ISSN: 2349-2147

Modern Research Studies

Editor-in-Chief
Gyanabati Khuraijam

An International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
An Indexed & Refereed e-Journal
www.modernresearch.in

Title: The Political is Personal: Postcolonial Identity Crisis and Resistance

Author/s: SOHINI KUMAR

Volume 3, Issue 3
September 2016

pp. 697–730

Email: editor@modernresearch.in
mrsejournal@gmail.com

Managing Editor: **Yumnam Oken Singh**

ISSN: 2349-2147
Modern Research Studies:
An International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Political is Personal: Postcolonial Identity Crisis and Resistance

SOHINI KUMAR
Department of English
Jadavpur University
Kolkata, India
Email: sohinikumar92@gmail.com

Abstract: This paper intends to be about postcolonialism and the consequential mass identity crisis that the colonized suffers –in context of issues such as hybridization, marginalization, cultural imperialism, and neo-colonialism. Blending the historical and the personal, and the personal with the political, Anoop Singh's *Qissa*, and Malik Sajad's *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir* draw us into the mundane and intimate details of their characters' lives, so that we empathize with their psyche and their state of being, as they seek for identities beyond the colonized, their religions, and their geopolitical situations. They show how modern colonization affects the identity of a nation-state and its people – how they are compelled to assimilate into the Culture of the Other, their identities both within and outside their communities becoming ambiguous; and how people unconsciously adapt to multicultural ways via long exposure to the Other (losing the purity of their original cultures, or the original Self), despite their active resistance to oppression. This last phenomenon is hybridity, a paradigm of colonial anxiety, as stated by Homi Bhabha.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Graphic Novels and Visual Narratives, Diaspora, Neo-colonialism, Kashmir, Indo-Pak Partition.

#1"Koi Humse Bhi Puchhey Hum Kya Chhahte Hain?"
("Can someone care to ask us what we want?")

Malik Sajad's graphical description of life in Kashmir through the insurgency and beyond tells us how colonialism is not a thing of the past, and how it is not enacted by external forces alone. Sometimes one's own Government can become the Other, try to occupy the State, and marginalize the State's people from the rest of the country, while simultaneously claiming that the occupied State is a part of the democracy. As a result, the people experience and struggle with a lack of definite space/identity in the world.

After the First Anglo-Sikh War, in which the British defeated the Sikhs who ruled Kashmir, the East India Company found the mountainous region too inconvenient to govern and sold Kashmir to Gulab Singh Dogra, under the Treaty of Amritsar (1846). Whenever the Kashmiris resisted the Dogra rule, large numbers were brutally murdered and their leaders were imprisoned without trial. Towards the end of World War II, and at the beginning of the Partition when the Empire was about to leave India, the British consulted only the Maharaja about the fate of Kashmir, much to the indignation of the state's populace.

The civilian uprising that followed led to the slaughter of approximately 200,000 Muslims by the Dogra rulers; hundreds of thousands of Muslims fled to newly created Pakistan to seek refuge.

In October 1947, tribesmen from Northern Pakistan poured into Kashmir to avenge the massacre of their brethren. The Maharaja, in turn, sought Indian help to resist the attack, and on October 26, 1947, India announced the accession of Kashmir to India. On 27 October, 1947, the Indian Army landed in Kashmir; with Pakistan also claiming it, Kashmir became a battleground between the two countries. To pacify both sides, the UN demarcated a ceasefire line running through the valley. The Indian Army has occupied its portion of Kashmir ever since, and India refuses to accept Kashmir as a subject of international dispute

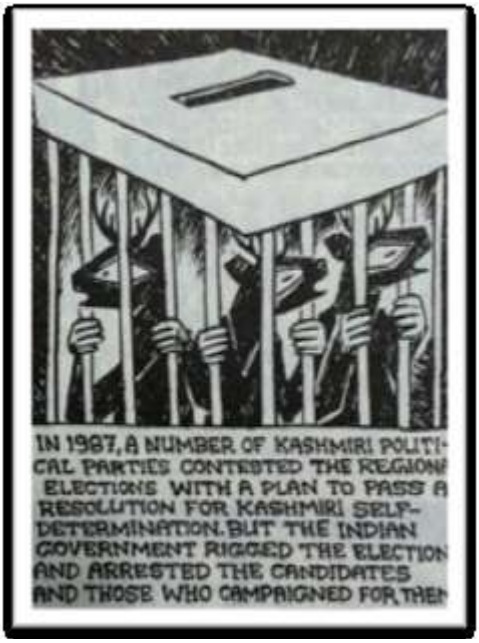

Fig.1. (Sajad 209)

In short, in the wake of the hasty departure of the colonizers, Kashmir became a battlefield for India and Pakistan. Kashmiri aspirations to remain independent were utterly ignored. To this day, Kashmir experiences regular brutalities from all sides, and its civilians are forced to live in a state of constant terror with a shaky sense of identity. In theory, Kashmir functions as a part of India, but in practicality remains separate from it; it is only held in place by force, in the position a colonized territory is conventionally maintained by the colonizing nation.

Nilanjan Raghunath (2006), in his paper "Jammu and Kashmir: Competing Concepts of Nationalism" explains this phenomenon – "The principality of Jammu and Kashmir found itself in a predicament in 1947 when Maharaja Hari Singh signed a treaty with India to protect Jammu and Kashmir while Pakistani tribesmen annexed a part of what they termed Azad (free) Kashmir" (46). It is important to note that not all Muslim leaders and civilians in the Indian region of Jammu and Kashmir support factions that want a separate state. Other, more extremist sections emphasize separation from India and enmity to

Hinduism. Many Sufi mausoleums of prominent saints worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims have been destroyed by such groups, evidencing the dire state of multiculturalism in the region. These fanatical organizations seek to break the historical influence of both tolerant Sufi practices and Hindu traditions on Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir. They also identify their causes as jihad or holy war, in order to garner Pakistani support.

Many Muslims considered the Hindu Brahmin elite in Kashmir to be compliant and selfish collaborators of the Dogra court, helping to perpetuate injustice and oppression. In a similar vein, much of nationalist historical literature is rich with statistics and economic data that support the charge that Muslims have been discriminated against and exploited by a feudal order imposed by imperialists and nurtured by its successors. Thus, the concepts of class conflict and imperialist exploitation have entered this nationalist discourse. "[T]he concept of kashmiriyat—cross-cultural tolerance based on the national unity of invented traditions and historically-shared experiences—broke down when Indian leaders used it to assimilate the religious differences in Jammu and Kashmir into the larger Indian secular ethos."[1]

Such issues are explored ina nuanced manner in Malik Sajad's*Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir*, where he shows how the political intermingles with the personal. It is difficult to retain innocence under military occupation, as is evident from the political nature that Munnu's cartoons assume from a rather young age. *Munnu* is distinctly reminiscent of Spiegelman's representation of Jews as mice in his *Maus*[2], in its depiction of Kashmiris as 'Hanguls' (the endangered Kashmir deer), as opposed to the rest of the population which is depicted as human. The portrayal emphasizes the forced uniformity of their existence, their reduction to limited identities (that of a minority), and their collective lack of individuality as they are helpless under the constant crackdowns by the military.

[1]Raghunath, Nilanjan. "Jammu &Kashmir : Competing Concepts of Nationalism." *Yale Journal of International Affairs*.

[2]Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale.* Penguin: New York, 2003.

