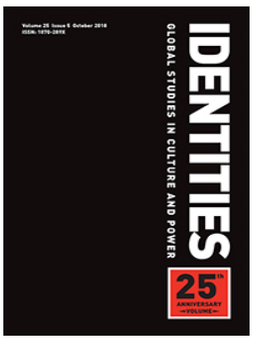

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"Their wounds are our wounds": a case for affective solidarity between Palestine and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Both Palestine and the Indian held Kashmir have become hallmarks of a postcolonial siege manifest in heavy militarisation, illegal occupation, human rights violations, and an excruciating love born from and for people's resistance and solidarity. While different, strong overlaps exist between the two conflicts in having been midwifed by the waning British Empire in 1947; subsequent internationalisation and fighting against a type of contemporary international politics that subsumes them under so-called 'Islamic terrorism.' Also noticeable is the motif of 'suffering' that makes the tragedy of Kashmir resonate with the pathos of Palestine. This paper focuses on the vantage from Kashmir, where people herald the Palestinian struggle as pioneering and a beacon of just struggle. I illustrate how Kashmiris, have come to harbour for the Palestinians an 'affective solidarity' which is evident in their modes of resistance to lend support for the liberation of Palestine and credibility to the Kashmir's own resistance movement.

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KEYWORDS Kashmir; Palestine; affective solidarity; Kashmiri Intifada; poetry; Mahmoud Darwish; Agha Shahid Ali

Introduction

In the world that was supposed to belong to 'decolonization' both Palestine and the Indian held Kashmir[1] have become a continuing saga of postcolonial siege manifest in heavy militarisation, illegal occupation, human rights violations, and also an excruciating love born from and for people's resistance and solidarity. Much has been written about these two places: on why they can or cannot be compared, or that, how Kashmir is another Palestine in the making (Osuri 2016). In a broad context, both Kashmir and Palestine 'seem' very similar and removed only by continents. While the political histories of both disputes are different, strong overlaps exist in having been midwifed by the waning British Empire in 1947, UN intervention and internationalisation, and

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in their resistance movements constantly battling being subsumed under what the current global politics brands erroneously as 'Islamic terrorism'. More important, is the motif of 'suffering' under the heavy military presence that 'have made for similar experiences for both Kashmiris and Palestinians' (Siddique 2016).

In this paper I make 'affect' central arguing that suffering becomes a pivotal resonating factor between the Kashmiri and Palestinian struggles. I do not intend to juxtapose the two struggles for similarities and differences but the analysis more serves to illustrate how the Palestinian struggle is interpreted or how it resonates with the Kashmiri struggles for *Azadi* in Kashmir. The meaning of the word *Azadi* is freedom or liberty, which for majority of Kashmiris means freedom from India and for a small section stands for accession with Pakistan. This paper focuses on the vantage from Kashmir, where people herald the nation of Palestinian struggle against the occupation of its land as iconic, pioneering and a beacon for just struggles for right to existence elsewhere. The struggles of Kashmir and Palestine are both sites that involve Muslim populations and are identified as sites of oppression in the Muslim world, thus evoking a pan-Islamic solidarity. They are also linked to other sites such as Iraq, Chechnya, Bosnia, etc., even if each of these conflicts is different.

Sara Ahmed (2004) illustrates how emotions as cultural politics create and align communities together even if they might not be in physical proximity. Drawing on the theory of language, Ahmed shows how the evocation of certain words, or signs, elicits emotional responses that only grow upon more repetition. These emotions are material rhetoric, which have the power to dictate modes of social, psychological, economic, and political world. Thus, affect and emotions can lead to a collective politics and social alliances. Kashmir and Palestine also resonate with each other through words and symbolics of brutal military occupation, especially through analysing the evocation of the word 'Intifada' borrowed from Palestinian struggle for Kashmir. Pivoting around the invocation of Intifada this paper will illustrate the emotional and a political resonance between the two struggles, as well as how Intifada connotes varied meanings when deployed in the Kashmiri, international and the Indian discourses. As Arabic word that means an uprising and is closely allied to Palestinian struggle, Kashmiris and the supporters of Kashmiri resistance invoke Intifada as shorthand to acknowledge the credibility of the Palestinian struggle and draw a similar impetus for the Kashmiri movement. One Kashmiri interviewee put it thusly: 'it tells the world that our resistance is a genuine one against India, which is a brutal occupier just like Zionist state is in Palestine'.[2]

Some studies consider suffering as not crucial to politics, while others argue that the experiences of suffering and trauma can attain wider collective political influence and can form the basis of community in world politics.

