kashmiri man, "PSA was slapped on us by India to gag our voices". Additionally, to get a government job, mostly young educated people were asked to produce police verification certificates at the time of appointment. Such practices added more misery to the sufferings and escalated strong anti-state feelings among the youth. As Jamwal (2016) writes, "playing against the backdrop as a force multiplier was a history of denials, unfulfilled promises, betrayals, dilution of autonomy and rigged elections right since 1947" (p.13).

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[42] PSA allows arrest and incarceration of a person without trial for two years on mere suspicion that he/she may disrupt law and order in the state or may act in a manner prejudicial to the security of the state. The Act bypasses all the institutional procedures and human rights safeguards of the ordinary criminal justice system in order to secure a long detention term. Amnesty International, in one of its reports in 2011, called PSA a 'lawless' law. Document available at jkhome.nic.in/PSA0001.pdf, accessed on 12th Feb 2014.

In post-2010, a heightened sense of alienation increased the chasm between the state and citizens, and the lack of faith in regional leadership made the situation more volatile, moving in circles from unrest to calm and then back to unrest. Though the new regime at the center had promised to resolve the Kashmir dispute, newly held series of round table conferences recommended confidence-building measures pertaining to human rights and governance "which continue to gather dust on the shelves of government offices" (Jamwal, 2016, p.13). Prof. Muhammad Aslam (2014) writes about despotism of the state and says:

> If you have to survive in Kashmir, learn not to speak the truth. And, if you ever dare to speak it, be prepared to suffer for it. Though for the past more than two decades, truth has become a big eventuality here, I'd like to speak it. (para 1)

After the secretive hanging of Afzal Guru in 2013, the entire Valley was once again under the siege and state of affairs was very grim and dark. The hanging of Afzal Guru was called 'the miscarriage of justice' and 'the death of democracy,' it fueled people's anger and frustration by scratching emotional wounds. This incident brought back the heart rendering stories of the heydays of militancy, and memories of traumatized past. The protests led to another intifada making the younger generation fearless and determined to rebel against the regime. Stone-pelting had become a regular feature of the protests, and by this time, young boys were using stones against the guns.

Simultaneously, another issue, i.e., the returning of the Kashmiri Pandits was boiling the background. Kashmiri Pandits' organization which have been fighting for the rights and safeguards of the Pandit community were demanding a separate homeland. The central government proposed the *Rehabilitation and Resettlement policy* to settle the Pandit community

back in the Valley– those who had left the Valley following the outbreak of militancy in 1989. Though a large section of the Kashmiri society welcome Pandits, some groups including separatist groups are of the opinion that rehabilitation and resettlement policy has an implicit agenda, a nefarious motive- to polarise the Valley along religious lines. Capturing the complex nature and complexity of the Kashmir conflict, Kaul (2011) raises the concern about fundamentalist ideologies. She writes:

> The distinctive identity of Kashmir was shaped by multiple influences and rulerships. Kashmir's history is a knot of contested interpretations made worse by ignorance. The biggest myth of recent times is that seeing Kashmir historically in terms of Hindus versus Muslims, instead of Hindus and Muslims. (p.198)

Under the above-mentioned scheme of the division of the Valley, the government has constructed separate colonies in many places in Kashmir. Though the Muslims welcome the Pandits back, they wish the Pandits to settle in their own localities as they were living earlier before migrating to other parts of India. Separatist leaders have also issued similar statements showcasing popular sentiments. Hurriyat chairperson Syed Ali Shah Geelani said in a joint meeting: "They (Pandits) can come and live as our brothers here. But we would never allow separate Pandit colonies"(Masood, 2016, para 5). However, another section of the people, including both Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits, recognize the return and rehabilitation of the Kashmiri Pandits more of a political issue in nature, rather than a humanitarian one.

Living in one of most militarized zones, the Kashmiris negotiate with lived realities, trapped within the spheres of normalcy and disturbed where crackdowns, raids, and arrests have become the norm. Locals continue to live amidst curfews, fake encounters, and unpredictable situations, facing all the hardships of life that the Valley has to offer, resisting both militarism and militancy. In the past couple of years, there is a surge in street protests. Youth choose stones

over guns, and militancy has also reduced. Young boys feel that stone pelting is the only tool of resistance against repression as it was witnessed in the unrests of the summers of 2010 and 2012. The protests are led by young boys who use stone as a weapon. Protesters throw stones at army personnel and by using the narrow alleys and maze of streets, they dodge the security personnel. Protests, skirmishes, bandh, hartal have become common features of Kashmiri lives. Security personnel use tear gas, rubber bullets to disperse the protesters. Furthermore, in recent times, the use of pellet guns has been on the rise. The use of pellets cause serious injuries. In some cases, youngsters have lost sight in even one eye and some have turned blind.

(Fig. 2.5: Stone pelting scene in Srinagar (Photo:Aman Farooq/GK)

(Fig. 2.6: Hamid lost the sight in his right eye after being hit by pellets from a gunshot by security forces. Photo: Shahid Tantray[43])

In recent years, Kashmir has been witnessing constant mass protests and demonstrations as a constant reminder of people's struggle. Kashmiri people, both men and women, attend the funeral processions of militants killed by the security forces in defiance to the state. Moreover, one important change which has occurred in the last decade is that the resistance has gone multi-dimensional. If youngsters are using stone as a weapon, they are also using internet based social media as a platform to share the ordeal of ordinary Kashmiris. The trend of sharing the stories is not only limited to web-based media, but people have also been publishing stories, autobiographies, and novels.[44] In the last couple of years, young writers like Fawad Shah, Farzana Munshi, Furkan Fazili and Shahnaz Bashir have begun to write what they have observed in the Valley. For the last couple of years, some human rights organizations and the civil societies are also coming forward to fight the legal battles of human rights violations in the Valley; for example, The Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCSS) published a book

[43]https://newint.org/blog/majority/2015/06/01/kashmir-police-brutality/

[44]There are many writers who have authored books on Kashmir based on their experiences mostly in the forms of novels, like Mirza Waheed, Basharat Peer, Rahul Pandita, Malik Sajad, Siddhartha Gigoo, Shahnaz Bashir, Fahad Shah, to name a few.

entitled '*AllegedPerpetrators*'[45] which contains 214 cases of human rights violations. Another example is the reopening of the infamous Kunan Poshpora Mass Rape case against the army. For this case, a forum called "Kunan Poshpora Support Group" has come forward to help the victims to carry on the legal battle.

During my latest visit to Kashmir in February 2016, I observed that the feelings of disenchantment with the state and its institutions has deepened and the repressed anger has been on the rise. Some youngsters called the current movement a revolution, a right to receive *azaadi*. It has become an intifada, imbued with revolutionary ideas, rage, passion, and religious symbols. Young people of the Valley are ready to 'sacrifice' their lives for their motherland, to rise against the oppression.

(Fig. 2.7: The Dal, the Zabarvan Hills and barbed wires)

This black and white image was given to me by one of my Kashmiri friends during my last visit. He said: "This picture reflects our lives. The view of Dal Lake and the Zabarwan hills in the background is simply a feast for eyes. But, the reality is… our life like this picture is covered with barbed wires".

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[45] This report is available on JKCSS website: http://www.jkccs.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Alleged-Perpetrators.pdf

The purpose of this chapter is to the present the snippets of the history of the Valley to establish a background to the Kashmir conflict. In the subsequent chapters, I follow what Suvir Kaul (2012) suggests:

> …texts of the experiences, frustrations, and aspirations of people are in fact the archives that should shape our historiographical concerns and cause us to re-examine our analytic fixation with state policies and institutions, national interests, and international relations. Of course, any serious writing on a situation like Kashmir cannot dispense with the latter, but equally, it should be impossible for any commentator to side step the politically formative power of everyday experience and indeed of the powerful memories they generate. (p.80)

I close this chapter with a poem of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, a revolutionary poet. This poem given as follows speaks of the aspirations of the Kashmiri youth and exhorts them not to be intimidated by forces of oppression and authoritarianism.

Speak, your lips are free,
Speak, it is your own tongue,
Speak, it is your own body,
Speak, your life is still yours.

The following chapter of the thesis analyses the idea of the everyday in the lives of the people residing in the Valley. It complicates the notion of normalcy in a conflict zone by questioning the understanding of 'normal' in an everyday routine. As Hubbarrd and Kitchin (2010) write that the everyday lived realities and its experiences are fundamental to providing a locus of identity and sense of belonging among those who inhabit it, the subsequent chapter is also interested in such a lens of inquiry where the everyday experiences of living amidst a conflict prone area can be analyzed.

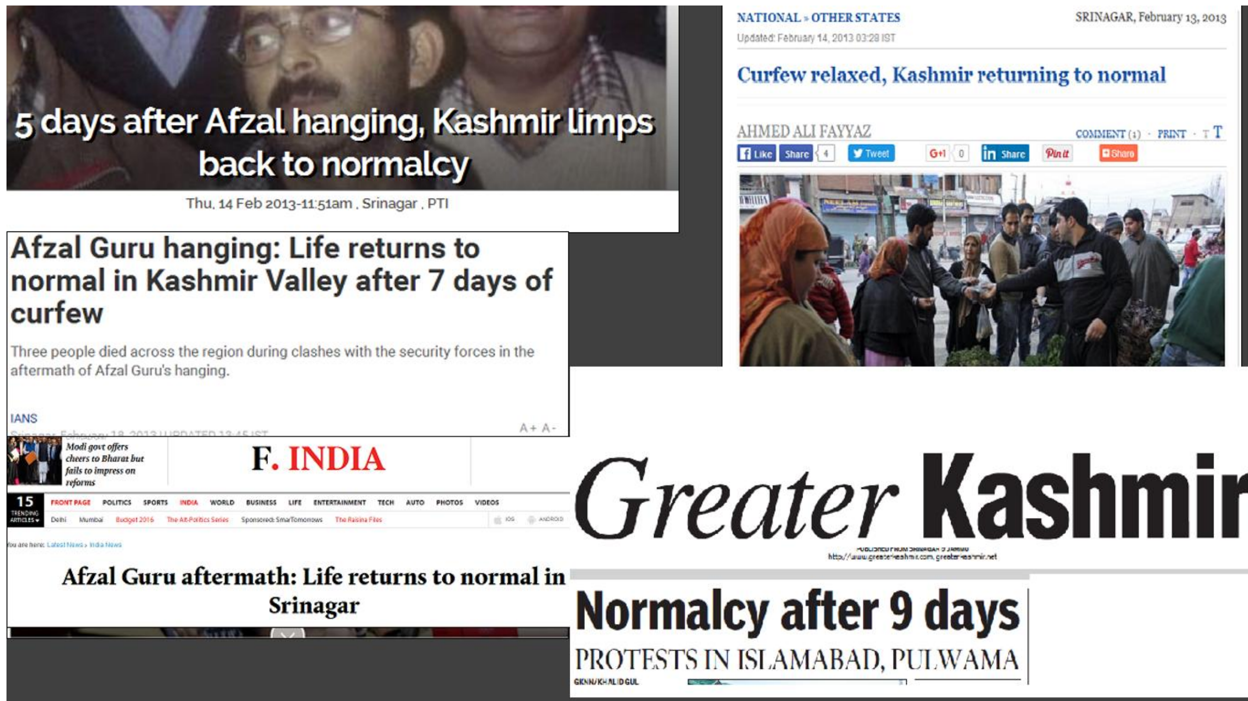
Chapter 3: Spaces of everyday life in Kashmir

Man must be every day, or he will be not at all. (Lefebvre, 1991, p.127)

On 9 February 2013, Afzal guru, convicted in the 2001 Indian Parliament attack, was hanged inside Tihar jail. His execution was considered as a ‘dangerously radioactive political fallout’ and a blow to Indian democracy (Roy, 2013). When the news of the hanging reached Kashmir, large-scale demonstrations, and mass protest were held across the valley. Subsequently, fearing unrest, the Indian government imposed a curfew and put a blanket ban on the communication modes like the internet, mobile, and cable television network. Moreover, the authorities also closed the Srinagar-Jammu national highway for the day to avert any trouble. After the ban was lifted, India Today published a report saying:

> Life returnedto *normal* in Srinagar and other major towns of the Kashmir Valley on Monday after seven days of curfew and two days of separatist-sponsored shutdown following the Feb 9 execution of parliament attack convict Afzal Guru. Shops, banks, post offices, business establishments and government offices were open in the Jammu and Kashmir summer capital, while public transport was plying *normally*. (emphasis added) (Afzal Guru hanging, 2013, Para1).

Several other news sources also published similar headlines like 'life returns to *normal*' or '*normal* life resumes in Srinagar' etc. (emphasis added). These news headlines reinforce the idea of normalcy as a condition that enables the performance of mundane.



5 days after Afzal hanging, Kashmir limps back to normalcy

Thu, 14 Feb 2013-11:51am , Srinagar , PTI

NATIONAL » OTHER STATES

SRINAGAR, February 13, 2013

Updated: February 14, 2013 03:28 IST

Curfew relaxed, Kashmir returning to normal

AHMED ALI FAYYAZ

Afzal Guru hanging: Life returns to normal in Kashmir Valley after 7 days of curfew

Three people died across the region during clashes with the security forces in the aftermath of Afzal Guru's hanging.

IANS

F. INDIA

Afzal Guru aftermath: Life returns to normal in Srinagar

Greater Kashmir

Normalcy after 9 days

PROTESTS IN ISLAMABAD, PULWAMA

(Fig. 3.1: Headlines published in various newspaper after Afzal hanging)

Normalcy can be understood as an effect of regularly held practices in a repetitive and rhythmic way. However, in Kashmir, oscillating between disturbed and normal, ruptures in life have become ordinary for the people. What constitutes 'normal' is a zone where curfew, violence, and surveillance form a part of the everyday. In a similar context, Tobias Kelly focuses on the ordinary life during the second Palestinian intifada in the Palestinian West Bank. Writing about everyday life, Kelly (2008) observes that the ordinary does not stand for "all that is not spectacular, large-scale, institutional, or formal" (p. 353). However, it is a social notion that is defined by its context and "participating in everyday activities in the face of a military occupation threatens to collapse the distinction between the ordinary and extraordinary" (Kelly,

2008, p.353). Denis Murray, a BBC correspondent, shares similar sentiments while reporting from Northern Ireland. He writes:

> Many people accustomed to life in Northern Ireland found themselves opening their bags or standing, arms outstretched, ready to be frisked when visiting places like London, Dublin or New York. Force of habit. What was totally abnormal elsewhere in the western world became normal in Northern Ireland. Our lives were circumscribed by the extraordinary, which became just ordinary. People adapt very quickly… The extraordinary becomes humdrum in no time at all. Helicopters, for instance. Everyone who led in every other respect conventional lives in Belfast through the Troubles had the sound of hovering army helicopters as the quiet soundtrack of their existence. We simply stopped noticing the noise. (Murray, n.d.)

Lives circumvented by the extraordinary conditions for a sustained period bring certain changes in people's attitude and in relations with day-to-day affairs. Subsequently, these diversions become the new normal and the people start living accordingly. For someone like me, who had never felt a difference between normal and disturbed, staying in a curfew zone was a strange experience. I had never lived amidst such a situation before. Impositions such as being confined to home alone; the fear of being interrogated by the police were not usual for me.However, when I stayed in a curfew zone for some days at Aamir's home. I could sense the meaning of a routine where the extraordinary becomes ordinary. Contrary to a regular day routine, I would stay at home the whole day reading already read newspapers and old magazines. The afternoon would be spent watching television switching from one channel to the next mostly for news, trying to gather updates. In the evening, close friends of Aamir would gather at a common place (mostly inside the home) talking about job opportunities, discussing politics and pieces of information on recent developments. During one such conversation, talking about managing household requirements, one of Aamir's friends said to me: "We Kashmiris are the best stockist, we stock everything for two-three months. This helps during extended curfews. It has become a habit

now". While I felt uneasy and uncomfortable facing what felt like a standstill like life, my host, and his friends were calm. Unlike me, this routine was not unfamiliar to them; the curfew has become an internalized routine and self-imposed mass-house-arrest for the people of the Valley. The routine in Pulwama was a reminder of alienation of people from the state and a situation in which "the elected administration was often powerless in the face of military and paramilitary priorities" (Kaul, 2012, p.76).

As I gathered from the narratives and discussions with young respondents, recalling what ordinary might have been like before the struggle was difficult for them. The ordinary of course is considered mundane, but the shifts that occurred during the last decades obfuscate an understanding of the ordinary. Therefore, the youth have their own understanding of normal or as Abid said lightheartedly, "We have a perception of the normal!"

The Kashmir conflict has been widely understood through the lens of violence, oppression and the struggle in and around it due to its geopolitical situation. However, in all this, an implicit question that remains unanswered is about the shifts in Kashmiri society, in particular, changes in routine, about the 'ordinariness' of life and its shifting meanings. Every day, a particular mixture of fear and unpredictability, violence and the ordinaries of ruptures, surveillance all these changes have become a part of the ordinary Kashmiri' life, manifesting itself in time and space.

In Kashmir, burdened with hostile situations, life is surrounded by volatile circumstances. In such conditions, facing uncertainty, life emerges as a site of struggle and negotiation to maintain the banality of life. It is in this context that I look at the idea of normalcy in everyday

lives of the people in a conflict zone. This research draws from the studies that pay attention to the everyday as a site to understand human experiences (Spencer, 1990b; Scheper-Hughes, 1993; Kelly, 2007; Das, 2000, 2007; Chatterji and Mehta, 2007). I engage with the quotidian to understand how far and in what ways people adjust every day precarities and how their routine intersects with politics and violence. I look at routinized performances and banal geographies of violence and fear to discuss the different shades and subtleties of human lives in a contested zone. My analysis dealing with various aspects of the everyday and its material and discursive aspects runs through the chapter. I approach everyday life through a theoretical and methodological lens to locate the effects of conflict present in everyday spaces. I address militarization and violence as a multilayered process that extends beyond the margins of the state institutions, space, and personnel, which in turn also generate resistance and mobilize the community (Dowler, 2011).

In this effort, ethnographic accounts aid to comprehend negotiations, resistances, and power in spaces of persistent conflict. I use narratives from the field to argue that everyday life needs to be put in a context, specific to its location and surroundings to understand its nature and various attributes attached to it. The narratives discussed here shed the light on how precarity is negotiated and lived. Further, these stories reveal that how power and politics work through microstructures as much as they do through macro structures. I pay particular attention to spatiality of routinely held practices, and attempt to move beyond a simplistic compartmentalization of daily life or fixing activities into binaries like disturbed and calm; simple and complex and ordinary or extraordinary.

Violence, curtailed freedom, insecurities, and controlled participation in public spaces have continued to be essential dimensions of people's lives in the volatile terrain of the Valley. In such a setting, I am seeking to enter into the inner world of experience through a situated understanding of quotidian containing fragments of violence, emotions, and hope held in small gestures and habits. As Lars-Christer Hydén (2011) turns our attention to the ways in which narratives are embodied. For example, during some interviews, I observed certain acts that the respondents resorted to while talking to me. One of the respondents was clinching his fingers while narrating a story; in another instance, Rahman was stroking his healed ankle; again, Sadiq was touching the scar mark on his face unconsciously talking about a particular incident. Along with exciting, compelling, and insightful narratives about the lived experiences (Stanley, 1992; Tamboukou, 2010), such observations become important to understand that "words and memories are both deeply connected to bodily experiences" (Andrews et. al, 2013).

Why Everyday?

The attributes of everyday life have been equated with routinely performed acts, mundane and trivial aspects of social life. While appearing transparent and straightforward, the meanings rooted in social practices are both complex and inconsistent depending on the spatio-temporal context. Berger and Luckman (1967) write about the taken for granted nature of everyday, "It is simply there, as self –evident and compelling facticity. I know that it is real. While I am capable of engaging in doubts about its reality, I am obliged to suspend such doubts as I routinely exist in everyday life" (p.37). This emphasizes that we all follow a routine essential to our identity and being. Sociologists like Goffman, Simmel, Agnes Heller, and Habermas also addressed

enormous variations in human lives to understand both abstract and concrete patterns of the everyday.[46]

There is no dearth of literature available on Kashmir issue highlighting the nature and the consequences of the conflict. This literature includes scholarly articles, books, monographs and research reports. These writings covering geo-politics, socio-religious, violence and nationalist discourses help to understand various dimensions of the Kashmir conflict and provide insights into its contested history. However, in all this, everyday life remains unnoticed containing "broken patterns, non-rational and duplicitous actions, irresolvable conflicts and unpredictable events" (Silverstone, 1994 p.7). Shabir[47], a 26 years old student at Valley University, shares his experience that offers such insight:

> …now we have become familiar with sudden breaks in the life, its uncertainty, and disturbed conditions. Sometimes, this generates a vacuum in our lives. We simply live and accept whatever comes in our way. Children are no more afraid of *fauzis* (army men). The encounters, gun battles, news of deaths and disappearances, all this is *normal*. These things are part of the routine given to us by our colonial masters (smirks). Crackdowns, army raids, killings, are common to us, nothing extraordinary. We have a situation, and we are still figuring out to live with and fight against it.

This narrative reflects that the categories like disturbed, normal and extraordinary are not fixed and are always relational. This example also highlights that experiences and practices are not that simple or straightforwardly mundane. Rather, they are embedded in a context and environment, characterized by uncertainties, volatility and inherent contradictions dominated by power

[46] A discussion on the various theories of everyday, please refer to Ben Highmore (2002), Michael E. Gardiner (2000), Michael Sheringham (2006) and Pink (2012) for the detailed discussion on the theories of every day.
[47] I have used pseudonyms of the respondents, except for those who insisted their real names be used.

relations. In the words of Rob Shields (2002), "the everyday is not only banal but so mundane that it is of the essence and yet beneath the radar of domination and power relations" (p.4).

I recognize the disturbed as a deviance from the fixed routine due to some external factors, common to a large group of people. Whenever some exigencies interrupt the routine, a rupture unsettles the mundane and reworks the fixed routine. In such circumstances, inability to perform the daily activities either suspends the rhythm of life or obliges people to alter their performances. Since in Kashmir, such ruptures loom large, altered performances and efforts to maintain the normalcy of life blur the distinction between normal and disturbed. However, such minute alterations and negotiations transmitted through everyday activities remain unnoticed and undiscussed. I argue that hidden in the mundane lie layers of meanings that are critical to uncovering the connections between the Kashmiri conflict at its various scales.

The residuals of such adjustments, no matter how subtle, hidden beneath the routine provide a scope to analyze, interpret and understand the underlying meanings. When I met Abid in summer of 2013 during my first fieldwork, he often talked about the hidden and unnoticed aspects of their lives. He is a research scholar in Valley University and has a keen interest in international conflicts and the dynamics of geopolitics. Abid thinks, there is too much focus on Kashmir and less on Kashmiris. During our initial conversation, he said:

> For an ordinary Kashmiri, life is not so simple; it is not about living in a *Jannat (heaven)*. This conflict is not only about politics of two countries (India and Pakistan), about militancy or movement for *azaadi* (freedom). It is a struggle to live with dignity, to live with honor and to receive what is rightly ours that belongs to us. People have been writing on Kashmir issue for a long time, describing reasons for Kashmir conflict like dynamics of geo-politics, state versus people, anti- India and pro- Pakistan stance, etc. All these things may reveal many things; but what about having a life in this conflict.