However, Sajad refuses to depict his fellows as victims. It was suggested to him that he should use the word "intifada" (an Arabic word referring to uprising, which has been utilized in multiple, primarily Middle-Eastern rebellions) in the title of his book, so as to appeal to a larger audience, but he refused to reduce their struggle to a generic one. In Kashmir, there is no "post"colonial trauma. The occupation of Kashmir occurs in the present continuous tense; their ongoing trauma is a harsh reality of everyday Kashmiri life.

What has been happening in Kashmir is an instance of neo-colonialism. In order for the Indian government to justify its suppression of the people, they are all—whatever their individual politics and allegiance may be—pushed into the category of the seditious. "In keeping with the Indian filial narrative which constructs Kashmir as an integral part of its geo-body, the Kashmiri resistance movement is demonized as a "terrorist campaign" orchestrated by external elements. This is because it is seen as a political anomaly in the face of the hegemonic discourse of Kashmir's 'natural' and therefore incontestable place within Indian borders."[3]

When talking of Kashmiris, one should note that most do not necessarily identify themselves as Indians, nor do they see themselves as Pakistanis. The Indian Army oppresses them, while Pakistan makes militants out of their teenage sons. All they want is peace and freedom, without external or internal forces altering their narrative. But neo-colonialists of Pakistan and India alike continue to try and control, suppress, and conquer Kashmir through a process of cultural hegemony.

[3]Rizwan, Rakhshan. "Repudiating The Fathers." Kashmir Lit. 2013. Accessed April 30, 2016. http://www.kashmirlit.org/repudiating-the-fathers-resistance-and-writing-back-in-mirza-waheeds-the-collaborator/

Fig.2. (Sajad 112)

In the conversation with Mr X (the interview has been included later in this paper), one can see that Kashmiri allegiance (or its lack thereof) is not simply based on their religion, as is presumed by Islamophobic sections of India. He explicitly mentions that if given a choice between India and Pakistan, he prefers moving (and he did) to a relatively peaceful state in India, since he feels he can exercise his rights freely here, despite being a Muslim, despite people stereotyping him as a Pakistani sympathizer who supports the separatist movement. He goes on to say that in Pakistan, the government decides what TV channels one can watch. Religion is not the determinant here. Nor is it about India or Pakistan, but about finding a place where a person can live a democratic and dignified life.

> *Drawing the mirror image of a chinar leaf and the curves of the paisley was pretty difficult. And sketching the photos of unrecognizable, disfigured people from the newspapers was even harder.Drawing an AK-47 was easy though*. (Sajad 5-6)

From drawing AK-47s in bulk for his classmates, to coming to school to news of his principal being detained over suspicions of being linked to militants, to getting lost in a cloud of teargas while trying to navigate his way home in a stampede of protesters and police, to

relocating to a new school midway through the academic session because the army shut the old one down, to coming home to his father and brothers gone for hours due to a crackdown (where the army raided and searched every house, marched the adult males to the identification parade, and frisked them from dawn to dusk), to having to celebrate Eid austerely because firecrackers remind mourning families of gun battles – Munnu's was a childhood forced into political consciousness prematurely. He grew up in a place polarized by a long standing conflict left behind by the colonizers, between two opposing forces, where unannounced curfews meant you were trapped outside your own neighbourhood; civilians were only collateral damage in the larger scheme of things, where freedom was only ever a protest slogan in a state constantly at war within itself.

"During a recent conversation, he said that his generation grew up isolated and vulnerable, manipulated by external forces for ulterior political reasons that end up ignoring real rights and needs of Kashmiri people. Caught in between India and Pakistan, an insecure community is created, that is yet to come to terms with its dire need for serious introspection."[4]

However, Sajad refuses to take a simplistic ideological standpoint in his narration of Kashmir; instead there is space in *Munnu*for coming of age, love, education, and family, and for detailed insight into a social structure collapsing under incessant political unrest.

Munnu and countless others like him had their childhoods adversely punctuated by the army breaking down the door, dragging their fathers and brothers out for the crackdown parade, ransacking their house without warning as if looking for a ticking time bomb. They grew up among mass funerals of fighters or civilians who were shot dead at the slightest suspicion, seingbodies being dragged through the streets of Batamaloo, until no skin was left on their faces. Munnu narrates the harrowing story of the murder of his neighbour Mustafa, whichcaused

[4]Recchia, Francesca. "Malik Sajad's "Munnu": A Graphic Novel from Kashmir." Warscapes. November 4, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016. http://www.warscapes.com/reviews/malik-sajads-munnu-graphic-novel-kashmir

him severe trauma; he couldnot sleep without visualizing Mustafa suffocating in his grave, struggling to break free. Incidents of stray bullets unintentionally hitting random civilians were common, the targets often unfortunate children, since the bullets fired by the State agencies were targeted belowwaist level – collateral damage, they were called. With the news of each death, people frantically tried to find out if it was anybody they knew; if it wasnot, momentary relief was followed by the eternal hopelessness of living in a dying state. Life under occupation and insurgency meant accepting death as a part of everyday existence.

In the new school that Munnu went to after he lost the previous one because the army took away the principal, the Kashmiri language was not entertained. In fact, one was severely punished for speaking in it; they were forced to be fluent in Urdu instead, which is a prime example of linguistic imperialism, the "transfer of a dominant language to other people." It is an exercise of power by the ruling class, designed to manipulate the culture of that society. Via language, the culture of the Other is imposed on the people. An evident example is the pre-eminence and social cachet of English (the language of British colonialism that stayed behind even after Independence) in modern day India; in most quarters of the society fluency in English is interpreted as equivalent to being well educated. Social Anglicization is visible in all aspects of life in India.

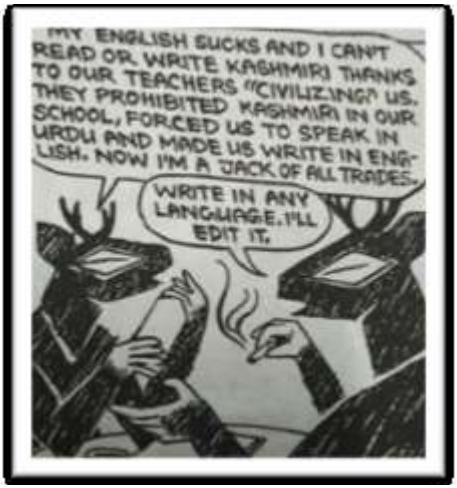

Fig.3. (Sajad 223)

Another jarring fact was that their school building was actually an abandoned home once belonging to a Pandit family, who were compelled to flee Kashmir due to the violence inflicted on the Hindu section of the community by religious extremists.

It is evident that life in Kashmir is far from normal when conversation between pre-teen kids comprise of how the taller ones were dragged to crackdown because their height made them look older, or how many people were killed in the neighbourhood, or how students were punished for incomplete homework with torture techniques the teachers picked up from the army in the crackdown parades. Munnu recollects how a trip with his Abba had turned almost fatal when a random firing interrupted their day and forced them to run for their lives.

> *Fear, shame and chaos of thoughts froze Munnu in place.He couldn't make sense of what had happened. He felt unclean and gripped with unindentified guilt.* (Sajad 143)

Further humiliation and torment followed when a barely adolescent Munnu, while manning his brother's shop all by himself, had an encounter with an army officer who subjected him to sexual assault – a representation of the multifaceted sources of trauma in Kashmir. Sexual violence proliferates inthe society but nobody can speak up against it, since they existin a perpetual state of terror. Kashmir is an epitome of failed democracy. Yetparticipating in the Indian Election is compulsory in the state, the irony in the approach seeminglylost on the authorities. On Election Day, militants blocked the street outside Munnu's home, planning an ambush on the army. Fearing for their lives, the family was forced to leave for Eidgah, for the bullet-torn house where their Abba lived. The lack of a purple mark on an individual's index finger (which signified that one had voted) meant facing the army's wrath during the raids, crackdowns and frisking that inevitably followed the election. Simultaneously, it marked the bearers as traitors to the resistance movement in the eyes of the militants. Resistance in the face of state surveillance and repression in Kashmir has only led to more civilian deaths, in addition to those killed by the Indian government.

