Violence against Women in Kashmir: Personal and Political

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Abstract

This thesis highlights the subversion and silencing of interpersonal violence against women in Kashmir due to a larger focus on political violence, both within the community and in academia, as well. A detailed examination of various forms of violence(s) faced by women has been carried out throughout the thesis, some of which has not even been recognized and documented as violence in the existing literature. It has been accomplished through an in-depth ethnographic field research study spanning the years 2017-2019, drawing on qualitative interviews with 68 women in addition to other informants and extensive field observation in Kashmir and is also complemented by my auto-ethnographic reflections in form of 'vignettes'. The thesis also gives an insight into the role and functions played by the state and the non-state institutions in reinforcing, and exacerbating violence rather than mitigating it, given that the violence is addressed superficially without using gender as a tool of analysis, which is challenged throughout the thesis along with demonstrating the advantage and scope of gender analysis of violence.

The overarching purpose of this research inquiry is to recognize intersectional politics of multiple violence(s) of 'community and the state' survived by Kashmiri women akin to violence of 'sexism and racism' in the US explored and challenged during Black Feminist movement (Crenshaw, 1991). Such work was not possible without delineating various forms of violence faced by women in Kashmir. Therefore, this thesis comprises of three overarching themes, one emphasizes on establishing everyday violence against women in the earlier two chapters in greater detail through narrative form wherein the violence is broadly but not rigidly categorized as 'in-community violence' (everyday violence generated by the community and family largely, buttressing in religious practices and cultural norms) using a sociological and gender lens. This is followed by a detailed analysis of violence generated by political conflict against women in the second part (the next two chapters) through a conceptual analysis based in Feminist IR, categorizing violence as 'out-community violence' (violence generated by political conflict). It is followed by the third theme, an intersection and co-constitution of the two throughout these chapters and particularly in the conclusion part of the thesis. To this end, each of these three sections utilizes various theories like the Theory of Corporeality to discuss both in-community violence (like murders, domestic abuse, honour killings) and out-community violence (rapes by

armed forces, exclusive electoral and separatist politics), as well as Standpoint theory (exploring lived experience as a basis of new knowledge). A key strength, and yet also a limitation, of this thesis is that the concept of violence has been broadly defined to include invisible epistemic discriminations on one side and male centric attitudes of mohalla committees on the other hand, in addition to various visible forms of physical violence, hence understanding violence as a "spectrum rather than a monolith" (Kelly 1998, Enloe 2000). In fact, this is the first thesis that examines and ethnographically highlights the forms of violence like honour killings, murders due to DV masked as suicides, financial exclusion in form of local custom like Azal, and lack of property inheritance by women in Kashmir. In examining different forms of violence expressed through women's narratives, an intersectional politics of violence is explored that is rooted in the questions of who perpetrates violence, who survives it, and who gets to define it. The thesis further prompts the regional politics in political conflict of Kashmir to look away from binary of electoral or separatist politics, and to rather introduce the ethics and praxis of "politics of care" which feminists argue are "easily forgotten or willfully dismissed" (Hoover, 2019). This lack has indeed been exemplified by way of case studies, ethnographic observations, and interviews with the activist women making a case for examining violence as a spectrum, exploring grey areas and challenging dualities often used in understanding violence against women.

This thesis thus departs from understanding violence only as 'an act of the perpetrator of violence' and fills the gap by understanding 'violence as an experience of the survivor of violence.' It also takes a departure from understanding conflict through dominant discourses of security, nationalism, regional politics and traditional IR because as observed in the existing literature, such an enquiry understands politics only in terms of state and its policies leaving behind the power relations beyond state, such as in families, cultural practices, etc. For this thesis, the term 'Violence against Women (VaW)' is preferred over IPV or GBV as the violence under discussion is neither limited to violence in marriages by intimate partner nor has it covered violence against LGBTQI or other genders.

The thesis adopts a unique methodology of Participatory Action Research (PAR) which has been used by feminist social work researchers. The model, although not straitjacketed, has five main underlying principles (Renzetti, 1995; Reinhar 1992 in Mark, 1996: 71-72). First; analysis of gender is central to a research plan, in which male responses are not treated as a standard norm. Second; it gives voice to women's everyday experiences. Third; an orientation towards action

research, that aims at problem solving. Fourth; no claims to absolute objectivity are made, instead reflexivity is practiced. Fifth; collaborator techniques are utilized in which the respondents are considered as partners and co-creators of knowledge in place of a mere interviewed population.

The thesis thus contributes to academia by drawing out aspects of violence that blur the lines between binaries of personal-political, home-outside, peacetime-wartime, as well as other dualities such as victim-agent. As argued in various feminist studies about women in different global conflict zones, there is one common thing that connects the people of conflict zones across the world, namely the lived experiences of violence. This thesis hence builds on various experiences of violence survived by Kashmiri women that challenge us to define violence in a conflict region broadly and at the same time use gender as a tool of analysis in understanding and mitigating violence against women.

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Author’s Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

1. Introduction

Before discussing what the thesis is about, it is pertinent to mention what it is *not* about, at the onset. Unlike most research studies conducted in and about Kashmir, it is neither a political commentary on Kashmir from a security perspective, nor is it a project centered on how political conflict impacts women in Kashmir. Although it touches upon the latter, it rather focuses, through women's narratives gathered by way of 68 in-depth interviews and field observations, on how women and the violence that they face fall through the cracks of both the community as well as the state institutions. Moreover, it emphasizes how the separatist/resistance movement also selectively focuses on state violence against women, and not those forms of violence which unfold within the community itself, whereas, there is barely any accountability for the state for the militarized violence against women, leaving women with very little support within community or within state institutions.

Multiple violence(s) against women in Kashmir are discovered, examined, and analyzed in this thesis, thus advancing the scholarly literature through a broader conceptualization of violence against women in Kashmir. This conceptualization, as we shall see, can be extrapolated to other conflicted regions across the world.

This introductory chapter addresses the questions of 'why?' and 'what?', namely providing the background, rationale, and need for this research project and what it entails. It first establishes the current situation of violence in Kashmir, followed by the definition of what I have termed 'out-community' and 'in-community' violence and the rationale behind this proposed categorization. Violence against women and its feminist understanding is described in detail, followed by the violence of politics, war, and nation against women that follows. This chapter alsodiscusses what violence in Kashmir largely constitutes, and how violence against women has beenexamined in the existing literature about Kashmir. It discusses in detail, two strands of violence: interpersonal violence against women called ‘in-community’ violence in the thesis, violence against women due to political conflict called ‘out-community’ violence. As such, the thesis situates the examination of violence(s) against women in Kashmir within the two broader sets of literature on violence – power and control of bodies in corporeal feminism, security, war, and war rape in

Feminist IR. Both are examined in detail in this chapter to provide a framework for analysis of the ensuing research findings.

1.1. Violence in Kashmir: In the literature and on the ground

Violence spanning over three decades has become a 'new normal' in Kashmir. Human rights violations, counter-insurgency measures involving brutal encounters that often fail todifferentiate combatants from non-combatants, psychologically disturbing search operations, and various unaccountable legislations - all have made violence an everyday reality in Kashmir rendering the ideas of accountability and justice redundant. According to a written submission by the Union Minister of Defence to the Rajya Sabha on 1 January 2018, out of the Fifty requests for sanction for prosecution of armed forces personnel, sanction was denied in Forty-seven cases while in three cases the matter is pending. Seventeen cases pertained to the killing of civilians, Sixteen to custodial killings, eight to custodial disappearance, and four to the alleged rape. There is blanket impunity that the central armed forces enjoy in Kashmir, which exceedingly exacerbates the conflict between the Indian state and the people in the valley of Kashmir (see e.g. Gossman, 1991). This establishes the fact that violence of conflict is a pervasive reality of living in Kashmir.

The State violence against the militant movement in Kashmir is part of the violence as youths joining the ranks of militants respond with violence as well. It is followed by their capture, torture, and a climate of political repression by the state on not only armed militants but on separatist political groups, who seek secession of Kashmir from India, but who differ on the future of Kashmir in either being an independent nation or seeking a merger with Pakistan.Then, there's also a politics of support, and solidarity from the separatist politics to the militant movement, that often target-kills Kashmiris, who compete for a seat in the smallest of offices, such as that of the Panchayat/local self-governance bodies (See e.g. India Blooms News Service, 2020).

In such a climate of violence and repression; extreme patterns of social control and socially acceptable violence against vulnerable groups, like women, is although an obvious outcome and yet a secondary concern. As much as violence against women is a function of the violence in the larger society, it is a phenomenon in itself. Hence the relation between the two areas is often more complicated than apparent. The acceptance of a 'culture of violence in a society often determines the degree of violence its women suffer', as validated by Scully (2013). This

understanding can thus signify higher acceptability of violence in private spheres in politically unstable or violent regions. This thesis will help explicate the complexity and interaction of societal and political violence(s) acting together on women in the valley of Kashmir.