> *Where am I in all this*? Can you tell me what it is like to be a young Kashmiri, about my arrested imagination, (*meri soch per bhee pehra hai)*? How do we live here and face the crude reality of being governed by India? Can you look at our lives as we *live* it? Don't tell me that seeing is believing; make an effort to understand our lives as we (ordinary people) perform routines and make spaces for hope.

Abid feels that there is no way out; life is imprisoned in a web of institutional power and politics, entangled in religious and nationalist discourses. While he was quite vocal about the role of India (as an oppressor), he also criticized the role of local politicians, their '*gair jimedaarana*' (irresponsible) behavior. For him, life has become an arena of various ideologies contesting with each other. Here, the voice of Abid embodies a "society whose members just want to be treated in a normal way, they wish to be who they "really" are, or who they ought to be" (Galasińska and Kozłowska, 2009, p. 87). He yearned for a life devoid of any fear (*khauf*), and instability (*na- paidari*) and asked to *'present life as it is'* in my work. In this conversation, Abid could paraphrase concerns of many like him. Here Abid represents the figure of an ordinary man, like the central character in Michele de Certeau writings. Abid represents a common person, who yearns for 'a normal life'. Michele de Certeau invokes this ordinary man, as an essential figure, in his writings to understand the daily lives. In the preface section of *The practice of everyday life,* de Certeau (1984) writes:

> To a common hero, a ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets. In invoking here at the outset of my narratives the absent figure who provides both their beginning and their necessity, I inquire into the desire whose impossible object he represents. (p. vi)

What de Certeau suggests is that the ordinary man provides a window to look into the everyday life, one that has been largely ignored. This reaffirms my concern for an analysis of everyday to understand 'normalness' of human lives in a conflict.

Further, everyday life also bears marks of resistance and struggle that is not always visible. In the words of Scott (2008), 'everyday resistance' is *quiet, dispersed, disguised or otherwise seemingly invisible*[48]. I consider everyday life as a site to comprehend lives in a conflict zone, a site to understand dynamics of conflict, people's struggle, and resistance. I look at everyday experiences and routinized life as a mode of inquiry.

Mundane acts of Everyday Life

One dares to speak out; there is restlessness in their hearts,
Wish we could speak of our condition[49]

Everyday life seems simple, a reality that exists in open and present itself in various actions. However, as Highmore notes (2002), everyday is also a name for the aspects of life that lie hidden. One such aspect of life appears from Aamir's narrative extending the understanding of mundane acts. I met Aamir in April 2013, during my first field visit. I stayed at his home couple of times along with his family. Once, I noticed a particular habit of his mother. We were returning to University campus after holidays, his mother kissed his forehead and said something in the Kashmiri language. On the way to University, Aamir received three- four calls from home asking about his whereabouts. Since it takes less than two hours to reach University from his home, I was curious about these frequent calls. When I enquired Aamir about this, he smiled in a strange way and asked: "do you know what she said when we left home?" Then he explained,

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[48]"Everyday resistance" is a theoretical concept introduced and popularized by James C. Scott in order to cover a different kind of resistance. Scott (2008) in his book Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance' writes that everyday resistance is about how people act in their everyday lives in ways that might undermine power like non-compliance, feigned ignorance.

[49] Abid recited this poem of Majhoor, a Kashmiri poet, in the response to one of the questions.

her blessing was, “now only Allah can save you, HE is your savior now, I pray for your safe traveling.” The typical act of blessings is not that simple and straightforward. It reveals the fears of a mother for her son, who understands and acknowledges the threat attached to traveling. I propose that a close reading of such mundane acts can enable a nuanced understanding of lives surrounded by the conflict. Moreover, to understand “what is left over after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis” (Lefebvre, cited in Highmore, 2002, p.3).

Drawing attention towards the significance of everyday Agnes Heller (1984) notes, “In everyday life the person . . . shapes his world and in this way he shapes himself” (p.6). It is through common practices, activities, and performances that people conform to the social structures and create spaces for themselves in society. These socio-political and economic structures subsequently set conditions to articulate social relationships. Further, everyday life has not only socio-economic strings attached with it but also holds close ties with political structures. However, the cyclic nature of a routine portrays life as a mere series of repeated things and moments, a simple continuum of past activities. This makes it difficult to recognize the constituents of politics. Acknowledging Arendt’s work, Kogl (2009) writes that every day is “political to the extent that its routines and activities take place in the context of human-made conditions” (p.515).[50] She elaborates, “while the everyday is usually a realm of habit and behavior in which individuals are submerged, in which we behave according to routines, nonetheless the everyday, unlike the intimate, can and should stand up to political scrutiny” (p.9).

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[50]Kogl writes about Arendt's notion of ‘the social’ and discusses the functions of routine, which may look like uneventful, boring, and opposite of politics.

In Kashmir, residential segregation, surveillance, and restrictions on various activities are embedded in people's lives in numerous ways; control and monitoring have become common features of an ordinary Kashmiris life. Hundreds of armed forces camps scattered in the valley are keeping a close watch on its residents. In a recent Bollywood movie Haider (Bharadwaj, Kapur & Bharadwaj, 2014), set in Kashmir, a particular scene depicts that how the repetitive and routinely held practices of frisking and checking have seeped deep into people's conscious. In this scene, a man standing outside of his home waits for hours. He expects someone to come and check his identity card so that he can feel allowed to go inside in his home. This scene shows the ordeal of an ordinary Kashmiri and the ways in which identity cards become entangled with politics of control and surveillance. This leads to an understanding where citizens are treated as mere state subjects required to prove their citizenship many a time in the span of a single day and the routine is always under the 'gaze' of the state. Such measures, as maintained by the authorities, have been adopted to secure the safety of its citizens and to create safe zones for them. Ironically, to protect the citizens, safety is achieved by means of curtailing 'freedom' and curbing their rights. However, the measures adopted by the state and security forces do not necessarily guarantee the safety and security of the people as contented.

(Fig. 3.2: Demolished army bunkers, Photo: Firdous Hassan/GK) [51]

Militarization of Everyday Life

According to Urvashi Butalia (2002), “the presence of the army, paramilitary and police forces is ubiquitous, and fear of violence and arrest has now become part of the daily lives of ordinary people” (p. xii). Further, Enloe (2000) adds to the understanding to a militarized place that it through not only direct means and exposure but also when militarized products, views, and attitudes are taken as natural and unproblematic (cited in Menjívar, 2008). Such impression of ‘natural’, unproblematic, and distorted difference between ordinary and extraordinary stresses the need to reflect on the ordinariness of the extraordinary and the extraordinariness of the ordinary.

[51]In Feb 2016, three army bunkers were removed by the local administration after a series of protests by the locals in Handwara. These bunkers were constructed on top of shops in Handwara main market.
http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/kashmir/three-army-bunkers-removed-from-handwara-market/215179.html

The people of Kashmir have been living amidst war and the militarism and a result of the continuation of militarized social life, many youths like Aamir identify themselves as ‘children of the conflict.’ Moreover, Aamir and many other young people like him who grew-up amongst troubled times seeing blood and tears, military presence continues to be a problem. As the militarized spaces and fear of gunfights between army and militants, limit the participation of locals in public places.

This phenomenon, shaped by the experiences of living in a contested zone affects the interests and marks the ways in which Kashmiri people especially youngsters choose to engage with politics in the everyday lives.

> Yogesh: Why do you call yourself ‘child of the conflict’? Is it because you grew-up in a conflict area?
> Aamir: We all feel the presence of the conflict in our lives. Especially, the army’s presence and constant surveillance. Taking permission from them (army), being quizzed several times for the same type of questions, house arrest like situations, fear, anger, frustration… All such conditions have made us aware of our position within a power driven structure. The presence of conflict and violence in which we grew up have shaped our political strategies and the ways in which we act and react in certain contexts, or challenge the state.

The arbitrary use of power by the armed forces generates a force of resistance. Additionally, fear, frustration, and anger produced through the constant negotiation with material aspects of life garner the resistance movement.

Martin-Baro (1991a) writes, “The militarization of daily life in the main parts of the social world contributes to the omnipresence of overpowering control and repressive threats... This is how an atmosphere of insecurity is fostered, unpredictable in its consequences, and

demanding of people a complete submission to the dictates of power" (pp. 311-12). He refers to this phenomenon as the "militarization of the mind" (Martin-Baro, 1991b, p.341). Adding to the understanding of militarization of spaces, Shabir's narrative draws attention towards spatiality of the everyday life. Shabir is from Shopian district, one of the disturbed areas of the Kashmir valley, known for its resistance movements. According to Shabir, being from Shopian makes him more vulnerable during curfew. His words were, "during curfew, and it matters a lot which place you belong. I can tell you many instances when I was frisked again after I revealed my village's name." He narrated another incident about his fear of a particular place. He says:

> Earlier, I used to take a shortcut to reach my room. One day, I found that some army personnel were thrashing a man on that road. Seeing that, I fled the scene in fear. I do not use that shortcut anymore, who knows I may be the next...

Shabir's narrative highlights the spatiality of fear embedded in everyday acts. While a particular lane is unsafe for him, his *dera* (rented room) is a safe space. Adding to his narratives, Shabir further says:

> We all have learned to live in a state of siege. The sight of an intimidating, fierce looking *army wallah* (army-man) does not bother us. We see them all the time from dawn to dusk. We coexist with the security forces.

Like Shabir, many other respondents, too, defined spaces as safe and unsafe and talked about the alternative spaces. The alternative spaces such as the private spaces of the family, homogeneous spaces like religious gathering (like mosques) and public spaces such as universities are considered safe. During one of the protests, which was led by some of the University students who were opposing Zubin Mehta's show "*Ehsaas-e-Kashmir*" one student posited his opinion, "We are strong as a group but still not in a position to speak freely as an individual. I know that here inside the campus army would not beat us or will open fire on us." "Don't be so sure of

anything, and mighty Indian forces can shoot us inside the campus (made a hand gesture)", adds another student. These narratives shows that the construction of safe spaces is based on the subjective experiences and the freedom of being politically vocal in public spaces.

In a similar context, a young woman talked about her fear of security personnel while commuting to college. She says, "I have my own preconceptions about the Indian army, and it's not about right or wrong. I believe what I have seen so far from my own experiences". Once, I asked Aamir: "have you ever thought to pass these barriers without producing your identity proof, like an act of defiance?" His replied in a tone mixed with a tinge of helplessness. Aamir's response reflected another facet of the conflict- everyday exposure of civilians to armed security forces. He says,

> The sole purpose of these barrier, checkpoints, barricades is not security checks or to prevent any attack, or curbing intrusion but to exercise the authority and demonstrating power over ordinary people; forcing us to produce I-card, stopping us for inspection, making us to wait, to disturb our schedule .. Now, if I argue with security personnel's then it helps them only. They can hold me as long as they want me too. And back at home everybody would be disturbed hearing this, and the people waiting for their turn behind me will feel more insecure and scared. The checking point does not function merely as a security check it has various other functions too.

Further, he elaborates, "When securities agencies arrest someone in relation to any commotion or 'anti-India activities'. It is not only that particular person in detention who suffers; the entire family goes through trauma. Army believes in breaking the spirit of the family." These narratives reveal the manifold realities of the life. It is about the multiple challenges youth face in Kashmir, feeling of control and being governed, or how to challenge the regulated space through their engagement. Even for the youngsters participating in politics and expressing their ideas, is not without perils of its own. Azmi (et. al, 2013), in a study, show that the participation

of war- affected youths from eastern Sri Lanka depends on upon their access to particular spaces and the power relations in which they are embedded. Similarly, my respondents were of the opinion that political participation is limited to protests and demonstration, and alternate ways of political involvement were absent in the Valley. The leadership is divided as Islamist, secularists and autonomy seekers. However, a young activist from Hurriyat (G) argued that the presence of different ideologies are not a deterrent to the political structure. As Chowdhary (2008) opines, "expansion of the mainstream political space does not necessarily mean that the separatist political space has shrunk" (p.23). The existence of democratic politics and separatist politics influence each other, though, the breakdown of political authority is a hindrance in democratic processes. Moreover, the ability of young people to engage with political spaces is obstructed by the lack of political security and disillusionment with the state institutions.

Close attention to the details of everyday also reveals gendered relations of power within a military conflict. According to Farzana, "She is paying a price to be in the land of conflict". Farzana, whose husband has been missing for the last three-four years, is in her late 30s and a mother of a five years old boy. Her husband went out to work on a usual day and never returned. Farzana still awaits for his homecoming. She explains the misery of her life and says,

> I never felt scared to go to the field earlier as my husband was there to accompany. But now, since he is missing, it is very tough for me to go to the field all alone especially at night. There is nobody to go with me. I am afraid that somebody might come and take me too. What would happen to my child?

It is important to bring into light the voices of Kashmiri women, which often remain buried in the labyrinth of household chores and child rearing. These are the voices which otherwise remain absent in the dominant narratives which mostly focus on the physical violence and not much on

the subtle but equally damaging forms of violence. As Veena Das (1997) aptly notes, "one can see suffering not only in extraordinary events such as those of police firing on crowds of young children but also in the routine of everyday life" (p.567), like going to the field in case of Farzana. In a similar context, Parveena, an elderly woman of around 60 years old also shared her experience of fear and insecurity, which were the parts of their daily lives back in the late 1990's. She said that chasing militants, the army used to enter in their homes. Both militants and army, operated in the public spaces without any inhibition and the privacy of one's home was not guaranteed. Main roads, fields, orchard, tea-shops, courtyards or even courtyards were not safe. There was no safe place as such, and fear of those uncertain situations still occupies Parveena's imaginations. She says,

> Male members of the family always suggested us to stay at home. We were kind of house arrested. But, God forbid! We were not safe, not even inside the home! Army has beaten many women and raped them inside the homes. Militants also used to come for shelter and food.

Unlike Parveena, who now spends most of the day in her kitchen garden in the backyard of the house, there are many women (half widows) who are forced to go out for a living. This is because now they have become the sole bread-earner of the family who have to carry out the responsibility of bringing up their children alone. The discomfort and anguish that the women bear in their hearts lessen with a busy schedule during the daytime. However, the same returns with more pain and ache during the night, as one of my respondents, Sakina, 47-year-old, expressed. She says,

> I pass my days in household chores and other activities. I talk to neighbors, go to the field and the market. But often during nights, I feel an anxiety and fear that military will take away my son like they have taken away my husband. Sometimes, I spend the whole night awake with an uneasy sense.

Many women like Sakina are trying to make peace with their lives behind the veil of everyday routine. However, much has not been changed in recent times either: crackdown, encounters in public places, house-combing are still very much part of people's lives. The everyday bears the marks of uncertainty, insecurity, and unpredictability. I recognize that the narratives disclose the tension between the performance of the regular activities and their experiences, especially in a militarized place.

Locating Violence and Resistance in Everyday Life

> *The streets of my town are littered with blood*
> *The red liquid engulfs us in a flood*
> *Before me I view the tired and defeated faces*
> *Dead bodies carried away in dark wooden cases.*
> (Moletsane, 2000, p.59).

My attempt in this section is not to theorize violence or to provide any definite account of the violence in Kashmir as theory cannot represent the reality of violence (Daniel, 1996). Violence is not merely an event, a palpable outcome that can be observed, reported or just measured. Valentine Daniel (1996) in his book *Charred lullabies: Chapters in an anthropography of violence* mentions:

> ...theory, any theory, is a way of understanding reality and not a collection of observations about reality. To the extent that it enhances one's understanding of the real, it literally "stands under" observations and gives form to these observations. But violence is such a reality that a theory which purports to inform it with significance must not merely "stand under" but conspicuously "stand apart" from it as a gesture of open admission to its inadequacy to measure up to its task. (p.6)

My intention is to highlight some aspects of the everyday life to demonstrate the interconnectedness of violence and mundane. Violence is not just a one-time act – it is an ongoing process, embedded in the daily lives of those who experience it. As Bar-Tal (2003)

writes, "violence has a crucial effect on the society as the accumulation and sedimentation of such experiences in collective memory penetrates every thread of the societal fabric" (p.86).

To understand nature of violence and its effects on the everyday, Dobash and Dobash (1998) argue, "Locating violence in the midst of daily life demands a focus on the mundane, the ordinary rather than the extraordinary…" (p.142). For instance, Ubaid, who works at a furniture shop, always comes to work without fail and seems occupied in his work all the time. However, during my conversation with him, he revealed that this was the only way for him to distract himself from the haunted memories of the past. He was once interrogated by security agencies after the 2010 turmoil[52] as a suspect and was tortured third degree. Ubaid says, "You see that I am polishing these chairs; but the truth is, in the back of my mind I struggle to forget those anxious moments. I take refuge in the busyness of my work." Ubaid's story shows the connection between the inner world of deep hidden fears and the outer expression of polishing a chair. Such a story demonstrate the "everyday as a problematic, contested and an opaque terrain, where meanings are not found to be ready-made" (Highmore, 2002, p.1).

Furthermore, during my conversation with Javed, a young Kashmiri, I realized that the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary lies very much in the terrain of ordinary only. Javed's life is an example where the difference between the ordinary and extraordinary collapses by immersing himself in the humdrum of the chores to forget the extraordinary. Javed too was once captured and tortured by the security agencies. Signs of violence and abuse are imprinted on his body and psyche. He was visibly disturbed when he was narrating that incident to me.

[52]In the year 2010, Kashmir faced a series of violent protests following the killings of three local youths by Indian security forces posing them as terrorists. This was further fueled by the killing of another teenager when security forces opened fire to stop a protest rally. This led to several confrontations between security forces and locals. This was the time when stone pelting became a routine as a mode of resistance.

Now, Javed struggles to forget the humiliation and suffering received during the arrest and wants to release the trauma. He regularly goes to his workplace, a shop, and works tirelessly as asked by his employer. Now, his job has become a part of his routine irrespective of a *bandh* or a protest he joins his duties, without fail. Javed finds solace in the mundane, as Veena Das (2007) notes that ordinary is often the space of recovery from violence. In this case, may be, it is true for Javed too. Kelly (2008) also acknowledges the role of the ordinary to understand violence in people's lives. She notes:

> …in the recent growth of the ethnography of armed conflict, there has often been a danger of over-determining violence, ignoring the mundane nature of most political conflicts. In order to understand how people live through violence, an examination of the ordinary is just as important as the apparently extraordinary or exceptional (p. 353).

It can be noted here that the ordinary and everyday should not be seen as existing in opposition to violence, as they can be deeply implicated in each other (Das, 2007). One may also reason, why it is necessary to go beyond the already established images/sketches of life in contested zones. I offer a response that in a place like Kashmir, everyday life does not fall under a fixed or a narrow category. It is uncertain and ambiguous, always under constant threat of violence, marked by visible and invisible, legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence (Wilkinson, 2004). Therefore, it becomes necessary to understand people's lives within a setting from the perspective of Kashmiris or being a part of their routine. Ali (et. al. 2011) writes about the effects of violence in the lives of Kashmiris:

> Depressed and exhausted by the decades of violence, many Kashmiris have become passive: the beauties of spring and summer pass unnoticed by listless eyes. Yet, fearful even of medium- term possibilities, Kashmiris prefer to live in the present. Oppressed by neither-nor, they are silent in public, speaking the truth in whispers. (p.7)

Silent in public, remaining passive to beauty such metaphors illustrate the effects of violence positioned in their quotidian worlds. In Kashmir, violence is a perpetual phenomenon and ubiquitous feature, visible not only in forms of killings, detention, and tortures, but through material artifacts like fencing, barricades, bullet marks on buildings and burnt dilapidated home of Kashmiri Pundits. The effects of violence can be felt even in the seemingly apolitical acts such as the lighting of electric bulbs late at night, going out with friends, or strolling in groups. I remember an incident when Gulam, a resident of a village near Srinagar district, stated that people used to switch off all the lights after 9 p.m. in his village. It was a norm, an unwritten code because lights attracted both the army and the militants. Moreover, the army had instructed the villagers to switch off all the lights after 9 in the night. He said to me that his mother used a small kerosene lamp during nights but not without covering all the windows with thick curtains. This would prevent the dim light of the lamp to penetrate the thick curtains so that the light is not visible from the outside through the tinted glass windows.

The presence of violence over the past decades has not only touched the entire landscape of the Kashmir Valley but also has gored the lives of its people in multiple ways. The effects of violence can be felt across the society. People live or try to live a normal life against the backdrop of persistent conflict, tensions, and a constant threat of disturbance. The use of coercive power and various forms of violence do not remain just physical acts, but affects the people in subtle ways creating emotional scars and memories of suffering and pain. In such condition, everyday life provides a lens to focus on such direct and indirect forms of violence. Kapferer (1988) states that there is a direct link between collective violence and everyday life, a simple continuity between everyday actions and violence. Kapferer elaborates, "the power of

nationalist myth derives from its ontological ‘fit’ with everyday practice, a fit which allows it to penetrate deep into the actor’s ‘being’…” (p. 88). I found few similar accounts in my ethnographic research in Kashmir. The phenomenon of penetrating deep into the actor’s ‘being’ was evident from many instances, like when students refused to stand for the Indian national anthem in University campus as they do not consider it as their national anthem. At many occasions, I found that the youth (especially students) do not support the Indian cricket team but the opponent team. Jonathan Spencer (1990b) carries forward Kapferer’s argument and adds that connection between collective violence and everyday life is ‘more complex than the simple continuity’. Likewise, Veena Das (2007), in *Life and Words*, focuses on the everyday lives rooted in the events of Partition of India in 1947 and the assassination of the then prime minister Indira Gandhi in 1984. She elaborates,

> It (everyday) narrates the lives of particular persons and communities who were deeply embedded in these events, and it describes the way that the event attaches itself with its tentacles into everyday life and folds itself into the recesses of the ordinary. (p.1)

During one of my interviews, countering the understanding of normalcy of life, Dar expresses his feelings:

> When you look at us what do, you see a happy face? We were supposedly jubilant people. Now things have changed. *Hum har roz marte hai , thoda thoda jindgi khrach hoti hai aur thoda hum bhee.* (I feel that every day we die, every day we all are being consumed by this conflict).

Dar is in his late 30s, married with one kid. He was born at the time when Kashmir was going through the initial phase of militancy. He had seen many mujahedeen passing through his village, sometimes in broad daylight, otherwise during the night. As a young boy, Dar was fascinated by their dresses, fierce eyes and gait especially their swagger. However, later, he also witnessed the

disappearances of many young men from his neighborhood and heard that a few of them have crossed the border for arms training to wage jihad. Most of them were killed by Indian security forces. Some who survived that phase had changed into different persons disillusioned by militancy, lost in a labyrinth of politics. Dar understands the pain of loss; he hears the silent cries of the family members of slain jihadis. He said, “I could hear the screaming and the wailing. I did not know then what to do? I remember funerals, women crying, male family members mourning the dead sitting silently and gazing in emptiness.” Dar reflects upon his experience and says, “Violence is not a solution, cannot be a solution ever. It generates only fear, pain and suffering.”