*Munnu*exposes the cracks in the resistance movement too. The story displays Kashmir's lack of identity as a nation-state, which is a consequence of too many politically diverse factions trying to own Kashmir's narrative.

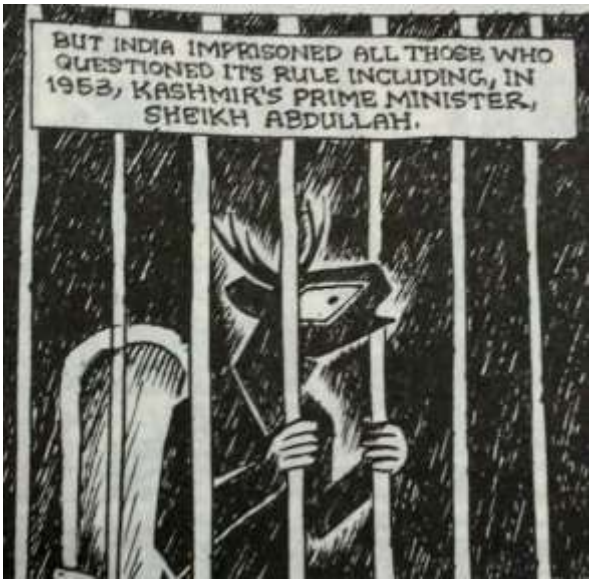

Fig.4. (Sajad 209)

"When a dominant power—for instance, a colonial power—is overthrown, many nationalist visions can emerge. One method for identifying a nation with a shared ethnicity is common ancestry, language, religion, or culture. Though many different nationalist visions did emerge following the departure of the British from the Indian subcontinent, the diversity of the population has rendered religious dogma the only effective unifying mechanism for dominant agencies of control. The separatist movements and factions disregard the religious diversity and tolerance of the local people."[5]

> *"I will draw a bear and write army on it. They won't publish that, draw something subtle."*
> *"Are you serious? Where was their subtlety when they killed Mubashir's father*?" (Sajad 150)

[5]Raghunath, Nilanjan. "Jammu &Kashmir : Competing Concepts of Nationalism." *Yale Journal of International Affairs*.

At sixteen, as his drawing skills improved and as he was transforming from a child to a politically conscious citizen under occupied Kashmir, he took to illustrating political cartoons for *The Alsafa* newspaper; it became his only medium of resistance, of protest, although he was censored on multiple occasions over the years.

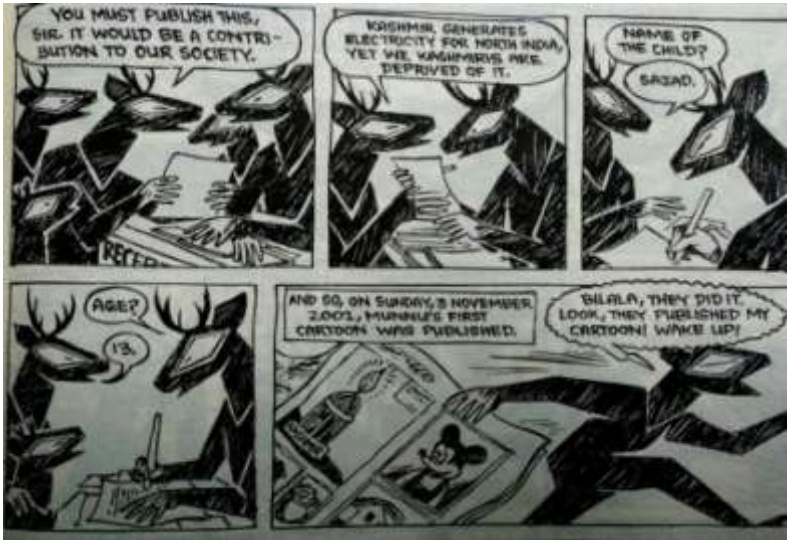

Fig.5. (Sajad 153)

Malik Sajad uses Munnu to show that Kashmir is not just a disputed territory, it is first and foremost home to millions of people - people who lived in peace, reaching across religions and other borders, before external forces tried to divide them and forced the entire populace to live in a constant state of war. He states that in Kashmir, people live the news before it is printed. In his conversations with Paisley, an artist from Brooklyn whom Munnu falls in love with, he tells her how the Mughal Emperor Akbar invited Yousuf, the last King of Kashmir, to India to draft a peace treaty; instead, Akbar captured Yousuf, and the Mughals invaded Kashmir. Kashmir has always been betrayed by forces surrounding it, be it the Mughals or the Indian government or the Pakistan government or the European Union.

> *Back then we hardly cared about who was Pandit and who was Muslim. We'd steal each other's lunches and swim together in the canal there. It wasn't a sewage*

> *channel then. But they felt isolated after the arms struggle against the Indian Occupation erupted*. (Sajad 280)

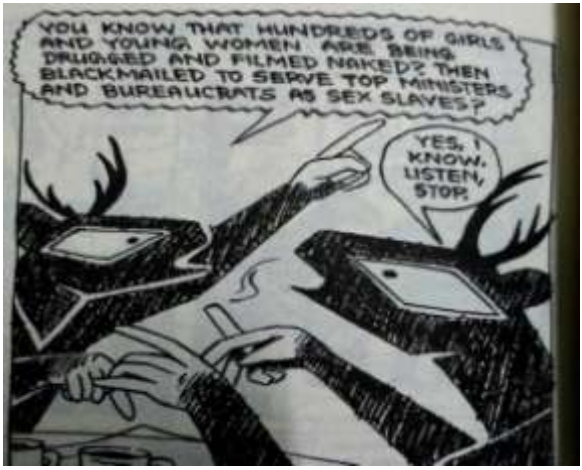

Fig. 6. (Sajad 222)

In Sajad's account, Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits are victims alike – of a greater political agenda that had nothing to do with the wellbeing of the Kashmiri populace. Munnu goes on to explain to Paisley how Pandits were being massacred, their disadvantage being that they were numerically a minority. Stones were pelted at their houses and they were called infidels. The last Pandit in Munnu's neighbourhood, who had refused to leave his home, was shot in the head by masked gunmen.

In June 2008, when the government transferred ninety acres of greenbelt land close to the Amarnath shrine to a Hindu shrine board, to accommodate the thousands of annual pilgrims, the resentment against the Indian Occupation resurfaced. Although the government rescinded the order, right-wing Hindu groups from India equipped with knives, petrol bombs, etc. attacked several truck drivers and sought to block the only highway that connects Kashmir with the rest of India, cutting short the supply of basic essentials. The people of Kashmir sought a peaceful resolution to the crisis, but instead they were met with indiscriminate shootings, curfews with shoot at sight orders, and the imprisonment of hundreds.

Malik Sajad reiterates how civilians, regardless of their faith, were subjected to brutalities, be it murder, invasion or sexual assault. Many Muslim women were taken away from their parents and then forced to marry their kidnappers. People were killed by armed militants just to settle personal scores. He emphasizes that the Indian Government, the militants, and the pro-resistance groups all use hugely different statistics of how many people have died in the insurgency; each chooses a number convenient to them, an amount that favours their claims. Kashmir is a place where individuals and their identities are reduced to mere statistical casualties of a civil strife.