Nadera Shalhoub Kevorkian has written about Palestine as the 'site of colonial suffering and resistance' (2014, 1). While under extreme duress she finds Palestinians engaging in modes of collective, 'everyday resistance (samood) that offer the community hope and build new networks of support, survival, and resilience' (Ibid: 11). Traumatic events experienced individually or collectively proliferate forms of meaning and feeling that distinguish a community as an 'affective community' (Hutchinson 2016)[3] which bonds over shared understanding of tragedy and trauma. In case of Kashmir which has been under duress for the last 72 years this has become pronounced. Kashmiris have always expressed solidarity with Palestine even when the government forces use disproportionate force to quell any protest inside Kashmir. In May 2018, when the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Kashmiris held hundreds of rallies in solidarity and to protest the killing of Palestinians in Gaza by the Israeli forces. The government forces responded with lethal force using tear gas and pellet shotguns (Shah 2018). In July 2014, Kashmiris protested against the Israeli bombing of Gaza. A boy named Suhail Ahmed Shah was killed when the Indian forces retaliated. Kashmiri traders also called to boycott Israeli products (Akmali 2014). The reflection of Kashmiri solidarity with Palestine is also present in the street graffiti against the Indian rule. Between slogans like 'Go India Go Back', 'We want Freedom' one finds 'Free Palestine' and 'Save Gaza'. The protests after Friday congregations in the historic downtown Srinagar have become part of the well-established political culture in Kashmir. Invoking freedom of Palestine in the prayers and protests is part of the usual repertoire.

Kashmiris having witnessed the Palestine's traumatic history for the past 70 years, which resonates with their own. This has led to creation of an affective community in Kashmir for the Palestinian cause.[4] Kashmiris harbour for the Palestinians, what I term as an 'affective solidarity' that is a mode of solidarity for Palestine and is also inspirational, cathartic, and lends value to the Kashmir's own resistance movement.[5] The affective solidarity becomes manifest, in what a Kashmiri research partner says of his support for Palestine: 'their [Palestinian] wounds are our wounds, we stand for them too, we know what it is to be *Maqbooza* (occupied)'.[6] Thus, in an atmosphere of repression affective solidarity emerges as a mode of politics for the Kashmiris. In their discussion of 'types' of solidarities, Lutz and Abu-Lughod (1991) argue that emotions are not only used by the powerful against the powerless but the powerless also deploy emotions to provide 'loci of resistance, idioms of rebellion, and means of establishing complementarity with status superiors' (15).

Brief history of the region of Kashmir

Since the 15th century, the region of Kashmir has been ridden by outside rules. Each of the rules was more tyrannical than the other that pushed

people into slavery-like conditions. Before 1947 the last regional monarchy and the British administrators had imposed a territorial and administrative unity over the disparate geographical provinces – namely Kashmir, Jammu, Ladakh, and allied regions. They were jointly called as the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir (also J&K or also referred to as the valley of Kashmir). In 1947 with the partition of British India and the princely states, India became a nominally secular nation with a Hindu majority and Pakistan became a Muslim state with Muslim-majority provinces. By this logic, Muslim-majority J&K should have become part of Pakistan even though the monarch, Maharaja Hari Singh, was Hindu. Singh hoped to stay independent and continue his autocratic rule. The analysis surrounding his indecision is diversely recorded in the two countries. After a brief war between India and Pakistan, the UN peace brokering ended up splitting the region into a semi-autonomous entity within Pakistan known as Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), while the Kashmir valley and the provinces of Jammu and Ladakh became the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). A ceasefire line was drawn, which was renamed the Line of Control (LoC). The UN deployed a Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan and promised to hold an internationally monitored plebiscite to resolve the divergent claims, which was never conducted.

Even before the Indo-Pakistan partition Kashmiris were engaged in an anti-monarchy movement demanding sovereignty as an independent nation. Called the Quit Kashmir movement it reached its epitome in the 1930's but was subsumed within the postcolonial formations that resulted in only two dominions of India and Pakistan. Kashmiris have continued to demand UN mandated self-determination. Over the years India has steadily downgraded Kashmir issue to an internal or domestic dispute. It controls the territory under an authoritarian, and an illiberal democratic apparatus, where military holds the centre stage. The validity of the 1947 accession treaty which shaped Kashmir as a quasi-autonomous region in relation to India under Article 370 of the Indian constitution is widely disputed (Lamb 1991; Schofield 2004; Zia 2019). Further ahead, this paper will show how the administrative apparatus in Kashmir has been 'manufactured' to provide a patina or camouflage of civil governance to an apparatus which is a de-facto military occupation holding the region against its will.