Along with violence, everyday life also bears marks of resistance, repression, and a struggle that is not always visible. In the case of Kashmir, the fight for self-determination and the stand against the Indian state emerges in various forms of resistance. It is mundane, which on the one hand, carries the marks of violence, and, on the other hand, creates the spaces of resistance. The resistance against the state also emerges in the various forms. If it expressed through armed insurgency, then there are other forms of protests, *bandh*, and boycotting the government functions. In 1990s Kashmir witnessed armed insurgency and the rise of militant groups like JKLF (Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front), Hizbul Mujahideen etc. In the summer of 2010, the resistant movement took a new turn. Kashmiri youth congregated in an unarmed mass movement to challenge the Indian government’s authority. Pravaiz Bukhari (2011), a seasoned journalist based in Kashmir, addresses the shift in the movement from arms to stone. He states,

> …young Kashmiris, children of the conflict, made stones and rocks a weapon of choice against government armed forces, sidestepping the tag of a terrorist movement linked with Pakistan. The unrest represents a conscious transition to an unarmed mass

> movement, one that poses a moral challenge to New Delhi's military domination over the region (p.3).

Sanjay Kak (2010), a noted documentary filmmaker, once remarked that these protesters are "children of the *tehreek*, born and brought up in the turmoil of the last two decades". Since then (2010 onwards) stone pelting has become a common feature of many young lives. However, stone pelting should not be reduced to just an act of violence or resistance. For many, it is a way of catharsis. The act of stone pelting gives a way to oust their anger and frustration. As Abid says,

> I know my limitation; I cannot do much. I cannot be a militant. I cannot do anything extraordinary, but at least I can throw a stone at security forces. A simple act of telling them (Indian occupation) that we do not like them. They are not welcome anymore.

I find the similar sentiments in Hilal Mir's essay, a Srinagar-based journalist who narrates a situation in which he felt like an 'ordinary Kashmiri' and wanted to react like them. Hilal writes:

> I picked up a stone from the debris of a housing cluster burnt by CRPF soldiers in 1990 and hurled it at the soldiers, a few of whom were filming the stone-throwers with mini-cams. Caught, I could have been booked under the Public Safety Act and jailed for two years without a trial. I would have been jobless because no news organization would have a felon on its rolls. But I threw more stones. As I was hurling the stones it felt like this was the only legitimate thing to do in that cursed place. (2011, p.49)

In similar fashion, I observed that to oppose the state-institution, ordinary people register their solidarity with *azaadi* (freedom) movement and participate in the protests and the strikes. They also attend *janaza* (funeral)of militants who die fighting with Indian security forces.[53]

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[53] One may find many such news in the daily newspaper published from Kashmir. In recent times, it has become a common practice to attend funeral ofmujahedeen. The image is from the funeral of Abu Qasim, a Pakistani militant which attracted tens and thousands of Kashmiri youngsters. This news can be accessed at http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-unwinding-in-the-kashmir-valley/article7851758.ece

(Fig. 3.3: People in the funeral of militant killed by Indian security forces, Photo: Nissar Ahmed)

According to Vinthagen and Johansson (2013), “everyday resistance is quite, dispersed, disguised or otherwise seemingly invisible…” (p. 4). I believe, it is carried out in small acts of daily activities. For example, when some of my respondents out-rightly refused to identify themselves with the word Indian. One person said, “I may be called Indian because I have an Indian passport but besides that I don’t have any allegiance with Indian state”. Basharat Peer, a famous novelist from Kashmir, once commented:

> I still have an Indian passport as that is the only travel document available to anyone from the Indian-controlled-part of Kashmir. The question of my nationality continues to be a matter of dispute. I refer to myself as a Kashmiri, as a journalist, as a writer. (Sircar, 2010)

There are many other similar acts which might seem trivial but are of a part of the resistance like unsubscribing a particular news channel for its bias approach towards the Kashmir issue.

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Two Kashmir journalists asked to leave army event for sitting through Indian national anthem

By ANI | Published: 25th May 2016 10:08 AM Last Updated: 25th May 2016 02:56 PM

SRINAGAR: An Indian Army officer asked two journalists to leave an event because they "did not stand up when the Indian national anthem was played and the Indian flag was unfurled".

The anthem was played during the passing out parade of recruits at the regimental centre of the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment.

The national flag was disrespected in front of a Jammu and Kashmir minister and

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Kashmir University students refuse to stand up for Indian National Anthem

Srinagar: The authorities in Kashmir University had to face embarrassment today after the students refused to stand up while the Indian National Anthem was being played out during a Special Convocation, where Governor N.N.Vohra was invited to deliver address.

Reports said that a special convocation was being organized by Kashmir University to confer degree of doctorate of Science. As the Governor started his address, scores of students left the Convocation Hall and did not hear the address.

The rest of the students both boys and girls preferred not to stand up and remained seated when the National Anthem was played out to formally begin the proceedings of the Convocation.

However, people in the front rows, mostly the faculty members and other guests, stood up when the anthem was being played. (CNS)

(Fig. 3.4: News clippings about refusal to stand for Indian national anthem[54])

I argue that attending the funerals of militants, joining protests, or not standing for the Indian national anthem are not heroic or extraordinary acts, but ordinary doings to defy the state, In this resistance movement, women also participated to challenge the state hegemony and played a crucial role. Though women were not the part of the armed insurgency, they were at the forefront to support the militants. Writing about Kashmiri women's expression of resistance situated in the realm of everyday, Rita Manchanda (2001) notes that women will sing songs of celebration, intertwining couplets in praise of local mujahideen (militants)….their voice excitedly shouting "oh, you holy fighters, rise and awake! The time of your martyrdom has come" (p. 50-51). Inspired by the idea of martyrdom and jihad, a new trend has emerged in the recent times, another facet to this struggle. It is about the radicalization of the new generation. Young people who do not want to remain left behind or to lament about the situation are joining militancy. A senior police official from Kashmir remarks about this new phase of the armed insurgency as

[54]http://kashmirwatch.com/kashmir-university-students-refuse-to-stand-up-for-indian-national-anthem/
http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Two-Kashmir-journalists-asked-to-leave-army-event-for-sitting-through-Indian-national-anthem/2016/05/25/article3450498.ece

‘quality militancy’ and says, “Their (the youth’s) dedication is rich and (they) are highly radicalized” (Falak, 2015, para 11).

(Fig. 3.5: Social media photo of young militants, Source. HT Image[55])

The youngsters, especially in their early 20s, are joining armed insurgency to fight against the state. A Srinagar-based lawyer talks about this ‘new-wave’ of militancy and says, “this new wave of armed struggle led by youth can be seen as a resistance to all hegemonies aimed at maintaining the status quo, even within the resistance leadership”. I am of the opinion that the idea of representing youth as new age militant “should not be just about the effect of power on young people, but also the political power young people wield through their practices, resistance, strategies and challenges” (Skelton, 2010, pp. 146-147).

[55]This photo went viral in social media which shows the new age militants unafraid of revealing their identities. Burhan Wani (in the middle) became the poster boy in Kashmir.
http://www.hindustantimes.com/static/the-young-militants-of-kashmir/

As discussed earlier, besides violence and resistance, fear is another factor present in the lives of Kashmiri people. Pettigrew and Adhikari (2009) argue, "…fear is always contextually situated, differently experienced through time and related to personal circumstances" (p.403). Bashir's fear of New Delhi railway station explains this phenomenon. Bashir (24-year-old), a resident of Pulwama district, studies in a college in Bhopal. He visits home during vacations and usually travels by train. His experiences of traveling seemed different from the usual stories that one gets to hear. He is always faced with a sense of fear while crossing New Delhi railway station, which comes on his way to Bhopal or during his return to his hometown. Bashir has been hearing stories of ill-treatment towards Kashmiris in New Delhi since his childhood. It is his experiences of having grown up in a conflict-ridden area, that have made him so cautious and fearful that he never set foot on New Delhi railway station. Bashir imagines that something bad may happen to him. He says,

> I stay back in the train sitting on my berth. I am afraid of Delhi police in particular. I know Kashmiris are not welcome in Delhi. Moreover, when I am not safe in Srinagar then how can I be safe in Delhi?

The fear has seeped deep into the Bashir's conscious. It is not Bashir but many others like him who are skeptical of surrounding especially in an unfamiliar terrain. These stories depict that fear becomes a part of the lives of the people of a conflict area. Even some of the most common acts like traveling, going out in the night, making long-duration calls are not free of fear. The above discussion shows that fear, precarity, uncertainty and suspicion such expressions can be read through an analysis of the quotidian.

Conclusions:

Everyday life is the self-evident, natural and an overt phenomenon that takes place in the realm of habits, rituals, and routinely embedded in a setting. In a contested zone where every day takes place within broader power structures of control and surveillance, everyday life and their symbolic meanings remain unnoticed and emerge as a site of experience that is "below the threshold of the noticed" (Johnstone, 2008, p.13). In such conditions, the mundane provides an understanding of 'ordinary' people's lives and deaths and through their narratives; a window opens up on to the allegorical quality of every day (Chatterji and Mehta, 2007). It is a lived process of routinization that every individual experience and enact. While violence, fear, and terror are hidden under the routine, there are small pockets in this routine where hope meets with reality aspiring for a better future. Thus, it makes more sense to think of the everyday as a way of experiencing, a window into people's lives as I have demonstrated through some narratives from my ethnographic journey. I mainly pay attention to the everyday lives of the Kashmiri people to expose the normalization of violence, the generality of fear, and precarious nature of life. It is against the backdrop of persistent conflict, tensions, and the constant threat of disturbance that locals adjust their lives and attempt to regain the normalcy of life. At the same time, the precarious nature of quotidian creates spaces for resistance and struggle to go back to normalcy. I have shown through the narratives that "a violent structure leaves marks not only on the human body but also on the mind and the spirit" Galtung (1990, p.294). It is for such reasons that I argue that instead of accepting 'natural attitude' towards every day and its banality, we need to carry out an analysis of the quotidian to understand human lives in a conflict zone.

In the next chapter, I explore the links between history, memory and everyday narratives. I look at the association of memories and sites circulated in the collective memory. The chapter focuses

on the ways in which people assign meanings to their common memories in such a way that these memories not only reflect the past, but also aspire to shape the present reality. In this effort, I also cite examples from contemporary situations in the Valley. My attempt is to examine the relations between memory and place to explore the significance of narratives in constituting collective memory.

Chapter 4: Placing memory: narratives of place and identity

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.
-Milan Kundera (1994)

> History is created, presented to the people to believe in something. For many decades, my land was called a *Jannat* (paradise), but now I wonder what it has become? In what ways people recognize this land? Now the magnificent Dal, sky touching Chinar trees, mighty Jhelum, and writings praising the Kashmir haunt me. Nowadays, I hear about multiple histories of Kashmir, different narratives about Kashmiri past, or rather I should call contested pasts. But you know, I think we do need many accounts so we can choose which one can help us to believe in our history. Help us to believe in ourselves, to connect with our roots. Similarly, you must have heard many stories about militants, killings of Kashmiri Pandits, security forces' brutality, the merger of Kashmir with Hindustan, etc. All this is a part of the history, is it not? But for me, history is not a thing of past; it is still present in our lives. My memories of childhood are my history. My childhood itself represents a portion of the history, history of a struggle and resistance. *Mera maazi enhi sab yaadoon se bana hai jo mere aaj se juda nai hai* (My past is made up of all these memories which is also linked to my present).

These words are of Imtiaz, one of my key respondents, a 28-year-old research scholar at the Valley University. Imtiaz has been living in Srinagar town for the last two years; he is originally from a nearby district. Imtiaz calls himself a 'child of the conflict' and is always keen to share his experiences. He shared many stories from his early years when he was growing during 'disturbing times' of the 1990s - the initial phase of the armed insurgency. Imtiaz especially mentioned the turmoil of 2008 and 2010 as decisive moments in the history of the contemporary times. He says:

> After a long spell of peace, these incidents wobbled the Kashmiris to their core. We were wrong assuming that peace is returning to the Valley. It was not the peace… It was a mirage, long unrealized reality of our lives.

What I gathered from him and some other respondents was that these incidents were crucial in shaping their notions of nationalism, democracy and *azaadi (freedom)*. He and many others like him had realized that the present always reels under the shadow of the past. Imtiaz's

understanding of the present reflects that the notion of belonging and self are fashioned by the historical processes informed by the collective memory and several other discourses in the Valley. Therefore, an understanding of the memory becomes a crucial element to make sense of the present circumstances and accompanied narratives. By probing these memories and their dialectic relation with history, this chapter deals with questions such as how a distant event becomes meaningful in relation to the present and what are the multiple relationships that exist between past memories and present events and in what ways past engage with the present (Chowdhury, 2014).

In this chapter, I focus on the relations between history and memory and the layered understanding of the past to appreciate the ways in which the former is (re)remembered, interpreted and used by various individuals, groups, and nationalists. This chapter deals with representations of the past(s) in both collective and imaginative ways and deliberates upon the question of how the past shapes and is shaped by the present. I am interested in the historical and personal narratives that permeate the collective memory of Kashmiri people to illustrate the diversity of experiences and the relation between lived experiences, memory, and construction of the past. What is equally important is the fact that recollection of the past embedded in oral histories and personal narratives highlight the importance of some widely used expressions such as 'invention of traditions' (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) and 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983). I cite narratives gathered from my field work with an understanding of the context in which narratives were shared with me. My emphasis on the context of the narratives is

to avoid any generalization of the experiences of Kashmiri people.[56]Above all, I am using my work as a medium to tell the stories of those people who spoke to me about their past and shared their baggage of pain and suffering with me. However, my writing may also give an impression that I am privileging people's narratives over the official descriptions and the accounts of a recorded 'objective history'. Writing about the history of the Blacksscholars like Du Bois and Frank Owsley have already raised concerns about regional biases and prejudices in the history of the South as objective history. French (1995) summaries Du Bois' views as following:

> Why these historians ignored the testimony of slaves in telling the story of slavery, why they failed to mention the efforts of blacks in telling the story of the Civil War and emancipation, why they relied on "the unsupported evidence of men who hated and despised Negroes. (p.11)

Since I am inclined towards presenting people's experiences of the present reality and the narratives of the past, I choose to look away from official narratives and adopt a 'bottom-up' approach. As Dwyer and Alderman (2008) point out that the state tends to exclude those histories that fail to conform to official narratives. Based on the experiences of suffering and trauma, "there is no 'single history' and its 'meaning' is largely influenced by the fact that there is a certain ideological guide decoding the collective memory even before the history is retold" (Michela, 2006, p.16). Mohamad Junaid, an anthropologist,addresses the multiplicity of local narratives and writes about the need of bottom-upadding more stories countering the hegemonic views. Talking about plurality of voices, he writes:

> There are many stories of Kashmir now, all vying for validity, but none commanding authority. The history of Kashmir is no longer something which can be imposed from above: its democratisation will ensure that it will always remain in the making, and never find its conclusion. It is being created as it is spoken about. (Junaid, 2008, para 1)

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[56] Edward Ayers (2007) uses this method in his book '*The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction'*. French, A. Scot says about this book "This book is a model for students of social memory, historicizing various conceptions of southern identity without stigmatizing or sanitizing particular points of view."

In the same article, he argues to looking for different accounts of history as an alternative to existing history (Junaid, 2008). During my fieldwork, my common observation was the complex relationship between history, memory, and the everyday. In particular, it was about the linkages of the present reality with the past events manifested in the mundane. These connections encourage me to reflect upon the primacy of sites and landscape in everyday experiences. The narratives collected throughout the fieldwork represent how memories are selected, utilized, and negotiated to constitute a historical consciousness through commemoration of sites and various acts of remembrance. Further, this process of reinventing the memories also informs the motivation for the change.

The narratives from the field demonstrate that people draw from the past events and merge them with lived experiences to compose new terrains, questioning and reproducing prevailing discourses. Interviews with youngsters reveal that their lives are shaped by many such discourses, often constructed around the idea of religion and a unique cultural identity, *Kashmiriyat*. One of the most common lines which I heard during my conversations with Kashmiris, especially youngsters, was, “Kashmir was never a part of India, it was a unique mix of different cultures and ethnicity.” The narratives gathered are sometimes about the glorious past and often about the pain and sufferings of the Kashmiri people.

Merging Memories: Experience, Imagination, and representation

> *I will treasure up the memory of the Nation's dead and on every suitable occasion, as long as life lasts, will present them anew to the youth of this country, as noble example of heroism and patriotism.* (General William T. Sherman, 1917, p.394)[57]

History is realized through imaginary representations, symbolic sites, and historical realities. In the case of Kashmir, the distinction between memory and history becomes more complex because it is not just the historical narratives or the content but the context in which past is reconstructed. Thenarratives circulated in collective memory inform how events are understood and expressed within a society. Further, multiple narratives are deployed to construct historical consciousness and to preserve the sacrosanct identity of the community. Chowdhury (2014) writes about the nationalist project, soon after India got her independence. She notes, "oral traditions were generally seen as part of a rich cultural heritage in need of preservation, which led to a folklorisation of culture" (p. 54). I argue that the same has been happening in the case of Kashmir. Youngsters sing songs of martyrdom, and women praise *shahadat* (sacrificing life) as the highest form of sacrifice. In this process of folklorisation new narratives enrich the collective memory.

Collective memory, for better, or for worse, contests the claims of official history and challenges the historical narratives registered in people's memories. Sometimes, engaged in polemical ways, such narratives construct a collective memory with a willingness to forget certain memories and treat some perceptions of the past as more persuasive. In the words of French (1995):

> …memory focuses on the construction of group boundaries, a process that reveals the multiplicity of meanings individuals attach to shared experiences and the intense struggles that take place within groups over what to remember and what to forget. (p. 17)

[57] In Preble, G. H., & Asnis, C. E. (1917). *Origin and history of the American flag.*

Collective memory is a concept linked with group identity which explores the connection between social identity and historical memory (Connerton, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992; Said, 2000; Le Goff, 1992). Building on multidisciplinary approaches and combining theoretical developments from the fields of sociology, anthropology, literary criticism, and psychology, the understanding of collective memory calls attention to the social contexts in which people shape their group identities and debate their conflicting perceptions of the past (French, 1995). By focusing on common memories, experiences, and negotiations over the use of memories in different temporal settings, an understanding of events and their interpretations can be established (Chowdhury, 2014). Although scholars draw a distinction between history and memory (Nora, 1989; Halbwachs, 1992; Daniel, 1996), I realize that the narratives move swiftly between the terrains of history and memory, blurring the distinction between the two. French (1995) puts this distinction voiced by several other historians as: “History is a discipline built on evidence, whereas memory is a malleable guide to the past” (p.10). Historians follow a set of rules for the purpose of writing about the past. However, in my opinion, memory expresses important aspects of the history and should not be labeled as less disciplined only because memory sources are folklores, poems, stories, autobiographies or people’s experiences rooted in the quotidian. Moreover, histories manifested as memories play a crucial role in shaping the present conjectures.

Kirmani (2008) writes that the knowledge of past violence becomes a part of collective memory and also gets “continually reconstructed by the younger generations in their narratives” (p.58). In similar fashion, I heard stories about Jammu massacre, tribal- raiders, and Pandit migration. Some narratives were about the class differences between the Hindus and the

Muslims, like Muslims being suppressed, humiliated and injured by both outsiders and insiders.Narratives about the continuation of oppression and subjugation by outsiders is not new in origin, the idea of ongoing suffering is part of a bigger narrative originating from contested histories. Now, these narratives have been refurbished by altering some specific details to support particular political agendas and social discourses around nation and identity. Serena Tennekoon (1990) in her study analyses the construction of identity using the past. Writing about the Sri Lankan conflict, another contested zone in South Asia, She notes, "the ethnic polarization of the present is defined concerning past rivalries, and in that process, the past is itself rearranged in terms of the policies of the present" (cited in Spencer, 1990b, p.220). In the context of Kashmir, Zutshi (2004) elaborates on the ways in which past influences the present:

> the idea of ongoing enslavement and oppression of Kashmiris by successive foreign entities beginning with Mughals, and continuing with the Afghans, Sikhs, Dogras, and Indians is a particular powerful sentiment that finds purchase amongst a cross-section of society- from old to young, academics to taxi drivers, men and women alike in contemporary Kashmir (p.301).

Personal experiences of lived reality add an element of authenticity to corroborate the historical claims of contestation and oppression. As Saba, a 24-year-old woman, who studies literature says,

> …these are our stories, moments of our lives. You might fail to recognize it as a reality because it is not your truth. It might be difficult for you to imagine all this but it does not mean it did not happen. We face hardship in our lives every day. What happens here is not new, it's a part of history now. Nothing new, a perpetual phenomenon, traveling in the stream of time.

It is not only Saba but many like her, who acknowledge the conflict as a part of their ordinary lives. But, at the same time, there are people like Raju Moza, who now lives in Delhi and

wonders whether the new generation would believe that a conflict-free life even existed in the Valley before 1989. A simple and peaceful life. He writes in a blog:

> One born later cannot today imagine what Kashmir was before 1989...1989 being the awful year when insurgency started. If we were to share our experiences with the new generation, who were born post-1989, they will think of them as if they are fairy tales (2012, para 5).

Discussing the role of different sections of the society in the struggle against the oppressor, Ghulam shared his views speaking at a length. Ghulam is a middle-aged government employee, living in a suburban area of the Srinagar town. Ghulam is of the opinion that the struggle against the state cannot be taken forward by weapons and retaliation. The struggle should be a unified fight in which all the sections of society participate. Ghulam thinks that in Kashmir, a large proportion of academia has opted to stay out from the ongoing struggle. He also includes upper-class elite, who are on the posts of benefits, in this category. In his words,

> People say that pen is mightier than the sword. At least the so-called 'intellectuals' can raise their voices. They can pick a pen, and perhaps it will also show a way to our youth to oust their anger through writings. To tell the world what is happening here.

It is in this context that Z.G. Muhammad, a regular columnist, and writer for a leading newspaper in the Valley, *Greater Kashmir*, remembers the role played by the great poet Dr. Muhammad Iqbal. According to Z.G. Muhammad, Iqbal was not only a great poet, who penned elegant and beautiful poems in Urdu and Persian, but was also one of the founders of the Kashmiri struggle for freedom. He notes, "It was he and Muhammad Din Fauq with many other intellectuals of Kashmiri origin settled in Lahore who played a significant role not only in sowing the seeds of freedom in Kashmir (J&K) but also providing intellectual content to it"(2009, para1). It is easy to see the legacy and contribution of Muhammad Iqbal. A good number of young Kashmiris, whom I met, were well versed with the poet's work and quoted him fluently.

The relationships between the past and the present cannot be taken for granted because of the fluidity existing between the two. History, too, constantly revises its sources and methodologies (French, 1995).I examine historical events and their varying meanings to comprehend how events are recounted in different temporal dimensions as the past, together with oral memory which is not separable but entangled. Moreover, when memories of ordinary people share resources from a contested past and articulated through lived experience and activities, then arises a need to look at the context to interpret the relationship between an event and its collective meaning for a community (Portelli, 1990; Whyte, 2015). Alessandro Portelli writes that when individual events produce emotions which are shared by a community, they reinforce the existing ties among the members of the community, or foster feelings of solidarity through these shared emotions. Therefore, the recollection of such stories travels through shared emotions of the community, and the individual who becomes a part of these narratives also becomes one among the audience.