> "*Come on, I will give you my phone, it's no big deal...You are overreacting! I have lost mobiles before"*
> *"Where? Europe? America? This is KASHMIR. You need to submit official documents. I had to give a photocopy of my passport…What if the police or the army finds the mobile? They might think it belongs to a militant."*
> *"You are being paranoid."*
> *"Kashmir's a prison you know. And a passport is your bail contract, a reward for behaving. Get it? It's not all fucking breathtaking here.*" (Sajad 291-292)

Moving seamlessly from the political narrative to Munnu's personal life, Sajad portrays how the continuing conflict impinges on the interpersonal relationships of people in the affected zone. Paisley, now Munnu's girlfriend, borrowed his phone for a short while after losing hers. However, she misplaced his phone as well, and Munnu quickly dissolved into a state of paranoia that eventually broke the lovers apart.

> *While talking about the blasts and the number of deaths, they turned towards me and peered over my shoulder checking what I was browsing. Are you a Kashmri?.....Let us see your passport! Why should we take responsibility for this boy? Call the police!* (Sajad 300-301)

Munnu unfortunately happened to be in Delhi (where his artwork was being exhibited at the Habitat Centre) at a time when multiple

bomb blasts occurred across the city's markets. Terrorist activity was suspected, and so was Munnu by default, since he was a Kashmiri. He was unfairly abused and arrested by the police, even though they had no proof against him. The only evidence the police had listed against him was that "He was searching for information about Kashmir, he had a camera" (Sajad 303). In prison, he could not do much to prove his innocence or identity as an artist; however, when he spoke to the police in Hindi (a dominant language in Northern India), they were more inclined to listen and verified his innocence by contacting the habitat centre. As discussed previously, this is a comment on language and nationalism in a colonial world. We see how Munnu was perceived as the Other in Delhi, although the Indian government keeps trying to convince the world that Kashmir is a part of India.

Medical emergencies were also an issue due to the lack of adequate infrastructure during the period of conflict. Munnu had to get his ailing mother to hospital on a scooter post-curfew, risking the wrath of the army after the same military had wrecked the hospital ambulance. Not everybody was lucky (using the word rather liberally and in a relative sense here) as Munnu and his mother. A father was not allowed to take his ailing daughter to hospital and she died at home without treatment. Several people carrying the corpse of their friend were gunned down on the way to the graveyard. Malik Sajad neither supports the Indian stand nor does he support the separatists. Instead, he foregrounds the plight of the common people stuck in this unending war through decades, without consent or any recourse.

> "*So, we were wondering what you'd think if China occupied Kashmir?"*
> *"Well, I guess you're giving us a choice between dying with a bullet and dying with a bullet. We want to live*!"
> (Sajad 340)

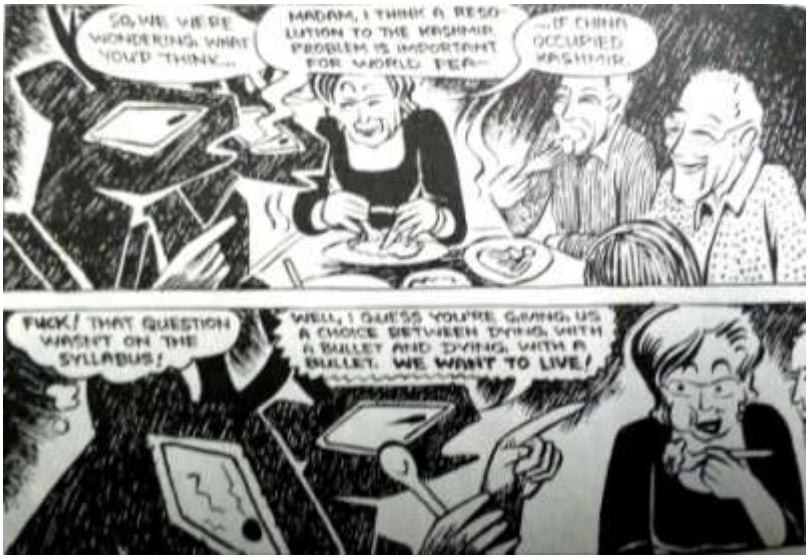

Fig. 7. (Sajad 340)

In the final pages of his narrative, Malik Sajad describes his dinner at the European Union as a journalist from *The GK*, where ambassadors of the European Union pretended to be interested in the state of affairs in Kashmir for the sake of world peace, but finally provided no better resolution than the current scenario. When the question of humanitarian intervention from the international community was raised, they dismissed it by saying that they lacked the authority to interfere in India's internal matters. They also glibly suggested that people in Kashmir should be empowered instead, completely ignoring all the evidence for how the voice of dissent in Kashmir has been unheard thus far.

Thus we see how the current situation in Kashmir borders on neo-colonialism (both internally and externally, as indicated by the European Union's suggestion that China occupy Kashmir). The unending colonization of Kashmir by various dominant powers has contributed to a lack of coherent identity (since most Kashmiris do not identify as either Indians or Pakistanis, they harbour equal resentment for both countries) and disjointed cultural roots. Kashmiri identity and potential discovery of the Self is eroded and hindered through political,

linguistic, social and religious domination by the Other. In order for Kashmir's populace to find a sense of identity, it is mandatory to recognize the infiltration of foreign culture - and to put an end to it.

Misplaced identity is a consequence of social uncertainty in a period of despondency that leads to a skewed sense of morality. Identity is a product of diverse factors – of one's heritage, of one's immediate landscape, of language, of age-old traditions, religion, social and cultural forces, etc. Kashmiri social structure took a crippling blow when India responded to the insurgency with direct rule and imposed security forces on the daily life of the state. Different ideas of nationalism competing for hegemonic control polarized the state into two opposing forces and interrupted the natural development of any given culture. Between the militants and the AFSPA[6], the broader interest of the populace at large continues to be misrepresented, as it has been for decades.

When an imperial power invades another's land, there is displacement on several levels. The indigenous people have to adapt to new cultures, traditions, and ways of life, which mingle with their own in odd, often inseparable ways, giving rise to a tenuous cultural identity. Often the blurred lines lead to negative ramifications that are difficult to remove without losing one's own identity altogether. Furthermore, with suppression also comes the gradual removal of the native people's former lives and culture, which is replaced by that of the Other, who believe that their culture is superior.

Technically, following the dismantling of empires, people are left to assess the cultural, linguistic, legal, economic, and social effects of colonial rule, and to re-establish national identities and build a new government. Kashmir never had that opportunity; from the Mughal rule, to the Sikhs, to the Dogras, to the Indian occupation, Kashmir has never been free - they have never been left to function on their own, to find their cultural roots.

[6]"Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. Web. 17 Sep. 2016.

> Over the years, tremendous political and social turmoil has been generated in the Jammu and Kashmir by the forces of religious fundamentalism and by an exclusionary nationalism that seeks to erode the cultural syncretism that is part of the ethos of Kashmir. These forces are responsible for the shutting down of dissenters who voice cultural critique, repression of women, political anarchy, economic deprivation, lack of infrastructure, and mass displacements that have been occasioned by these events.[7]

Since the beginning of insurgency in 1989, the Kashmiri populace has been marginalized in a way that made them second class citizens in their own homes, plagued by political, military, and religious fundamentalists who alienated them from decision-making bodies and imposed a life of invasive searches, constant surveillance, and extreme patriarchy. Between parliamentary troops and militant factions, the simple, dignified existence of civilian life is compromised. Democracy is a distant dream in Kashmir, where the discursive forces of colonialism continue to operate on and through the people.