In 1989, after years of exhausting all peaceful means of demanding plebiscite, Kashmiris rose up in arms against the Indian government. India has since deployed of more than 700,000 Indian troops in the region (Duschinski et al. 2018). With a population of approximately 8 million, that is one soldier for every eight Kashmiris, making Kashmir one of the world's most militarised regions. In the last decade a revisionist political and historical scholarship on the region illustrates how the Indian military is an 'occupying force' and the Indian rule is de-facto 'military occupation' (Zia 2019; Duschinski 2018; Bhan 2018; Osuri 2017; Junaid 2018; Duschinski and Ghosh 2017; Mishra et al.

2010). In 1991, India implemented an emergency law known as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which gives the military supreme control over the region (Amnesty 2011; Bhan (2013)). Under AFSPA army has committed fake encounters and extra judicial executions, rapes, enforced disappearances, and done arbitrary arrests and detentions; thus reinforcing the impunity of the Indian forces. According to human rights organisations, more than 70,000 people have been reported killed in counterinsurgency operations 8,000-plus forcibly disappeared and more than 60,000 subjected to custodial torture (Duschinski 2010; Kazi 2009; Mathur 2012; Zia 2019).

On August 5th, 2019 the current Indian government run by the right-wing Hindu supremacist party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) unilaterally revoked Kashmir's autonomous status and territorial sovereignty which were maintained under Articles 370 & 35-A of the Indian constitution. The region was demoted and bifurcated into two union territories to be directly ruled by the Indian government. All this was done without consulting the Kashmiri legislature or the people. This has been decried as being 'illegal' (Parthasathy 2019) and an 'unconstitutional deed accomplished by deceitful means' (Deshmane 2019). More than 48,000 extra troops on top of the existing ones put the region under curfew. Kashmir was put under a siege and a communication lockdown. All forms of communication including cellphones, Internet, and cable were suspended for more than seven months; a partial internet lockdown continues despite the raging Corona virus pandemic. A humanitarian crisis has erupted with Kashmir incurring economic losses over 2.5 billion (See Kala et al. 2019). Historically since 1947 the policies of all the Indian government even the secular parties, have always supported evisceration of Kashmir's autonomy, which had remained been hollowed out (Noorani 2011, 2014). The only effective provision still standing was the article 35-A which protected Kashmir's territorial sovereignty. Kashmiris see the loss of autonomy as an attack on their ethnic, cultural, religious, and national identity. They fear the removal has opened pathways for Indian settler colonialism, dispossession and rampant exploitation of resources (Zia 2020).

The 'Intifada' in Kashmir

When Edward Said writes about the Palestinian's their embattlement and intensifying resistance in his essay 'Intifada and Independence' (1989), he could well be describing Kashmiris. Since the year 2008, Kashmiri resistance began to notably change from an armed one to civilian resistance with street fighting at its centre. Young Kashmiri boys fight the Indian troops with stones. Over the years Kashmiri youth organised as loose network across neighbourhoods calling themselves Sangbaaz (those who throw stones). The resistance proliferated in alternate forms as art, music and literature. Kashmiri historians. Folklorists opine that stone throwing is age-old form of protest dating back to

resisting Mughal rule. As recent as 1930's stone throwing was used to fight the monarchy (Khan 1980). The sight of street fighter Kashmiri boys drew instant analogies with Palestinian youth throwing rocks at the Israeli soldiers. The similarity in the images are striking with people mistake one for the other. So much so, that in 2016, the Pakistani ambassador at a UN meeting presented a picture of a Palestinian child wounded by pellet shotguns instead of a similarly injured Kashmiri girl.

The term Intifada also invokes a strong resonance between the two regions. After 2008 Intifada became commonplace descriptive of the Kashmiri struggle especially in the political and media discourse in India and Pakistan. Intifada, as Edward Said (1989) notes is the only word, which entered the vocabulary of 20th century world politics. The invocation of the term represents the struggle of Palestinians against the Israeli occupation. In the late 80's Palestinian Intifada became a movement known for elements of non-violence including civil disobedience, non-payment of taxes, worker strikes, boycott of Israeli manufactured goods, protest rallies, demonstrations, and resigning from jobs in the Israeli government. Headed by the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising the Intifada was managed by local committees and women also became visibly active in the movement. Kashmiri Intifada increasingly shows signs of having similar components even if it is not working under a singular command. The participation of women has increased in demonstrations, resistance literature, activism and media (Misri 2014; Kaul and Zia 2018; Kanjwal 2018; Kanth 2018; Malik 2019)