History, narratives, and identity:

Hamara maji bhee hamari hi tarah qiad hai
(Our past is also prisoned like us.)[58]

Agha Shahid Ali, a Kashmiri poet, writes about the life in the 1990s in Kashmir. He draws a dismal picture of Kashmiri lives. He remarks,

> Srinagar hunches like a wild cat; lonely sentries, wretched in bunkers at the city' bridges, far from their homes in the plains, licensed to kill…while the Jhelum flows under them, sometimes with a dismembered body. On zero bridge the jeeps rush by …Guns shoot

[58] From the field notes

> stars into the sky, the storm…rages on…night after night… son after son taken away, never to return from the night of torture. (2000, p.5)

Kashmir is among one of the most contested places in the world. The six-decade protracted conflict has become a permanent part of the lives of the people residing in this region. Kashmir's contested past is a complex web of multiple historical narratives and claims; narratives based on ethnicity, religion, and nationalism. These varying, often contradicting and competing narratives hinge upon various discourses. Zutshi (2014) writes about the emergence of alternative publics engaged in the process of "generating a deeply polarized, about Kashmir's past as a territory rather than a place, with all sides laying claim to presenting *the* objective and true history (emphasis in original)" (p.298). Once Imtiaz said very emphatically:

> This conflict has made us what we are; we are laden with the baggage of the past. We have heard about the golden age under the rule of Budshah. We are aware of Lal Ded and Nund Rishi and proud of our Sufi tradition and Shaivism. We need all these memories and symbols. We have to erect memorials, build more sites of commemoration, lest we all will be lost in time.

The history of Kashmir has always been seen with a distinctive cultural and historical consciousness. There are many narratives describing the Kashmiri past rooted in different socio-cultural and historical consciousness. M.J. Akbar, in his book *Kashmir Behind the Vale* (2002), writes:

> ...the history of the Kashmiri mind, of its heart and its sentiments,...lies... in the timeless `Vakyas' (Sayings) of Lal Ded, or in the `Nurnama' of Shaikh Nuruddin, whose shrine at Charari Sharif is still burdened each day with the prayers of men and women, both Muslim and Hindu... This message of harmony created a reservoir of humanism which became the ideological fountainhead of the modern Kashmiri mind, gave a unique quality to the Kashmiri identity… (p.4)

It is hard to imagine that people from within or outside of the Valley will agree upon a single historical narrative of Kashmir's history. In recent times, as an outcome of the six-decade conflict and the struggle against the Indian state, multiple stories have emerged. These narratives are about the Partition of British India, India-Pakistan relations, the role of India in Kashmir and interstate relationship including religion and tradition. Within the state of Jammu and Kashmir, intermeshing ideologies of religion, culture and political alliances play a crucial role. History is complemented through the lived experiences to present a specific perspective matching the needs of the present-day. People also contest the official narratives and are of the opinion that the state mechanism and government institutions continued to reinforce the idea of one identity and in this effort, the state continues to devise new ways to project an ideology through its various apparatus. These conflicting narratives create alienation between the state and its citizens. Dr. Javid Iqbal, a columnist for *Greater Kashmir* writes:

> From Kunan Poshpora to Handwara, from Pathribal to Machil, truth continues to be a casualty, as the state institutions continue to throw a veil over it. The effort to work out parallel narratives, and sow doubts in the minds of masses continues. In the maze of parallel narratives the truth gets lost, as the state continues to breathe the burrowed breath. (2016, para 1)

In his work on Cumbal community in the Colombian Andes, Joanne Rappaport (1988) writes about the interplay between history as practice and history as narration and demonstrates that history is a fundamental element to establish claims for an identity through conscious efforts. While narratives help to reconstruct the past in the collective memory, history emerges as a process to be lived in the present. Stories and narratives become the tools to locate the past(s) and a medium in which history is (re)organized in a sustained fashion. Similarly, when the experiences from the past resurface in the present, then the experiences lend a historical accuracy to the memories and legitimize the claims of being authentic. Likewise, oral histories of

Kashmiri people offer an understanding of the past from the experiences of "those who have remained largely anonymous in history- the "nameless" multitudes in their trails and tribulations" (Alf Lüdtke, 1991, pp.3-4).

The narrative becomes a necessary component in the reproduction of the past and "memory thus provides a means of constructing a relationship with one part of the historical event, even as other of the same event are mythologized" (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 58). Webber and Mullen (2011) discuss the natural, obvious, and unchallengeable rendering of meta-narratives and write about the active processing of narratives. They write:

> Carefully comparing two particular stories from particular places helps us think more carefully about what counts as narrative, what counts as resistance, why, and how, while at the same time avoiding the creation of yet another grand narrative. (p.214)

At large, political circumstances are always present in the narratives. The narratives reflect the different shades of the past and not only refer to inter-community relations but also transgress the regional and national boundaries. Given the nature of conflict and socio-political conditions, memory is reconstructed and deconstructed in order to create the 'past of the nation' and as a means of defining relations to the neighbors (Michela, 2006). I argue for focusing on the everyday histories and day-to-day experiences of Kashmiri people to highlight the 'history from below' (Thompson, 1980[1963]) to challenge the idea of macrocosmic understanding of history. This approach not only focuses on material culture (houses, bridges, various sites) but also uses texts, images, narratives, and experiences to include the voices who remain submerged in daily chores bearing the weight of the history on their shoulders. According to Sadiq, a young activist in Kashmir, who acknowledges the politics of memory, believes that history is a reconstruction based on selective memories. It is an outcome of a process in which past is renovated again and

again in different times. Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski (2003 writes about the connections between past events and lived experiences of the present:

> The past by definition is an ocean of events that once happened; and those events are either retained in our memory, that is to say they exist only as part of our psychological reality, or reconstructed by us on the basis of our present experience-and it is only this present experience, our present reconstruction of the past, that is real, not the past as such. (2003, para 1)

Following the similar line of argument, Nazeer, a 30-year-old businessman who runs a papier-mâché shop feels that the past is never long-gone, it is still very much present in their lives. He says:

> Things have not been changed, and they are still the same. What I had heard from my father and other family members I also faced the same, and the next generation will also feel the same. What has changed for good…? Nothing (closes the eyes). Earlier we were ruled by Afghans, Sikhs, and Britishers… now it's India. The experiences of my father are similar to mine, in this way the past and the present are same. *Hamara Maazi, Haal, Mustaqbil sab ok jaise lagte hai* (our past, present and future all look alike).

What seems clear from his narrative is that memory is a continuous phenomenon, a bond binding people with the eternal present (Nora, 1989, p. 8). Sadiq, further elaborates on the meaning of memories and their political and social relevance:

> Meanings do not emerge naturally from the stories of the past, and meanings also change over time. What Sheikh Abdullah meant to my father, does not corroborate with my feelings. Abdullah's image does not appeal to me in the way it did to my father. People not only tell you the stories, but they tell you associated meanings too. Often stories are prepared infused with a certain purpose. Through these stories and the meanings, a particular historical consciousness is raised to counter many hegemonic discourses, and all this make sense to me. We all have lost something which was a part of our history, our culture, and our freedom that has been snatched away from us. My lived experiences make sense when I align them with a given particular historical perspective. I understand what constitute my history.

From Sadiq's narrative, it is evident that people are selective in their choices of historical understanding, they choose to believe in a specific story perhaps to legitimize the struggle against the state or any other group or party. One of the main features of nationalism narrative is: it occupies people's imagination, and becomes a repository of stories of its heroes, belief, and tales of struggle against the oppressor. As time passes by, slogans like 'occupied land', 'children of the conflict', etc., become more popular with the masses. Another important factor influencing the collective memory is the experience of religion trauma, apart from personal and historical, as well as geographic bonds with Pakistan together with the constant reminding of the '*ummah*'[59]. The ideology of *ummah* is also reproduced and frequently reminded of in many gatherings and congregations through some socially accepted slogans like '*Yahan kya chalega Nizam -e – Mustafa*' (What will rule here - Islamic law)[60]. It leads to the historical production through the narratives, which eventually becomes a part of collective memory. In this process of reconstruction of the history, collective memory focuses on fixed points including ruptures in the continuity of the past. And as a result, collective memory concentrates on these points privileging some memories over others to forge the continuity between past and present. These points have been used differently by various people. For instance, Habb Kak thinks of the Tribal attack in 1947 as a defining moment in Kashmiri history which solidifies the unity among different communities within the region. But, some others believed that it was an opportunity, well used by the Indian government to establish an army base in Kashmir. These breaks are reflected in time and space in experiences of those who witnessed a transition in the Kashmiri

[59] Ummah is an Arabic word which means a community or a group of people. The nation is a political concept which is defined as a community in a given territory with their own government, but in the ummah, the citizenship involves a commitment to a particular religion i.e. Islam.

[60] I heard such slogans in processions and such slogans can heard in many videos online like youtube. Some are: '*Hum kya chahte – Azaadi. Azaadi ka matlab kya – La ilaha illlala*' (What do we want – freedom. What does freedom mean – No one but Allah); '*Yahan kya chalega – Nizam-e-Mustafa*' (What will rule here – Islamic law);

society. Such changes not only reflect in an individual's memory but also become the part of social memory, especially when a particular phenomenon is felt, lived or experienced by a large group of people living in same spatial settings.

Cultural aggression by the state also plays a significant role in determining the nature and the shift in the narratives. In response to the question, "The schools being opened by the army are for Kashmiri children. Why object to this?" asked by a journalist, S.A Geelani replied:

> I know the schools are meant for Kashmiris. But they are also meant to make them sing Vande Mataram and not offer *namaz*. The aim of these schools is to turn Kashmiri children into pure Indians. This is cultural aggression on our Islamic values and is not acceptable to us. In fact, apart from fighting for the right to self-determination for 62 years, we have also been fighting against the cultural aggression by India. ("Why object, 2008, para 5,).

This is not different than seeing a local cricket tournament as another Indian strategy to lure the Kashmiri youth. In 2013, a local cricket tournament was conducted. It was played at Kashmir University's sports ground. I also happened to be there during one of the matches. I was sitting away from the crowd under a canopy installed by a tournament sponsor. There I met an employee of the sponsoring company who eventually shared a 'conspiracy theory' with me. He says:

> The state wants to *gumraah* (astray) our youngsters. Once they (young Kashmiris) become busy in all this, how will they think about gaining freedom from India? It's a tactic of the state and supported by a few money-monger companies.

Everyday spaces and memory of belonging

In the previous chapter, I have already argued for an understanding of everyday spaces in a contested zone. The concept of the everyday is invoked to recover the 'overlooked material'[61] (Moran, 2004) and to connect the memory and history within a broad range of mundane activities. The historical narratives and experiences remain submerged into the everyday routine and triggered by certain events open 'historical wounds' which further add to the stigmatized and contested past. The tangible evidence of the past can be located in the everyday lives of ordinary Kashmiris not only as the product, but also as implicated in the mundane (Cohen, 1992). Let me elaborate on this through an incident: It was around 9 in the night, there was no electricity, and the only source of light was a kerosene lamp, struggling to illuminate that small shop with its faint yellowish light. The store was filled with household stuff and grocery items, packed in wooden and gray color aluminum racks mounted on the walls of the shop. I was sitting on a bench near the main counter with Rahman, a friend of my respondent Gani, the owner of this shop. Both of them were of the same age, in their 40s, and were from the same locality. Gani is a wholesale distributor of a biscuit company, too. While Gani was busy counting cash and tallying the invoices, I was talking to Rahman. Rahman was interested in knowing about my views on the Kashmir conflict and my journey in Kashmir so far. During our conversation, I noticed that he was stroking his left ankle off and on. Later, Rahman told me that his ankle was broken in a *lathi* (cane) charge by the local police. He voiced his *ranj* (sorrow) that his broken ankle reminded him of the atrocities by the police. In his words:

> *Yeh mujhe yaad dilata hai, jakhm bhar jaata hai lekin ghaav nahi jaata. Hum log kaise bhool sakte hai jo hamare saath hua, agar bhulna bhee chahe toh dard yaad dila deta hai*

---

[61]To describe the notion of 'overlooked materials' J. Moran uses Braudel's (1992) concept of 'para-historic languages…which are usually kept separate from each other and which develop in the margin of traditional history (p.26).

> (The wound may be healed, but the pain remains forever. How can we forget whatever that has happened to us? And even if we try to, the pain doesn't let us.)

It is in this context that I turn towards De Certeau (1984) where he talks about the danger of looking at the effects of everyday activities without looking at its context and its settings. He writes, "It removes knowledge from its context of practice, interaction and manipulation, placing it within a new and isolating scientific framework that, ultimately, robs all meaning from it" (cited in Rappaport, 1988, p. 719). Rahman's act may not appear as a direct link between past experience and present reality. However, for Rahman, his wound is not a thing of the past, it has become his connection with the past that needs to be seen in a framework, a current reality amidst the history of struggle and repression. In such activities, "history takes forms that are frequently invisible to the observer because they are brief, compressed, cryptic, and sometimes do not appear to refer to the past at all" (Rappaport, 1988, p. 719). In such ways, history is not only produced through past accounts, historical sites, or the commemoration of events, but also through images holding meanings for individuals; in the case of Rahman, a healed ankle. Therefore, such links between present reality and experiences shed light on the contemporary history by drawing on their own understanding of human tragedy (Garimella, 2010). I argue that historical narratives should not be understood as mere products of past events, but also in dialogue with the present conditions articulating relations between memories of past events shaped by the insights.

Memory works as a bridge that connects history with the present and makes the everyday visible. In the words of Moran (2004), "it can denaturalize the everyday and render it visible, disrupting the illusion of the timeless routine and connecting it again with historical processes"

(p.57). The invisibility on theeveryday becomes evident when a memory from the past presents itself at that moment giving meaning to the mundane. The link from the past transcending the temporal form makes sense of the present reality. For Gani, to understand the present, one must look at the past. He says:

> History speaks for itself. Traces of past are always present in the present. Memories are the only medium which helps to make sense of the present conditions. You may see a reflection of past in various things which are still present in our lives. Empty houses of Pandits, army bunkers, physically challenged people, grieving parents they all are here in the present, moments have passed, but memories still haunt…

Narratives like the one stated above inform that the everyday contains residual of the past memories.Sometimes these memories denaturalize the everyday to render history visible fragmented and dispersed across these unnoticed routines. This relationship to history is concealed under the invisibility of the everyday in such a manner, that “it evade[s] the grip of forms” (Lefebvre, 1971, p. 182).

The experiences of being in a contested land, memories of crackdowns, killings, suffering and violence lend support to the memories of the past which is wounded. It is the experiences that help them to authenticate their past. The lives teemed with unfortunate events made them believe what runs deep in people’s memories. Though some parts of the narratives remain forgotten, some other parts are kept alive in the minds because the fear, deaths, and killings are a persistent reality that is encountered in everyday life by the people of Kashmir. I also noticed that even the national and international events influenced narratives. People readily forged solidarity with other activities taking place globally. Moreover, people recount the plight and pain emanated somewhere else which give them a chance to paint their experiences and stories. Incidents such as the death of Mudasir Kamran, a student at Hyderabad University, and the

killings of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar stir the emotions of the people of Kashmir, which they see as attacks that happen in the name of religion, and in a way, identify with the victims. When I visited a *Madrassa* in Sadarbal area in Srinagar, I met a *Maulvi* (teacher). During our conversation, he expressed grief and showed great concern about the killings of Muslims in the world, be it in Gujarat, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur or Myanmar. He was of the view that Muslims as a community are being targeted everywhere. These feelings and sentiments stemming from the personal experiences of the Kashmiri people are perceived by them as similar to those who experience or have experienced a parallel fate in other parts of the country or the world. These experiences make them, in words of Imtiaz, 'brothers in distress', as the perpetrator is the state in all the cases.

The above narrative elucidates how people from one community absorb, recast and represent the experiences of those who have been in similar conditions as them. Such narratives about human suffering and pain construct a story that draws attention about human situations under the repressive regime much like their own struggle to find peace. The idea of 'imagined community' is appropriated and fitted into a particular narrative showing links with the geopolitics of emotions. For example, popular representation of the attack of 9/11, Zionist movements, labeling Muslims as terrorists, etc and several such incidents were discussedduring interviews. The inclusion of international events in the local everyday narratives was to contest the Indian state authority over Kashmir and in some cases to reflect the Islamophobia of the western world. Among many others, a narration of Abid paints a picture that supports the above argument. He says:

> People call it Islamic terrorism. For me, it's an oxymoron. Islam means peace, then how it can be terrorism? It's a western construction. Islam is some evil for westerns, and we Kashmiris are terrorists for Indian people. All are same…

An awareness of geopolitical events enables the youth of Kashmir to bridge the gap between their lives and the lives of those who are embroiled in similar conflicts elsewhere.

Lived experiences and individual memory

The atmosphere of threat is still alive and felt by the minority community, i.e., Kashmiri Pandits. There are stories that show a different side of violence being witnessed in the Valley. Raman, a 32-year-old man from Kashmir told me about the slogans that were shouted in the 1990s like "*Agar Kashmir Main Rehna Hoga, Allah-u-Akbar Kehna Hoga"* (If you want to live in Kashmir, you have to say Allah-u-Akbar); "*Asyi gasyi Kasheer, batav warai, batnyav saan"* (We want Kashmir, without Kashmiri Hindu men, but with Kashmiri Hindu women); "*Asi gachchi Pakistan, Batao roas te Batanev san"* (We want Pakistan without the Hindu men, but with the Hindu women). Raman's family migrated from Kashmir to a nearby place to protect the honor of the family and the lives of the family members. If Raman's feeling of fear is rooted in the past events, then Gautam's experiences of the present are no different. Gautam, a 35-year-old Kashmiri Pandit, also had moved out of Kashmir in the late 1990's but happened to come back when he was appointed by the Government under the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Package, as a primary school teacher in Kashmir. The people who joined various Government jobs under this scheme have been given accommodation by the Government in designated areas. Gautam lives in a Government colony with his family and feel unsafe. Once he witnessed an incident where some people, allegedly 'others' or Muslims, pelted stones at their colony. Gautam is of the view that the situation for Kashmiri Pandits has not changed since the 1990's. The fear of the unknown stills persists in their everyday lives as much as it did in the past. In this context, the several questions and concerns about the loyalty of Kashmir Pandits for their motherland and the

responsibility of their Muslim neighbors are being discussed in the Valley by the residents, and often such discussions are based on the historical conditionality of the contested zone.

During my fieldwork, I was invited to attend a marriage. The sister of one of my respondents was getting married in a village near Srinagar. I was introduced as a Hindu friend from India. I met many curious people, who wanted to know why I was in Kashmir and what I was doing there. To escape such inquiries, I came out and went to the backyard of the house where the cooks were busy making food for the guests. Out of curiosity, I started inquiring about the food being prepared. After learning that I am a Hindu, the *Waza* (head cook) told me about how he used to cook food for the Pandit community on the occasion of marriages and how on some special occasions like Hindu festivals, Muslim butchers would first give meat to the Pandits and then to others. Afterwards, I met an old man who also told me of his association with Pandit community. There were several other narratives which reflected that people from different communities, especially Hindus and Muslims, were linked and thrived upon social and cultural similarities and did not limit themselves to politically constructed boundaries between communities. Kashmiri Pandits also possess the same cultural memory being a Kashmiri. There were some instances where I heard different narratives of same events, interpreted differently.For example, the exile of Kashmiri Pandits during the 1990s. The exile of Pandits presents a situation where two contradictory memories, originating from the same event were presented in the public with two different interpretations. But the link between the pain of exile and life in an occupied land serve as a link “between two brothers, one suffering in a strange land and another at home”, said Farooq, when I visited his home along with his son. Farooq, 70-year-old, is a now retired government employee.

The idea of returning of the Pandit community to the Valley is not that simple.Some people believe that younger generation of Kashmiri Pandits would never return. Sameer Yasir, a writer and political commentator, based in Srinagar, writes in an article that young Kashmiri Pandits are not interested in coming back. He quotes from one of his interviews with a young Kashmiri Pandit boy who spoke about his first visit to Kashmir:

> I did not cry because I was not born at the time of migration. For me, it is a place which you want to come to once in a year, nothing else, it is not home. Delhi is home now, I have lived in worst conditions and been brought up there, studied there, and would like to work there. And why would I come back and for what?" he asks (Yasir, 2014, para 8).

Some even wonder whether the Pandits intend to return or not. Farooq Abdullah, National Conference leader, asks, "If the Pandit community is waiting for the last guns to stops firing to come home, they will never be able to come home" (Yasir, 2016, para5). Over the years, Pandits have been called upon, or, 'invited' to return home. However, Raju Moza (2012) expresses his anguish and laments his status as an outsider. He writes:

> Every time someone 'invites' me to Kashmir, an excruciating feeling emanates within me. Invite from 'home'...? I respect all those friends of mine who invite me; they genuinely extend the invite with no intention to provoke, ridicule or insinuate. It is not that I am rude to their hospitality... just that I am unable to come to the terms with the invitation from someone to my own home... (Para 1)

However, at the same time, contradiction also emerges because both sides try to defend their versions of the story and make efforts to legitimize their claims by recalling the past. For example, some leaders justify the struggleby mentioning the atrocities done by Hindu elites on Muslim peasants in the past, or Muslim pogrom in Jammu on the eve of Partition.Such accounts become central to the memory of trauma. Furthermore, reviving and reproducing such memories aided by similar local stories influence the collective memory. However, several strands of

rhetoric narratives are kept alive in memories by the state and other stakeholders in Kashmir that contribute to mutual misunderstanding. Some of the discussed shared by both the communities, Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims, inform that the people from certain quarters of the society twist history. People such as Habb Kak, who had lived for decades with the Pandit community before their migration, feel that everything they had gone through would be overlooked. In the struggle of appropriating a particular version and misappropriation of the stories, people will distort the history. He was visibly emotional remembering his old friend Nath Sahib. He adds:

> *Ho sakta hai mere baccho ke bachhe bhool jaye ki yaha kabhee Pandits bhee rehte the, lekin mere jehan me wo log hamesha jinda rehnge. Unki yaadein kisi kitaab ki mohtaaj nahi hai. Bas mai toh chahta hu wo log laut aaye. Waisa ho jaye jaisa pehle the.*
>
> (It is possible that the forthcoming generation may forget that Pandits had also lived in the same place, but, they will always be alive in my mind. Their memories do not require the proof of any book. I just want that they come back and life becomes the same at it was once upon a time).

His life embodies the public and personal memories, and the losses in the conflict are not abstract; these are lived reality. For the people who lived through troubled times, the past is not a fixed entity. They encounter the past in everyday spaces. Such examples posit a demand to rethink the relation between institutionalizing the personal memory and using them for particular purposes; this also calls for a critical reflection on the commemoration of memories.