When it comes to a discussion on violence and women, there are sociological works on violence (Levinson, 1989; Khor, 1993; Smith, 1990; Johnson, 1995; Yodanis 2004) and then there is also work on women in conflict areas (Sayigh, 1981; Cockburn, 1999; Shalhoub, 2009; Theidon, 2009; De Silva, 2009). Both the categories of literature have benefited from varied insights into the feminist theory.

Analogous to this, academic work with its focus on women in Kashmir can be classified into two broader categories. There are some sociological studies about women, most of which use psycho-social methodology (Shafi, 2002; Zutshi, 2002; Akhtar and Jan, 2007; Jan and Masood, 2008; Ara and Gani, 2010; Dabla, 2011; Akhtar, 2013; Amin, 2013; Manhas and Bano, 2013; Suri, 2013; Irshad and Bhat, 2015; Bala and Mir, 2016). These studies make no mention of the larger geopolitics of the region, possibly assuming that political conflict does not affect Kashmir women sociologically. And then some studies directly focus on the effects of state violence on women (Kazi, 2008; Jan and Masood, 2008; Khan, 2010; Rashid, 2011; Duschinski and Hoffman, 2011; Chakraborty and Ganguly, 2013; Naik, 2015; Mathur, 2016). The focus of more recent literature about Kashmiri women, in particular, is on constructing Kashmiri women as an agentic subject (Parashar, 2009, 2011 and 2014; Kanjwal, 2011; Shekhawat, 2014 & 2015, Malik 2019).

In these areas of academic inquiry, sociologically generated violence on women and the political violence faced by women in the conflict areas, the intersection and the interaction between the two can contextualize everyday or quotidian violence suffered by women living in Kashmir. As Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009: 32) argues: “The denial of violence against women in conflict zones has caused both the victimization and the strategies by women, which are largely absent from the social and political analyses of these areas.”

Such forms of violence are largely sociological but highly political, as they are directly or indirectly affected by the existing political conflict in ways of being silenced, side-lined, reinforced, or exacerbated. Thus, there is a need to categorize the examination of these violence(s) altogether as a subject of 'political sociology' such that the impact of politics on the apparently non-political everyday realities of women in a conflict zone is examined. Some examples of such

works that are centered on women's well-being in the case of Kashmir have been conducted by Chennoy (1998), Butalia (2002), Khan (2009), Rashid (2011), Zia (2013), Qayoom (2014), Misri (2014), Kazi (2014) and Dsouza (2016).

For a society like Kashmir that has seen political violence transform into armed violence for nearly three decades, talking about oppression, violence and injustice are synonymous with the multiple policies of the state and its laws and policies. The questions like, whether Kashmiris should have a right to political self-determination, whether demilitarization should take place, if there are human rights violations by the state or whether laws like Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and Public Safety Act (PSA) should be revoked, have more or less consensus in their answers, at least within the community. Meanwhile, there is another set of questions to which responses of the Kashmiri community are not unanimous: whether women should be more visible in public life, whether discrimination and violence against women takes place in Kashmir and needs attention, why are there no women (without patronage or lineage) in both mainstream and also separatists politics? Are women heard and valued? Does their identity based on gender necessarily oppose the larger communal understanding of identity based on nationality?

In trying to understand the violence(s) faced by Kashmiri women, it is important to define, recognize and classify both categories of 'Kashmiri women' and 'The acts of violence'. Kashmiri woman for this study means any woman who is living in Kashmir during the course of this study and is ethnic Kashmiri. During fieldwork I came across women who were not ethnic Kashmiris but were living in Kashmir. Although support was offered to them in their respective cases but their experiences have not been included in the research. As far as the acts of violence are concerned, what we understand as violence differs depending on whose definition are we using: it can be defined differently by the perpetrator of violence as against the victim-survivor of violence. Again, what acts get classified as violence in literature and what is seen as violence by the individuals or the community can be different. What might also differ is the hierarchy of multiple violence(s) in a community, based on the degree and the kinds of violence inflicted or suffered.

"Acts resulting in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life classify as violence" (Salhi, 2013: 1). Departure from understanding violence as pure

physical harm or identifying an act of violence based on the intention of the perpetrator has taken place to include ‘verbal, psychological, or behavioral harm as violence’ (United Nations, 1993). This thesis proposes the conceptualization of two terms: 'in-community' and 'out-community' violence, which are used to cover inter-personal violence and state and political violence, respectively. They are described in detail in the subsequent section of this chapter.

1.2. Violence Against Women in Kashmir: Need for Care Ethics

The conflation of violence with the political violence in a conflict zone is common where the politics of violence seems to determine violence only in terms of “an act of the perpetrator of violence,” leaving a gap in understanding violence based on 'the subject: the survivor of violence or the victim'. Using the two terms, survivor and victim interchangeably is also a point of debate. To that end, an analysis of violence(s) survived by women in their personal spaces has been made, most of which is still not defined as violence in the community or the existing scholarly work pertaining to Kashmir. Subsequently, an examination of violence(s) by the state institutions is also carried out: about which there is some awareness in the community as highlighted through the narratives of women research participants, and which has also been receiving some attention in academia, more recently.

The thesis examines and analyses the aspects of violence which straddle, and put into question the binaries of personal and political, home and outside, and other dualities like peacetime and wartime. It attempts to understand violence as a spectrum rather than a monolith, as the same is reflected in the narratives of women research participants for the project, whether victims or activists. Taking a note of various feminist studies about women in different global conflict zones, one can argue that if there is one common thing that connects the people of conflict zones across the world, it is violence. And if there is one thing that connects the women across the globe, it is violence, again. Hence, women living in the conflict zone of Kashmir experience violence for being women and for being Kashmiris and thus for being Kashmiri women in multiple ways. These violence(s) overlap, reinforce each other, and intersect in the lives of Kashmiri women, even though some are visible, many are still invisible; some are fought against, many are obscure; some are defined using international frameworks of human rights, while as others are based in 'honor', culture, and tradition – which is understood as a way of self-preservation by a community that feels politically disempowered otherwise but no other than women bear the cost of such

preservation, as highlighted through this detailed ethnographic study.

This thesis is hence a study aimed at extricating the spaces, and margins that women occupy in between these violent intersections, and are marginally and conditionally included in the ambit of 'politics of care' (Hoover 2019); the condition being that the violence they face in some way should be reinforcing a particular geopolitical narrative of the 'care-r': the family, the community or the state. Care Ethics recognizes that focus be on "relations of power that govern attitudes, discources, and policy around care" (Hamington 2015). The term Ethics because it recognizes "moral or valuable" relations and throughtout the thesis, whether discussing the police's attitude towards the cases of domestic violence, Mohalla committee's approach in overemphasizing reconciliation or the politician discounting the material struggles of women who they one one side recognize as victims of state violence but on the other hand are left to continue in the state of 'loss and lack'. In brief, this thesis strongly advocates that the physicality and 'everydayness' of violence is consequently to be viewed politically from the vantage point of complex social, cultural, and economic processes. The thesis emphasizes that understanding one form of violence does not necessarily entail ignoring and obscuring the other and a broader a gender-centered theory of violence against women is required to understand complex realities of women in a political conflict; case in point being a 50-year-old political conflict of Indian-administered Kashmir.

1.3. Violence against women: Feminist reading of Interpersonal violence (IPV)

The violence which was earlier regarded strictly as an act of physical harm has expanded to include verbal, psychological, or behavioral harm as violence. In 1993, the United Nations in its General Assembly defined violence inclusively to include "any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (Salhi, 2013: 1). Violence against women is a global phenomenon, but the way it is constructed, perceived, and addressed may vary from country to country or even community to community. Therefore, it depends on our willingness and analysis to understand violence broadly. Violence as per the World Health Organization's report (2002:38) is the "intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation." While this definition excludes unintentional behavior that

may cause harm, Gelle's (2016) definition classifies those acts as violent that may be perceived as intentional by the victim, if not by the perpetrator. For Gelle (2016), any activity carried out with the intention of, or perceived intention of causing physical pain or injury to another person is violence. This definition however limits itself to ambits of physical violence, probably because of the visibility of the physical violence as against the more invisible or intangible forms of violence.

