

Original Article

Kashmiri Memoryscape: Construction of Cultural Memory in Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014) and Malik Sajjad's *Munnu* (2015)

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Abstract

The focus of this study lies in foregrounding the conflict zone of Kashmir as a subject of memory studies. The research highlights the impact of the catastrophic decade of 90s, on the life of Kashmiris as narrated in Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014) and Malik Sajjad's graphic novel *Munnu* (2015). Informed by Homi K. Bhabha's ideas this research explores the significance of narration as a means of reflecting the transitional cultural reality of a nation. In addition to that it reflects the significance of narratives as an agent of transmission of culture. The study thus aims to portray centrality of the Kashmiris as a memory community. It intends to record the shift in representation of objects as a result of emergence of new social movements to signify transformation in culture. It thus employs Homi K. Bhabha's idea that the "totalization of national culture" is a "problematic closure" and must be replaced by the possibility of transition and multiplicity through which cultural "symbols" may be interpreted. In addition to that, this research benefits from Jan Assmann's assertion of the significance of memory making for the construction of cultural identity.

Keywords: culture, mediation, transition, insurrection, memoryscape, mnemonic signifier.

INTRODUCTION

"I am being rowed through Paradise on a river of Hell"

Agha Shahid Ali "Farewell"

This research concerns the conflict zone of Kashmir. Kashmir's history is fraught with geographical and political turmoil since centuries. It has been subjected to colonial invasions, massacres and denial of basic human rights. Since the partition of the sub-continent, it exists in a terminal colonial situation, under the Indian occupation. It is this lived reality of Kashmiris, especially in the context of the uprising and its curtailment in the 1990s, that makes Sumantra Bose term it as a paradise lost, quite contrasting to its idyllic beauty (154). Despite being a Muslim majority princely State, its Hindu ruler signed a treaty of accession with India against the wishes of the people. Although the people of Kashmir are struggling for their freedom from India since 1947 but the active resistance through weaponry occurred in late 80s. Bose identifies the change Kashmir underwent post insurrection. He writes, "The tourist broucher image of a vacation paradise... has been replaced by daily accounts of gun battles, bombings, body counts, and a traumatized population" (Bose 154). So, he points out the transitional social reality of Kashmir in the 90s.



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The staggering spatial and temporal reality of Kashmir finds depiction in Kashmir anglophonic writing. In the poetic genre, Agha Shahid Ali emphatically communicates the pain and pathos felt by the Kashmiris. The translations of the poetic pieces of Habba Khatoon, reflect the melancholia felt by the Kashmiri women. The subversion of the Indian occupation through literary genres like memoirs, and fiction is worth mentioning too. Authors like Basharat Peer, Mirza Waheed, Malik Sajjad, Shahnaz Bashir etc. focus on young male Kashmiri subjects. Farah Bashir, on the other hand shares the experiences of girlhood in Kashmir in her chick-lit novel. In addition to the fictional and life narratives, the issue of Kashmir finds expression through nonfiction that underpins the facts of history of Kashmir. Writers like Gowhar Gillani share the lived experience of the Kashmiris through insurrection. Ather Zia, highlights the issue of forced disappearance of Kashmiris. She also emphasizes on the impact of the absence of male members on the overall family and the resultant female activism. Like her, Muhammad Junaid also highlights the Indian state as a perpetrator, and he largely discusses this practice as a replication of the pre-partition colonial tendency of the empire.

A constant theme in the literature written about Kashmir is portraying the subjugation and victimization of Kashmiris by foreign invaders like the Afghans, the Sikhs and the British colonizers pre-partition and the Indian state, post-partition; another predominant theme revolves around remembering the uprising against the Indian occupation and mentioning the coercive measures used by the Indian state to curtail the same ; yet another theme is the global indifference to the cause of Kashmir; and a final major theme involves the celebration of narrating the nation and self-definition, the decoloniality achieved by the indigenous writings. The writings about Kashmir involve commemoration asserting that life and loss of Kashmiris matter.