Memories and places: constructing each other

During one of the group discussions, one respondent made his point very clear about the control of India over the landscape. He said:

> We are a colonized population; it is about exercising the power and control. Look at the number of soldiers marching in the Valley, how can someone call us free? Historically, we have been ruled by forces only, and the Indian army has been camping here since

> 1947. You look at us; we have different cultures, traditions, and customs. Historically, we have never been a part of India. We will all always be Kashmiris, be it Kashmiri Pandits, Muslims, Sikhs or any other community. We have a history, which we need to defend against the malice of historical distortion.

People in this group were mostly postgraduate students from different disciplines ranging from Kashmiri literature to business management. They also acknowledged the fact that history shapes and is shaped by the ongoing struggle to legitimize certain perceptions and to delegitimize others. During a focus group discussion, a young man mentioned Trouillot's line: '"History is the fruit of power"', and said that contested past leads to the proliferation of 'counter memories' among the various groups to establish the claim of historical accuracy. The proliferation of memories and the presence of multiple stories allow us to shift our gaze a bit and to look at similarity and modification in the narratives, and subsequently, this process generates different question to confirm the validity of the narratives (Webber and Mullen, 2011).

Each story grounded in the local geography speaks about the historical understanding juxtaposing historical narratives with personal memories. Moreover, people use the meta-narratives to make sense of their situation amidst persistent conflict; they search for the historical narratives located in the collective memory to resist the forces which seek to control the local population. These narratives slowly form the metanarrative and raise socio-political questions about issues such as demand for *azaadi*, challenging the accession, and the role of democracy, etc. Such metanarratives produced and asserted in everyday spaces unsettle the institutional narratives and challenge the hegemonic discourses offered to the society. There is always a danger of homogenizing experiences and the narratives under a fixed rubric of popular

sentiments, without paying enough attention to the particulars and the grounded reality of the stories. For example, when Syed Ali Shah Geelani invokes the image of a nation based on single identity, he draws people's imagination towards compelling images of place and spaces within a crafted religious landscape. These images and accompanied narratives charge the passion of the Kashmiris, longing for a promised land, and incite their imagination of a nation.

Multiplicity of narratives: The migration of Pandits

> Why Pandits left the valley, nobody forced them. We all were with them. Yes! Some problems were there, some confusion. Some rogue elements took advantage of the *azaadi* movement and committed crimes. But we as Muslims never meant harm to our Pandits brethren. (Noor Sahib, 65-year-old)

Talking about the migration of Kashmiri Pandits, Noor Sahib responded in a very firm voice. He does not think that Muslims forced Pandits to leave their homeland. He acknowledges that "*Panditoon ka jaana hamare liye koi khushi ki baat nahi thee, mere kai dost chale gaye. Jo log piche choot gaye unhe kaha se lau*" (The migration of Kashmiri Pandits was not a happy thing for us. Many of my friends also left. How can I bring back the people who were left behind?). It is not only Noor Sahib, but there are many more like him, who are of similar opinion, be it a grocery shop owner, a school teacher, or a politician. Here are the views of Er. Rashid, member of legislative assembly, about the issue which appeared in the *Kashmir reader*, an English daily:

> The world knows that Pandits themselves left, and their migration was a well-planned strategy to exterminate Muslims from the Valley. The plan was to keep Muslims alone, bulldoze them freely and return back to capture their properties… (Bazaz, 2016, para 2).

Rashid also added that instead of staying with Muslims, they (Pandits) left them to be killed. The two narratives mentioned above show how one event has contradictory explanations in collective memories.

Following is a page from a book which I found in the library of Kashmir University which had texts like “Only pandits” and “Few Pandits vs. lakhs of Muslims”, written against the chapters bearing titles, “Stir over kidnapping of a Pandit Girl” and “Brutal killings of prominent pandits” respectively. There were some other books also with similar remarks expressing anger towards the ‘biased approach’ in depicting Kashmiri Pandits only as victims of the conflict.

30. Biased Land Reforms [illegible] - 166
31. Political lightweight: Scattering of Pandit votes 167 - 171
32. Bonanza for Muslims 172 - 177
33. Legal Fight 178 - 183
34. Stir over kidnapping of a Pandit girl 184 - 189
35. Communalism and Corruption under Qasim's rule 190 - 194
36. Tarki-Mawalat : Social boycott of pro-Indian elements 195 - 200
37. Playing communal card 201 - 205

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38. Dress rehearsal of pro-Pak demonstrations 206 - 211
39. Brutal killings of prominent Pandits 212 - 217
40. Apple Sheikhs - the high Priests of militancy 218 - 221
41. Unabated killings 222 - 226
42. Jihad is our strategy, martyrdom our aspiration 227 - 231
43. Militants writ ran everywhere 232 - 236
44. Sangrama, Wandhama and Chattisinghpora carnages 237 - 241

only Pandit

Few Pandits VS Lakhs of Muslims

(Fig. 4.1: Photo: Author)

I also met some Kashmiri Pandits living in Srinagar city. They said something very opposite and shared a different side of this story. It was in May 2014, a hot summer morning, when I visited Ksheer Bhawani temple in Tulmula, Ganderbal District. It is a very famous and revered

destination for Pandit community. I went there to meet the Pandits who were living in the quarters on the temple premises provided by the state government. And there was another reason: I had heard that there is a special spring inside the temple; the color of its water would change, and it is considered a bad omen if the color of the water turned black or a shade of it. When I was in the temple, I heard that the color of the water was turning into a shade of black.

(Fig. 4.2: Tulmula Temple, Photos: Author)

After visiting the main temple, I entered *a Dhaba* (eatery) on the temple premises for lunch. During the meal, a young man named Sunil offered me almond *chutney*, a home-made recipe, realizing that I am not a local person. During our conversation, he told me that his entire family had moved to Faridabad, a town near Delhi, fearing a backlash from the Muslim terrorists. His family holds a small piece of land near Tulmula and so he often comes here. He said to me, "I was just 7-8 years old but still remembers that awful night when we had to leave our home. I am certain, had it not been the governor Jagmohan; terrorists would have butchered us." Sunil now works in an automobile company, earns a decent living and recently bought a small flat in a posh area of Faridabad. However, he says,

…after migration everything changed. My parents never feel at home. Their home is here. And how can we come back? What is here for us? Hostility, unemployment, burnt houses, ruined relations? Nobody recognizes me; I am an outsider for the locals.

His association with this land is imbued with fear and suspicion; an attachment with roots and a feeling of being a Kashmiri coupled with a sense of exclusion. Sharing her views about Kashmiri Pandits' migration, in '*Kashmir and International Law: how war crimes fuel the conflict*', Patricia Gossman (cited in Kaul, 2010b) writes:

> In response to widespread threats and targeted attacks and killings by militants groups, many Hindus had fled. Jagmohan's government ultimately assisted some 90,000 Hindus in leaving the Kashmir Valley for camps in Jammu and New Delhi.[62]

Balraj Puri (1993), one of the eminent writers from the Valley, in his book *Kashmir: Towards Insurgency* points out that the then Governor Jagmohan facilitated the migration and the flight of many Pandit leaders and was not very interested in efforts to restore inter-community understanding and confidence. In a conclusive way,Sumantra Bose (2003) expresses his opinion about the migration of Pandit community and said that "the *azaadi* movement has never been able to live down the taint of the Pandit exodus"(p.124).

There are few Kashmiri Pandits who stayed back in the Valley. Sohan is one of them. He is an old man in his 60's and lives with his wife in a village in Pulwama district. Sohan's extended family lives in Jammu and so does his son. I went to meet him at his house with my translator. It was a small Kuccha house in that neighborhood of *pukka* cemented houses. In the large courtyard of the house were two-three trees and shrubs. In one corner, was Sohan's two

[62] Gossman, P. (2002), *Kashmir and international law: How war crimes fuel the conflict*. http://www.crimesofwar.org/onnews/news—kashmir.html, now the report is no longer exit on this link.

room house, next to which, on the right was another three-storeyed house made of wood and concrete in a dilapidated condition. Sohan looked at this house and said in a gloomy voice that it belonged to his elder brother who now lives in Jammu. His brother wants to sell his house, but Sohan does not want this to happen. He invited us (translator and me) inside the house. The walls of the room were decorated by Lord Rama and Krishna's calendar, in one corner there was a *puja-ghar* (small wooden temple) adorned with conch, bottle of *Ganga-jal* (holy-water) and many idols of Hindu deities. Initially, he asked many questions about me but later he became comfortable with the fact that I was taking his interview for completing my degree. He was happy to help. Talking about troubled times, Sohan said something that seemed like dark comedy to me. He stated in a wryly manner: "*us waqt hum bhage nahi*" (We didn't run away at that time). He said that there were only two more Kashmiri Hindu families in the town, rest all had gone. He was referring to the migration, and the conditions when it all happened. According to Sohan, whenever he thought of moving from there to Jammu, his Muslim friends pleaded and forced him to stay back. He still feels, "*kya pata purane din wapas aa jayee, hum sab saath-saath rehne lage*" (Who knows the old times may come back and we all start living together). During our conversation, he remained silent on some issues that I asked him about the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims. His silence is not the absence of words; it's just that he remembers old days in quietness and like narratives, silence speaks about the past which is lost in time and space.

Politics of Memory

Memory Politics is a global phenomenon. Jeffery Olick (2003) refers to memory as "the central faculty of our being in time; it is the negotiation of past and present through which we define our

individual and collective selves" (p.15). Collective memory is produced, reproduced and maintained through images, texts, and historical narratives to be used at scales of regional, national and global to justify and legitimize beliefs, attitudes, and needs of the present (Wertsch, 2002). In a contested zone like Kashmir, collective memory produced through various representational forms become crucial to challenge the state and its role in the construction of a fixed history and of political narratives. Javed, a 23-year-old guy, who works at a shop in the timber market, once said to me:

> *Bhaijan tum jante to kee deewaro per jo likha hai ki 'we welcome Taliban' iska matlab yeh nahi ki hum Taliban ko pasand karte hai. Iska matlab hai ki we hate India so much that we support her enemies.*
>
> (You must have noticed some slogans written on the walls like 'we welcome Taliban'. It does not mean that we endorse Talibanis, it just means we hate India so much that we support her enemies).

(Fig. 4.3: Graffiti 1, Photo: Author)

(Fig. 4.4: Graffiti 2, Photo: Author)

This phenomenon of writings on the walls indicate that often in situations like that in Kashmir, memory turns outwards in forms of graffiti, writings memoirs, and novels, etc. Expressing similar sentiments, Tawfeeq Wani, the author of *The Graveyard* (2013), who wrote the book as a way of resistance towards the atrocities in Kashmir, says, "I chose to write the book after being haunted by the nightmares after the uprising in 2008. The images of the boys who were killed continued to haunt me even when I left Kashmir." ("Newsgram", 2015, para 9).

In 2009, when Asiya, and her sister-in-law Neelofer from Shopian were found dead in mysterious conditions, the entire Valley was engulfed by massive protests and unrest. Later, to honor the memory of Asiya and Neelofer and many other who died in similar circumstances, a wall of memory was created near the graveyard where they both had been buried.

(Fig. 4.5: The wall of Memory, Photo: Sameer Fayez)

The text written on the wall proclaims, "This movement is an expression of our commitment that we shall never forget our mothers, sisters, and daughters whose honor was violated and lives snatched at the hands of tyranny in Jammu and Kashmir." These memorials have become symbols of a struggle for *azaadi* (freedom) and remind people about *shahadat (*sacrifice*)* of thousands of Kashmiris.As Jeffrey Olick (1999) notes, "commemoration is a way of claiming that the past has something to offer the present, be it a warning or a model" (p. 381).

Acts of remembrance:

When Sameer (translator) and I visited a martyr memorial in Pulwama district, we met one of his acquaintances who said,

> *Tum logo ke India me bhee toh India Gate hai, who bhee Shaheedo ko yaad karne ke liye hai? Jaliawalan Bagh ka museum hai, pure hindustaan me smarak hai toh fir hum kyu nahi bana sakte.*

> (You also have India Gate to remember your martyrs. There's Jalianwala Bagh Museum. The whole of India has memorials. Why can't we also have one?).

The practice of memorialization is not a new phenomenon in the Kashmir Valley. Martyrs' graveyards are common in Kashmiri towns and villages. Memory and its sites acquire great importance since "the quest for memory is the search for one's history" as Pierre Nora (1994, p. 289) argues. Kashmiris have been celebrating Youm- e – Shuhada (martyr day) for a long time.[63] Martyr day was considered as Kashmiri people's march towards their destiny of freedom. Since then, martyr day has become the symbol of Kashmir's freedom struggle and the fight against oppression. Now imitating similar sentiments and tradition, Kashmiri people yearn to honor the memory of the fallen comrades in the ongoing conflict. However, such efforts to commemorate martyrs now have been termed undemocratic and provocative by the state authorities. Mohammad Ashraf (2010) writes about the feelings of an ordinary Kashmiri and says, "Till this day Kashmiris had been agitating for their rights and had been brutally suppressed" (para 1). The narratives collected during the field stay for my doctoral research in Kashmir also have a similar implication, a common perception among Kashmiris, who believe that though the regime has changed from autocratic to democratic, the oppression of the people continues to exist irrespective of the form of the authority in power.

One such account of memory and remembering is evident from an article of Faheem (2016), in *Kashmir Reader*, a daily newspaper. He writes about the memory, remembrance and political implications of commemoration. In his words:

> In Kashmir, graves and graveyards mean less as resting places for the dead and more as repositories of remembrance and collective memory for the living. Also, graves and

[63] On July 13, 1931, as many as 21 people were shot dead by the then Maharaja Hari Singh's forces. The people were agitating outside the jail premises in Srinagar against the state's atrocities.

> graveyards as burial sites have achieved stable political meanings over a period. Some graves are marked, some un-marked, some have been imprisoned, some decorated and turned into cenotaphs and some encroach on public spaces and are guarded by the police. When graves have become symbols of an ideology worth dying for, some have become symbols of collaboration worth indignation even in death. (Para 1)

Similarly, remembering the Martyr day is also gaining momentum in recent times. Dr. Mohammad Ashraf (2010) writes in his blog:

> The memory we have from our school days is of the massive turnout and a colorful tribute paid to these martyrs on this day every year. Every locality would send its own procession. There used to be an official procession of smartly dressed policemen who would pay a formal tribute to the martyrs. (Para 1)

The acts like collective mourning, joining the funeral of the dead militants, constructing the symbolic graves solidify the sense of unity. Moreover, collective remembering functions to establish a connection between mujahedeen and civilians as both come nearer through such acts. These acts about celebrating and mourning become a triumph of death and a triumph over death at the same time. Further, people believe that remembrance is a weapon against oppression, and memorials and graveyards are inspiring and a reminder of the battle. In the struggle against forgetting, memory is used as a tool to invoke the past. The act of remembering the dead plays a pivotal role in the creation of the collective memory against the oppression and to carry the struggle. Echoing similar concern, a man from Anantnag, who lost his son in 1993 shares his views:

> India has responded with its huge military might to crush the genuine struggle of the people of Kashmir. Our memory is our only weapon against them. As long as we remember the events and the martyrs, the sentiment shall survive. And, the moment we forget our past, the movement will die down as well. (Zahir-ud-Din, 2016, para 2)

The primary purpose of having such sites or creation of sites of memory is: “to stop time, to block the work of forgetting...to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial” (Nora, 1994, pp. 295-296). The narratives attached to such events remain present in everyday lives of the residents and bring these sites of violence as the sites of oppression and symbols of resistance. Further, sites of memory emerge as symbols to enforce singularity of the narrative and the stories linked with the sites help to limit multiple interpretations.

Afzal Guru has become a martyr in Kashmiri people’s imagination, a symbol of an ideology and the struggle against the oppressor. The hanging of Guru and his grave near Maqbool’s grave invoke the memory of Maqbool Bhat[64].Kashmiri people acknowledge the narrative of their *shahadat* (sacrifice) and firmly believe that both Bhat and Guru laid down their lives for *azaadi* (freedom) of Kashmir. Many people in the Valley drew an analogy between the cases of Bhat and Guru. About Guru’s hanging, Shahmala, Bhat’s mother, says, “I felt like my son, Maqbool was again hanged. February 9 was reminiscent of everything that happened on the day he (Maqbool) was hanged. Afzal was like my son” (Bashir, 2013, para 1). Her statement makes it clear that Afzal’s hanging connects the present with the past (Bhat’s hanging). Bhat’s memory works as a thread connecting two events between which there is a gap of 29 years. Further, Shahmala adds, “My son’s hanging on February 11, 1984 triggered an armed rebellion in Kashmir and now Afzal’s hanging would lead Kashmir towards the final goal (freedom)” (Bashir, 2013, para 5).

[64] Maqbool Bhat was a Kashmiri separatist and co-founder of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).He was hanged in 1984 inside the Tihar Jail, New Delhi.

Maqbool Bhat was hailed as a martyr by Kashmiris, whose sacrifice is still fresh in the collective memory. After execution of Maqbool Bhat in 1984, Abdul Ghani Lone, MLA and chairperson of the People's Conference, said, "Maqbool is the first martyr on the question of Kashmir's accession. The Centre and the Government headed by Farooq Abdullah have made a martyr out of him" (Mitra, 1984, para 7). The sentiments of the Kashmiri people were appropriated by calling him the first martyr. It is worth noticing that how the memory of Bhat's hanging is used to support freedom struggle later in 1989.

> It was only when an armed struggle broke out in 1989 and toppled the existing structure that Bhat's name started doing the rounds, but again only on the margins of *Azaadi* discourse. It took some painstaking effort by JKLF to refresh his memory and then appropriate him as the symbol for its freedom struggle. (Gangahar, 2013, p.32)

On the phenomenon of memorization and how one memory becomes a defining moment of history, Praveen Swami (2007) cites Rafique Khan's essay:

> More mythology is added as the legend of Maqbool Butt expands….[he] may one day join the ranks among the 'rishis' (sages) of Kashmir who are believed to have such powers that they could travel by air, mounted on a stone boulder, when their mounts tired (p.109).

Talking about the memorization of Maqbool Bhat and Afzal Guru, one of the veteran journalists from Kashmir, Yousuf Jameel, commented: "Why does Kashmir witnesses hartal on both the anniversaries? Like Maqbool Bhat, Afzal will always be remembered" (Nabi, 2016, para 10). Afzal's hanging serves as a reminder of the Indian state's atrocity on Kashmiris.

Memory becomes a tool to regain and reconstruct not just the past but history itself (Dixon, 1994, p.19). Interestingly enough, since commemorating and naming a site is closely connected to memory, this process becomes a crucial act of representing sentiments of a

community and reclaiming the identity of the community. Association with some symbols and motifs resulted in an alternative medium to proclaim a distinctive Kashmiri Muslim identity. As Siddarth Gigoo (2011) recalls the sentiments of Kashmiri Muslims about Pakistan in his novel, *The Garden of Solitude*:

> The names of towns and streets were changed to reinforce a new cultural identity. Green was decreed to be the color for all signboards of the shops and commercial establishments. The time in all the watches and clocks was turned backwards by half an hour. (p.36)

Human rights activist and a lawyer, Parvez Imroz said to me at his office at Amira Kaddal: "Writing is an act of remembrance, and we will use it as a weapon." People like Parvez believe that it is their duty to pass on such stories of brutality and suppression to younger people. As (Dwyer and Alderman 2008,) argues that public remembrance of atrocity is necessary as a tool for facilitating social compensation to victimized groups. Imroz feels that the people residing in the Valley have always been confronted with the choice between forgetting and remembering. He further adds that one can only sustain one's sentiments with the help of memories. It is through collective memory and narratives that people are determined to present a reality which has been forgotten or manipulated. Imroz believes that "it is part of our history albeit a contested history but nonetheless also a part of the conflict which now has become a part of world history." The efforts to present an alternative reading of history, a history dominated by nationalistic discourses, provoke the idea of multiple accounts "whose actors and narrators are those previously silenced and marginalized from historical records" (González , 2004, p.9).

Sites of Memory

The historical event of 1931, Martyr day, is engraved in the collective memory of the Kashmiris as a referential point where power and oppression are intersected. With haunting memories of the past disturbing and destabilizing the present, many a time the people here feel that the past were repeating itself, that there is no difference between the past and the present. Historical revision through such narratives also reinforces the idea of reclaiming their identity which was lost in over the years. Through personal loss and historical experiences that are embodied in the individual and collective memory, people devise new ways of creating history. The past embedded in people's memory is subjected to constant change; "constantly selected, filtered and restructured in terms set by the questions and necessities of the present" (Jedlowski, 2001, p. 30).

Lal Chowk:

Lal Chowk occupies an image of a place that embodies the struggle for freedom, a symbol of resistance, and echoes nationalist ideologies. Like many other parts of Srinagar city, Lal Chowk represents many political facets of the struggle. It is a mute spectator of violence, killings, encounters, violent and non-violent protests, and occupies a prominent place in Kashmiri history.

Though Dwyer and Alderman argue that "what is commemorated is not synonymous with what has happened in the past" (2008, p.167), it does not disqualify the role of a site in collective memory. I heard many stories about Lal Chowk and how people remember it with historical reference. To quote Habb Kak: "when in 1948, India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru came to visit Srinagar, he unfurled the *TirangaJhanda* (tricolor flag) here at Lal chowk."

It is the same place where he (Pandit Nehru) promised Kashmiris a referendum to choose their political future. Pandit Nehru said: "The fate of Kashmir will ultimately be decided by the people. We have given that pledge and Maharaja had supported it. It is not only a pledge to the people of Kashmir but to the world. We will not, and cannot back out of it."[65] The relations between materiality and memories attached to sites offer a particular historical and political interpretations. These sites as a physical and concrete form invoke the past and have been readjusted to fulfill the need of the present.

In Haider (2014), a Bollywood movie based on the Shakespearian novel *Hamlet* and set in Srinagar, its protagonist questions the role of the Indian state and mocks its functioning. In the background, Lal-Chowk stands tall reflecting its significance as a witness to Kashmir's history. Memories grounded in local geography function as a binding force serving nationalist discourses, myths, and political ideologies. Memories also play a significant role to project a version of history which can be legitimized through memorialization and commemoration process. Narratives of collective memory are not only about the glorified past and unique identity, but also account for atrocities and violence against the community. For example, discrimination against the Muslims in the past still occupies a prominent place in people's memories. These sites become more important when 'victim' and 'oppressor'- both live within the same landscape. A presence of counter-narratives challenge the 'authenticity' and question the understanding of 'real' history. During my fieldwork, people who shared different and conflicting narratives were of the opinion that people believe what they want to believe.

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[65] A. G. Noorani quotes Pt. Nehru's speech in an article. Accessed from http://m.greaterkashmir.com/news/opinion/-un-resolutions-on-kashmir-i-how-relevant-are-they/208066.html. The part of the speech is also available : The White Paper on Jammu and Kashmir (1948)

DeLyser (1999) discusses the role of memory in the construction of 'reality' and says that authenticity is not an inherent quality or condition but a notion open to social control, negotiation and contestation. Collective memory "narrates history in selective and controlled ways—hiding as much as they reveal" (Dwyer and Alderman 2008, p.168). Memory is spatially constituted as Pierre Nora (1989, p. 9) also notes, "Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects." Memory is attached to the sites that are physical and tangible in nature (Graves, Lal Chowk, Papa 2 detention center, Hazrat Bal mosque, etc.) and to acts, such as the commemoration of martyrs, which give the present an aura of the past (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004).