The earliest documented use of the word Intifada for Kashmir occurs in an academic paper titled the 'Kashmiri Intifada' (Hafeez 1990). Kashmiri writers and journalists have also used the word to identify the resistance movement (Showkat 2016, n.d.; Sofi and Haq 2017; Murtaza 2010; Greater Kashmir 2008). In the Indian mainstream, the booker prizewinning Indian author activist Arundhati Roy, a staunch votary of Kashmiri Independence movement has termed it as 'Intifada'. In 2007 a documentary titled Jashn-e-Azadi [How we celebrate Freedom] made by Sanjay Kak used the term 'Kashmiri Intifada' to explain Kashmiri resistance. In 2010 Kak (2010) published an edited volume titled 'Until my Freedom has come: The New Intifada in Kashmir' bringing together Kashmiri writers who supported the resistance movement. Since the 2000's the expression of Kashmiri resistance began to emerge from the limits of militancy into art, writing, and other artistic and popular artefacts. The Indian policy has always been to subsume Kashmiri militancy under being 'Pakistan's proxy war' as if Kashmiris have no problem of their own against India. After 2001 India is increasingly branding Kashmiri resistance as global terrorism. Against this onslaught, the term Intifada allows Kashmiri struggle to be expressed as a people's movement, with and without guns that seeks the UN mandated self-determination.

The International media also invokes the word Intifada for Kashmir. The New York Times described the situation in Kashmir as an 'intifada-like popular revolt' (Polgreen 2010). Another NYT report focused on how phone cameras were fuelling Kashmir's 'Intifada (Mackey 2010). A Christian Science Monitor report explicitly titled 'Kashmir intifada? New view of India, Pakistan territory dispute' reminded its audience that the 'street violence gripping Kashmir is becoming known as the Kashmir *intifada* . . . ' (Arnoldy 2010). Other scholarly and journalistic analyses have also drawn parallels between Palestine and Kashmir by making the word 'Intifada' central (Hafeez 2013). In July 2016, when a fresh cycle of civilian resistance began, an international media report called it 'Kashmir's Latest Intifada' (Telesurtv 2016). An Al Jazeera report concluded: "unsurprisingly, the emergent generation of stone-pelting young Kashmiris identify with their Palestinian counterparts and are calling the new wave of protests an 'Intifada' (Hussain 2016). Even the Indian media has deployed the word, albeit in varying connotations. Previously, an Indian daily newspaper in an intriguing usage had called Kashmir 'India's Intifada' (The Economist 2010). The closest interpretation of this could be that Kashmir has been likened to an 'Intifada taking place within India'; with India being equated with Israel. Another interesting use of the word occurs in a latest memoir written by a former police Chief A. M. Watali of Kashmir. The memoir is ironically titled 'Kashmir Intifada' (2017) even though in the 80's the author, himself a Kashmiri, was one of the architects of the counterinsurgency policy. His choice to describe the Kashmir movement as Intifada points to the rampant proliferation and sometimes careless deployment of the word but also points to the parallels that are drawn between the two places. Reinforcing the Palestinian analogy, a veteran Indian journalist even offered a phase wise analysis from 1995 until 2016 of the Intifada that he deems is happening in Kashmir (Jha 2016). Another analysis in a leading daily explicitly analysed the Palestinian roots of Intifada and its applicability to Kashmir. While such analyses exist, the Indian government, media and mass discourse does not recognise the Kashmiri struggle as valid and just. Since 1947, when Kashmiris resisted the accession treaty, the Indian government has imposed laws that criminalised the Kashmiri demand for self-determination and independence.

The Indian government historically has been seen as a supporter of the Palestinian people yet the relation between India and Israel has also existed side by side. In the recent years the two countries are getting publicly closer in trade, arms and surveillance technology and tourism. Despite this a section of Indian citizenry still supports the Palestinian struggle as just. On the other hand, the current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi openly extols Israel for its military and secret service especially for its successes against the Palestinian resistance (Dhrubo 2016; Osuri this issue). Many of the military tactics in suppressing resistance in Kashmir have been directly learned from

Israel (Hakeem 2017). In 2015 India for the first time abstained from voting at the UNHRC that approved the Gaza Commission of Inquiry report. The reflection of Israeli policies of cracking down on Palestinians can be seen in the Indian counterinsurgency in Kashmir. An Indian historian critiqued the Indian government and its army for behaving with Kashmiris like Israel does with Palestinians (Chatterjee 2017). The phenomenon of support for Palestine in India appears ironic because majority of Indians do not recognise Kashmir's right for self-determination.