A convergence in these writings can be identified with a special focus on the happening of the decade of the 90s. Alastair Lamb in his book, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy* (1991), enumerates the reasons necessitating insurrection. In the context of accession of Kashmir to India, Pakistan was reluctant to forgo support for Kashmiris and certain factions in Kashmir also held pro-Pakistani sentiments. Secondly, a political vacuum was created after the demise of Sheikh Abdullah, a prominent pro-Indian Kashmiri leader. Moreover, Kashmiris were inspired by the Sikh revolt leading to the assassination of the Indian prime minister, Indira Gandhi in the 80s. The possibility of registering resistance through violent means was seen as an ultimate resort. In addition to the Sikh separatist movement in India, Kashmiris were inspired by the valour of fellow muslims in Afghanistan who successfully subverted the Soviet Union through active resistance (Lamb 323). All these factors acted as a stimulus, encouraging the Kashmiri youth that through active defiance and reliance on weaponry, freedom can be sought. They pursued the dream of *Azadi* (freedom) and this phenomenon led to new era of violence unleashed by the occupiers to curb the freedom movement.

This research concerns the social reality of Kashmir in the decade of the 90s, foregrounding the transition reality, before and after insurrection in Kashmir recorded in Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014) and Malik Sajjad's graphic novel *Munnu* (2015). The selected narratives reflect mnemonic signifiers, with a prime focus on spatial transition, constructing cultural memory of Kashmir through remediation.

This project is rooted in memory studies and aims at projection of Kashmiris as an identity category suitable to be established and discussed as a memory community. Although, the history of Kashmiris replete with sorrows to be archived, this paper discusses Kashmiri memoryscape with a prime focus on the spatial and temporal details of the events witnessed by Kashmiris during the 90s. The selected fictional pieces provide a rich field for the discussion of aesthetics and politics of memory making, with a prime focus on the transition. The selected narratives under discussion successfully assert the imperialistic violence exercised against the Kashmiris by the Indian state. These narratives recapitulate the essence of the sufferings of Kashmiris through loss of life and victimization by being tortured too.

The fictional characters relive the experiences of the people of the erstwhile Kashmir to communicate the sense of injustice and loss suffered under occupation. This memory making is an accumulation of

individual loss, which, put together leads to collective trauma with national and political implication. The internalization of the loss acts as an impetus for social movements, aiming at liberation. Anchal Malhotra, an Indian writer and historian compares the process of memory making to aspects of archaeology, which involves deep digging. This excavation aims at discovery of a unified sense of self across a memory community (Malhotra xiii). Raghu Karnad also comments on the sanctity and significance of the process of remembering. He is of the view that an individual experiences death twice, once when the life ends and secondly when s/he is not remembered anymore. This absentia memory pushes the individual to the farthest fields (Karnad 16). The fictional pieces under discussion also reveal characters choosing to join the resistance movement to avenge the personal and collective loss, inflicted under occupation. The denial of sovereignty and sanctity of the body to the Kashmiri subjects engenders the will to revolt and resist.

Different memory communities and their practices of commemoration serve as an example in the field of memory studies. Some of the memory communities include America, commemorating holocaust, and the events of 9/11. Others include Palestinian memory community, commemorating the loss suffered due to settler colonialism, South African memory community, on the other hand remembers the era of apartheid. Pakistani and Indian memory community finds locus in the violent events of partition. Boundaries thus exist between the spatial sites and temporal dimensions. This spatial metaphor of boundaries can be extended as a mnemonic terrain, as a landscape of memory i.e. memoryscape (Basu 116).

This project concerns Kashmiri memoryscape, as portrayed by the selected texts, through identification of mnemonic signifiers. These signifiers embody past through condensation of memories shared by a community and act as “the catalyst of the memories” (Malhotra xiv). In the context of Kashmir, these signifiers narrate the events woven around the decade of the 90s and the spatial transition witnessed by Kashmiris, where their paradisiacal land is converted into a war-torn area. The unison and convergence provided by the mnemonic signifiers instills a retrospective introspection, with relevance for present and future too. These reservoirs of memory bridge the distance between the tripartite structure of time.