Memorials and the graves

Visiting a memorial may become a habit, a part of a routine, which may not stir the same sentiments as earlier.But people visit the memorials to pay their respects. The demands for the memorials are not new in the Kashmir Valley. In 2007, the efforts for raising a "Martyrs Memorial Wall" at Martyrs Graveyard at Eidgah in Srinagar town were thwarted by the government. The state government had denied permission and used coercive measures against such acts. As the residents of a contested zone, living through troubled times, Kashmiris feel that such coercive measures only exhibit the oppressive and authoritarian regime abetted by tools of governmentality to crush the resistance movement. In January 2016, South Kashmir's Pulwama district witnessed a series of protests over a span of two weeks. The protests were led by the locals against the state authorities; the reason of confrontation was a proposed memorial for the militants killed by the security forces. People wanted to install a martyrs' memorial board inside

the local graveyard, called as the "Martyrs' Graveyard." This small cemetery, situated near one of the busiest corners of the town, has been the last sanctuary for many militants. However, the demand for the proposed memorial grew stronger after Omais Ahmad Sheikh, a member of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), who was buried there in December 2015. Initially, people decided to put a green color banner carrying the text 'Mazar-e-Shohda' (martyr's graveyard) and a verse of Muhammad Iqbal stating: "Their blood is precious and divine. Like precincts of the Holy Shrine" (Saha, 2016, para 9). This attempt was made in honor of the dead.But, the state administration refused to accept the demands which later resulted in clashes between a 'democratic' state and its 'unlawful' citizens. The chairperson of the Hurriyat Conference, Syed Ali Geelani, one of leading figures of the separatist movement voiced his concerns that the installation of the 'Martyrs Memorial' at the Shaheed Park is a 'genuine and logical demand' (Yasir, 2016). Following similar sentiments, Hurriyat (M) spokesman spoke about the rights of the Kashmiri to build the memorial, remembering those who have sacrificed their lives in the struggle for the right of self-determination. According to the spokesman, barring people to raise the memorial is against the democratic norms. ("Kashmir News Service", 2016)

The act of putting hoardings on occasions such as Martyr Day is considered by the state authorities as a 'negative act'. Talking about the recent demand for the memorial board, one of the police officials says, "no militant hoarding will come up in the town as it will have a 'negative' impact on the youth" ("Kashmir Life", 2016, para 8). An online news website, *Firstpost*, publishes views of another police officer who was of the opinion that allowing a hoarding with names and photographs of slain militants may attract youth to join militant ranks. "It would have become a provocative tool and people could have been attracted to joining militancy", the security officer says (Yasir, 2016).

Memory helps to create a historical consciousness and to unite a community for a particular purpose. In this process, the present is often linked with the past to establish a continuity to strengthen certain discourses. The past is often invoked in relation to the present conditions. Talking about 'Martyr Graveyard' and its significance for Kashmir people, Syed Ali Geelani, says:

> The Shaheed Park in Pulwama is associated with the martyrs of 1931 and since then this place has a historical importance. Our beloved youths who are sacrificing their youth for the betterment of their nation are our heroes, and they deserve to be respected and remembered in every respect. (Yasir, 2016)

Some even term martyrs' sacrifices as 'real treasure and asset of the ongoing resistance movement'. Such narratives not only eulogize the sacrifices of the martyr in the collective memory, but also reinvigorate the commitment to continue the struggle. The sites of memory function as a link between the past and the present, harking back to the ongoing struggle and resistance, and belief in a political reality of self- determination.

Milan Kundera (1994), in one of his most frequently quoted statements, says, "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting" (p.3). It reflects the inevitability of remembering the past. Echoing similar concern, a grieving father from Anantnag, who had lost his son in 1993 shared his view about forgetting the past. He states:

> Our memory is our only weapon against them. As long as we remember the events and the martyrs, the sentiment shall survive. And, the moment we forget our past, the movement will die down as well. (Zahir-ud-Din, 2016)

Collective mourning

Recently, Kashmir has been witnessing a massive turnout of people including women, attending the funeral processions of militants killed by the security forces. In Kashmir, the residents live under constant surveillance, in monitored and controlled surroundings. When spaces of resistance shrink and public spheres are being controlled, people create alternative spaces and devise new ways to resist. The participation in funeral processions is one such way. The funeral procession becomes a space and collective mourning a medium of grieving, sometimes a cathartic one. Anti-Indian, pro-freedom, pro-Pakistan slogans can commonly be heard in such gatherings, and sometimes people restore to stone pelting in defiance to the state. However, people's participation in the funeral is not about supporting violent means or fundamentalist ideologies; Kashmiris grieve for their own people who have laid down their lives for a cause. Collective mourning becomes a passage to the repressed emotions and angst, producing the narratives of martyrdom and memorialized deaths as heroic sacrifices. As one of my respondents says, "Martyrs do not die, they breathe in our hearts and live in our imagination." This space mobilizes nationalistic feelings that constitute the community and create a sphere where historical narratives interact with present realities, and political ideologies converse with public consciousness.

(Fig. 4.6: Men and women attending militant funeral, Photo: Vikar Syed)[66]

Memory of resistance

In the struggle against forgetting, memory is used as an instrument to invoke the past. Memories not only construct the history but also generate emotions. Again, emotions play a pivotal role in the formation of unity among people to create a collective memory. It is in this manner that collective memories also get shaped by emotions.

Halbwachs and Coser (1992) note, "the various groups that compose society are capable at every moment of reconstructing their past" (p. 182). Khurram Parvez[67], a human rights activist, told me during a conversation I had with him that the efforts of the organization he is working with also include creating the 'memory of resistance'. This is attempted at by collecting

[66]http://tribune.com.pk/story/1101429/a-celebration-of-martyrdom-in-kashmir/

[67]I met Khurram Parvez at his office in Srinagar. He is a member of the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society.

and documenting the narratives of people's experiences of violence and subjugation. He believes that memory is one of the ways to resist state hegemony and to counter several nationalistic discourses. In an interview with David Barsamian published in the *International Socialist Review*, Parvez says, "The only potent weapon we have as a weak and oppressed people is memory. Our memory will always help us to sustain the struggle against injustice" (para 2)[68].

Conclusions:

In Kashmir, lived experiences of the people remain present in the quotidian; residues of the past exist in the everyday spaces and remind them of what they had gone through. Memories of Handwara and Gawkadal Massacre, the migration of Kashmiri Pandits, and, Kunan-Poshpora rape cases, to name a few, are wedged deep in the collective memory of the Kashmiris. These memories return whenever the state acts as an oppressor and suppresses the struggle movement. Moreover, the tyrannical nature of security forces does not allow Kashmiris to forget their past; one marked with killings, torture, rape and loss of human lives. Each new wound brings back the memory of all the past hurts.

I am of the opinion that the complex set of memories through which people create a sense of history is a matter of active (re)construction of the past reproduced with the help of the present experiences and several socio-cultural tropes. In the struggle of reclaiming the past and establishing the legitimacy of the discourses, history appears as "(History) another kind of fiction", a synthesis of mentions and silences (Trouillot, 1995, p. 48). It was also revealed to me that no history is a true history without voices of its people.

[68]This interview is available at http://isreview.org/issue/80/we-are-trying-redefine-resistance

Sites like cenotaphs, graveyards, memory walls and funeral processions create spaces for ordinary Kashmiris "to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial" (Nora, 1989, p.19). The sites of commemoration provide such spaces where the past and the present interact with each other contemplating the future. I am of the opinion that privileging some sites over others serves to political uses of the memory. The sites of memory or the narrative also fit in a spatial and temporal framework. The year 1931 is marked for its temporality in the history of the Kashmir for its long-standing battle for freedom, and Papa-2 detention center and Gawakadal massacre (others too) mark a spatial understanding of the landscape.

On the basis of my research, I argue that the acts of remembrance evoke the past memories of collective suffering and the struggle, and the reconstructed narratives help in carrying forward the movement and shape the collective memory in both imaginative and material ways.

The next chapter makes an effort to map the relations between violence, intimacy and everyday spaces. By demonstrating the interrelation between the everyday spaces and bodily encounters in a conflict zone, I seek to highlight the role of space as an integral category of analysis. The narratives discussed in the chapter draw attention towards the everyday struggles of the people to make sense of their geopolitical existence (Dixon and Marston, 2011). The chapter looks at the bodies which are at the center of control and surveillance and also as sites of resistance.

Chapter 5: Scripted bodies and lived realities

“It seems that a script is written all over my body that proclaims my ‘otherness’ as a Kashmiri, a potential threat.” This sentiment was shared with me by Aamir, a 26-year-old teacher from a junior high school in Pulwama district. Aamir visited Delhi a few years back in 2010. Aamir’s first experience outside of Kashmir is filled with humiliation and a strange sense of soreness. In 2010, Aamir traveled to Delhi to meet his cousin who was studying there. Upon his arrival at New Delhi Railway station, a Delhi police personnel searched his luggage and asked him to show his identity proof. Aamir was nervous when he noticed that the people on the station were

staring at him. Aamir overheard that he was picked because of his looks- a fair skinned guy with a beard, who looks like a typical Kashmiri. The similar experience was repeated when a hotel-receptionist in Paharganj, near New Delhi Railway Station, told Aamir to deposit his voter identity card and Permanent Account Number (PAN) card in original in order to check in. Again, the reason was the same: “Kashmiris cannot be trusted”, as Aamir expressed. The next morning he reached his cousin’s place and shared his ordeal; his cousin said, “Luckily, I do not stand out as a Kashmiri because my physique is not like one, with the exception of Kashmiri accent. I fit in the world around me; I live in peace”.

Aamir’s experiences highlight the centrality of the body, as a marker of his identity as a Kashmiri. In a commonly perceived notion of a Hindu populated Jammu, Muslim inhabited Kashmir, and Buddhist Ladakh, Aamir’s account demonstrates the effect of a body marked with quintessential Kashmiri features symbolizing certain meanings attached to the idea of religion (Muslim) and a contested land. Writing on the body, Nast and Pile (1998) notes:

> We all have bodies, but the idea that we have bodies—that bodies are a possession that the individual has—is culturally, historically and geographically specific. Further, the impression that the individual is located in a body and that being in a body is also about being in a place warrants further scrutiny. (p.1)

Aamir’s experiences and the role of the body politics in a contested zone like Kashmir call for an engagement with readings of the body in spatial and temporal contexts. Such engagements lead to certain questions. How is a Kashmiri man’s body looked at in Delhi? What opinions are formed about a Kashmiri women when she walks around in a Burka in Delhi and Kashmir? How do the movements of one's eye reveal feelings of fear, shame or control? Although, there has been excellent work on the Kashmir conflict and its genealogy revealing several tensions and

multiple histories (Lamb, 1991; Schofield 2010; Bose 2003; Sikand, 2011; Rai, 2004; Zutshi, 2004, 2014), we have yet to develop, however, an account that traces out the ways these tensions are normalized in everyday practice, particularly with respect to bodily regulations (Smith, 2009b). During my field-work, people talked to me about the encroachment of personal spaces and various material and bodily boundaries that alter their sense of how they experience a place. People narrated many instances where security personnel would enter their houses at any hour of the day in search of militants or for a routine search leaving behind a ransacked home. Sometimes, the army even enter into mosques to carry out their search operations.

Following Massey's (1994) assertion that "the social is inexorably also spatial" (p.265), I examine the relations between bodies and spaces through which 'particular subjectivities are enhanced' (Dixon and Marston, 2011) and put to work. Based upon the experiences of my respondents comprising various socio-political and religious discourses, I am interested in the body as a social surface marked and transformed by different institutional regimes, cultural values, social laws, etc. (Grosz, 1994).

I seek to address the body as a site of geopolitics, a site through which the politicization of religion, identity and socially constructed boundaries are enacted; body as a site through which meanings are assigned, and spaces are coded. Low (2003) write, "Spatial analyses often neglect the body because of difficulties resolving the dualism of the subjective and objective body, and distinctions between the material and representational aspects of body space" (p. 10). Oriented around issues of intimacy, emotions, and violence, negotiated in the spaces of everyday life, I attempt an understanding of proliferating bodies of geopolitics (Dixon and Marston, 2011).

The narratives of the people I interviewed highlight their predicaments related to acceptance and spatial exclusions they faced as they went about their daily routine. Through the stories and the experiences of my respondents, I hope to push the understanding of both violence and intimacy mediated through their bodily experiences in a contested zone. I approach intimacy and violence as two interconnected aspects of life. In the life of Kashmiri's these play out in the form of restrictions on interactions, controlled choices, manipulated beliefs, and emotions. My work based on the narratives of lived experiences and embodied practices adds to an apparent growing interest in the geopolitics of intimacy by drawing attention towards the interconnections between bodily practices and politics of religion, culture , and gender.

Geopolitics of the state and religion

One of the reasons behind the multiplicity of the spaces is the intrusion of the state supported processes that have entered into the private social spaces of its citizens and at the same time, govern the interactions in public spaces. Such processes are inherently related to what Nelson (2006) terms as 'geopolitical positioning,' that is, "each community's position within broader configurations of nation, and state territoriality" (p.370). The processes involve functions at micro level, working towards the territorialisation of the body and space by shaping the political discourses and social practices.

The recent politicization of religion started in the late 1980s, by the beginning of the insurgency, when few Kashmiri Muslims took up arms for the independence of the Kashmir Valley. Since then, political discussions continue to be framed in terms of a separate and religious identity, jihad invoked in link with the idea of *ummah*. This intensity is further

exaggerated by Kashmir's geopolitical vulnerability around disputed borders with Pakistan and China. Geopolitical vulnerability affects the political conversations and alter the existing relations between the state and its citizens.

Agnew (2006) addresses religion as the emerging political language of our time (p.183). In a similar context, addressing the shift in the religious and political landscape in Kashmir, Sikand (2001) points out the growing intervention of Islamist groups and religious discourse in Kashmir. He writes:

> Kashmiri struggle not simply as a jihad between the Muslims of Kashmir and the Indian state, but in far wider terms: as a 'holy war' between the Muslims of the world, on the one hand, and the Hindus as an entire community, in league with other 'disbelieving enemies of Islam', on the other. (p.218)

Sikand (2001) elaborates that in the struggle against the oppression of Kashmiri Muslims, national and geographical boundaries are immaterial and "every Muslim is seen as being responsible for contributing in some way or the other in this jihad" (p.219). Such links between local to global draw attention to a variety of scales of religious practice and discourses (like *ummah*) to embodied practices (like imposing burqa). Further, the desire to mark a distinctive feature of identity has resulted in "increased attention to dress, food consumption and other bodily practices. In a political framework in which claims for rights and sovereignty are often made on the basis of difference, religious identity has become increasingly politicized" (Smith, 2009b, p.13.).

Contemplating the role of religion, Naylor and Ryan (2001) explore the role of the mosque played in negotiating religious and ethnic identity in South London. They observe that sacred spaces are endowed with political meanings, and such sacred spaces are intimately

involved in the construction of a political discourse. In the history of Kashmir, mosques, and shrines have always been a significant element of political atmosphere.

In the summers of 2010, the largest mosque in Srinagar city was closed by the authorities due to widespread unrest in the valley. But when the Mosque was opened to offer the first Friday prayer in the holy month of Ramadan, the mosque's chief cleric, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, mixed his *sermon with politics*, reportsa seasoned journalist Jyoti Thottam (2010). Mirwaiz Umar Farooq addressed the gathering in the mosque and remarked: “Oh, Allah, Ramadan is the month of blessing, of freedom… Bless us and give us *freedom from the Indian occupation*” (emphasis added) (2010, para 1).Using mosque as a political space is not new phenomenon. In the past also mosques were used as a place to discuss various issues ranging from religion to politics, as mentioned by Naveed, my respondent Parvaiz’s elder brother. However, the real concern voiced by Naveed was the use of holy places (mosques) more for spreading the venom amongst youngsters and giving them *bad-amli talim* (corrupt knowledge), and lesser for social causes, which should be the real intention of a mosque. Though in a different context, one of my respondents, a Kashmiri Pandit, was very indignant and commented on the role played by the mosques during the initial phase of militancy. Rahul, in his mid-30s, has returned to the valley along with his family after spending 2 decades in Jammu. He says, “We are back after living in exile for 21 years”. He remembers:

> From the speakers mounted on the mosque, militants issued warning to us, they openly made a call for jihad against infidels (Hindus). The slogans were about the rule of Islam, warnings like “either convert to Islam, or leave the place or perish” were raised. These were broadcasted from the loudspeakers of every mosque, encouraging youth to join holy war against the *kafirs* and India. Nobody raised voice against why militants were allowed inside the mosque premises. Moreover, people supported them in using mosques for such purposes. A religious place had become a place to plan murders and butchering of their own.

In October 1993, one of most holy places in Kashmir, Hazrat Bal Mosque, was surrounded by the Indian army to control the militants' activities in the area. The then Director- General of Police, M.N. Sabharwal, offered an explanation for the action. He says, “A religious place which had been very dear to the Kashmiris was used by the militants, not only as a hideout but as an interrogation center” (Schofield, 2010, p. 164). The fortification of the sacred place was resisted and objected by the Kashmiri and Muslims all over India. Though some journalists confirmed the presence of the militants in and around the Mosque, roaming freely in the vicinity with weapons, the action of the security forces was considered as a sacrilege. In an interview with Schofield (2010), Azam Inquialbi, chief Patron of JK Mahaz-e-*Azaadi*, says, “They wanted to humiliate the religious sentiments of Kashmiris, to the extent that once, shrine would have been demolished through shelling, they would then tell the Kashmiris - you see even after having this shrine demolished, Pakistani forces could not intervene” (p.164).

In May 1995, another similar incident occurred. The shrine of Seikh Noorud-Din Wali, a patron saint of Kashmir, was destroyed in a gun-battle when security forces tried to flush out the insurgents hiding inside the shrine. Such incidents reflect that the sacred places were used both by the militants and the army at the cost of people’s sentiments attached with the sacred spaces. Interestingly, another point that emerges from my conversations with some elderly people in Srinagar district was about the emergence of a new wave of religiosity amongst youngsters and the use of mosques. One such narrative is:

> These days younger generation has more knowledge about our religion. They are more knowledgeable. Because of this new generation, society is getting more religious. Look at our Mosques nowadays; all are full of young people. They discuss every aspect of life: religion, *azaadi*, politics… everything.

Perhaps Hab Kak is right in his observation when he says:

> Earlier, say 15-20 years back, you would have found very few people for *fazr ki namaz* (early Morning Prayer) but now our local mosque is almost full. These are young kids who are turning to mosque in large numbers for the prayer.

The above narratives address a change occurring in the Kashmiri society where young Kashmiris are taking refuge in refurbished religious narratives. This phenomenon is more of an ideological change rather than going back to the cultural heritage of Kashmir which is a mix of Sufism, Islam and Shaivism. At this point, I would like to cite another example of the politicization of space. The recent debates about setting up Kashmiri Pandits' colony also reveal the notion of whatLysaght and Basten (2003) terms as "sectarianized space" and "segregated space". The negotiation of space by emigrant Kashmiri Pandits and local Muslims over perceived notions of safety, security and cultural alienation gives an impression of segregated spaces. Reflecting upon the idea of perceived spaces marked by religious affiliation, Lysaght and Basten (2003) write about the coping strategies adopted by both the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. The authors elaborate upon the modifying behaviors according to specific areas, selecting particular dresses, etc. Even in Srinagar, it is not uncommon to observe the changes in behavioral aspects when people cross army bunkers, checkpoints, security check posts. Surinder Oberoi (2001), a journalist from the Valley, explains this phenomenon as "Srinagaris cross the bunkers gingerly, deliberately coughing or whistling, to advertise their presence lest jumpy soldiers gun them down" (p.195). These examples only inform about the heightened spatial awareness and bodily regulations in particular places. This also highlights how people priorities their sense of safety, inclusion and belonging to particular places.

Dynamics of the body and spatial understanding

Contested zones, because of their volatile and unpredictable nature, are sites for both change and continuity. Space is embedded within social life and shaped by social processes connected with the body, and similarly, lived experiences produce and are being produced by spatial relations. In Kashmir too, spaces are constantly being negotiated in several ways and on different scales. The spatial negotiations and their bodily expressions and experiences become particularly relevant to study in Kashmir where the geopolitical dispute is territorial. As Michael (2009) argues, "space cannot be viewed as a static envelope or stage within which social life unfolds. Rather it is a dynamic entity constituted out of a shifting ensemble of meanings, practices, and interrelationships" (p. 46). By demonstrating the interrelation between space and the body in a landscape marked by an ongoing struggle, my intention is to highlight its (space) significance as an integral, rather than a separate category of analysis.

As I discuss the geopolitics of bodily encounters, I use both geographical terms - space and place. I will use space when describing the abstract idea of a spatial relationship and will use place when referring to particular geographical contexts. John Agnew (1987) perceives place as a 'meaningful location' and "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value…."(Tuan, 1977, p.6). Places emerge out from meaningful spaces created through the acts of naming as well as the distinctive imaginings associated with particular spaces. Cresswell (2004) notes, "place is not just a thing in the world but a way of understanding the world" (p.11). And the relations between place and the body are mutually constitutive, if a space works as a constructing force behind molding a body, the body also has effects on the space (Massey, 1994, 2005, Pile, 2013) and in that sense in creating place. Moreover, if a space constructs then it also gets constructed by the social realities. Bodies and

spaces are mutually constituted and in order to explore this understanding, I draw upon the work of Doreen Massey (2005), who writes: “space is always under construction; it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed” (p.9).

Similarly, Moira Gatens (1996) explains that the metaphor of a human body is not a coherent one. She extends the understanding of ‘the human body’ by saying that “images of human bodies are images of either men’s bodies or women’s bodies” (p.24). However, in this course, the seemingly simple question is: what is the body? What relation do bodies share with a place; does the production of body explicitly move in tandem with the production of space under different social realities or scale? In this regard, Lefebvre (1991) notes:

> a body so conceived, as produced and as the production of space, is immediately subject to the determinants of that space ... the spatial body's material character derives from space, from the energy that is deployed and put to use there. (p. 195)

Therefore, experiences within the Kashmir Valley are subjected to the construction of space and spatiality.

There are various works dealing with the relationship between the body and its spatial dimensions. Some investigations include the study conducted by Clarke (2009) about Israeli soldiers, Sara Smith’s (2009a, 2009b) research on the body politics in Leh district of Jammu and Kashmir, and Lysaght & Lysaght and Basten (2003) analysis of the sectarianized spaces in the inner city of Belfast negotiated by its resident on daily basis. These studies reflect upon the notion of bodily regulation, the role of space in relation to violence, spatial negotiations, and the use of different spaces for segregation and population control. In contested places, the understanding of spatial relations reflects the actions of subjects the people who face the precarious nature of everyday life, who suffer and act to resist. The day-to-day presence of

violence and emotions, implores us to consider the ways in which the mundane is accommodated into the accounts of the geopolitical. The focus needs to be on the "everyday struggles of people to make sense of and negotiate their geopolitical existence." (Dixon and Marston, 2011, p.445).