A broad definition of violence may also include "the control of women's bodies, segregation in the workplace and limiting women's access to wealth, gender stereotyping through textbooks, media, verbal aggression and humiliation, control of women's finances and income, forced veiling and restricted access to education and health care" (Salhi, 2013: 2; 12; 13). Violence can also be defined through/by the institutions in which it is embedded, or the disciplines used to understand it like the criminal justice system, ethics and religion, sociological and psychological violence, armed violence, and state violence or similar. One can speak of the cultures of violence, domestic violence, intimate-partner violence, of violent cultures, mob violence, or gender violence, respectively (Green, 1999: 5). However, limiting analysis of violence to the agents and intentions, as suggested by Green, "fails to convey the pervasive forms of violence that are integral to structures, institutions, ideologies, and histories" (1999: 7). Galtung, a pioneer of peace and conflict studies, says that structural violence shall not be assumed to be less cruel than any physical violence just because it is invisible, or may not be understood as such (1969: 173). It embodies hierarchy and inequality but may not be immediately pointed out. Along similar lines, Green (1999: 8) highlights that quotidian violence "emerges out of the social relations," which is a helpful perspective for this research project.

As per the UN declaration in December 1993, violence against women is a manifestation of historically "unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and the prevention of full advancement of women." Theoretically, the emphasis on the feminist understanding of violence is on historical traditions of the "patriarchal family, contemporary constructions of masculinity and femininity, and structural constraints which lead to systemic violence against women" (Johnson, 1995: 284). This violence is globally present in various types and forms, but some forms of violence are specific to politically volatile societies, as discussed in the next sub-section.

1.4. Feminist Scholarship and Violence in IR and War: Political and state violence

Juxtaposing routine violence of everyday life as briefly discussed in the previous sub-section against the sudden extraordinary violence such as "the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, the state violence of Argentina's Dirty War, and organized criminal violence" is a daunting task as per Scheper-Hughes (2004). The same holds for any discussion of quotidian violence in Indian-held Kashmir, where state violence and a demand for a political resolution of the Kashmir dispute comprises the dominant reality of the lives of Kashmiri people. Taking a slight departure from Hughes position which seems to suggest that the juxtaposition is a deliberate academic exercise, for the purpose of study and analysis; the juxtaposition or intersection of "multiple violence(s)" (Menjivar, 2011) is in fact a reality of people's lives leading to corporeal and material impact for the people living in conditions and environment which Monica McWilliams calls "societies in stress" (1998), as shall be elaborated.

Drawing on a wide range of academic literature concerned with defining notions of violence, we find that violence is "slippery", as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgeois (2004: 1) argue. Along the same lines, academics have oftentimes highlighted the fact that violence is heavily theorized and consistently empirically studied and tracked it nonetheless remains "omnipresent and ubiquitous with its obliteration tantalizingly and achingly out of reach. The aim is to keep violence at bay, yet violence haunts every day." (Zalewski, 2013) Indeed, the complexities of defining and understanding violence is widely recognized, and even more so in the domain of violence against women, not least within societies under stress where this phenomenon is arguably even more complicated than in other societies. In this context, Randa (2006) describes the latter as "peacetime violence" and Zizek (2009), sees former as "acts of crime and terror and international conflict." Importantly for this research project, Cockburn describes the relation between the two in form of a continuum that exists between "violence at a domestic level right up to international level" (1999, 2; 18), as does Liz Kelly (1998). This, as we shall see, will be particularly relevant to the research project. Within the literature exploring linkages between different forms of violence(s), Holt argues that the linkages should not obscure some violence while focusing on some (Holt, 2014: 46). The extent to which political conflict affects women's 'telling,' detracts attention from 'private' acts of violence, McWilliams (1979, 111-112). Once again, this is of direct relevance to this research project looking at the complexities of different forms of violence intersecting in the

context of women in Kashmir. Amongst the studies which address the intersection between political and private spheres of violence, these are oftentimes limited in their accuracy due to the lack of national accounting mechanisms, particularly during periods of intense conflict. In situations of conflict, the categorization of violent acts in the context of the family, the community, and the state maybe even less appropriate, because the locus for the abuse is not tied to any single category, but instead becomes a pervasive and interactive system for legitimizing violence. As McWilliams (1998: 119) suggests, "Irrespective of the conflict or the culture, it is now generally accepted that violence is a part of life directly, or indirectly, for women in almost all societies and that it is perpetuated by dominant beliefs, traditions, and institutions wherever it occurs."

A unifying definition of violence is any act or situation that puts a person to physical and emotional harm, as was understood in my fieldwork in which I interviewed two categories of women: activists and victim-survivors of violence, with an overlap between the two categories with some survivors turning activists. To discover and understand this intersection is neither to depoliticize the direct violence of war and state violence, nor is it to equate everyday violence with political violence or warfare. The attempt through my research is to challenge the binary of violence of war, and violence at home and to understand the intersection between the larger violence which is political on the one hand (international, on borders, involving military and strategy), and the violence of every day on the other (IPV in the domestic sphere, sexual abuse, systematized criminal offences of dowry deaths, honor killings, murders camouflaged as suicides, and gender-based control of women's bodies sanctioned by religion and culture). Taking women's own experiences of war, of political violence, and understanding the concepts of security, peace, and violence in their own experiences seriously, "demonstrates valuing women's understanding of their world", as Pettman describes in her work *Wordling Women* (1996: 757). In-state terror and civil war, as in family violence, perpetrators are known, and may never be held accountable or be removed from the victim-survivor's lives. A more comprehensive view of security, which begins by asking what, or who, mostly threatens particular groups of people, will disrupt any notion of 'national security. For the greatest threats to people's security in many cases, are local state agents or military personnel, or 'home' men who are constructed as soldier-protectors, or sometimes liberators of the very people they endanger, challenging the very conceptualization of home as a safe haven, or national security as the topmost priority of the state (Pettman, 1996).

Feminism exposes myriad violence(s): of gender, of sex, of identity, the domestic violence of love, the everyday violence of tolerance (Brown, 2006), as well as the relentless violence of the ordinary (Butler, 2010; Zizek, 2009). It is also emphasized in the literature that the brutalities of ordinary family life and the routinization of sexual violence and economic deprivation remain shocking (Enloe, 2007; Alexander and Hawkesworth, 2004). However, in this constant exposure of shocking violence still lies the demand to garner enough international attention to a wide range of violence(s) to abate them. In the process of doing so, "feminist knowledge about cross-national gender violence and itsrelationship to international conflict and economic development has acquired a measure ofauthority within the field" (Zalewski, 2013).

Despite the clear identification of many violence(s), even the most 'obvious' violence can go unseen. Feminists insist that, much more frequently than imagined, we do not see, recognize or know violence well enough, particularly when women are involved mostly because of the historic devaluation of women, and the discourses that do not consider women as complete human beings or individuals with rights. Feminists continually urge that we need to keep observing, documenting, and interrogating violence to know it better, and to bring an end to it. This is especially true in feminist IR, which has urged attention to militarized violence (Enloe, 2007), global economic violence (Marchand and Runyan, 2011), neocolonial violence (Agathangelou and Ling, 2009), discursive violence (Shepherd, 2008), masculinist violence (Parpart and Zalewski, 2009) and violence among/of women (Sjoberg and Gentry, 2011; Zalewski, 2013).

1.5. The need for a scholarly enquiry, and the emergence of my research questions and hypothesis

It is precisely the aforementioned feminist premise, that we must keep interrogating violence in order to understand and oppose it, which served as the main motivator behind my Ph.D. project. Based on my first-hand immersive experience of being a woman in Kashmir, combined with my in-depth engagement with the scholarly literature relating to (violence against) women in Kashmir, and theories of violence, my research questions and hypothesis slowly, but surely started to take shape. Thus setting out to fill a glaring gap within the existing body of academic literature on violence against women in conflict settings, I designed my project around the following research questions:

- What are the various kinds and types of violence(s) against women (VaW) experienced by women in Kashmir?
- In what ways do Kashmiri women define their lived experiences of violence (both political and personal), and in what ways do the existing institutions and value systems shape the gender constructions that cause and/or reinforce VaW?
- How does 'in-community' and 'out-community' violence against women overlap and form a hierarchy of violence(s)?
- How gender is based analysis useful/what dimensions does it highlight in understanding and addressing multiple violence(s), the hierarchy of violence(s), and its overall impact on women in Kashmir?

The central hypothesis and research argument advanced in this thesis is that in-community violence is denied by the community, whereas, the out-community violence is highlighted. On the other hand, the state institutions play down the out-community violence, and highlight the in-community violence as a result of which Kashmiri Women are pushed into margins between the two without much support on ground. In the thesis, an attempt is made to exemplify both the categories of violence as well as the lack of support to victim-survivors of violence, rather exacerbation of violence all across the institutions has been examined and analyzed, in detail.