This paper highlights the mutual responsibility of preserving cultural memory through conscious effort. It is thus a project of cultural studies too. Raymond Williams in his book, *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (2015) identifies three strands of definition of culture. One concerns, “a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development”. The other indicates a particular way of life and the last involves recognition and description of “the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity” (Williams 95). So, Williams’ interpretation of culture with respect to the way people live their life and the process that involves recording it through artistic activity is of use for this project. He further mentions that in cultural studies reference is “primarily [made] to signifying or symbolic systems” (96). Hence the emphasis is on the recognition and interpretation of cultural objects that can be interpreted as signs.

This research paper signifies the role played by the selected texts as specimens of cultural production, transmitting culture intergenerationally. Jan Assman, refers to such cultural productions as “reminding objects”, which act as a stimulus for garnering memory. This function is not performed by texts only. He asserts that cultural transmission across generations happens through objects as diverse as “dishes, artefacts, feasts, rites, images, stories and other texts” (Assman 111). He asserts that culture is “mediated in texts” (Assman 117). This research highlights the role of text as torch bearer of memory making and ensuring sense of nationhood.

This research benefits from Jan Assman’s assertion about the role of mnemonic signifiers in solidification of cultural memory. These mnemonic signifiers operate through the processes of repetition across texts. The paper deals with the identification of the spatial transition highlighted in *The Book of Gold Leaves* and *Munnu*. The identification is limited to the discussion of the selected texts, while the same can be asserted even across genre, as similar icons of past leading to cultural memory can be identified in poetry and films about Kashmir too. In addition to the views of Jan Assman, this paper also benefits from Homi K. Bhabha’s views regarding celebration of voicing the uniqueness of one’s nation and taking part in self-definition.

Homi K. Bhabha also refers to the possibility of cultural transmission through exercising “right to narrate”. He believes, “Narrative is a sign of a living culture”. He emphasizes that a narrative successfully records the “historical transition” a nation undergoes and thus stores information about “transformative and translational conditions” in a culture. He observes that cultural documents establish an individual’s perspective about a particular spatial, temporal and political reality (Homi K. Bhabha, *The Right to Narrate*, harvarddesignmagazine.org). He thus encourages individuals of all nations to represent their culture through narratives.

Bhabha reiterates the emphasis on the cultural aspect of a nation in his essay “Narrating the Nation” as well. He delineates that the phenomenon of “transitional social reality” gains prominence when nation is studied with respect to progression of time. He asserts that in the narratives of nation “a system of cultural signification” is a chief concern (Bhabha 306). He is of the view that texts dealing with a specific nation tend to highlight signifying systems of the respective cultures through exhibition of object used in that culture. He claims that the assertion of “totalization of national culture” is a “problematic closure” and must be replaced by the possibility of transition and multiplicity through which cultural “symbols” may be interpreted. He mentions “recesses of the national culture from which new social movements” may emerge. These movements may “assign new meanings and different directions to the process of historical change”. Bhabha thus acknowledges a continuous process of flux that is continuous change in the culture of a nation. He thus reserves a “productive position” for culture. The narratives about nation reflect the possibility of culture being “fractured”, “diffused”, “reproduced” (Bhabha 308). He thus proposes that “cultural boundaries” of a nation are porous and may be “crossed” (Bhabha 309). The same sense of fluidity with respect to culture is maintained by Raymond Williams too. He points out culture to be an extremely “indeterminate” and “deceptive” concept in its applications to nations (Williams 94). He proposes to refer to culture in the plural. The plurality is all inclusive and encompasses variation and change over time (Williams 94). So, like Bhabha he also acknowledges the multidimensional aspect of culture.