Sara Smith (2009) notes that the body is crucial to the state projects and for the political strategies to exercise power and control over a population. By going through several such processes (governmentality), bodies become territory to be controlled. They become like places which are "territorialized through scales, borders, geography, and geopolitics" (Nast and Pile, 1998, p.3). However, if a body is a site of identity and nationhood, then, it is a site of repression and resistance too, which carries markers of both oppression and defiance.In a contested zone where the body is used as a tool to produce a political subjectivity as good citizens, a body of a protester or a militant emerges a threat for the state. But in a continued struggle where 'the claim of equality is not only spoken or written, but is made precisely when bodies appear together or, rather, when, through their action, they bring the space of appearance into being" (Butler, 2011, para 19), bodies alter the existing spatial relations of control.

(Fig. 5.1)

As a discipline, geopolitics is interested in analyzing the techniques and motivations for controlling territory and populations. Scholars have also observed that an understanding of the body is fundamental to geopolitical practice (Nast and Pile., 1998; Ó Tuathail, G. 1996; Longhurst, 2001; Hyndman, 2004; Dowler and Sharp, 2001; Fluri, 2009). As Smith (2009) and Fluri (2011) state that autonomy movements' key strategies have been focused intensely on the regulation of bodily interaction and disciplining.

Sara Smith's (2011) study is one in the direction stated above. She examines the geopolitical conflict in Leh and discusses the ways in which this conflict resonates through the bodies as they act in the intimate themes of sex and childbirth.She writes: "when population becomes part of a territorial struggle, the body itself becomes a geopolitical site" (pp. 456–7). Similarly, Rich also recognizes the geopolitics of the body and writes about the spatial hierarchy

of the scales of oppression from the body outwards to the global, recognizing the connecting points between the individual and place (Cited in Nast and Pile, 1998, pp. 2-3). However, the connecting points could vary from person to person. An individual may occupy not one, but varying positions within a grid of spatial relations. For instance, when Abdul, a young graduate from a local college in Pulwama joined Aligarh University for further studies, he experienced a different perspective about the freedom of expression and the choices one can make. He says, "The experience was entirely new to me... to breathe in the open air". Abdul further remarks:

> Back at home, I was always scared. I was very shy, in some ways, a timid person. I always lived under the shadow of fear. I did not make many friends, fearing the unforeseen outcomes. For me, my home's outer walls were my border, my inner sanctum (smiles). Now here in this campus, I worry no-one and have a large friends' group. And my friends are from everywhere... from Meerut to Kerala, from different backgrounds. However, sometimes, I feel depressed thinking about the conditions we live in back at home. We all are living in a siege-like situation.

His narrative expresses a sense of spatial hierarchy associated with both safe and insecure places. Moreover, Abdul's experiences underpin the effects of a place on the bodily movement reproduced through the daily negotiations. He adds, "You know, when I joined this place I used to be a very reserved guy (exact words were '*sikuda-sehma sa*'), even some people named me *Kachhua* (tortoise) (laughs)". Based on the bodily encounters and (re)adjustments, people learn and recognize places in different ways and register a spatial familiarity.

Seeing Lal Chowk: Reading of a place

It is believed that Kashmir's Lal Chowk was named after the famous Red Square of Moscow by one of the active leftists BPL Bedi, who penned the Naya Kashmir[69]. Located in the center of Srinagar city, “Lal Chowk is an eyewitness to Jammu and Kashmir's wretched political history since 1947. It is also a witness to a lot of bloodshed and violence for the past 26 years. That way, Lal Chowk is an appropriate name” (Geelani, 2015, para 4).

(Fig. 5.2- Google map: Lal Chowk)

Conjuring up the image of Lal Chowk, Jonah Blank (1999), a journalist and foreign policy expert gives a vivid expression:

> In Srinagar’s Lal Chowk, the most volatile bazaar in the most volatile city in India’s most volatile state, life is as normal as life here ever gets. Merchants and marketers haggle over the price of bruised apples, auto-rickshaws jockey with oxcarts for passage

[69]Naya Kashmir is the name of the proposal submitted to Maharaja Hari Singh, by Sheikh Abdullah. This document consisted a detailed economic plan for the development of the state and to convert the Jammu and Kashmir to a constitutional democracy. It was considered as a blueprint for a welfare state.

through the bustling alleyways, and soldiers gaze lazily through the gun-slits of their sandbagged bunker. (p.36)

(Fig. 5.3- Clock Tower)[70]

I found that locals were engaged with this place in multiple ways by a diverse set of people. At one corner there was an army establishment (bunker and a fortified building) watching over people's movements and actively surveilling the space, yet- they have become almost like a taken-for-granted presence- one who's being there does not explicitly alter the everyday routine. People were busy in shopping arcades, vendors were selling fruits and some people were haggling over cheap Chinese goods. The State Road Transport Corporation (SRTC) yard where passengers were de/boarding the buses, Sumo (a type of SUV used for cab purposes) drivers

[70]Source: http://cushtravel.com/asia/south-asia/india/srinagar

were shouting the names of nearby places. Everything was taking place within the close quarters of Lal chowk. In the words of Parvaiz:

> Lal Chowk is a place where the occupier and the occupied exist together, a place that resonates with the call of *azaadi*, where the seeds of future were sown, which reminds us about army's callousness action[71]. But at the same time, this place gives us hope that we saw a dream that will be achieved, *Inshallah*.

Parvaiz is right in his thoughts. Lal chowk seems like a 'fractured space' divided into the grids, and each grid has its own connotation. For example, youngsters find this place ideal for hang-outs, for shopping, for food-joints; protesters gather here for protests and meetings; and the older generation see this place as a reminder of many historical events. A place that can be approached from multiple points of views. A place may be perceived by different people in varied or similar ways according to their engagements with that particular place. However, the presence of clashing symbols can also be sensed in the same place. Consider this example: the Indian army set camps in the vicinity in a fortified building. On the top of the building is a mounted saffron color flag and the other side of the area witnesses a green flag wavering with every stroke of wind. These two colors, two flags clearly mark the space with a sense of religious and socially demarcated boundaries at a very local level.

More recently, hoisting flag, especially near Lal Chowk, has become a political matter. In the past couple of years, Kashmiri youth hoisted the Pakistani flag atop the Ghanta Ghar and Indian political leaders have tried to hoist the Indian flag at Lal Chowk in the past. However, this act was resisted by the locals who refused to attend these events. Such actions often result in

[71]In April 1993, the main commercial center of downtown Srinagar, near Lal Chowk was burned to the ground by the Indian security forces. Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) set fire to the locality in retribution for the burning of an abandoned BSF building by the local residents. *Kashmir Dispatch*, an online news portal reported that the fire had destroyed 59 houses, 190 shops, 53 stores, two office buildings, five commercial buildings, two schools and a shrine inside the building. For details, please see http://wp.me/p6XoZF-B8I

curfew like situations temporarily suspending the usual hustle and bustle of the area. During my visits in 2013, 2014, I also found that Kashmir's Lal Chowk remained deserted on 15 August. The image given below shows the atmosphere in the place on Independence Day.

(Fig 5.4- Lal Chowk duringcurfew)[72]

Casey (2001) argues, “[O]nce having been in a particular place for any consider-able time . . . we are forever marked by that place, which lingers in us indefinitely and in a thousand ways . . . the whole brute presence of the place”(p. 188). The spatial relations shared between a contested space like Lal Chowk (or the perception of this place) andbodily experiences highlighted the ‘whole brute presence of the place’. During my field stay, I visited Lal chowk numerous times. I was mostly sitting near Sanatan Dharam Dharamshala situated in the vicinity of Lal Chowk. Occupying one of the iron benches, I spent long hours watching tourists, army personnel, local Kashmiris, and students from Women’s College and Tyndale Biscoe passing through this place.

[72]Source:kafila.org/2011/08/16/twelve-questions-for-the-press-trust-of-india-on-indian-independence-day-15-august-in-kashmir/

The following two images show these two locations (Lal Chowk and Sanatan Dharam Dharamshala) simultaneously.

(Fig. 5.5 - Main Sign board of Sanatan Dharam Dharamshala[73])

(Fig 5.6- A sitting arrangement near Lal Chowk)[74]

[73]Source: http://www.panoramio.com/photo/80600498

I sensed that while some people were oblivious of their surroundings busy in their activities, for some others, the presence of the security forces was both comforting and troubling, especially for outsiders (tourists). This helped me to understand the co-constitutional relationship between body-space and politics, or the ways in which body-place relationship are politically induced. There is a temple inside the Sanatan Dharam Dharamshala. I met the priest of the temple. I call him Panditji, a usual salutation used to address priests. Panditji was in his mid-40s and was living in the compound of the temple along with his family. He had come to Srinagar while working for a tunnel construction company. However, as he says, "this temple is my destiny now". He has been working as a caretaker for the *dharamshala* (Inn) and a full time priest. When I met him inside the temple premises, he was neatly dressed in a silk embroidered Kurta with a maroon colored *dhotī*, donning a long vermillion *tilak* and a medium sized *choti*. His dress up was a clear sign of his profession and identity, and Panditji was very proud of it. Panditji told me that though he lived in one of the most sensitive zones in Srinagar, he was comfortable there and not afraid of anyone. Further, he adds, "I share cordial relations with all. Though my clientele is largely army personnel, I also receive invitations by the remaining few Hindus in Rajbagh and Jawaharnagar area". Talking about the conflict engulfed in the state, he opines,

> Who does not fight, even brothers fight. I am an outsider but never felt like one. I do not see any reason why should I be afraid of this place. This place gave me food and shelter and safety concerns are not on my agenda.

Panditji shares a very simple relation with the place. Away from all religious and political negotiations, he accepts conflict and struggle as a part of life and chooses to remain a spectator only.

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[74]Source: http://www.panoramio.com/photo/8060049)

If Panditji was somehow contained and understood the dynamics of life of being in a contested zone, Sanjay, another respondent, has a different opinion about this place. Sanjay, 25 years old, is a recruit of Indian army soldier and comes from Eastern India, the state of Bihar. He was positioned near Lal Chowk as a part of security team when I met him in Srinagar. This was Sanjay's second posting after the training period. Though he was not very happy with the stationing, he was very conscious of the differences local people exhibit in their routine and lifestyle. In his words:

> This place is very different from any other place in India. Here, civilians hate us, unlike any other place in India. And we are also skeptical about their intentions and doings. We (soldiers) do not know whom to trust. There is lack of faith in each other (locals and army). I fear, if I stay here two more years, then I will start doubting my friends and family. Such is the atmosphere here. This place seems cursed, no one is at peace.

Sanjay further said that the first few things he noticed in Kashmir were anger, frustration, suspicion and a sense of fear, reflecting from local people's gestures. Since, mostly the soldiers come from faraway parts of India, unknown of the local culture, language and traditions, this alienation around them restrict social intercourse between the locals and the soldiers. The identity of a soldier is a mere face behind the weapon. Sanjay talked about the feelings of distrust between the army and the civilians. Sanjay elaborated that for the locals, the army should not have been there because they (soldiers) are outsiders and do not understand the cause of the struggle. On the other hand, security personnel believe that Muslims supported the insurgency. Hence, the security personnel believe that the Kashmiris could not be trusted and that they are doing their 'job' by enforcing the law of the land. Sanjay's experience clearly shows the complex relation between an insider (local) and an outsider (soldier). In a slightly witty tone Sanjay shares another story:

> Sometimes, the tourists from other states come and ask – is this place safe? We keep hearing that Lal Chowk and nearby areas are very sensitive. I tell them- do not worry, *hum hai na!* (We are here to protect you).

Sanjay's body, a product of statecraft, becomes a political site signaling Indian nationalism. In addition, Sanjay's narrative about the impression of the place on his psyche (doubting his family) corroborates with observations recorded by Clarke (2009) in his study of Israeli soldiers' bodily reactions after they return to the places which they had occupied earlier. In his work, Clarke demonstrates, "the bodily nature of encountering violent spaces and the way that it maps directly onto the experience and 'knowledge' of places is also a powerful evocation of the play of forces on bodies" (p.89). Though I could not get more opportunities to interact with army personnel due to the restrictions in place, I am of the opinion that despite disciplined/ trained bodies, soldiers also carry the impressions of embodied spaces and carry the experiences along with them.

These narratives highlight the relationship embedded in spatial settings containing emotions and different experiences of the same place. And also demonstrate the enactment of state practices throughout the society, scripted meanings at every level and in every space performed through the bodies. Since the body is placed "geopolitically" and its location is marked by its position with specific historical and geographical circumstances, such narratives also emphasize the role of the body bringing in the study of lived places and spatial relationships.

Inscription of power relations in and through bodies.

The conflicting versions of the state of Jammu and Kashmir as a secular or religious state, its contested history as a part of the Indian state or an independent state, and various other claims associated with the place have resulted in a six decades long conflict and have become major

concerns for the people of Kashmir and Indian state. As a consequence of this ongoing conflict, violence has become endemic and intimately interwoven in people's lives. Though it does not rest only on physical harm to the bodies, the fear of violence is always at the core of people's lives. It also leads to various forms of mental and verbal abuse which also needs attention. In a recent survey conducted by 'Médecins Sans Frontières', a medical humanitarian organization in collaboration with Kashmir University has found that "an estimated one million adults (26 percent) in the valley are living with significant symptoms of anxiety-related disorders". The survey also reveals that nearly 19 percent adults in Kashmir show signs of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) symptoms. This situation clearly states the effects of the conflict on the health and lives of people.

Pain and Smith (2008) argue that all forms of violent oppression work through intimate emotional and psychological registers and "discourses of fear are now routinely utilized to legitimize more punitive justice, restrictions on workplace rights, and freedom of movement" (p.2). As I see, in all these, the body emerges as a central figure that emerges as a site through which subjectivities are produced (Smith, 2009). The body as an illustrative figure of an ideology carrying symbols of a nation. The body also amounts to a product of discipline and strategies deployed by the state power. These dynamics of the body adds to the understanding of the 'domesticating geopolitics'. I explore the potential of the notion of intimacy to add to our understanding of the geopolitical and the way in which intimacy is mapped on various scales. In this section, I pay particular attention to the analysis of the body in a conflict zone within a broad spectrum of violence connected with the theme of intimacy-geopolitics. Drawing on the work of feminist political geographers (Dittmer and Gray, 2010; Rose, 1993; Pain & Staeheli, 2014; Pratt

and Rosner, 2012), I draw attention towards the everyday and seemingly apolitical sites with a particular emphasis on the gendered embodied practices.

The story of women: veiling the body

The militarization of space not only accounts for direct violence but creates different patterns of violence. It "profoundly affects the social, economic, and political status, roles and responsibilities of women and alters their relations with men during and after conflict…" (Kumar, 2001, p. 7). While men are the victims of direct violence (extra-judicial killing, illegal detention, torture, and enforced disappearance), women face violence mostly in the sphere of economic and social.

The body of a woman becomes a 'site for political intimidation' and is used to humiliate the community. Menon (2005) notes:

> It is by now a phenomenon well recorded by feminist scholarship and politics that communities vest their honor in 'their' women and the cultural policing begins with first marking and then drawing women 'inside' the community. Especially when a community feels its identity or existence is under threat, then its proud assertion of identity is always marked on the bodies of its women first (p.209)

Writing about the situation in Kashmir, Nyla Khan (2010) notes that women have been violated by both military and militants, "a number of women have been ruthlessly violated by members of the paramilitary troops" (p.101) and "purdah is another way through which the militants extend their control over Kashmir" (p.110).

Apart from this, women's bodies are used as a tool to maintain binary gender order. For example, Dukhtaran-e-Millat (Daughters of the nation), an Islamic group and part of the separatistAll Parties Hurriyat Conference in the past had issued a fatwa to wear burqa and

dictated rules to impose restrictions on women's movements. However, the fatwa was criticized by locals and was seen as something against the ethos of the Kashmiri society. Scholars like Ahmed (2011) and Hoodfar (2003) have written about the various meanings associated with hijab analyzing within a framework of Islamophobia and patriarchal practices.

Fluri (2011) also highlights the "ways in which gendered political discourses flatten the spatial, situational and historical understanding of the chadori" (p. 286). The meanings attached with burqa is mainly of women's oppression but as Fluri (2011) aptly notes "wearing the burqa (or not) comes with a complex set of expectations within families and communities, which is further mediated by prevailing social, cultural and political influences on the domestic sphere" (p. 286). Consider this example: Gulshan, a 23 years old graduate who comes from a conservative family feels:

> Curfew or no curfew, it does not matter. For us (females), there is always a curfew. We are like some precious things that need security and safety. *Hum hamesha pehre me hai, Ghar chardiwari bahar burqa*. (We are always shielded or under protection, inside home we are sheltered by the boundary walls, and outside home, it is the burqa).

Gulshan's predicament highlights the manifestation of the notion of a weaker gender who needs security. However, there is another story behind the veil which I would like to address here. When a young girl in the Valley was interviewed by a journalist about the diktat of wearing a burqa, she replied: "I used to go the beauty parlor regularly, but now I do not have to bother about my face." Further, she added that she felt safer in the public because men were more respectful. "It can be liberatory… you can go wherever you want to go" she says (Menon, 2005, p. 209). Further, Menon notes that the burqa offers a "refuge from sexual harassment and some of the restrictions in mobility faced by young girls" (p.209).

Another issue that needs to be addressed in this section is that of ‘half widows’. ‘Half-Widows’ is a term used to refer to the women whose husbands went missing in the existent conflict for more than twenty years in the state. There are many case studies recorded by Amnesty International, Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS), addressing the concerns of ‘half widows’ and incidents where security forces raped Kashmiris women. Aruna’s story is not about sexual harassment, but about the pain she carries with her all the time of being a ‘half-widow’. She is a resident of Srinagar and now stays with her brother, as her husband has disappeared in 2010 turmoil. She says:

> I do not understand the politics of India and Pakistan. I am afraid of all, whether it is police or the militant or my family. All are the same for me. I have to bear the pain of losing my husband, losing a family, cuss words of in-laws and taunts of people, because I have nowhere to go.

Gulshan and Aruna feel that by being women, they are oppressed, helpless and trapped and were treated in a particular way, mostly focused at the corporeal scale. Their narratives demonstrate that “domestic family life includes complicated sites and gendered spaces that in some cases compound women’s experiences of violence from both within and outside the home” (Fluri, 2010, p.292). The body has been considered as a space and a primary location where our personal identities are constituted and social knowledges and meanings inscribed (Gill, 2001, p.15). Talking about the bodily experiences, Faheem, a 25-year-old young man, narrated a story about his journey from Jammu to Gwalior, his experience is focused on the centrality of the body. Faheem said that while on a trip to Gwalior, he realized his features like fair skin, sharp nose, slightly brown eyes, and his accent were enough to reduce his identity to a “terrorist” or a sympathizer of militants. He feels that he is trapped inside a package labeled as Kashmiri. Faheem’s younger sister was studying in Gwalior pursuing her M.Phil. in English literature. He

said that his parents felt that their daughter would be better off in Gwalior, away from the disturbed atmosphere of the Valley. Faheem narrates his story about their very first visit to Gwalior. He says:

> We (he and his father) had boarded the train from Jammu for Gwalior. Somewhere near Sirhind (In Punjab) some fellow passengers from the same bogey called the Railway Protection Force (RPF) to check our luggage. We were shocked and did not know what to do. I thought that we could never get away from the security forces whether we were in Kashmir or in any other state.

Later on, they got to know that the RPF was called because they (Faheem and his father) were Kashmiris, and the fellow passengers wanted to be sure that they were safe traveling with Kashmiri people, and his body was perceived as a 'threat to others'. Faheem said that he had never felt so humiliated and afraid. After this incident, whenever he went to meet his sister he felt uncomfortable in the train and could not sleep.

Reading Intimacy

Living amongst the 'troubled geography', violence has become a permanent feature of the lives of the Kashmiri people. The effects of violent acts and their spatial consequences involve an intrusion into someone else's space. A body as a carrier of lived experiences is produced and being produced by spatial relations linked with violence and intimacy. Intimacy functions as a set of spatial relations that may take place beyond closed quarters, stretching from local to distant, and may traverse the personal, institutional and national realms (Pain and Staeheli, 2014, pp.344-345). One of my respondents' reaction on the 9th February 2016 Jawaharlal Lal Nehru University, New Delhi (popularly known as JNU) controversy[75], clearly, highlights the spatial

[75] On 9th February 2016, some students of the left-wing student's organization held a protest at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi campus against the capital punishment to the 2001 Indian Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru. Some media houses reported that anti-India slogans were raised at the protest. This incident later resulted in

dimensions of intimacy that stretch from local to regional. Talking about the protests held in, Abdul says:

> I wonder! How come JNU students could hold such a protest in their campus? We also did it in our college. But, in India? That too in her capital? I am surprised! It's good to know that a section of the Indian society shares our concern.

(Fig: 5.7: A graffiti in JNU campus)

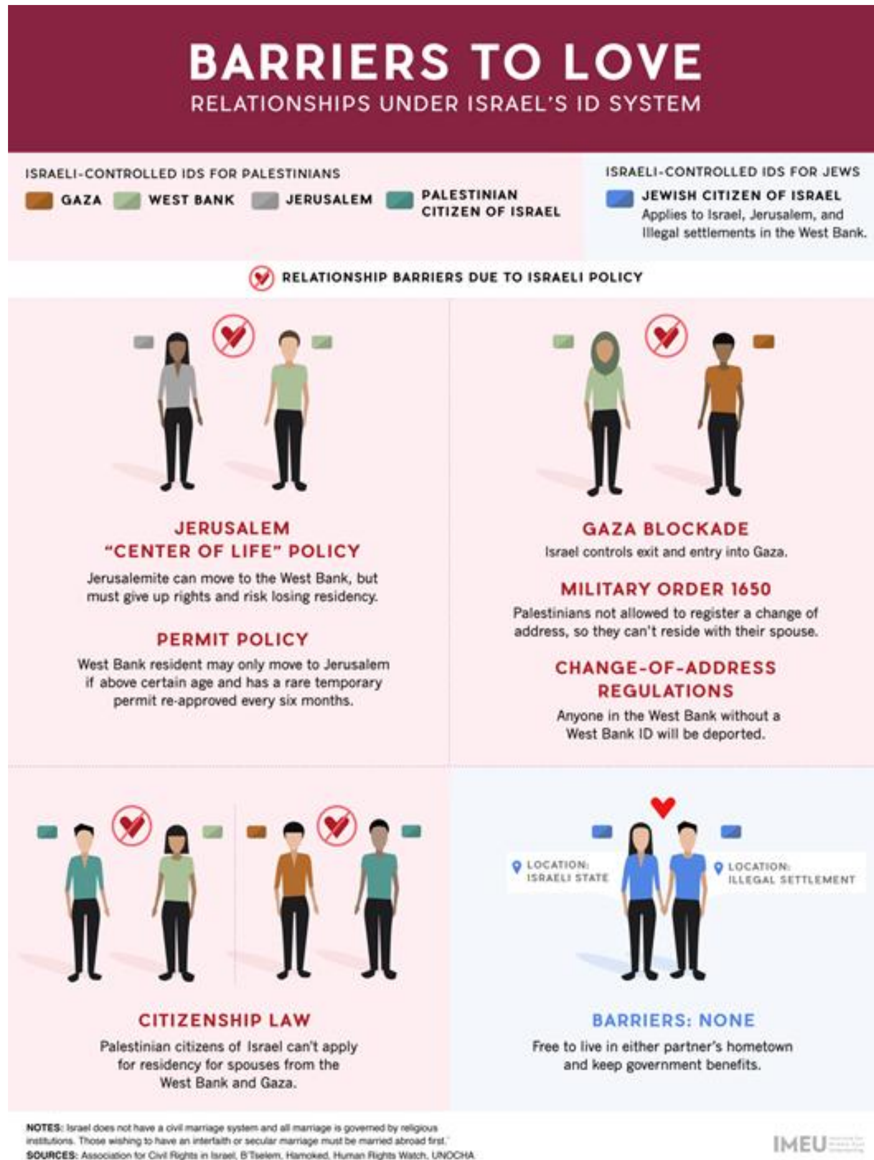
The narrative shows that without having a direct interaction, a certain kind of affinity was established between a local student and a group of students placed in a different region. Intimacy may involve a set of practices applying to, and also connecting the body which is proximate or distant.

an anti- JNU campaign and led to the arrest of JNU Students' Union President Kanhaiya Kumar and Umar Khalid on charges of sedition

Love Under Apartheid is a project launched by Tanya Keilani. The website (http://www.loveunderapartheid.com/) features stories shared by men and women describing the situation in which intimate relations become a subject of the state jurisdiction mixed with the politics of space. This project features the stories of couples and families fractured by occupations in Palestine. These stories, as Tanya Keilani, project founder and coordinator, writes:

> Indigenous Palestinians have been living under Israeli military occupation for nearly 70 years now. Thinking about occupation historically and in the abstract, we may not comprehend the extent to which it affects the most private and intimate parts of Palestinian lives (Keilani, 2012, para 3).