"It is only by telling stories that a place like Kashmir begins to exist" (Malik Sajad)[8]. By tracing the development and struggle of everyday life in all its existential and political being in Kashmir, Malik Sajad successfully lends a voice to a community that has been grossly underrepresented for years. His account negates the contentions that mainstream media usually practices while talking of Kashmir, where their marginalization by the rest of the country is ignored in favour of winning/retaining the territory. By focusing on the human condition, by emphasizing elements that are recognizable to human beings everywhere, and by depicting Kashmir as a place torn apart by polarizing forces, Sajad forces us to look at the plight of the Kashmiri

[7]Khan, Nyla Ali. Kashmir: A Postcolonial Nation." Dissident Voice. October 9, 2006. Accessed April 26, 2015. http://dissidentvoice.org/Oct06/Khan09.htm

[8]Francesca Recchia, "Why this graphic novel about Kashmir hasn't been published in India," *Scroll.in*, last modified November 14, 2015,http://scroll.in/article/769240/why-this-graphic-novel-about-kashmir-hasnt-been-published-in-india

populace. By humanizing the marginalized, he converts Kashmir from the subject of dispassionate newspaper headlines into a world of palpable human tragedy.

An Interview with a Kashmiri Family

I conducted this interview with a couple from Kashmir, whom our family has grown close to over the years. To protect their privacy, I shall refer to them as X and Y. Mr. X has frequented West Bengal as a shawl merchant for over a decade; he used to come here every winter, engage in business for a couple of months, and then return to Kashmir. However, the visits became longer and longer as they figured that life was much better here in terms of a dignified existence without constant surveillance; now they only return to Kashmir for a couple of months in summer. They have also acquired voting rights in Bengal.

Question: I read in this book (*Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir*), that people of Kashmir do not identify as either Pakistanis or Indians. Do you think that's true?

X: Yes, that's right. That's not a bad point at all. See, the Kashmiris, the ones with a government job, they seem to support Pakistan. But the businessmen find more advantage in supporting the Indian agenda. The reason being that as long as there are frequent "hartaals" and fights, the former category are exempted from going to work; these people do not go to work for more than 5-6 days a month. On the other hand, for the businessmen, their business suffers tremendously when there are strikes –there is no one united cause in Kashmir, since people are constantly manipulated by the State and militants alike. But for the majority of people who are being oppressed by either side, they just want to be free.

Y: "Hum nehi bolte kee Pakistan accha hain ya India, dono ek jaisa hain. Jab flood (2014) huya tha, ghar mein paani aa gaya, bohut luksaan hua, kisike pass paisa nehi itne hartaal ke beech mein. Akbaro mein khali bolta hain itna paisa diya gaya hain, kee crore-ro diya hain relief mein, paar woh paisa gaye kahan? Toh hum kya manengey, India ya Pakistan?"

X [Further elaborating on the point his wife raised]: Modi government has declared that he has sent millions in relief to those displaced by the floods. But where is the money? The corrupt politicians have absorbed it. Maybe Modi government should have made sure that the money actually reached the ones it was intended for. There is not much the media can do about it. They are also suppressed.

Question: What about the raids conducted by the Indian Army? Were innocents ever hurt in the procedure?

X: Yes, definitely. Many, many people. The torture was merciless and arbitrary. Completely innocent people were detained, subjected to violent interrogations. The army cannot seem to find the actual terrorist, so they bother civilians.

I myself had one such experience. I was in my shop during the day when there was a sudden bomb blast at the next lane. The terrorist fled. But the military started bothering us civilians. Most of the people had hurried home from the scene, but I couldn't leave my shop, so they cornered me, me along with the rest of the shopkeepers there. The army kept asking us where the terrorist fled to. How am I supposed to know? So they gathered us shopkeepers at one place and started beating us up. I was subjected to a few blows, for being unable to answer their unreasonable questions. Thankfully, a sensible senior officer arrived at the scene then, and vehemently opposed to the torture of the innocent bystanders who had nothing to do with the blast. I was lucky; if the colonel wasn't present that day, worse fate was awaiting me. The Indian Army tortures us civilians and lives on bribes.

I will tell you about another incident. At the borders (to the Pakistan section of Kashmir), where the Indian Army are posted; technically, we are not allowed to cross, right? But the army, who are posted in that area, accept bribes and lets anyone across the borders for some money. That is how young boys become militants. They go over the Pakistan side and train as militants. Kashmiri families always have to be very careful with our children, so that they do not go astray. Children in Pakistan are made to lose their innocence.[He had brought his two sons away from Kashmir for the same reason; they study here in Bengal now.]

Often, the Indian Army comes to our neighbourhood without any warning and starts raiding our homes. They make us all gather outside while they ransack our house and empty it of whatever valuables they can find on sight. We have nobody we can complain to, we are helpless.

I am a Kashmiri, I love Kashmir. But I can no longer live there. I have peace here. I will eat less here but at least I will have freedom. I have my shop at Lalchowk (a popular locality in Kashmir), but I am compelled by circumstances to shut it down and do business here in Bengal instead. Once, I have had five people die in my neighbourhood in the same day in an open firing. They were civilians – one of them was a young girl. I could have died too, but I had locked my doors just before the incident. On the other hand, the militants torture the army. But the army punishes us for the torture inflicted on them by the militants.

Y: It is not religion that makes militants or terrorists. It's just brainwashing. Islam doesn't tell us to kill people, oppressive politics does.

Question: Can you elaborate on young boys being recruited by the militants?

X: It happens often, and one can see why. The economy has been completely destroyed. There are a lot of poor people. If one has a secure job, and enough money to put food on the table, why would they resort to terrorist activities? But if they do not have money, when a militant ask them to throw a hand grenade or even stones for a lot of cash they are tempted to do so. If you do not have any money, you become desperate. The militants take advantage of that weakness. Apart from that, families whose relatives were unfairly detained or tortured by the army often turn to militants too.

Question: What do you think of Afzal Guru? [9]

X: He was unfairly killed. He was innocent. I can take you to every other home in Kashmir, you will see how much he is respected there.

He was only trying to solve the crisis. He was not a violent person. He was not even given a fair trial.

Y: *14 saal unko jail mein rakha gaya; tabhi maar diya hota toh theek hain, itne din baad kyun, ye kaisa insaf hain, kaisa hain yeh government. Kashmir thaa jannat, aab nehi raha.*

This unstructured interview, simply a conversation about life in Kashmir and after Kashmir, offers us a real world, first hand perspective to my argument. I particularly wanted to include this inmy research since it is high time we let Kashmiris tell their own stories; they have been misrepresented for far too long. While Mr X and Mrs Y were leaving, they told us more stories about Kashmir; how they long to go back permanently but cannot; how much it hurts to not be able to return; how they miss the weather of Kashmir, the language, the landscape, the community and even the food. We had them over to one of our family weddings, and although they adequately enjoyed the Bengali wedding, they told us how different Kashmiri weddings are. They told us about their intricate customs and rituals; their reminiscences made their nostalgia and grief palpable. It is reprehensible that, in a so-called democracy, people are forced out of their homes, having to trade their roots and their identities for some semblance of freedom.