Bhabha’s idea of changing social reality as a result of “new social movements” within a culture can be witnessed in Kashmiri Anglophonic Fiction written about the decade of 90. Novels like *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014) and *Munnu* (2015), for instance, deal with the changing dynamics of Kashmir due to emergence of an active Resistance Movement in Kashmir. These narratives signify culture through portraying Kashmiri “dishes, artifacts, feasts, rites, images, stories and other texts” (Assman 111). These texts act as a source to reflect the shift from representation of cultural objects signifying artistic and social pursuits to those symbolic of the conflict in the region. Mirza Waheed, for instance, in *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014), portrays Kashmiri culture through papier-mâché art, chillum, kangri, peaceful Jhelum river and Kashmiri dishes before the insurrection. But, post-insurrection, the weapons and the changed landscape signifies Kashmiri culture.

Waheed refers to legendary papier-mâché artist Sadat Beigh Sherazi whose art adorns the ceilings of Kashmiri shrines and some of houses in Kashmir (4). When he is offered to migrate to America in recognition of his art, he declines the offer being closely connected to his culture. He says, “[H]e warm[s] [his] paints over the little coals of kangri” which is not possible elsewhere (Waheed 4). The papier-mâché art is depicted to be in demand internationally. It is revealed that the shields bearing papier-mâché art are in high demand in Japan and Bangkok (Waheed 14). There is reference to Ustad Kamangar, sixteenth century patron saint of “naqashi” or papier-mâché art. He is widely known for having painted “royal chronicles” (Waheed 15). So, over all Kashmiri culture is depicted as a culture of art and aesthetics.

Waheed also mentions “chillum” as part of Kashmiri culture. Its preparation is depicted in a ritualistic way. The first step concerns an exquisite arrangement of tobacco. Then space is created for placing coal in the middle of tobacco and the final step is lighting the coals (Waheed 13). Waheed shares winter rituals in Kashmir. He particularly mentions the kangri “the warm, affectionate wicker brazier” that everyone carries in winter (Waheed 207). There is a particular reference to the dishes Faiz cherishes. Waheed repeatedly mentions that “saltish tea” and “red beans and rice” is part of Kashmiri cuisine (Waheed 5).

In addition to general comments about Kashmiri culture in pre insurrection period Waheed gives a detailed analysis of artistic identity of the protagonist Faiz. Faiz is an artist who loves art and a girl named Roohi. But he has to join the freedom movement in the larger interest of his nation. Initially, Faiz's identity as an artist is highlighted. He is portrayed surrounded by the natural images of "deer, cypresses, chinar leaves" etc that he paints (Waheed 3). His artistic endeavours define him. Waheed points out that, "finished, semi-finished and just-began pieces" fill his life with love and sense of fulfillment (Waheed 6). Faiz could "unleash a thousand nightingales" through his paint in one night (Waheed 5). Before violence erupts in Kashmir as a result of active resistance movement, the priorities of his life are different. He is depicted enjoying simple pleasures of life like watching "Bombay sagas" in cinema (Waheed 3). But, in the decade of 90, Faiz contemplates about the deteriorating situation in Kashmir and decides to actively participate in the Resistance Movement. The thought of Roohi's love does rule his mind but he questions himself, "If everyone decides to remain in their own small worlds, how will [the oppression] end?" (Waheed 108). He prefers collective welfare over choices of personal life.

A similar kind of transition can be witnessed in the portrayal of the female protagonist Roohi too. Roohi is initially portrayed to have attributes of a romance heroine. She is depicted to live a carefree life. Her life is ruled by romance and amorous contemplation. Her description alludes that she lives at a distance from realities of life and enjoys escapism. Waheed mentions that she has a cupboard in her room, which is a "depository of her stories and desires". Roohi's reading collection reflects her personality too. Her reading interest comprises of poetry of Perveen Shakir (a Pakistani romantic poet), Urdu magazines with "kitschy film poster designs" and Ibne Safi's detective novels (Waheed 19). Later on when Faiz becomes an active member of the Resistance Movement, Roohi pines over his absence. She contemplates about the changed river Jhelum too. She used to meet Faiz by the river side. Back then the river would bring only "straw mats and flowers" but after the confrontation between the freedom fighters and Indian army the river "carries torsos or body parts of those dismembered in some detention cell upstream" (Waheed 144). So, the conflicted reality of Kashmir deprives her of her romantic way of being.