The social and political institutions like families, state institution; cultural and religious practices; nation and militarism; and, the spaces like mainstream/electoral and separatist/resistance politics have been interrogated for their support and propagation of gender constructions that create and reinforce violence against women (VaW) in Kashmir.

Through a detailed examination of the various forms of violence(s) survived by women in Indian-controlled Kashmir, the thesis advances the hypothesis that a broader conceptualization of violence against women is required to fully make sense of the politics of violence, in a political conflict of Kashmir, and beyond. The thesis thus advances an understanding of the generation, and perpetuation of violence against women by various state and non-state institutions, whilst, also highlighting the response of families, police, judiciary, the community and the larger Indian military control to the women. It argues through narratives of Kashmiri women (victim-survivors of violence, local informants such as journalists, lawyers and women activists and a detailed ethnographic participatory research), that the creation, reinforcement and exacerbation of violence

against women take places through various community and institutional practices, sometimes even in the name of mitigating violence against women.

To explore the research questions and hypothesis and advance the scholarly literature on violence against women in conflict settings, this thesis examines two broad strands of violence against women in Kashmir: gender based inter-personal violence (which I conceptualize as 'in-community') and the violence produced by state and political conflict (which I conceptualize as 'out-community' violence). Thus, this thesis, in contrast to conventional scholastic approaches through which violence against women in Kashmir has been approached, uses a single frame of analysis of gender to argue that both the strands of violence need to be identified. However, the two are not mutually exclusive and have common origins and ways of operation and intersect, reinforcing and exacerbating each other. Whereas this overlap has been identified, and studied in other political conflicts by scholars from Anthropology and Feminist IR, the analysis has not been extended to Kashmir. Hence, this thesis approaches a broader conceptualization of violence against women in Kashmir in an inter-disciplinary manner using Feminist IR, Anthropology, Gender Studies and Sociology. As I outline in greater detail within the Methodology chapter, the research approach of participative action which is rooted in social work is utilized; making this a project of Feminist Praxis that challenges all forms of violence(s) against women, ranging from epistemic to actual physical violence irrespective of the perpetrator or their politics. As shall become evident throughout the thesis, I have utilized an intersectional lens, along with a focus on standpoint theory and corporeal feminism, helping to counter the common critique of standpoint theory as being inadequate in that it allegedly essentializes women.

1.6. Thesis structure

To present the central arguments and in-depth analysis of the field research findings, placing the voices of Kashmiri women at the centre stage, the thesis has been divided into seven chapters. Following on from this introductory chapter, the methodology chapter discusses the process utilized in shaping, conducting and writing this research. It provides insights into Participatory Action Research (PAR), as a research paradigm, and formation and work of a Feminist Collaborative support group called Kashmir Women's Collective, where women would seek support and be interviewed by way of interviews, and ethnographic analysis of their experiences and their journeys to seek remedy or justice. This chapter contributesto academic knowledge on

research methods in highly complex research environments by discussing the challenges, and advantages of conducting Participatory Action Research against all odds.

Subsequently, in the two chapters that follow (chapters three and four), my principal contribution to knowledge is found in my conceptualization of 'in-community violence'. Here, my field research interviews, and observations are analyzed through the lens of academic literature, drawing out new theorizations of violence against women in conflict settings, which are not only relevant to the context of Kashmir, but indeed elsewhere too. With violence(s) like inter-state conflict, anti-state movement, state impunity and armed rebellion, everyday violence against women is relegated to a secondary place and the ways in which woman is vulnerable to certain forms of abuse and violence in families is examined in detail.

Chapter Three focuses specifically on socio-cultural, and religious bases for gender construction in ways that perpetuate interpersonal violence against women, which has not garnered much attention in the existing literature or community discourses. These matters which are otherwise trivialized, have been discussed through long narratives of women, giving credence to their voice and experiences. The chapter also discusses the 'weak and ineffective', in fact re-victimizing responses of the state institutions in mitigating violence against women, which in turn can also be defined as a kind of violence. This thesis is hence not hesitant about naming any practice buttressed in culture, religion or state as violence; unlike the previous researches on the subject which tend to be somewhat selective, as is discussed in the chapter. The violence of control, abuse, physical, economic and psychological violence(s) are discussed in this chapter, as is their basis.

In the subsequent and the fourth chapter, two forms of violence existing in the community are named as violence: 'honor' killings which have found no mentions in any literature, policy or public discourse in Kashmir to date; and 'murders of women which are masked as suicides', both by the murdering families and the police. The chapter exemplifies how the bodies are controlled, surveilled and disciplined giving a broader conceptualization of power, not limited to the power of the state. As such, chapters three and four together focus on narratives of violence centered on victim-survivors of violence, not the perpetrator which is otherwise the most common approach in understanding crimes against women.

Subsequently, in chapters five and six, I develop the conceptualization of 'out-community violence. Chapter five examines the institutionalized and militarized 'out-community' violence

through an interrogation of the concept of security, militarized masculinity, and war seen through the lens of Feminist IR. The chapter analyzes an extensive body of ethnographic field observations from my fieldwork, as well as auto-ethnographic reflections of my own experience of living in Kashmir. Furthermore, the chapter also makes an important contribution by presenting a discussion regarding the shrinking space for women in (oppositional) politics in Kashmir - both Indian national and Kashmiri national narratives (electoral and separatist, respectively). It aims at contextualizing how militarized living is experienced by women in Kashmir, and how this intersects with the 'in-community' violence experienced by women.

Chapter six takes the discussion of 'out-community' violence further, categorizing the direct and indirect impact of 'out-community' violence on women in Kashmir. The chapter also elucidates the ‘violence of nation and aspired nationhood’. Forms of state violence such as enforced disappearances and killings not only leave behind half-widows, and widows with no institution (community or state)catering to their material needs, but also bring about a unique politics in which victim-bodies of women are necessitated to garner support to regional politics. The subtle forms of violence by way of ‘visibility and non-visibility’, and the norms thereof, which are perpetrated on women protestors or stone-throwers are also discussed. This serves to highlight the high levels of complexity required when seeking to make sense of violence(s) in the lives of women in Kashmir, where experiences of violence also co-constitute women's political response and forms of resistance.

In the concluding seventh chapter, the key arguments and findings of the research project are reiterated and brought together, along with a discussion around the reasons for silence around in-community violence through a discussion of what is called ‘3 E’s framework’, which is again an original academic contribution of the thesis. The chapter ties together the forms of violence discussed throughout the thesis, making a case for an understanding of violence(s) against women as intersecting and overlapping in complex ways. Ultimately, it is argued that the hierarchy and politics found in Kashmir must not be ignored, to broadly and holistically conceptualize violence against women in a conflict region.

2. Methodology: Participatory Action Research to explore the intersectional politics of identity and violence faced by women in Kashmir

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology utilized in conducting, shaping and writing this research project, and is divided into five main sections. Firstly, it provides a brief review of the existing research on 'Kashmir, Women and Violence' drawing connections to the review of literature briefly undertaken in the previous chapter. Secondly, it provides insights into Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a research paradigm, with a discussion around the research sample and the research, as well as the support group; Kashmir Women's Collective, which played a paramount role in the implementation of the complex field research. The chapter subsequently explains the methods employed to collect and analyze data, including interviews, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis of lived experience, and so on. Subsequently, the theoretical framework is outlined, that is; the lens used to frame Kashmiri women in the research, which borrows from Feminist theories like Standpoint, Corporeal feminism and concepts of Securitization and Masculine Militarization situated within the Feminist International Relations. The chapter then discusses the notion of locating the self, as well as the issue of boundaries between the self and the research topic and subjects, namely; the so-called 'insider-outsider dilemma.' Finally, the chapter addresses ethical considerations of collaborative field work, including threats, challenges and limitations of conducting research in politically volatile environments.

Each of these sections is significant, in the sense that each provides the reader with a perspective and context. It also gives the reader an understanding of my personal standpoint and situated-ness within the research. In essence, this chapter is designed to answer the questions of 'Why', 'What' and 'How' of this research: why I am researching this topic, what I am attempting to explore, and how I have accomplished it. The 'what and why part' is also discussed in the introductory chapter, which reviewed the existing literature about women and violence broadly and in the context of Kashmir. To this end, I have also chosen to include a brief outline of the literature about 'women and Kashmir' here, in order to lead into the research design in the subsequent sections.

2.2. Women's lives in Kashmir: Existing Research on 'Kashmir, Women and Violence'

In order to allow for an in-depth understanding of the intersection of violence in lives of women in Indian Kashmir, I have chosen to carry out ethnographic case studies of women who have survived violence, as well as women activists. I have done so through a feminist-phenomenological exploration of their 'identity-consciousness' in relation to being Kashmiri, and being women. I have pursued this extensive study by asking women questions about their experiences of violence at home and outside, following their journeys in police stations, law courts and communities.