#2The Other

"What am I? Who am I? What curse have I brought on myself? Neeli, how many times must I tell you this tale?"- Umber Singh/ Kanwar's monologue, from *Qissa*. (Singh 2013)

Thus begins the Indian-German diaspora film *Qissa*, a movie on the cusp of the real and the phantom, which deals with the psychological and sociological effect of colonialism on the colonized, along with the social dysfunctions, imperialism, patriarchy, alternate sexuality and gender identity crisis during the Partition of India.

Qissa's multi-layered narrative and the characters' doubts about their own existence symbolize the widespread identity crisis in a postcolonial state. The film also elaborates how violent histories elevate masculinity to a dominant position and create a patriarchal community

that marginalizes its own women and forms a Self-Other dynamic within the borders of the State, indicating how colonialism alters the narrative within the community and outside it.

The film opens in a bleak home in a deserted and plundered Sikh village in Punjab, the Pakistan territory, during the Partition of India, 1947. Communal violence triggered by colonialism has torn the village apart. The protagonist is seen carrying the corpse of a Muslim to poison the village waters, to "have their colonizers' ghosts haunt themselves" as he puts it. When a village elder advises him against it, saying that a true Sikh would never take such a revengeful measure, Umber Singh replies ominously "We are nothing now." The viewers are confronted with the first instance of the displacement of one's Self and identity that dominates the world of *Qissa*.

Next, we find that the women are kept away from the village at night to protect them from the Muslim plunderers; shifting to the scene of the women in hiding at the outskirts of the village, we discover that a woman called Mehak (Umber's wife) is extremely distressed at having given birth to a girl child. Colonization and subsequent displacement makes heirs, sons in particular, a necessity to carry on the lineage of the family situated in a diaspora community, such as the one depicted in *Qissa*. Come morning, confronted with yet another girl child, Umber tells Mehak, "I have seen enough girls." The discomforting rootlessness triggered by the aftermath of colonialism has turned Umber Singh into a totalitarian patriarch.

> "*Leave it open. I do not want them to break and enter our home*."– Mehak to Umber Singh. (Singh 2013)

The entire village is forced to flee overnight, without prior preparation, mental or practical. They leave most of their belongings and half their lives behind. Mehak questions her worthiness as a woman, since she is unable to produce a son, but Umber Singh asserts that she is his wife. She seems to be satisfied with the sole identity of being a wife to someone, which comments on the collective psyche that women under colonialism were used to. Later in the movie, when Mehak mentions the ancestral home that was passed onto her from her

parents, Umber Singh is blatantly dismissive of it, ignoring Mehak's desire to retain some form of identity that belongs only to her, which is not borrowed. It is only after the death of her husband, the patriarch, that the said ancestral home comes to serve a purpose.

Punjab, Indian Territory:

Umber Singh takes four years to rebuild his life from scratch after the Partition and to achieve financial security. However, one thing remains unchanged over the years – Umber's fixation with a son. The pressure on his again pregnant wife to produce a son is almost tangible, and reduces Mehak's character to a bearer of children and no more, at least from Umber Singh's perspective. At the time of the delivery, ignoring all evidence that suggests otherwise, Umber Singh chooses to believe that he has finally got the son he has been hoping for. He dismisses Mehak, who tries to convince him that it is a girl, and clings to his absurd denial. This moment in the narrative marks the beginning of his descent into madness.

Note: I shall be using the gender neutral pronoun 'Ze' ('Zir' as the possessive determiner, and 'Zirs' as the possessive pronoun) for Kanwar, the child who was born as a girl and raised as a boy. Gender is only a social construct, as is evident from her story and how she never feels comfortable as female or male.[10]

Ten Years into the Narrative:

Kanwar has been raised as a boy, under zir father's close administration. Being too close to zir father, ze is isolated from zir mother and sisters. Ze isalso reprimanded by zir father at any show of physical weakness or feminine attributes that might jeopardize the male identity imposed on zir. The members of the family live a lie every day of their lives, and thus weave themselves irretrievably into an identity crisis that is impossible to escape. The situation gradually leads to social, moral and ethnic disintegration. Here, Umber Singh functions as the dominant force or the colonizer that overtakes Kanwar's space and

[10] "The Need for Gender-Neutral Pronoun." https://genderneutralpronoun.wordpress.com/tag/ze-and-zir/

being, transforming them in accordance to his desire. Umber refuses to assimilate and instead annihilates all that is native. In a way, he subconsciously recreates the same tyranny in miniature that forced him out of his motherland. The delusional existence he chooses for him and those around him also further pushes them into a jarring state of misogyny.

Often Kanwar is shown staring longingly at zir mother, or zir sisters playing, or at zir own reflection in the mirror with zir hair down; this kind of contemplation hints at zir confused state of identity, zir longing to engage with the other sex, to develop a camaraderie with them thatze cannot with zir male contemporaries. Kanwar is torn between imposed manhood and zir natural state of being born as a woman. Zir state of being is an uphill battle of never quite being able to reconcile with zir alter-ego, which mirrors the psyche of individuals displaced during the Partition of 1947.

As Omar Ahmed writes, "Kanwar's gender crisis is used as a wider metonym for the trauma of Partition, suggesting the blurring of gender identities mirrors the crises of family and national identity families were forced to undertake as a result of Partition. Nonetheless, the attempt to erase Kanwar's femininity by her father and in effect the family who remain complicit in such oppression criticizes patriarchal culture in a post Partition context."[11]

Kanwar's sisters bear a salient grudge against zir for the male privilege ze seems to enjoy. In a disturbing scene that borders on sexual assault, one sister (Bali) corners zir and attempts to find out what makes zir different, saying, "What's so special about you? Let me see." Kanwar falls down a shallow cliff in the scuffle, escaping the fall with a broken leg. Zir sisters are severely punished by Umber Singh due to this event, beaten and made to understand how important their brother is.

[11] Ahmed, Omar. "QISSA: The Tale of a Lonely Ghost (Dir. Anup Singh, 2014, India)." Movie Mahal. October 25, 2014. Accessed April 27, 2016. https://moviemahal.net/2014/10/25/qissa-the-tale-of-a-lonely-ghost-dir-anup-singh-2014-india-spoilers/

He goes on to say that he will not spare them a second time if they dare to hurt their brother again. In doing so, Umber further dissociates Kanwar from zir sisters, and increases the distance between them; Kanwar is pushed farther into isolation.

Kanwar is trained physically in heavy exercises so as to build a physique suitable for a man, so that ze can channel a false machismo. Zir chest is bound tightly so as to prevent the augmentation of breasts. Ze is given lessons in masculinity and made to practice predominantly male occupations like hunting. Ze is even subjected to a turban ceremony. When ze gets zir first period at the age of twelve, Umber Singh, in denial and bordering on madness, says, "You have become a real man." He asks Kanwar to not tell zir mother about the development, as though that knowledge will alter the truth of Kanwar's identity.

Kanwar staring into zir reflection at various stages of zir life is a recurring image that reminds the audience of zir eternal quest for zir true Self; not the one forcefully imposed on zir, not the one ze chooses to go with partly because it is the only life ze knows, and partly because this assumed identity is advantageous (due to male privilege in a patriarchal postcolonial existence).

> *"Gypsy girl has come to whore herself?"* - Kanwar to Neeli when they first meet. (Singh 2013)

Kanwar's encounter with Neeli (zirfuture wife) changes the course of zir life forever, complicating the already ambiguous gender politics of the film. Following an initial squabble, the two effortlessly fall into a playful, flirtatious relationship, which makes it easy for Umber Singh to get Kanwar married to the unsuspecting Neeli. That Neeli belongs to a subordinate class helps the situation, given that her lack of an adequate support system (as would have existed in a more privileged family) means that she could be suppressed with ease once she figures out that she has been tricked into marrying a woman. Kanwar and Neeliexemplify how displacement affects interpersonal relationships.