The majority of the Indian media and political analysts refuse to see the Kashmiri resistance or Kashmiri Intifada as an offshoot of the indigenous Azadi (freedom) movement. Hence, the thrust is on reiterating that it is unlike the Palestinian Intifada and is solely as coordinated by elements of Pakistan's proxy war or pan-Islamism. In 2010, B. Raman an Indian security expert observed that India was facing a 'an Intifada of the Palestinian model in J & K for the first time'. He acknowledged the resistance was popular but refused it was anything other than a response to human rights abuse by the Indian troops; thus, negating its political roots. One of his arguments is that the Kashmiri youth on the streets had not raised the question of future of J&K. His analysis is incorrect because it was in 2010 only that the civilian movement for demanding self-determination came to came to a head. Raman explains Kashmiri Intifada in context of what he calls 'Jihadi Intifada' as outlined by Al Qaeda. Calling Kashmiri Intifada as 'leaderless street violence' Raman contradicts his own comparison to Al Qaeda-like Jihad, which is not leaderless. A former Indian army general denounced the Kashmiri resistance, calling it an offensive that is patterned on the Palestinian intifada (Chowdhary 2016). Thus, in the Indian discourse, Intifada also takes on a meaning, which is deployed to disassociate Kashmiri resistance from what Palestinian Intifada globally represents – a just struggle against an illegal military occupation. And thwart making any connection between Palestine Intifada, and Kashmir.

While Intifada is a preferred word, in Kashmiri parlance the dominant word to describe the resistance has always been 'Tehreek' (revolution in Kashmiri & Urdu). While 'Askari Tehreek' is used for the armed militancy, the political and civil resistance is simply called 'Tehreek'. People who support the movement are called Tehreeki (of the movement) or Azadi-pasand (lovers of freedom) while the militants are called Mujahids (warriors of a sacred cause) or simply militants or its colloquial variation as 'Milton'. The armed resistance is also known as Jihad-e-Kashmir (armed war for Kashmir). Cabeiri Robinson (2013) in her exhaustive ethnography has illustrated the category of political Jihad-e-Kashmir as being different from the version that is stereotyped globally. She explains while the Jihad in Kashmir takes inspiration from Islamic ideals, it is solely waged for the liberation of Kashmir from India and not for pan-Islamism. The majority of the armed and political resistance leaders agree on this premise (Hilal 2019). However, India refuses to acknowledges that the

Kashmir issue is an international conflict and Kashmiris are a rightful party in its resolution. Even though in 1948 the case of Kashmir issue was taken to the UN by the then India Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru. The Indian discourse, be it of the government, media or masses, labels the Kashmiri movement as *Aatankwad* (Hindi for terrorism) and the militants as *Aatankwadi* (terrorists). In the last few years, 'agitational terrorists' is a term coined specifically for the Kashmiri protestors and street fighters (Misgar 2018). For Indian the use of such terminology allows for the Kashmiri movement to be erased as a just struggle and subsumes it under the rubric of global terrorism or the erroneous stereotype of 'Islamic terrorism' and thus delink it from the right to self-determination and UN mandated plebiscite.

Shared symbolics of siege

On one hand Kashmir and Palestine are seen as similar, 'as a matter of principle guided by the UN'.[7] On the other, some denounce the use of 'Intifada' in Kashmiri context, arguing specifically that the Kashmiris have not been "thrown out of their land where they had lived for centuries. India is not an occupying force in Kashmir (Devji 2010).[8] That Kashmiris have not been driven out of their land, or are not being held against their will are aspects that India has subsumed within its own hegemonic narrative. This while it stridently expanded administrative control through engineering elections and making constitutional amendments to permanently absorb Kashmir into its federation.

During the partition of British India, occurred what has come to be known as the 'Muslim massacre of Jammu'. Before 1947, Muslims comprised 61% of the population of Jammu which is another province in the region. Estimates suggest that the Hindu mobs killed between 2–5 lakh Muslim men, women and children, and about 2 lakh people went missing. The number of women abducted by Hindu extremists varies from 256 to 27,000 because of unreported cases. Evidence shows that the Hindu monarch oversaw the pogrom (Snedden 2001; Bashir 2001; Choudhary 2015; Rashid 2020). Many survivors fled to Azad Kashmir and Pakistan leaving uninhabited villages. The large-scale killings and displacement of Muslims caused significant demographic changes, which were most likely engineered to sway Kashmir towards India if the plebiscite was ever held. Mona Bhan (2018) writes about the memories and emotions around evacuee properties and how they remain deeply contested in enmeshed in the relations that bind kith and kin across the LOC, a divide that has wreaked havoc on the frontier communities. Invoking the Palestinian analogy, the Jammu pogrom has been analysed as 'A Nakba Close to Home' (Faysal 2017). Kashmiris have also been displaced in 1965 and also in the aftermath of the armed resistance in 1989. Most of those who fled ended in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir where they still live in camps. Cabeiri Robinson in her ethnography on the militants in Azad Kashmir observes that

many Kashmiris who fled prefer to be called Internally Displaced People (IDP) to emphasise their different status from stereotypical refugees who cross international borders.