Post-insurrection, Roohi's life is in stark contrast to her earlier way of being. Her epistles to Faiz serve as mnemonic documents, recording the events of historical importance, witnessed by her. The resistance in Kashmir is met with violent means to suppress dissent. She mentions that the Indian army ensures "blood-soaked headlines" in the news paper every day. The vulnerability of Kashmiri subjects is highlighted by Farah Bashir in her memoir, *Rumours of Spring, A Girlhood in Kashmir* (2021) too. She mentions the Kashmiris being subjected to curfews and crack downs. She records aggravated murder too and the landscapes erstwhile associated with festive celebration take new meaning through being converted in to "martyrs' graveyard" (Bashir 11). She mentions that Kashmiris are forced to forgo the habit of peeping out of the window as it could invite bullets and closed windows ensured blocking the smoke of tear gas too (Bashir 22). Arundhati Roy in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), mentions the frenzy of the Indian army who fires in the direction of the women and children peeing out of the windows during a funeral ceremony. She empathically puts that; a bullet enters Miss Jabeen's head through her left temple and [comes] to rest in her mother's heart" (214). Thus, two Kashmiris, Begum Arifa Yeswi and her daughter Miss. Jabeen get killed by the same bullet.

The staggering and violent audio-visual reality of Kashmir involves mass murder of innocent civilians. Waheed commemorates the brutal killing of seventeen Kashmiris, targeted by the Indian army across *Zaine Kadal Bridge*. The vulnerability of killable Kashmiri body is revealed through the audacity with which the Indian continued firing, "even after the boys were all dead, mown down next to filthy drains (*TBoGL* 212). The frantic firing not only kills those seventeen boys, but a child named Uzair also gets killed arbitrarily. Roohi points out the heightened sense of loss felt by the bereaved family. Uzair's sister, for instance, spends three nights by his grave in utter state of disbelief and denial of her loss (*TBoGL* 212).

Waheed adds a layer of transformation of Kashmir through the example of a shrine in Srinagar too. He explicates that the motive to shrine going undergoes change post-insurrection. Before the initiation of the freedom movement the shrine going is driven by commemoration of the buried sufi saint and the celebration of his legacy. Post-insurrection, it becomes a site of political convergence aiming at displaying rage and

resistance. It also turns into a funereal site of those violently killed. Kashmiris turn it into a site of collective mourning to show solidarity with the slain commanders of the freedom movement. It also draws crowds of angry Kashmiris after the murder of Roohi's father, Kabir Khan. All gather in solidarity to participate in his funeral rites and register resistance through sloganeering.

In addition to the transformation of the afore-mentioned social hub, Waheed reflects the school building also as site embodying memory. Waheed records the anger felt by Faiz's younger sister Farhat who is displeased about sharing school with the army. The principal's obvious displeasure is also portrayed by Waheed. The school undergoes change both in appearance and operation. The windows of the school, for instance, are turned into "sandbag embankments" to monitor movement of the people in the city (Waheed 52). This memoryscape attains significance for being transformed into an interrogation center (Waheed 118). The young Kashmiri boys who are subjected to arbitrary arrests, are detained by the Indian army in the girl's school.

Mahraze, a Persian conversant *dervash* (a wandering sufi), gets to record the sobs and sighs of the detainees. The same recordings are then played by him in quite a street performance, where people try to reach out for getting the clue of whereabouts of their loved ones. Waheed focusses on the auditory mnemonic signifier being of great value. Throngs of Kashmiri parents witness the recordings "for a note of recognition amid all the muffled moaning and crying, for the peculiar way the son shouts, or the unique drawl when the brother says, 'Hai Khodaya,'" (*TBoGL* 119). But, the recoded proof of whereabouts of the young ones is relevant in retrospect only as Waheed reveals that while the people listen to the recordings of the youth played by Mahraze, the same are killed with their bodies dumped into river Jhelum. He further adds that "While Jhelum brings the heavenly waters of the emerald spring... the city thwarts its dreams... pouring stories into it" (Waheed 23).