Umber Singh's character is based on the grandfather of Anup Singh, the movie's director. He revealed in an interview that when Partition

disrupted their lives, his grandfather became a refugee, who refused to go to the new India and settled in Tanzania instead. However, the uprooting of his identity left him a violent man and he had nowhere to express it. So, he would lash out at his family instead – another example of how dislocation and separation affects interpersonal relationships, in fiction and beyond. Saibal Chatterjee says,

> The betrothal sets in motion a chain of events that the new couple can barely comprehend in the face of the oppressive patriarch's continuing and increasing insensitivity.
>
> The themes of gender dynamics, challenged filial loyalty and twisted personal identities open out by the end of the film into a much larger space where legends and hazy memories impinge upon reality in appalling ways.[12]
>
> "*You know I was uprooted from my home, all the dreams of my ancestors turned to ash. It is only a wife who can give you that no one can take from you*." (Singh 2013)

The statement reinforces the importance members of diasporas often put on lineage.On the night Neeli tries to escape her absurd circumstances, Umber Singh catches her and pleads that their family's future is in her hands. After that, Umber – now at the prime of his madness - attempts to rape her, as his latest way of acquiring a boy child. When a protesting Kanwar chances upon them, ze is asked to leave the scene; but Kanwar cannot let Neeli be violated, so ze shoots zir father. When a grieving Kanwar embraces zir dying father, his last words are: "You are my son. You are a good son. But you are a woman after all. Someday we will have a son, a real son." Thus we see that Umber carries his patriarchal obsession to death, reflecting the way the effects of colonialism often persist in society in irreversible ways.

[12]Chatterjee, Saibal. "'Qissa' Review: A Profoundly Moving Partition Tale." The Huffington Post. 2015. Accessed April 30, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2015/02/19/quissa-review-irrfan-khan_n_6710870.html

Following the murder of zir father, Kanwar is forced to flee to zir mother's abandoned maternal house along with Neeli. In an interesting turn of events, Mehak's wish of taking her children to her old village materializes only after the demise of Umber Singh. In Umber's shadow, Mehak was not allowed to retain any shreds of her original identity, a subplot which serves to reinforce the gender politics of the film. Afterthe demise of zir father (the patriarch and the Other), Kanwar too finally has the courage to confront zir mother about the isolation ze felt while growing up. Ze accuses her of marginalizing zir in favour of zir sisters, while a false identity was foisted on zir. But zir rage is directed more toward the father who forced the identity on zir, as opposed to zirmother, who was as helpless as Kanwar in the execution of the absurd idea that tore their lives apart.

> *"You are free now. You can forget your own life. Be what you are."* Neeli to Kanwar. (Singh 2013)

In the new home, at zir mother's village, Kanwar and Neeliare compelled to establish a twofold identity – that of husband and wife for the benefit of the society, and that of two women learning to accept things as they are, while one tries to embrace zir womanhood for the first time, in the privacy of their home. Without Umber's looming patriarchy, Neeli and Kanwar's bond grows stronger, and the hostility that was triggered by the deception is replaced by a strange relationship where they seem part lovers, part sisters. However, despite Neeli's assertion, Kanwar isnot really free, given that ze is forced to maintain the disguise of a man, since two unrelated women living together is unacceptable to the society. They are still constrained by what external forces expect them to be as opposed to what they really are, or what they want to be.

Their curious relationship is punctuated by odd realizations like "I fell in love with a woman", or by the revelation that they have come to depend on each other - "You cannot leave me here alone."Neeli says that if they are to live together, Kanwar must come to terms with the fact that ze is biologically a woman. Kanwar tries to adapt womanly ways to humour Neeli, but realizes that ze does not quite feel at home with the identity. Ze reiterates that when ze tried on women's clothes,ze

felt like had scorpions all over zir. It is not like Kanwar wants to live the false identity zir father had imposed on zir either, but ze is torn between the two identities. As ze declares –"I no longer know who I am or what I am." The dilemma Kanwar and Neeli face is further complicated by the growing suspicion of the villagers, who are invasively curious of their relationship.

Kanwar returns to zir home to look for zir mother to fix the mess. Instead, zefind a burned down house, a dead mother, and a sister who is consumed by grief and descending into madness. The latter seems oddly attached to the remnants of the burned house and is stuck in the past. Kanwar tries to pull her back to the present, but she is beyond help. Amongst the ruins, Kanwar confronts zir father Umber Singh's ghost, who begins to shadow zir for the rest of the film. Given the film's multi-layered structure, this can be read as a colonial hangover – the damaging impact of a native's sense of Self long after the colonizer has left. As Vandana Shukla notes, "The phantoms — creation of this complex web — once released, are hard to be retained by the chapters of the past history. They spill over the present." [13]

"*You could never see me as I was. You have to see me now*" (Singh 2013) - Kanwar to zir father's ghost/hallucination as ze exposes zirself in full view of the villagers, trying to solve a conflict that clearly did not die with zir father.

Ze goes on to say ze cannot live a false identity any longer,that a part of zir does not abide by what ze was taught over the years and it is struggling to break through. Kanwar breaks down and asks zir father what ze should do now, since he always told zir what to do, and ze cannot think for zirself coherently as a result. At the same time, ze is scared that Umber has come back to ruin zir present life, that he will not leave them alone, and will force manhood on zir again. There is simultaneous resentment and grief here.

[13]Shukla, Vandana. "A Qissa of Displacement and Lost Identities." The Tribune. March 2, 2015. Accessed April 28, 2016. http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/a-qissa-of-displacement-and-lost-identities/48391.html.

Following the scene, there is outrage from the villagers, once they discover that Kanwar is biologically a woman. Neeli forces Kanwar to flee to escape the wrath of villagers at having broken moral codes. When Kanwar flees, zir father's ghost catches up with zir. By now, the ghost has become Kanwar's alter ego. It says that Neeli will be killed if Kanwar doesnot go back to rescue her. And Kanwar will be killed if ze does go back. The ghost reiterates that there is only one way to save Neeli from the villagers – for the ghost and Kanwar to merge into one, since only in combination can they save Neeli. In a surreal scene, Umber Singh's form merges with Kanwar's mind, which can be read as Umber Singh colonizing Kanwar entirely. Following this absurd turn of events, the physical form of Kanwar is gone, replaced by a strange juxtaposition of Umber and Kanwar, thereby ending the natural development of Kanwar's personality; Kanwar essentially fails in zir assertion of Self.

> "*We are going home now, Neeli*." (Singh 2013)

Only, there is no home to go back to. However, Kanwar, with a newly acquired body returns to the village to Neeli's aid. In a drastic measure, ze takes zir shirt off and declares that ze is Umber Singh's son, and ask if anybody thinks ze looks like a woman. The scandalized villagers disperse, without argument.

> "*We will tear down this house. Keep nothing from the past.*" (Singh 2013)

They return to their burned down home to rebuild their life, but their lack of a coherent identity prevents them from doing so. The new Kanwar is an odd amalgamation: dominantly zir father but also Kanwar in parts. Neeli cannot make peace with this unfamiliar person and chooses to end her life instead. In effect, the metaphorical ghost of Umber seems to guide everyone's destiny, suggesting that the decisions we make are inevitably influenced by our past. At the end of the film, no conclusion is reached; the displaced identities have penetrated the society in a way that snubs the quest for freedom. As Omar Ahmed says, "Perhaps it is only as a ghost that borders become invisible. Umber Singh (Irrfan Khan), an exile and victim of Partition, is

displaced from Pakistan to India, and reconciliation with such a cataclysmic disturbance never emerges and in fact never can."[14]

It is important to note that it is the ghost/phantom remnant of Umber who tries to convince Kanwar back to a masculine state of being; unable to resist it, ze has to do away with most of zir femininity, and assume a masculine superiority guided by a phantom of the patriarch. In a country where female infanticide is rampant, the phantom transforms to a reality the society as a whole needs to confront.