Women's own lived experiences of violence are indeed the focus of this thesis. Such a perspective allows for an understanding of the intertwining nationalist and gender-based identity and its politics. This project challenges the silences, both within Kashmiri community, as well as in academic investigation about Kashmir, which prevent gendered contextualization of women and their inclusion in understanding the political conflict. In that, it moves away from the binary subjectivity of 'women victims of conflict' and 'agentic woman as an active political subject'; both rigidly drawn positions are fraught, with partial and inadequate analyses of women's lives.

By highlighting multiple forms of violence endured and survived by women; from structural to political and from epistemic to cultural, a dual case is made, not only to contextualize women as gendered subjects, but also to include these gendered subjects, with all their complexities, into the process of knowledge creation. Since Feminist International Relations (IR) challenges the traditional understanding of IR and its women-exclusive process of knowledge creation, this thesis makes a unique contribution in including women in Kashmir as socio-political subjects, taking the centre-stage of the research and the ensuing analysis. As such, I have attempted, through this research project to strengthen the inclusion of structural and discursive construction of the gendered aspects of being a woman by interrogating them..

A study of the existing academic discourse around Kashmir, violence and women, highlights conflation of violence against women with state violence, with a diminutive exploration of intra-community violence or 'in-community' violence as I refer to it my project. Also there is almost no

intersectional understanding of both 'in-community' violence and 'out-community' violence in the studies so far.

In the literature review seen in the previous chapter, it was noted that most of the studies about the subject of violence experienced by Kashmiri women are sociological in nature, with no political analysis. They have largely been conducted using a psychosocial methodology. A psycho-social study can be understood as one which "explores interactive relationships between self, culture and society. This approach is defined by an exploration of the links between the internal and external worlds - individualized and socialized." (See e.g. the Association for Psychosocial Studies, 2019). Some examples of such studies have been carried out by for instance Shafi (2002), Zutshi (2002), Akhtar and Jan (2007), Jan and Masood (2008), Raina (2009), Ara and Gani (2010), Dabla (2011), Akhtar (2013), Amin (2013), Manhas and Bano (2013), Suri (2013), Suri (2013), Qayoom (2014), Irshad and Bhat (2015), Bala and Mir (2016). These studies, only a few in number, are not extensive, and do not holistically portray the gravity and the lived reality of women's lives in Kashmir and also do not utilize feminist or gender lens.[1]

There are a few more studies that focus on the state violence against Kashmiri women, including examples published by Batulia (2002), Kazi (2008), Khan Jan and Masood (2008), Rashid (2011), Rashid (2011), Duschinski and Hoffman (2011), Chakraborty and Ganguly (2013), Misri (2014), Naik (2015) and Mathur (2016) Malik(2019). These studies are detailed but limitthe analysis of women in relation to the state, mostly.

The research conducted so far rarely explore women's experiences and lived realities, in an all embracing manner. However, a few recent studies examine both the social and the political conditions affecting women's lives, for example, Bhat (2011), Nazir et al. (2012), Zia (2013) and Dsouza (2016). The studies look at both social and political aspects of being a widow or a half-widow in Kashmir.

My critique of understanding conflict through dominant discourses of security, nationalism, regional politics and IR is that first of all, its understanding politics only in terms of state and its policies leaving behind the power relations beyond state, in families, in cultural practices etc.. Subsequently, it confines socio-political conditions and reality to normative male experience and opinion. The confinement is uncritical and is likely so because nearly all the public

[1] As discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

positions or positions of power are occupied by men. Thirdly, it genders women only in order to understand state violence on women, thus conflating violence against women as state violence. The perspective, otherwise un-genders/de-genders woman, leaving the subject of Kashmiri woman, confined to the regional political identity.

Significant lack of broad gendered perspectives in the existing research about Kashmir motivated me to design and implement this first-hand field research. My work allows for a much-needed exploration of the widely understood 'not-so-political' aspects in an otherwise politically understood and researched place. 'Not-so-political' here refers to the politics and power dynamics of being a woman, which is generally not understood as political, especially in a political conflict. I am bringing out common women's voices, through their situated-ness, using their ontology of experiencing and embodying violence. This approach is unique, complex to carry out in concrete terms, and moreover contributes to a democratization of academic research by bringing in unheard and ordinary voices and experiences to the centre of analysis.

2.3. Participatory Action Research (PAR) as research paradigm

Process involving a relationship between the researcher and the members of the community of study that goes beyond data gathering by the researcher and offers solutions/benefit to the research subjects' issues often requires more effort, investment, on part of the researcher. Researchers who feel are deeply invested in any cause/comunity tend to take up a form of scholarship combined with practice that feminism refers to it as praxis. One such paradigm is that of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which is the approach employed in this thesis. Participatory research practices do not necessarily follow the logo-centric, dispassionate view of the world, but rather take a position and justify it with empirical support.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) has been used by feminist social work researchers and the model although not straitjacketed has five main underlying principles (Renzetti, 1995; Reinhar 1992 in Mark, 1996: 71-72). First; analysis of gender is central to a research plan, in which male responses are not treated as a standard norm. Second; it gives voice to women's everyday experiences. Third; an orientation towards action research, that aims at problem solving. Fourth; no claims to absolute objectivity are made, instead reflexivity is practiced. Fifth; collaborator techniques are utilized in which the respondents are considered as partners and co-creators of knowledge in place of a mere interviewed population.

Action research is not a new concept and has been known for some seventy years. It is deeply linked with social change. Noffke (1997) says that the term 'action research' also appeared in 1961 in a speech of Martin Luther King (in Mcniff and Whitehead, 2006: 36). Policy and practice require an evidence base through empirical data collection, but in situations where no or little research is present, it is different to put things together. In traditional social science research researchers produce theory which the practitioners apply, whereas the PAR challenges the division of theory and practice (Mcniff and Whitehead, 2006: 5). Action research is a liberating form of inquiry, because practitioners get a chance to apply their educational values in the field and produce knowledge about their area of inquiry. In terms of the process of knowledge-creation and providing support as part of this research project, it can be noted that both were more or less non-hierarchical and participatory. Attention was paid to 'researching with' instead of 'researching down' and this was generally extremely challenging because the survivors of abuse and violence are extremely vulnerable, and feel that anyone has power over them. Attention has thus been paid throughout this research project, as is expected of a feminist research, to power dynamics, boundaries and relations. Action research generates a special kind of knowledge, which is of practical value, unlike 'spectator perspective', which utilizes people as research subjects for individual research with little or no benefit for the research respondents (Mcniff and Whitehead, 2006: 12). As the scholars suggest, it is "a rigorous and stringent research process that can be seen as systematic enquiry" (2006: 20). Whyte (1991: 7) adds that "PAR evolves out of three streams of intellectual development and action", also highlighting that it constitutes a social research methodology, entails participation in decision-making, and ensures to produce action oriented practical results. The researcher in PAR is seen to have no monopoly on explaining social worlds, but respondents can be empowered or their capacities can be built primarily through participation and secondarily, in the process, a research can be produced (Whyte, 1991: 131) which brings about 'transformation' at the heart of PAR, making it feminist in approach.

Paulo Freire, a well-known Brazilian educator, argues that dialogical relationship is characterized by "subjects who meet to name the world in order to transform it" (1972, 136). Naming the experience of violence, as women understand it in Kashmir, is the basis of the project, in which it tried to challenge a narrow definition of violence as physical harm or state violence. [2]This

[2] For detailed discussion on Violence, see previous chapter.

participation of the research respondent is active in PAR. It focuses on Gustavsen's idea of "democratic dialogue" (1985) which is Habermas' criteria for evaluating the degree of democracy in a dialogue aimed at democratizing the world (Gustavsen, 1985: 474-475).

A researcher may introduce new ideas or concepts and participants may influence the knowledge-generation, but the new knowledge must be resolved based on the participant's interest. This is the core of 'co-generative dialogue' (Whyte, 1991: 137) and of PAR, as well.