This incident also reveals the juxtaposition, that pre-insurrection the Kashmiri parents are portrayed, visiting the shrine, tying the votive threads and seeking blessings of the saint for the young Kashmiris academic and professional excellence. But, post-insurrection Kashmiri history teems with the statistics of the disappearance of Kashmiri youth and thus all the aggrieved parents visit the shrine praying for the safe return of their sons.

Waheed refers to the proliferation of weaponry in Kashmir. It is displayed by the young Kashmiris in strong defiance of the Indian occupation (Waheed 52). The weapon bearing boys chase army to announce their supremacy. This emergence is met with strict and repressive measures to contain the movement. Waheed registers that this collision leads to the transition with reference to overall ambience of the city. People could not believe the changing reality and question the, "machine gun fire becoming a part of city's ambience" (85).

A reference of the same social reality is depicted by Malik Sajjad in his graphic novel *Munnu* (2015) too. Art Spiegelman, an American comic writer comments on the strength of graphics for fiction. He considers it a "highly charged medium". This attribute is attained by the virtue of being "densely concentrated" as the narrative is put forth with economy of language and images that need to be decoded (qtd in Reiser 3). He further asserts that the "yoking" of words and images in a graphic novel demands a cognitive exercise. According to him "Comics are a kind of concentrated orange juice, and brain is the water" (qtd in Reiser 8). Malik Sajad's graphic novel has this characteristic too where the images carry depth of meaning to be interpreted. The very choice of representing the Kashmiri characters as dear is significant. To emphasize the brutality that Kashmiris are subjected to, they are represented as an endangered species of dear. But, in addition to the suffering of Kashmiris Sajad reports their resistance in diverse ways too.

Sajjad depicts *Munnu* as a child who is interested in drawing and tries different designs. The Armed struggle of 90s is alluring not only for the young boys but has an impact on *Munnu*'s drawings too. Malik Sajjad states the new possible subjects to be drawn being the half effaced, half decomposing bodies of the boys who choose to actively resist the Indian occupation. The same subjecthood is confirmed by Mirza Waheed in his debut novel *The Collaborator* (2011). He mentions the cruelty with which the boys are killed

and are then denied their final rituals. They are left to rot at the open spaces where they become prey to the animals. He considers the whole affair as the “man-eating mela (carnival)”, that continues day and night (22).

Sajjad refers to this changed social reality that appears in the mediascape too. In all his naivety, Munnu tries to sketch “the unrecognizable, disfigured” images of the dead bodies of “militants” from the news paper but he finds it difficult. He thus switches to drawing “AK- 47” that he finds relatively easy to draw. This attracts the attention of his friends and they want him to draw the weapon for them too (Sajjad 6).