> "*Neither a man, nor a woman. Neither human nor a ghost.*" (Singh 2013)

Colonization occurs on multiple levels in this narrative, and there is more than one colonizer. That Umber Singh and the rest of the village are forced to migrate from the Pakistani half of Punjab is a consequence of colonization – especially of the "divide and rule" policy that the British employed to weaken the Indian freedom movement. Umber's obsession with a son to carry on the family lineage is a consequence of being uprooted during the Partition; being displaced from his geographical and cultural roots, this is the only way, according to him, that he can leave behind a legacy of some sort. Umber forcing Kanwar to accept a false identity to suit his expectations is a colonization of Kanwar's state of being, where Umber is now the colonizer. Kanwar's lifelong struggle with zir complicated sexuality, zir deconstruction of Self to identifiably become a confused man (the Other) in a distraught woman's body, is also fundamentally the result of colonization, where imperialistic histories push masculinity to a dominant position.

"In *Qissa*, the crisis of identity, triggered by a violent chapter of history goes beyond religion. It confronts a disturbing fact; violent histories push masculinity to a dominant position. At a time when family's 'honour' is attacked, is it only the male who can protect it? The

[14]Ahmed, Omar. "QISSA: The Tale of a Lonely Ghost (Dir. Anup Singh, 2014, India)." Movie Mahal. October 25, 2014. Accessed April 27, 2016. https://moviemahal.net/2014/10/25/qissa-the-tale-of-a-lonely-ghost-dir-anup-singh-2014-india-spoilers/.

resonance of violence haunts, it colours relationships and society in disturbing shades. At a time when women are empowered and independent, why does the ghost of patriarchy survive in certain sections of society and make its presence felt in all walks of life, not in families alone? The film underlines the need to confront these echoes."[15]

Thus, the psychological and sexual quagmire in the battle between nature and nurture push the characters into an ambiguous state of identity, which is shaped by the imperialist and patriarchal world. Furthermore, the gender dynamics of *Qissa* function as a microcosm of our times as well, which suggests that the effects of colonization are universal and timeless, and that individual lives are damaged as much by history as by human foibles.

Conclusion:

Through close analysis of these two texts, I have tried to explain how the political becomes personal and vice versa in the face of oppression brought about by fundamentalist occupation or even so-called democracies.

The diverse nature of the works discussed indicates that the effects of colonization are universal. They share key similarities, regardless of the geopolitical circumstances; the remnants of imperialism or the "colonial hangover" are much the same across the world. The effects of colonialism inevitably result in hybridization, leading to mass identity crises, which an individual or nation-state may or may not recover from.

Furthermore, the marginalization of Kashmir in the present day, especially in the aftermath of sedition charges against three JNU students for raising pro-Afzal Guru slogans and with constant violence being enacted by the military there, only reinforces the neo-colonial

[15]Shukhla, Vandana. "A Qissa of Displacement and Lost Identities." The Tribune. March 2, 2015. Accessed April 28, 2016. http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/a-qissa-of-displacement-and-lost-identities/48391.html

structure of the occupation, where India and Pakistan serve as contemporary colonizers. The seditious charges surrounding Afzal Guru stand testimony to the fact that Kashmir is indeed marginalized, because it is questionable if the man ever received a fair trial.

Contemporary colonization does not limit itself to Kashmir. News of lands being taken away from indigenous people is abundant in social media (while the mainstream media often chooses to ignore them) nowadays. Dongaria Kondhs, a vulnerable tribe with a population of approximately 8000, residing in the Niyamgiri hills of Odisha, have had a decade-long fight against London-based Vedanta Resources. The bauxite mining project there should ideally have the villagers' consent, but the State government of Odisha has turned against its people, displaying a legacy of colonialism and subsequently capitalism. The villagers have been under paramilitary occupation for seven years now; voices of dissent are being met with violence and an ancient tribe is being forcefully uprooted.

The almost destitute, stateless, minority Rohingyas on both sides of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border; the European Refugee Crisis; the Mediterranean migrant crisis; and terrorism in Syria and the Middle East; these are only a few instances of people being rendered second-class citizens in their own homes and/or being forced to flee to other countries for safety and a semblance of normal life. There, they are not only perceived as the Other, but also face major cultural barriers in building a coherent sense of Self again. Fiction and life both show that as long as there is colonization, there will simultaneously be resistance movement. Since dissent is usually criminalized, the resistance movement takes on new forms and strategies.

With ever increasing threats to democracy, people at large are coming to realize that the nation and the government are not one and the same; even in a democracy, the people at large are often misrepresented by the authoritarian body. Perhaps one's identity need not be unilateral; in the face of conscious or subconscious cultural assimilation, maybe transculturalism is the answer.

In short, it is safe to conclude that we need a new understanding of postcolonialism and cosmopolitanism – one that can be inclusive of differences and pluralities without having to compromise one's identity.

References:

Ahmed, Omar. 2014. "QISSA: The Tale of a Lonely Ghost (Dir. Anup Singh, 2014, India)." *Movie Mahal*. October 25, 2014. Accessed April 27, 2016. https://moviemahal.net/2014/10/25/qissa-the-tale-of-a-lonely-ghost-dir-anup-singh-2014-india-spoilers/

Chatterjee, Saibal. 2015. "'Qissa' Review: A Profoundly Moving Partition Tale." The Huffington Post. Accessed April 30, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2015/02/19/quissa-review-irrfan-khan_n_6710870.html.

Khan, Nyla Ali. 2006. "Kashmir: A Postcolonial Nation." *Dissident Voice*. October 9, 2006. Accessed April 26, 2015. http://dissidentvoice.org/Oct06/Khan09.htm

Rizwan, Rakhshan. 2013. "Repudiating The Fathers." *Kashmir Lit*. Accessed April 30, 2016. http://www.kashmirlit.org/repudiating-the-fathers-resistance-and-writing-back-in-mirza-waheeds-the-collaborator/

Raghunath, Nilanjan. 2006. "Jammu &Kashmir : Competing Concepts of Nationalism." *Yale Journal of International Affairs, 2.1*: 44-53. Web. Accessed April 28, 2016. http://yalejournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/062105raghunath.pdf

Recchia, Francesca. 2015. "Malik Sajad's "Munnu": A Graphic Novel from Kashmir." *Warscapes*. November 4, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2016. http://www.warscapes.com/reviews/malik-sajads-munnu-graphic-novel-kashmir

Sajad, Malik. 2015. *Munnu: A Boy from Kashmir*. London: Fourth Estate.

Shukla, Vandana. 2015. "A Qissa of Displacement and Lost Identities." *The Tribune*. March 2, 2015. Accessed April 28, 2016. http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/a-qissa-of-displacement-and-lost-identities/48391.html.

Singh, Anup, dir. 2013. *Qissa*. Performed by Irfan Khan and Tilottama Shome. Germany & India: Just Film Distribution. Film DVD.

"The Need for a Gender-Neutral Pronoun." Web. Accessed August 20, 2016. https://genderneutralpronoun.wordpress.com/tag/ze-and-zir/