2.3.1. Kashmir Women's Collective

Victim survivors of 'violence, abuse and discrimination' were inducted through a voluntary group called Kashmir Women's Collective (KWC), inspired by Combahee River Collective made by Black Women in Boston, US in 1974. Combahee River Collective for the first time described and worked against the violence faced by Black women, at the hands of White men, white women as well as Black men.[3] This categorization by Combahee inspired me to classify violence against women, into 'in and out community violence': violence within Kashmiri community and violence of conflict (including Indian armed forces and militants).Although the categorization is messy with people from Kashmir being recruited in Indian armed forces, and police that mainly comprises of the local men also not neatly fitting into either in-community or out-community group. Or, the violence by local armed militants falls into out-community violence, not in-community violence. The categorization for this study instead of being an oppositional binary points out the fault-lines where the gender identity is underplayed and national/aspired national identity dominates. That is how the rape of a Kashmiri woman by a Kashmir man is downplayed and the rape of a Kashmiri woman by an Indian armed person is highlighted as has been highlighted in the thesis. This categorization has also been helpful in establishing connection between underplayed forms of violence against women as taking place intra-community. It is not to say that the state is not a part of the community or the people involved in conflict as armed militia are outside of the community but this categorization identifies the existing nameless/tacit fault lines instead of creating them and hence helps in understanding the politics emerging from it. In fact no categorization is neat as such, the categories of war-time and peace time violence used by Feminist IR theorists are not mutually exclusive or war-time violence doesn't negate the presence of peace time violence in wartime but is rather additive.

[3] See work by Collins cited in the thesis for more on the feminist collective of Combahee.

Going back to KWC and how women reached KWC was that information through social media and word of mouth was circulated about KWC being a group that supports women survivors of violence which resulted in women survivors of violence approaching KWC. In supporting some women, and with more social media and media visibility, the process snowballed with more women approaching KWC. Women were supported in multiple ways, regardless of their participating in the study. Keeping in view that there is no popular discourse on feminism in Kashmir, and that no "women-only" support structures exist, newfound support in the form of KWC was readily accessed by women who were willing to share their 'experiences of violence' and longed to be supported. The reason to establish KWC was not merely recruitment, but creation of an actual space that allows women to vent out, discuss, and be believed without any judgment..The objective was to make women feel safe, along with being offered ways to deal with their situation and feel supported through the whole process. Hence, my audience was not captive, but the group was open to anyone who needed support, hence the question of my biases or selectivity in choosing the women research participants was minimized. Ensuing this, no woman who approached was turned back in these three years, and the initiative continues with free legal and psychological support to the women. Although women from both urban and rural areas approached KWC cutting across class yet the study does not claim to be representational in nature. The aim was to understand the construction and experience of surviving varied forms of violence by women, response of the institutions to it, and its politics.

Keeping principles of social work, like 'informed consent, privacy, non-judgment and confidentiality' in mind, women were heard patiently, for hours. Translating (from Kashmiri and Urdu to English) and transcribing the interviews, was one of the most demanding parts of my project despitebeing well versed with all the three languages.

I sought support from a f woman lawyer to help legally with cases of a few women. A woman researcher and a few volunteers (female college students) put themselves forward to support the work, once they had seen cases being highlighted by KWC over social media. The commonality of having a feminist approach and a strong sense of gender-based identity got a few like-minded volunteers together to form KWC.

KWC is currently an actual support group for women survivors of violence, in ways like - accompanying women to police stations, courts, referring them to psychiatrists, doctors and counselors. KWC was registered in the court of law as a Voluntary Trust such that the work is

not seen as illegal. The magistrate vested with power to register Trusts remarked: *"How will you women change the society by excluding men from the group membership?*" It was undoubtedly the first all-women's group that he had registered in hiscareer, which he remarked. A dismissive surprise was not limited to the magistrate, but even theowner at the matting shop in the main city of Srinagar, from whom we purchased matting for our KWC office after pooling out some money. He smirked, when he made the bill in the name of Women's Collective and asked condescendingly, *"What do you people do in the collective? Empower women by breaking marriages?"* The lawyer in the group responded in irritation saying, *"god forbid, the day your daughter faces violence in marriage, you might need help for her. Then you can come to us to know what we do"*. These preconceived notions about women's groups and

feminism in general, hint at the hostility towards women getting together for any cause, and particularly a lack of understanding around women's rights in a society which is easily mobilized around cause of political and national identity. .

Since there was no such support group present in the society, that would not judge women, would believe them, and keep their details confidential, women were willing to talk to me at KWC for research interviews. In fact, this participatory research became ethnographic in nature, in which I would follow each case through its legal proceedings and public sittings like in mohalla committees. Many victims' family members are known to me now and rely on me and other collective volunteers for support. In manyways this thesis also belongs to other KWC members – lawyers, counselors and volunteers, and not just to me and the victims of violence or the activists and interlocutors who were interviewed.

2.3.2. Research Sample: Who are these women?

Patton writes, "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples" (Patton, 1990: 106). My focus in this research was to explore major themes around violence and any emergent patterns. Further, a specific approach highlighted by Patton was "maximum variation sampling." Patton states, "this strategy [maximum variation sampling] for purposeful sampling aims at capturing and describing central themes and turns an apparent weakness [small sample size] into a strength." The rationale is that "Any common patterns that emerge are of particular interest andvalue in capturing core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts…" (Patton, 1990: 108-109).Therefore, the sample was purposive and small in terms of activist women and open to any women victim-survivors of violence without any specific conditions of recruitment.

Both sometimes overlapped by way of some women identifying as survivors as well as activists. Although, I did not have any control over the sample as any woman who needed support approached KWC but the sample in itself was diverse. It consisted of women with variation in region (urban and rural), education (illiterate and well educated), and in terms of employment (dependent and earning). Some women had master's degrees – worked as bankers, engineers, doctors and lecturers, whereas, some had never been to school. Some women had stopped working because their husbands did not want them to work. In terms of class, again the sample was crosscutting, with some interviewee women with household income of as less as 5000 INR/month to as high as 200000 INR/ month. The similarity of their experiences cutting across the axes of caste, location and class was striking. Women faced domestic abuse of similar nature, desertion was common, gender expectations from daughter-in-law and wife were strikingly similar as was the entitlement of their husbands. This homogeneity of experiences is alarming as it highlights a high degree of acceptance of violence and its justification in culture and religion, across categories of class and location within the community. Although, at KWC we offered support to women, having suffered any kind of violence in general, yet women with cases of IPV, SH and abuse at home contacted KWC not many having survived political violence reached out. It is an interesting phenomenon, because in a politically volatile environment, where widows, families of the disappeared and other victims of state violence are not uncommon, why would more women with domestic abuse be the ones to reach out to KWC? The reasons as to why women with interpersonalviolence contacted us over women with political violence, are possibly the following:

a. No intervention in the state violence is seen as possible through a small women's support group.
b. Victim-survivors of state abuse organize, mobilize, politicize and have support of the community largely whereas women suffering from domestic and personal abuse do not have any support beginning with the family.
c. Quantitatively, it concerns more women as in-community violence is pervasive with little attention, whereas, a lot of focus – in academia and by the community, is set on women survivors of state violence. However, whether that support actually transforms the situation of victim-survivors or impacts the well-being of women is debatable and discussed in detail in the thesis.

d. The comments on KWC social media page (Facebook) often criticized KWC of highlighting cases of domestic abuse but 'not discussing political violence enough'. The slant on part of KWC was however not deliberate, since most of the cases that we received were not concerning political violence and when they were, they were highlighted with equal diligence on KWC Facebook page This criticism from the community validates my research hypothesis that in-community violence is denied, downplayed, and any discussion to it is seen politically motivated. This in turn not only shrinks space to discuss and intervene in in-community violence but creates suspicion around any such project for being statist and a diversion from the state violence.. This suspicion is an outcome of prevailing political conflict. Hence, it is fair to say that the only violence against women that the community acknowledges is the state/political violence (out community violence). It is deliberated in detail in the conclusion chapter by way of arriving at 3E's framework. What methods were adopted to conduct the research and analyze the data follows.

2.4. Methods

This thesis has adopted an interdisciplinary approach, borrowing methodologically and analytically from anthropology, social work, gender studies and feminist International Relations. Each chapter has its theoretical premise and the analytical concepts that have been utilized to frame and assess the fieldwork be it data obtained through interviews, observations, lived experiences, media portrayal in certain cases, or ethnographic details and reflections. My research design is qualitative, exploratory, interpretive type, which tries to understand the interaction of personal and political in the lives of women in Kashmir. It does so, through exploring their consciousness around violence, as women and as Kashmiri; what Husserl also calls 'the philosophy of experience' (Kokelmans, 1967). Methods like interviews – in person and group, group discussions,narratives and ethnographic observations have been utilized. In addition, references to content of media stories published in newspapers, reports published by government bodies and bodies like women's commission and other human rights groups, and social media sites (like Facebook, YouTube, etc.) have been made abundantly. In addition, my own auto-ethnographic reflections informs of vignettes are utilized as well in part second of out-community violence.