The following image "Barriers to Love" shows the ways in which the Israeli policies limit Palestinian intimate and familial relationships.



(Fig. 5.8: Barrier to love, Source: loveunderapartheid.com)

I felt similar experience articulated in Sanam's story. He is a 28 years old, a postgraduate from the Valley University. Sanam narrates his story about love and struggle. He says:

> When I found a partner, like anyone else, I thought about the future which we may have together. But strangely, I got trapped in some eerie questions like what if prolonged curfews lead to tensions in my family? While staying inside the four walls of the house all the time, we may end up fighting out of stress and frustration. Perhaps, I worry too much or planning a future is not that easy for people like me, who live in the land of uncertainty. I am not even sure what I want…I don't want my kids to have the same fate

> like me…no school for months, crackdown, blood, cries, losing friends…nope. I am better this way…alone.

Sanam's desire to love and to be loved becomes a politicized terrain adding to the everyday realities of conflict which is experienced differently. Sanam's story draws the connections amongst personal relationships, intimacy, and occupation and suggests that "relations of love can offer to understandings of power, knowledge and social relations between people, space, place, objects and politics" (Morrison et.al, 2013, p.516).

Conclusions:

Violent spaces create spatial registers that remain lodged in the body of the receiver. For example, this notion of the space shaping the body is also exemplified by soldiers' bodily reactions while on patrolling or canvassing a particular area. Their very attentive but tensed bodies, despite an intense body-based training, reflect the direct encounter with volatile spaces. The body as the locus of experiences perceives spatial relations in various ways. Scholars argue that this analysis can be extended to understand intimate violences as foundational to geopolitical dynamics and force (Peteet, 2013; Dowler et. al, 2014; Pain, 2015). This chapter suggests the need for further inquiry to frame the geopolitical understanding of a contested place with reference to the everyday realities of intimate- violence. Along with bodily regulations, control on personal decisions, power-relations, gender violence, religious beliefs also become a site where violence is present in the intimate realms reproducing emotional dynamics of geopolitical imaginaries and possibilities.

The goal of all these analyses is to propose a framing of intimacy-geopolitics, not simply as a terrain on which power relations are written and marked through coercion or imposed using various institutions. But, how it configures spatial relations, interactions, and practices in a particular place.

In conclusion, this work is an attempt towards an understanding of the human lives in a conflict zone under the veil of security barriers and multiple contestations which obscures other struggles. Behind the veil, there are multiple spaces and scales embedded within the everyday which go beyond the traditional representation of the Kashmir conflict and its different trajectories. Inherently, all acts of violence constitute an effect of spatial proportions. The narratives quoted in chapters talked about the embodied experiences within different spaces and the relationships between these spaces and the bodies inhabiting therein. Further, by illustrating a gender frame within the everyday spaces, I demonstrate the links between military processes, violence and discrimination within and beyond the family. I have attempted to explain the phenomenon of people joining *janaza* to pay tribute to the 'martyrs'. The phenomenon of collective mourning provides the opportunity for the emergence of a sense of community constructed on a common cause. The analysis of such acts helps to understand the emotive ways through which people recognize and accept representations of various acts and their own place within it (Sharp 2001; Dalby and O Tuathail 2003; Dittmer and Gray 2010). Moreover, acts like collective mourning draw people towards emotional and embodied experiences engaging them in intimate relations of nationalistic feelings and interpersonal relationships. As Misztal (2003) writes: "Cultural memory is embodied also in regularly repeated practices, commemorations, ceremonies, festivals, rites and narratives" (p. 12).

This work contributes by bringing in the everyday with its inherent ambiguities and contradictions dealing with a range emotions and beliefs and precarious nature of life. I end my work with the words of Agha Shahid Ali, a poem about hope, longing, and recovery.

We shall meet again, in Srinagar,

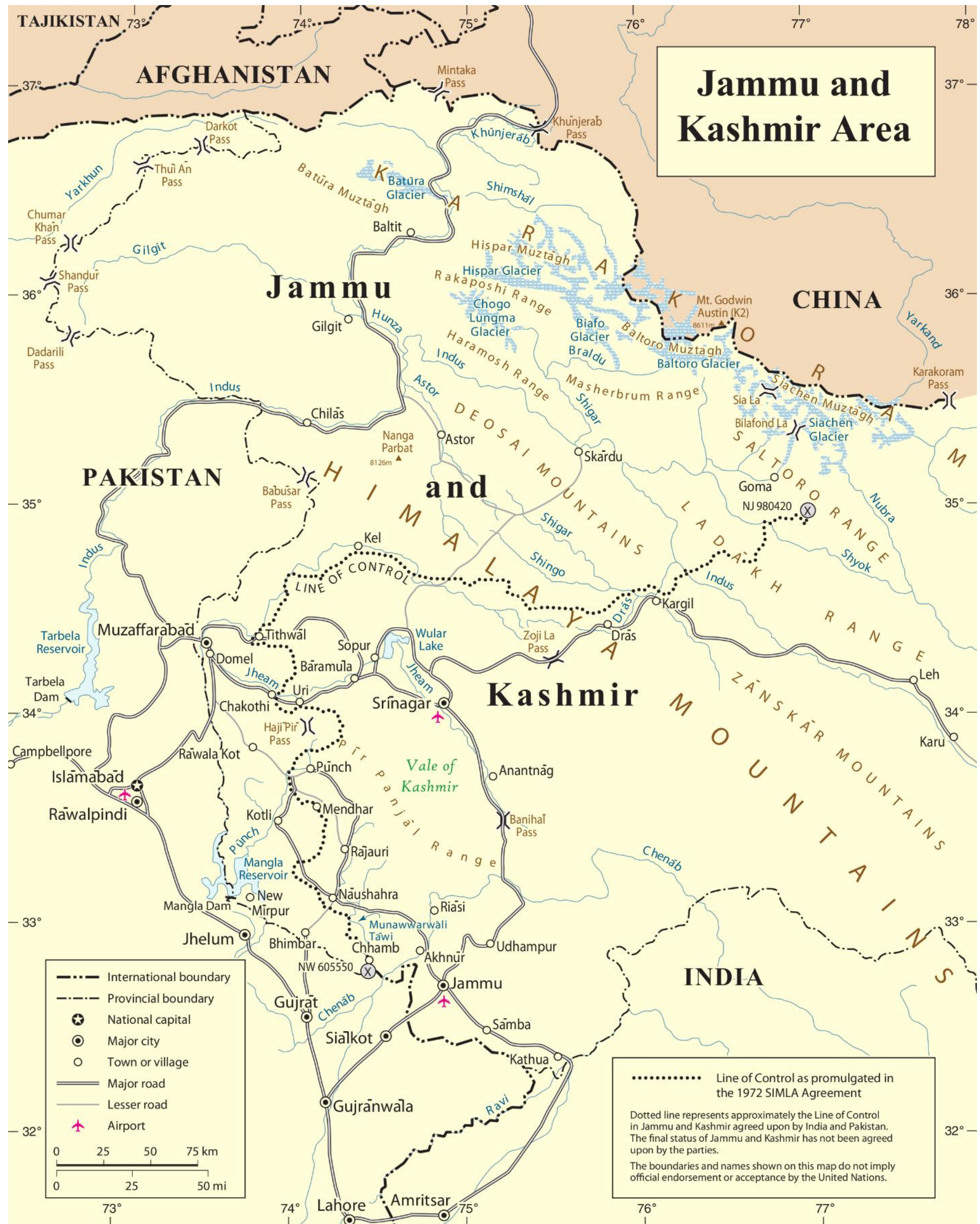
by the gates of the Villa of Peace,

our hands blossoming into fists

till the soldiers return the keys

and disappear.

("A Pastrol", by Agha Shahid Ali, 2000, p.30)



(Fig. 5.9: UN Map of Jammu and Kashmir)

Chapter 6: Epilogue

Prof. M.A. Sofi (2016) writes in an article published in *Greater Kashmir*: "The Paradise that we so passionately love, cherish and adore stands violated, vandalised and vulgarised by a cocktail of factors which have to be located chiefly in the political uncertainty" (Para 1). At the time of writing this chapter, a fresh spell of agitation in Kashmir has started again. In the wake of the recent events in the Valley[76], or what followed after the killing of Burhan Wani, a 22-year-old militant, a new wave of resistance has emerged.Simmering discontent coupled with injuries, oppression and a feeling of helplessness seems to have pushed this generation to the wall.The state government and the government at the center both have failed to recognize that separatist politics has now passed on to a third generation. A generation who understands the power of knowledge and education, acknowledges the geo-political contexts, and uses the internet as a tool of resistance. While thousands of youth come to the streets and engage directly with the security forces, another section of young Kashmiris uses the social media to reach a global audience. Even militants have been using social media to approach youngsters for some time now, as a backdoor engagement.

Wani also used the social media with his videos and messages to motivate the youth to pick up arms and put a fight till death. However, as Jamwal (2016) points out that what made him unique was his call to not attack Amarnath yatris or civilian areas and to welcome Kashmiri Pandits, whom he described as part of Kashmiri society, back to their homes. This reflects a

[76] After Burhan wani, a Hizbul Mujahideen commander, was killed by the Indian security forces there was three month long curfew in the Valley. The Valley was under siege, turned into a prison inside out. In the struggle against the state and as consequence of direct confrontation with security forces, many people lost their lives, scores were injured, many youngsters lost their vision fully or partial.

choice made by this generation to counter the state and its efforts to depict militants as anti-Hindus or ultra-fundamentalists.

(Fig.6.1: A graffiti in Burhan's memory)[77]

It was common during the protest, after Wani's killing, to hear slogans like, "*mubarak tas maajeh yes ye zaav: shaheed hai aav, shaheed hai aaav*" (congratulations to the mother who gave birth to Burhan—the Martyr). Such narratives in the collective memory reinvigorate the commitment to continue the struggle and this is how memory becomes one of the ways to resist the state hegemony. On the basis of my research, I argue that the acts of remembrance evoke past memories of collective suffering and struggle, and these reconstructed narratives become central to the movement shaping collective memory in both imaginative and material ways. These memories return whenever the state acts as an oppressor. Memorialising 'the sacrifice' of the

[77]https://www.thequint.com/india/2016/07/12/burhan-still-alive-eulogies-to-wani-adorn-walls-in-kashmir-srinagar-hizbul-mujahideen

militants and to honor their memory become way to keep alive the wounds in the collective memory. As Misztal, (2003) writes: "Cultural memory is embodied also in regularly repeated practices, commemorations, ceremonies, festivals, rites and narratives" (p. 12). Memory facilitates the negotiation between the past and present through which people define their individual and collective selves.

(Fig.6.2: People defied the curfew to mourn Burhan Wani's death and many got killed in protests against the state)[78]

Now young women have also joined the young men in their struggle. Brigade of stone pelters have been joined by school girls.

[78] http://www.dailyo.in/politics/burhan-wani-militancy-kashmir-crisis-curfew-stone-pelting-nationalism/story/1/11982.html

(Fig.6.3: College girls pelting stones at security forces in Srinagar)[79]

(Fig. 6.4: College girls pelting stones at security forces in Srinagar)[80]

[79]http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/barely-out-of-teens-young-girls-are-the-new-face-of-protests-in-kashmir/story-oHJ46koWLJ8KtI4r52tEmM.html
[80] http://www.bbc.com/hindi/india-39703024

(Fig. 6.5: It is a screen grab, taken from a video. And the term 'they' is used for security forces.)[81]

These young women have been called as "new face of protests". Toufiq Rashid (2016), a journalist with Hindustan Times, writes[82] :

> But unlike us in the '90s, these girls took on the forces. Instead of running for cover, they picked up stones and targeted the police. Every shell was countered with a scream for 'azadi'. This was unprecedented. Like their teenaged male counterparts, these girls too seemed to not fear death. A few days ago, a photograph of a burqa-clad college girl kicking a moving army vehicle had gone viral, making the young girls the "new face of protests". (para 8, 9)

This new phase of the movement calls for a detailed analysis using gender as an essential dimension of the conflict. The role of women not just as victims but someone who resist, fight and stand against the oppression.

In conclusion

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[81]http://www.thehindu.com/society/when-little-girls-pick-up-stones/article18305180.ece
[82] http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/then-and-now-when-girls-in-kashmir-took-to-srinagar-s-lal-chowk-to-protest/story-rFDG5Pj00XJpDbxOi8XtPM.html

As a result of continued struggle and conflict, Kashmiri society stands fragmented. The violence associated with conflict leading to such fragmentation has now become deeply associated with Kashmiri society. The analysis of a conflict in its contextual, historical specificity demands an attention to a multiplicity of scales from global and national discourses to embodied practices. I have argued in this thesis that bringing the everyday life and the voices of its residents back into the debate is essential to present a nuanced reading of this conflict.

Cowen and Gilbert (2008) examine how powerful political discourses seep into the everyday, and reveal that "the war on terror is not simply one that targets so-called terrorist acts, but the feelings of terror generated by a range of contemporary social and political insecurities" (p.49). In a contested zone where every day takes place within broader power structures of control and surveillance, everyday life and their symbolic meanings remain unnoticed and emerge as a site of experience that is "below the threshold of the noticed" (Johnstone, 2008, p.13). In such conditions, the mundane provides an understanding of 'ordinary' people's lives and deaths and through their narratives; a window opens up onto the allegorical quality of every day (Chatterji and Mehta, 2007). It is a lived process of routinization that every individual experiences and enacts. While violence, fear, and terror are hidden under the routine, there are small pockets in this routine where hope meets with reality aspiring for a better future. Thus, it makes more sense to think of the everyday as a way of experiencing, a window into people's lives as I have demonstrated through some narratives from my ethnographic journey. Third chapter of this thesis argues that my efforts were to expose the normalization of violence, the generality of fear, and precarious nature of life. It is against the backdrop of persistent conflict, tensions, and the constant threat of disturbance that locals adjust their lives and attempt to regain

the normalcy of life. It is for such reasons that I concluded inthe third chapter that instead of accepting a 'natural attitude' towards every day and its banality, we need to carry out an analysis of the quotidian to understand human lives in a conflict zone.

In the fourth chapter, I focused on the ways in which recollections of narratives and discourses have become a part of the collective memory in the Kashmir Valley, as Said (2000) suggests, "collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified and endowed with political meanings" (p.185). In Kashmir, lived experiences of the people remain present in the quotidian; residues of the past exist in the everyday spaces and remind them of what they had gone through. Memories of Handwara and Gawkadal Massacre, the migration of Kashmiri Pandits, and, Kunan-Poshpora rape cases, to name a few, are wedged deep in the collective memory of the Kashmiris. These memories return whenever the state acts as an oppressor and suppresses the struggle movement. Moreover, the tyrannical nature of the security forces does not allow Kashmiris to forget their past,which is violent marked with bloodsheds and torture. Each new wound brings back the memory of the past experiences.

I argue that the complex set of memories through which people create a sense of history is a matter of active (re)construction of the past reproduced with the help of present experiences and several socio-cultural tropes. In the struggle of reclaiming the past and establishing the legitimacy of the discourses, history appears as "(History) another kind of fiction", a synthesis of mentions and silences (Trouillot, 1995, p. 48). Through revealing contradictions between the

multiple histories of Kashmir, I show, that no history is a true history without voices of its people.

In the fifth chapter, I discussed how violent spaces create spatial registers that remain lodged in the body of the receiver. For example, this notion of the space shaping the body is also exemplified by soldiers' bodily reactions while on patrolling or canvassing a particular area. Their very attentive but tensed bodies, despite an intense body-based training, reflect the direct encounter with volatile spaces. The body as the locus of experiences perceives spatial relations in various ways. Scholars argue that this analysis can be extended to understand intimate violence as foundational to geopolitical dynamics and force (Peteet, 2013; Dowler et. al, 2014; Pain, 2015). This chapter suggests the need for further inquiry to frame the geopolitical understanding of a contested place with reference to the everyday realities of intimate-violence. Along with bodily regulations, control on personal decisions, power-relations, gender violence, religious beliefs also become a site where violence is present in the intimate realms reproducing emotional dynamics of geopolitical imaginaries and possibilities.

Limitation of Present Work and Scope of Future research: In my field work, I found the young Kashmiris believe that their integration in the national identity of India (Indian-ness) is not based upon their cultural history (Kashmiriyat) and nationality is not a sufficient condition for citizenship (Mitra, 2010); it is a political construct rather than a cultural construct. Those interviewed were of the opinion that identity and citizenship are not complementary. According to them, they are in possession of multiple identities based on religion, ethnicity, and culture. To delve deeper into this phenomena, my future research direction hopes to engage with young

people as actors who are differently conditioned and positioned agents (Kallio and Häkli, 2013); and who feel that their rights as citizens are frequently curtailed by the state institutions.

In a contested place like Kashmir, it is important to engage with youth as a conceptual category linked with a constant struggle, subjectivity, participation in public life and active politics within a complex web of power relations and identity.I will focus on spatially oriented discussions on young Kashmiri people, citizens of a contested land, as actors and how they choose to enact the rights and claims of being a citizen. It is needed that we consider the everyday spaces essential within which young people operate and carve out spaces of engagement as spaces of citizenship, politics and participation. As Philo and Smith (2013) suggest: "a central challenge for political geographies of children and young people is to work precisely between [...] the micro-politics of personal experience and the macro-politics of the public sphere" (p.110).

One of the limitations of my present work is the minimal inclusion of female voices. Another limitation, is in terms of gathering more narratives on public and private divide about security, or feeling safe in certain spaces. By paying attention to the mundane, prosaic, and the ordinary aspects of daily life, I will make continuous efforts to engage with literature on sociology of body focusing on bodily struggle in everyday spaces. In brief, I will strive to understand the body as a site of resistance and struggle amidst troubled geographies of fear, resistance and violence. And for this purpose, I am committed to use both deductive and inductive methods for my research. I will make efforts to further the understanding of the relation between intimacy and violence in terms of performativity and the ways in which

discourses are practiced and enacted.The research would consider philosophical examination as a part of the theoretical framework such as, Butler (2004), Foucault (2012) and Hannah (2013) to make an attempt for philosophical engagements with violence and intimacy.

Thesis Contribution: In the case of Kashmir, questions of conflict and violence emerge at the center of everyday life. While it is not possible to arrive at any definitive "conclusion" or "truth" regarding the conflict and the experiences of militarization, my work contributes to the literature on the militarization of everyday life. I argue that the militarization of the everyday is central to the extension of state power into the daily, even intimate, interactions of its governed population (Cowen 2008; Cowen and Gilbert 2008; Enloe 2007; Sjoberg 2006; Dowler 2002). These seemingly natural and regularly performed activities generate an identity for its bearer and carry a multitude of emotions like loss, satisfaction, grief, and contentment. This thesis adds to the understandings of the mundane practices and the meaningful encounters within everyday spaces at various scales which bring to the fore the voices of those embedded in and effected by the conflict. Such an understanding disrupts the seemingly coherent and perhaps closed project of the sub-discipline of political geography (Staeheli, Kofman, & Peak, 2004).

This thesis as an ethnography of everyday life in a conflict zone goes beyond the traditional representation of the Kashmir conflict and its different trajectories. The narratives quoted in the chapters talk about the embodied experiences within different spaces and the relationships between these spaces and the bodies inhabiting therein. I have attempted to explain the phenomenon of people joining *janaza* to pay tribute to the 'martyrs'. The phenomenon of collective mourning provides the opportunity for the emergence of a sense of community

constructed on a common cause. The analysis of such acts helps to understand the emotive ways through which people recognize and accept representations of various acts and their own place within it (Sharp 2001; Dalby and O Tuathail 2003; Dittmer and Gray 2010). Moreover, acts like collective mourning draw people towards emotional and embodied experiences engaging them in intimate relations of nationalistic feelings and interpersonal relationships.

My work based on the narratives of lived experiences and embodied practices adds to an apparent growing interest in the geopolitics of intimacy and interconnections between practices such as politics, religion, and gender. Overall my research has important implications to understand fluid and shifting ways of geopolitics and relations of intimacy and violence.

In conclusion, this ethnographic work is an attempt towards an understanding of the human lives in a conflict zone under the veil of security barriers and multiple contestations which obscures other struggles. The goal of all these analyses is to propose a framing of intimacy-geopolitics, to reveal the connections between multiple scales and how each constitutes the other – Global-national-local; collective memory-bodily performance.

I started my work praising Kashmir's landscape by citing a couplet of Rumi used by Jahangir, the Mughal emperor, which was

Agar Firdaus bar rōy-e zamin ast, hamin ast-o hamin ast-o hamin ast.
(If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here)

I end my thesis with another expression using the same couplet but now with some different words, giving a new meaning,

Agar curfew bar roy-e zamin ast , hamin ast-o hamin ast-o hamin ast

(If there is curfew on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here)

These lines depict the way in which nowadays Kashmiri youth sees the *Jannat* - Kashmir, as a *beautiful prison.*

Or What Aamir said:

Daem phuit chi gaemits myaen nazar:	(My gaze has been silenced
yoot matsar kyah?	What frenzy is this?
mei rov labith lol shahar,	I lost the city of love I'd found,
yoot matsar kyah?	What frenzy is this?)

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