In the recent decades Kashmiris fearing demographic changes had become more wary with the Indian government through local proxies pushing for policies including the allocation of land to retired army officers and non-Kashmiris. Most notable is also question of separate townships and colonies for the Pandit community, who are ethnic Kashmiri Hindus and form 4% of the total population. Historically, the Pandits have been upper caste and educated political elites. Majority of the Pandits sided with India against the Muslim supported insurrection. In retaliation of their political leanings towards their co-religionist India, the Pandits and a section of Muslims who collaborated with India faced killings and persecution. Subsequently in the early 1990's almost 90% of the Pandits migrated to Jammu province and India. Scholars opine that most of the selective killings in the early militancy were not driven, as is often projected in the Indian narrative, by religious differences with the Pandits but were 'inspired by some sort of political motive, rather than simply pan-Islamic fundamentalism' (Bose 1997, 74). The number of killings of Muslims who were perceived to be siding with India was approximately three times that of Pandits (Madan 1993; Bose 2003). Subsequently, many Pandits never migrated and over the years many have returned back. While the returnees are not settlers, the rehabilitation policies that the Indian government is instituting are deeply problematic and 'settler-like'. Kashmiri resistance leaders while welcoming of the return of Pandits warn that segregated colonies and townships will lead to ghettoisation, and create unnecessary risks and communal rifts. Yet, after the removing Kashmir's autonomy the BJP government is actively pursuing the policy of separate townships for Pandits.[9] The creation of separate religious territories is tantamount to setting the stage for deepening the Kashmir dispute and internecine warfare.

In 2008 the mobilisation of civilian and street resistance was catalysed by the fear of demographic change. At the heart of this incident was a pilgrimage that Hindus from all over India and also Kashmir undertake to a cave called Amarnath in the Himalayas considered as the abode of Hindu God Shiva and his consort. That year the local administration in Kashmir agreed to transfer 99 acres of forestland on which the shrine trustees wanted to set up permanent facilities and shelters for the pilgrims. Kashmiris rose up in massive demonstrations against this proposal fearing India was planning settlements like Israel was doing in Palestine. Parallels were drawn with the Israel Lands Authority's new constructions in Har Homa, East Jerusalem in 2005 (Sehgal 2008). Kashmiris feared such policies would instigate demographic changes and favour India (Bhat 2012). Kashmiris see the intensification in pilgrimage tourism as part of the Indian policy of Hinduising Kashmir

and assertion of 'undisputed claim' (Zia 2018:26) on the region. The threat of demographic change, termed as India's 'demographic terrorism' has always been seen as real (Showkat n.d). The deepening of India-Israel ties has also led to intensification of the comparisons. The Indian control of local resources especially rivers (See Bhan 2014), is seen as a mark of Indian hegemony and occupation over the territory. The Indian power corporation, often referred to as the New East India Company is seen as a corporate arm of India's occupation (Chatterji et al. 2009). Kashmiris have long feared settler colonialism in the wake of losing the last vestiges of their territorial sovereignty. In 2019 this fear has entered the fact stage.

Affective solidarity and the state of siege

Kashmir is under a de-facto 'siege' (Human Rights Watch 1991). While some continue to undermine the analogies between Palestine and the valley, some see uncanny similarities in daily living under occupation despite the different geopolitical histories (Parull 2010; Siddique 2016). An aura of death and maiming especially blinding with a pellet shotgun, heavy deployment of troops, constant checkpoints, crackdowns, raids, and encounters have become similar motifs. Specifically, the everyday humiliation of the natives at the hands of soldiers is a shared suffering. When I first read the poem ID card (1964) by Mahmoud Darwish it instantly resonated with me. For a Kashmiri, the ID card stands for a hostile ritual that is exchanged with the Indian soldiers. Failing to produce an ID card can result in beating, imprisonment and even death. Kashmiris are daunted and oppressed by the Indian apparatus which has imposed laws that not only seek to erase indigenous identities through violence but also through creating administrative categories of people for identification and surveillance. Not surprisingly, over the years Kashmiris have begun to read Darwish finding in his verses a resistance, suffering, and anger similar to their own.