2.4.1. Phenomenology

Phenomenology explores the process of experience, and its domain is to study how people construct and report reality or experience. In phenomenology, it is left to the individual to report and explain in order to understand how their consciousness is shaped up. It is a methodology that has roots in philosophy and uses 'reduction' and 'bracketing' as reflective techniques. It tries to explore the meaning of a lived experience, at the level of consciousness. It is seen as the "observed's method not the observer's" (Garfinkel, 2005). In that it aligns well with participatory action research in which the research participants define their problem and decide on the kind of support/solution required with researcher as a means to facilitate it, through which, they gather the data. Phenomenology explores the cognitive and consciousness side of human experience with no specific modalities of engagement. A phenomenologist's job is to explore subjective ways of reconstructing lived experience (Schuzz in Eberle, 2012). It not only explores the philosophical understanding of lived experience, in order to understand how social reality is assigned meaning by the actors, but in more radical ways, the actors themselves are seen objects of this social reality, not necessarily subjects (Butler, 1988).

Phenomenology as philosophy dates back to Kant and Hegel, but Husserl is often seen as a pioneer in the field of phenomenology because of his seminal work, 'ideas'. Husserl, Mead and Merleau-Ponty discuss in their work mundane ways, in which subjects constitute the social reality through; language, gestures and actions and behaviors of symbolic meaning. In this study, an attempt was madeto do a phenomenological exploration or mapping of women's understanding and experience of violence due to their 'ethnic and gender identity'. The exploration through interviews aid the understanding of the socio-political realities that shape women's identity in Kashmir. A keen examination of this interaction between the social reality and women brings to light, how reified and naturalized concepts of gender are actually socially constructed. Hence making these interactions viable, to be deconstructed and re-constructed, in ways that are not violent or at least less violent with respect to women. Butler argues, that both the traditions of phenomenology and feminism include the materiality and facticity of the body into consideration, but reconceived it as a distinct entity which has come to bear the cultural meaning (Butler, 1988: 520). When Simone de Beauvoir claims, "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman," she is appropriating and reinterpreting this doctrine of constituting acts, from the phenomenological tradition. In claiming that the body is an historical idea, Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenologist, means

that it gains its meaning through a concrete and historically mediated expression in the world. Therefore, for both Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, "the body is understood to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities, a complicated process of appropriation which any phenomenological theory of embodiment needs to describe" (Butler, 1988: 521), making a case for feminist phenomenology.

The individual who is involved with the phenomenon, and experiences it, gives meaning to the phenomenon, and the experience of it, and does so intentionally, even if tacitly. And, hence the human experience which is a socially and culturally constructed text, is analyzed in phenomenology. It requires the researcher to go beyond the observable, to reach into the context of that human experience, to increase understanding and imply a certain level of self-understanding as well (Letherby, 2003). The lived-experience of violence as experienced by women in Kashmir, has been explored through feminist phenomenological ways, that makes the lived experience in itself, the data to be analyzed.

2.4.2. Narrative Analysis

After interviewing 68 people – women survivors of violence, women activists and people who respond to the survivors (journalists, lawyers, police officers, members of the women's commission), I was left with disconcerting stories and experiences to make sense of, for which method of narrative analysis was utilized. Narrative analysis takes as its 'object of investigation' the story itself as is the case in phenomenology. It is also not much different from a research interview. But whereas, qualitative analysis of interviews often ends up using pieces, bits and snippets of a response and fits in to themes, narrative allows for a longer story telling experience.

People, according to Riessman, narrativize particular experiences, "often where there has been a breach between ideal and real, self and society" (1993: 3). Alcoff argues, "The problem of representation underlies all cases of speaking for, whether I am speaking for myself or others" (1991: 101). Like many others, Alcoff points out that a neutral voice is not possible (1991: 105). Therefore, in trying to retain the originality of the experience, without attempting to speak for, I have tried to profusely depend upon the first person narratives.

Storytelling is an experience, in which the body becomes a constitutive part of the "story's contextualizing and contextualized function". It especially is remarkable with embodied experiences like that of "rape, illness or disability" (Heavey, 2015). Since most survivors'

experience was personified/ embodied and ordinary women's experiences in Kashmir are downplayed, and not contextualized as political, it became important to include experiences of women qualifying as violence and oppression. However, such experiences of women (elsewhere not in Kashmir) are recognized as violence in literature and on international platforms as well. But for a community living in an endless cycle ofpolitical violence, for three decades, controlling the narrative around these violence(s) by normalizing it, is possibly the only derivative of power. Heavey labels it "narrative body construction," which she defines as, "the process of constructing, performing, and making meaningful one's own body in the narratives one tells about it" (Ibid: 16). In victim survivors' narratives, bodies were the sites of violence and the repositories of shame and honor. These embodied experiences of violence were the main data, collected during field work.

By putting it upfront that gender is my prism of analysis and interpretation of women's experiences of enduring violence, I am not limiting my project but only accepting and understanding the limitations. Not recognizing the interpretive lens in reading narratives can give a false notion of absolute objectivity, but in feminist research, there is no such claim. Objectivity is replaced by "feminist objectivity" which Haraway (1988) describes through "situated knowledge" which is "relational, subjective, power imbued and experiential."

In her work on legal discourse, language, and rape cases, Susan Ehrlich (2001), discusses the many possible consequences of retelling narratives, in different contexts within the legal system.

Ehrlich argues that silences of women often can be traced to "social relationships and power dynamics." It applies to my observation during fieldwork when women insisted on going back to husbands, who would beat and abuse them. It is easy to conclude that women are docile or weak but the subtext when analyzed through "social relations and power dynamics" highlights that there is shame associated with a woman being divorced, her going back to parental home, and her being economically and socially dependent and vulnerable. There's a social legitimacy associated with a woman's dependence on her husband which is not there towards her dependence on parents and brother after divorce. In which case, a woman is forced to continue in an abusive marriage as has been demonstrated in many cases studied and examined for this thesis.

Structural rupture points in women's life like rapes, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and so on, give an insight into women's experiences and the structural construction of it. One achievement of participative research was that it wasn't done in a silo, women were introduced to each other, they interacted. During their own reflections, women interviewees, made some connections, had certain realizations, and also found support in other women, in addition to the support that Kashmir Women's Collective provided them.

2.4.3. Interviews

In a society with a high prevalence of violence, understanding identity, through the experience of violence, through semi-structured interviews and participant observation became an obvious choice. Semi-structured interviews were employed with victim survivors of violence for an enriched and more intimate view of their social world. The semi-structured interviews gave enough freedom in the questioning procedure, such that the interview approaches the informality of a regular conversation. Such freedom helps to explore the responses of respondents through their frame of reference (Sjoberg and Nett, 2011).

The respondents are more likely to answer a question negatively, when they sense a value judgment in a question, which is often based on the researcher's standpoint or language use. To address this concern, I relied on field guides (see e.g. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1892; Murdock, 1983; Ferraro, Travatha and Levy, 1994; Durrenberger and Erem, 2013) to structure ethnographic interviews, especially with regard to stress on framing sensitive questions, about political beliefs or experiences of violence. I had taken a course in anthropology and human rights in my master's degree but not having an experience of conducting an ethnographic study made me go back to the oldest books and texts in anthropology to feel more confident. In fact re-visiting the books from my master's degree that have deeply shaped my way of conducting research include like Farmer's (2006) and Hughes' several works (1992, 2004). It gave me deep insights into the ways anthropologists conduct and discuss research. Being a native, it was expected of me to make small talk with my respondents. Nonetheless, I tried my best that my small talk should not influence my data gathering and tried to keep it brief, at least before the interview. In a political conflict there is a lot of mistrust and fear, and my respondents, especially the activists, before speaking to me would interrogate me into revealing my opinions about local regional politics which was sometimes hard to maneuver. I tried to be a reflexively objective research and allowed the interviewees to be comfortable and unhindered in their

answers and reflections by my identity or perspective, being a fellow Kashmiri. I discussed my research ethics, core research values, and my way of working for women's issues, being in a government job and being a researcher at the same time.

Since I was focusing on understanding and experiencing violence through women, I interviewed several women activists (10 women), women victim survivors of violence (30 survivors), families of several women victims, and experts in the institutional positions like, public prosecutors, journalists, lawyers, police officers, staff and a Chairperson of Women's Commission along with some victims who were supported by Women's Commission. I also interviewed the families, whose women were killed/died as a result of acute domestic violence. I interviewed 68 people in all, out of which nearly 40 or more were provided with voluntary help with respect to legal processes, counseling and other forms of support. To supplement the study, 100 randomly selected women were interviewed in public offices, courts and shrines about their economic well being based on a single parameter - inheritance of parental property. It was found that women survivors who approached KWC had not inherited parental property, making them economically even more vulnerable. Startlingly, no data regarding the economic position or on this practice of non-inheritance of parental property by women in Kashmir was found. As a result this brief exercise was carried out. Responses from women helped establish the impression that women do not inherit parental property and it was indeed found to be a common practice. More research in this area is needed.