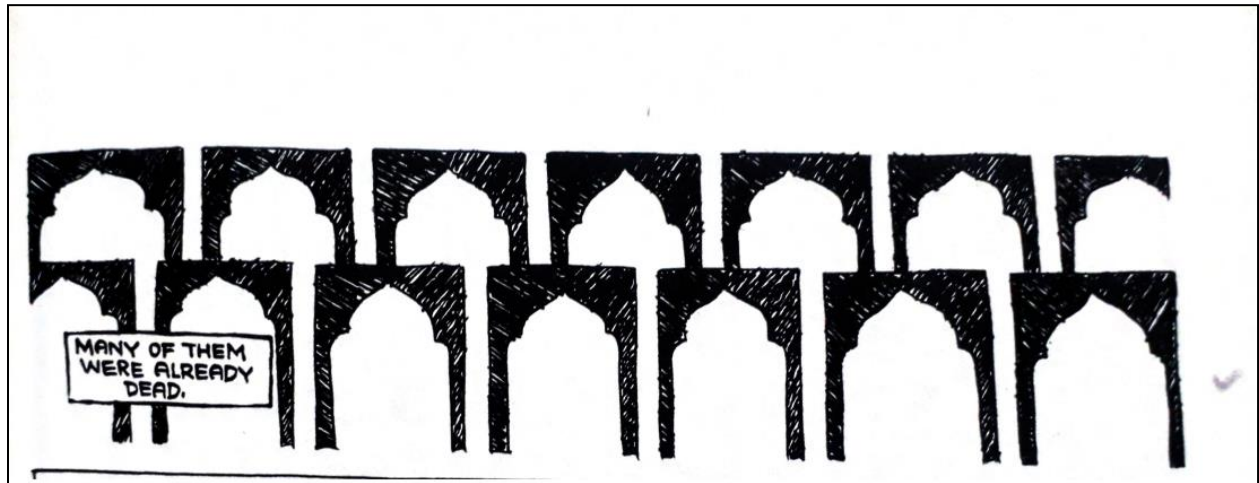


II. *Munnu* (page 6) by Malik Sajad, copyright © 2015 by Malik Sajad.

The novel contains multiple examples where Kashmiris are represented being deprived of “the Heimlich pleasure”. It is mentioned that “crackdown” and “identification parade” is a routine practice that is nightmarish (Sajad 12). It is so not only for the man who gather to be searched and frisked but it is torturous for the women too. Munnu, the protagonist of the novel mentions that such days are “long” and agonizing for her mother who keeps praying till his father and elder brother return safely.

Malik Sajad in his graphic novel highlights the transitional reality of Kashmir in 90s. This change in the dynamics of Kashmir has an impact on the native Pandit community too. Sajad refers to the Pandit Exodus from Kashmir after being targeted by the “militants” (282).

Moreover, a sense of nostalgia is felt by the older generation. Munnu’s father for example refers to his youth when he could enjoy the outdoor games and cinema going but his sons are forced to remain indoor (Sajad 14). He is himself cautious about their movement as it is the period when the young boys largely join the Armed Struggle against Indian occupation. They choose to leave school and be part of the insurrection. Munnu refers to his father being kind otherwise but he is strict with Bilal, Munnu’s elder brother, so he may not follow his classmates’ choice of being part of the insurrection (Sajad 4). Munnu points out the possible outcome of being part of the insurrection in the form of death.



II. *Munnu* (page 5) by Malik Sajad, copyright © 2015 by Malik Sajad.

Sajad portrays Munnu flourishing as an artist, as he grows up. He draws sketches for various newspapers criticizing the callousness of the world towards the issue of Kashmir. He is critical of the indifference of the United Nations Organization as well.

Malik Sajad, in his graphic novel thus portrays a Kashmiri nation that is a “terminal colonial situation” (Lamb 322). But, it does show resistance against the oppression through means as diverse as insurrection and art. Stuart Hall also comments on the possibility of resistance by a group that is pushed to a marginal space. He affirms that such individuals may use “cultural raw material” to register resistance and thus form an immense reservoir of knowledge and power in the struggle to survive and “win space” (qtd in Lodge and Wood 582). Stuart Hall claims that culture undergoes evolution and registers that “Culture identity is a matter of “becoming” as well as “being”. David Lodge and Nigel Wood quote Stuart Hall that,

“He takes issue with stable cultural senses of self, referring instead to ‘identity’ as a ‘suture’ between ‘the discourses and practices which attempt to “interpellate”, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses’ on one hand, and ‘the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be “spoken” on the other” (582).

It is true for Munnu, the protagonist of the novel under discussion, who is reflective of the writer as well. Both attain agency against subjection through drawing and sketching. Kashmiris are portrayed to register resistance through insurrection as well. This process of self-definition is crucial in solidification of the shared sense of past, carved through memories of the Kashmiri community.

Waheed and Sajjad represent the transition in the social reality of Kashmir. They emphatically portray the symbolic significance of cultural objects. They also record the transition in the lived experiences of Kashmiris and foreground changed landscapes to represent change in the cultural reality of a nation. Insurrection in Kashmir is portrayed as a phenomenon that alters the lives of Kashmiris altogether. The temporality of the insurrection rooted in the decade of the 90s and the ensuing spatial transition turns the Kashmiri subjects into killable bodies. The novels under discussion successfully project the victimization of vulnerable Kashmiri subjects post-insurrection.

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