The depth of rage against the occupation in Palestine matches that is Kashmir, and this is also true for adults as well as children. More than 70% of the region's population is estimated to be under the age of 35. Most of them have been born into violence (Kumar 2017). Childhood in Kashmir is conditioned by the violence of the military occupation, as it is in Palestine (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015; Kovner and Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2018). Majority of boys arrested for stone pelting are young boys as 8 years. Juvenile detentions without the protection of laws have become rampant and sometimes the children are tried as adults (Shah 2019). Many young children have been killed, maimed and blinded by the fatal force used by the armed troops (JKCCS 2018). After removing Kashmir's autonomy, at one point, 13,000 children were in detention on suspicions of being protesters and many of whom are still imprisoned.[10] In 2016 a video surfaced in Kashmir showing a young boy around 5–6 years of age raging furiously at an Indian army

patrol. He displays unabashed anger, yells incoherently and even tries to kick one soldier when an adult man rushes to take him away. Another video similar in portraying rage and defiance shows a group of kids openly slogans like Go India Go back in face of an army patrol with.[11] These excerpts of defiance and rage resonate with Palestinian children's experiences with the Israel settler colonial state.

To illustrate the visceral nature of suffering that Kashmir finds in and for Palestine I recall a personal incident from 2010. As mentioned earlier, in this year Kashmiri civilian resistance increased after the Indian army killed young boys in a fake encounter and tried to pass them off as militants. People took to the streets demonstrating and pelting stones. The response of Indian troops continued to be lethal. A fresh cycle of protests broke out after Indian troops killed a 17-year-old boy named Tufail Mattoo who had been just a pedestrian. The Indian forces killed over 112 people and more than 2000 were injured. Being a poet, my mourning also took shape of a poem titled 'No Rose Red in Kashmir' which was published in Cerebrations magazine later (2010). Interestingly the poem that began in the bloodied alleyways of Kashmir, reminiscing of my grandfather's roses ended in 'Gaza'. I had made no conscious push for this change of location. It simply happened. And it was not a glitch. It was a slip, very Freudian, that gauged a Kashmiri's pain on the scale of Palestine. By invoking Gaza, I was most probably paying my tribute to the suffering of Palestine and coalescing the politics of mourning fuelling people's resistance in both places. This autoethnographic moment is illustrative of how viscerally Kashmir is connected to Palestinian struggle in the conscience of its people. In the narratives of Kashmiris who I interviewed for this essay, the struggles and suffering of both the lands admixes, and the clamour for prayer for the deliverance of each is as robust.

Till the time when I wrote my poem, I did not know I was following in the illustrious steps of Agha Shahid Ali a poet par excellence and whom the Kashmiris herald as their de-facto national poet. Ali says in one of his poems:

'By the Hudson lies Kashmir, brought Palestine'

Ali invokes the connection of intimate linkage of mourning, bereavement and exile between Kashmir and Palestine (Iskander and Rustom 2010). These are two places that evoke a chronic longing, especially in the minds of those who have been forced to stay away from them. Ali was an immigrant in America. First a student he went on to become a celebrated poet-professor and beloved of his people. Wary of his international influence and the focus it could bring people's resistance, the government thwarted any institutional interaction between him and his readers in. a Kashmir. He passed away soon after, at a young age leaving his people bereaved. Ali's writing is haunting. He expresses and amplifies the suffering of his homeland much like Darwish does for Palestine. Thus, in addition to the streets where slogans and graffiti herald Palestine, poetry is another place where Palestine and Kashmir is

invoked together. Other young Kashmiris poets often invoke the pathos of Palestine to express their mourning for Kashmir.[12]

Between the overlaps, one stark difference that Kashmir has from Palestine is that the world is not as aware of the dispute, or it is not known within the proper historic context. It is often reductively presented as an Indo-Pak territorial dispute and not as a struggle for the Kashmiri self-determination and Independence.[13] Kashmiri movement is also largely unknown even to many Palestinians, for whom India historically has postured itself as a benign ally. This perspective will change in future as the India-Israel ties steadily deepen. While India and Israel grow closer, the complex geopolitics sometimes steps on their individual nationalistic goals. In 2015 Israel while reacting to the proposed labelling of goods by European Union produced in settlements argued about the lack of such measures for "occupied territories like Kashmir and Tibet (Scheer, Cohen, and Emmott 2015). Kashmiri analysts marked this statement as Israel acknowledging India as 'occupying' Kashmir and it should have offended India. However, this statement did not indicate any dent to the larger trade, military and intelligence sharing interests between the two. While Israel staunchly supports India's stand on Kashmir, the Palestinian government also toes a stereotypical stance. President Mahmoud Abbas on his visit to Pakistan stated that the two countries should resolve Kashmir issue bilaterally. This is a run-of-mill stand on Kashmir, which for decades has negated that Kashmiris are the primary party to the dispute.

While status quo is central in the state level politics, people's solidarity between Palestine and Kashmir seems to have found a start especially through the social media. Mary Scully, an American anti-war activist and a veteran of Palestinian solidarity movement notes that social media like Facebook is proving pivotal in connecting activists in these places.[14] She explains that it is the Kashmiri users and activists who have mainly initiated contacts with the Palestinian counterparts. She calls the Kashmiri activists 'avant garde' who are using social media to garner international solidarity in face of years of mainstream media blackout on Kashmir. In 2016 a newspaper in Kashmir gave a hint of the breadth of such exchanges when the street fighters were seen making protectors out of X ray films. They had learnt to make the contraption against pellet shotguns from Palestinian friends on the Facebook (Bazaz 2016). Palestinian forums on Facebook have also begun featuring pictures of Kashmiri solidarity protests. The stirring of Palestinian response to Kashmir is also evident in a blog titled Palestine for Kashmir. It translates news reports, analysis, poetry published from Kashmir into Arabic, aimed to create awareness and solidarity for Kashmir.[15] Despite the differences in geopolitics, and global attention an 'affective solidarity' between Kashmir and Palestine is resonating; of which this edited volume is also evidence.

Concluding remarks

The symbolic of a homeland increasingly being occupied by hostile forces evokes emotions of fury, and humiliation. Discourses linked to torture and surveillance ring true with the experience of suffering in Kashmir and Palestine. Kashmir thus, is increasingly going the Palestinian way. An Indian journalist concludes that the ideal of Intifada 'has begun to describe the metamorphosis of the Kashmiri fighting' (Subramanian 2016). In the analysis of language, Sara Ahmed would agree, Intifada by now has accumulated a cultural meaning and a historical context. And when deployed in context of Kashmir, expresses what it stands for and aspires towards, and also marks the Palestinian resistance as a beacon of a just struggle globally. The illustrations in this paper reveal the resonances of emotional and political nature between the two struggles Kashmir and Palestine through words and symbolics of brutal military occupations of India and settler-colonial Israel and the affective solidarity emerging between the two resistances.

Notes

1. Henceforth noted only as Kashmir or the valley.
2. Interview by author. 1 June 2016.
3. Emma Hutchinson's book excludes Indigenous Australians in context of understanding affective communities across the globe.
4. For discussion on the witnessing of suffering (through media) see Chouliaraki (2013).
5. Affective solidarity as a concept has been developed by Clare Hemmings (2012) to illustrate sustainable feminist politics of transformation. This approach is seen as a way of moving forward and away from binding transformation in politics of identity and towards recognising modes of engagement that are fuelled by the affective dissonance experience. However, I deploy the term as a derivative of affect and affective community as used by Sara Ahmed (2004) and Emma Hutchinson (2016). Also see footnote 3.
6. Interview by author. 17 June 2016.
7. Musharraf rakes up Kashmir issue at NAM Summit. *Rediff*. 2003. Accessed 1 May 2017. http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/feb/24nam1.htm.
8. Also see Kashmir Intifada or Not. *ANI*. Accessed 23 April 2017. http://www.sify.com/news/intifada-or-not-kashmir-defies-definitions-news-national-kizoEgabgjasi.html.
9. 10 Pandit townships under process under 'Naya Kashmir" blueprint. 2020. The Indian Express. 18 February. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/10-pandit-townships-under-process-under-naya-kashmir-blueprint/articleshow/74197742.cms.
10. Women's voice; Fact-finding report on Kashmir. 2019. Maktoob Media. 24 September. http://en.maktoobmedia.com/2019/09/24/full-text-womens-voice-fact-finding-report-on-kashmir/.
11. Video accessed July 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF8mtDU3yeI.

12. See Uzma Falak, PalestineKashmir. *The Electronic Intifada*. 2015. Accessed on May 7 2017, https://electronicintifada.net/content/poem-palestinekashmir/15016.
13. Even though this perspective might be changing in the aftermath of India's revocation of Kashmir's autonomy and imposing a brutal military lockdown on the region.
14. Interview by author. 4 July 2017.
15. Website Palestine for Kashmir at https://palestineforkashmir.wordpress.com/.

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