Separatist and mainstream politicians were deliberately not interviewed, as I did not want it to be another project that explores Kashmir from a regional political angle - predominantly male to the extent of being exclusively male, both, in terms of constituents and discourses (male politicians discussing regional political processes).

Ethnographic details of accompanying victims to courts and police stations have also been utilized. The details from gender-workshops with youth of various degree colleges, which bordered somewhere between group interviews and focused group discussions have also been employed. KWC organized workshops to raise consciousness with women and workshops on gender sensitization with Police of the Srinagar city. A film, Mastoor (based on a woman's life and death) was also made by KWC members and screened[4].

[4] Available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkfUnDl0Ksg

A ‘me too’ Kashmir campaign was also initiated by KWC, responses from which gave more ethnographic and discursive data but that could not be included in this thesis due to word limit. Even a detailed study of the working of SWC was carried outdone, which could also not be included in the thesis.

In a small city, people tend to know each other and rely on associations. Being a local, I utilized my networks and connections to find people, seek appointments with them and interview them, possibly more easily than an outsider could have. No pretense was made about achieving absolute objectivity during data collection, instead reflexive subjectivity was utilized.

2.4.4. Group Interviews

A specific type of group selected due to certain characteristics, with a specific purpose, size, and procedures which is designed carefully to obtain “perceptions, attitudes and opinions” on a defined area of interest is a Focused Group. The characteristics of a Focus Group (FG) are that it provides data of qualitative nature, through a discussion between the researcher and the participants (Krueger, 1994: 6-11). Mostly it consists of 7-10 participants but participant number may vary. As per Krueger, the purpose is for the group to be ‘small enough for everyone to participate and big enough to offer diversity’ (Ibid: 18).

The information collected through a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) is done by “listening, observing and analyzing” (Ibid: 32). However, no generalization or representational claim can be made of the whole population, quantitatively, because of a few FGDs that were held. Gary Thomas (2013) makes a distinction between a group interview and FGD, in the sense that, researcher has a more active role and the communication being directed between the researcher and the group participants in agroup interview, whereas in FGD the researcher has a limited role of observing the interaction between the participants.

It appeared to me that there is sometimes an overlap of methods, when one puts them into practice. My objective was to record opinions and attitudes of the youth about women’s issues, rights and violence against women in the group activity. I conducted FGDs in colleges across the valley (both rural and urban) as a. accessible through college. b. relevant demographic group. The young generation in Kashmir is generally more responsive to the “rights framework” in the context of political conflict in the society, as observed on social media, media, or the sheer

number of protests led and held. I received a sudden access to captive research participants for my work, when a local office of a national NGO, Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) invited me to hold sessions on gender sensitivity in different colleges in Kashmir.This was the first year that they had started this program, and looking at the hardships that IGSSS faced in getting access to the students through colleges, I decided to utilize the workshops as an opportunity to conduct my research instead of seeking separate clearances for conducting FGDs in colleges. IGSSS staff informed me that colleges wanted to screen the content beforehand as they do not want any anti-state content to be discussed in the classrooms. Also, a teacher or two would sit through the sessions later or at least visited several times during the day. The qualitative information collected through these workshops was very useful to this project. Methodically, the resulting research material could be understood as overlapping different categories of field research, as they fit into the notion of ethnographic observations as well as focused group discussions and group interviews alike. Given that I was delivering my sessions, I had an active role to play as is the case with group interviews. It was preceded by my observing and initiating discussion among the students and their discussion among themselves about a few themes, in which it resembled a focused group discussion. My involvement was intermittently passive and active. Along with me, there was another gender-practitioner, with whom I brainstormed my observations before interpreting them, towards the end of the workshop. I took notes intermittently. FGDs were held in six-degree colleges: three rural and three urban colleges. Three colleges were mixed gender colleges whereas two were all-girls colleges, officially called, women's colleges, and one was an all-boys college, officially called, boy's college. The groups consisted of college students from sciences and social sciences and the group size was between 15-30 students in different colleges and the exercise was generally 2-3 hours long.

2.5. Theoretical framework: the lens used to frame Kashmiri women

This project advances scholarly work, aimed at generating understandings of 'multiple violence' (Menjivar: 2011) which women in Kashmir face due to their ontological intersectional position, of being both women and Kashmiri; both an identity based in gender as well as identity based in ethnic-nationality. The multiple types of violence conceptualized in this thesis include a range of forms, spanning from everyday violence in the home and community, to political and state violence.

I have utilized feminist theories like Standpoint theory, Corporeal Theory and concepts from

Feminist International Relations, to analyze the marginal intersection of multiple-identities that Kashmiri woman occupies, which is 'doubly marginalized' (Collins: 1990) and acted upon my 'multiple axes of power' (Collins: 2010) and 'multiple-violence' (Menjivar: 2011). I am carrying out an exploration of the power-knowledge nexus which renders women and their experiences silent. The nexus thus leads to generating a critically needed alternative epistemic position, that provides space to women's voices, narratives and gives credence to their experiences of violence and understanding of violence. The thesis is deeply rooted in "intersectionality and participatory action" which are a product of social justice projects that take form through "problem-solving and praxis, the hallmark of grassroots political activism and social movements" in the US (Polletta, 2014).

2.5.1. Standpoint Theory

The socio-political and epistemic silences around the violence(s) that women face necessitates this research project, that attempts to discuss the co-presence of different forms of violence in women's lives. It paves the way to study the relation between these violence(s), which are otherwise separated by the margins of sociology (interpersonal violence and other personal forms of violence) and politics (conflict-related violence). This in-between marginal space can serves as an epistemological terrain to explore what Foucault (1988) calls "subjugated knowledge." Borrowing from the concept of subjugated knowledge, Feminist standpoint theory says that:

> The worldview of the most marginalized and oppressed is closer to reality because they have to navigate both the structures and relations of the powerful and the powerless, in order to survive. What is academically investigated mostly is the dominant view but feminists focus on the worldview of the marginalized. Also, the dominant have an interest in propagating their worldview and to suppress the marginalized worldview. The standpoint of the dominant is also adopted by the suppressed unless their standpoint is developed with education or consciousness. (Mark, 1996: 73)

Feminist standpoint epistemology (Harding, 1993; Smith, 1990) is rooted in Marxian and Hegelian tradition of a person's social reality being shaped by their material and lived experience. This gives way to alternative modes of knowing and knowledge-creation (Biber, 2007: 6). Standpoint theory is often criticized for flattening the diversity of women. Nevertheless, with critical insights from feminists like Mohanty, Collins, Hooks and Anzaldua, Standpoint Theory over time has become more inclusive of women's diverse experiences and subjectivities.

2.5.2. Theory of Corporeality

Challenging the tradition of dualist cannon of rational-emotional, objective-subjective, personal-political, private-public, state-society, research- practice, and mind-body, my thesis explores the materiality and corporeal position of a Kashmiri women. In understanding the experiences of bodily control, body-based shame and honor, abuse and violence of women (bodies) by both community and the state, the body is seen as the center of the experience of violence on which the ideas of nation and culture are inscribed. Both feminists like Butler and Grosz and phenomenologists like Ponty, suggest that consciousness and identity have a material aspect in form of an embodied experience, "experienced through the internal and the external of the body. Body is a social construction, but it has a corporeal aspect – an interior, exterior and an autonomy which is not the case with texts, images or objects" (Graver, 1999).

Valorizing the body does not mean de-valorizing gender or any other analytical lens. The act of focusing on body by corporeal feminists comes long after rejection of body as an analytical lens in feminism, after body and bodily processes – maternity, menstruation, breast feeding, and so on, were seen as an impediment to women's realization of a complete and equal subjectivity and personhood.

Various male theorists and philosophers like Freud, Foucault and even Marx discuss corporeality and put to rest the ways in which the body is constructed as an oppositional binary of the mind. However, their imagination of body is gender neutral body or a generalized male body, which Grosz (1994), Bordo (1993) and Wolff (1997) critique for obscuring the corporeal experiences of women's bodies. In concepts like 'bio-politics and docile bodies' of Foucault (1988) one finds an overlap between new alternate genealogies, and the ways in which standpoint theory advocates for strong objectivity or subjugated knowledge. Another theoretical framework utilized is that of Feminist IR, as discussed.

2.5.3. Feminist International Relations

Feminist International Relations has identified male-stream International Relations theory as perpetuating a distorted and partial world view, that reflects the disproportionate power of control and influence that men hold, rather than the full social reality of the lives of women, children and men (Youngs, 2004: 76). Tickner (1992) terms it as "gendered estrangement".

Key scholars such as Cynthia Enloe (1989, 2000, 2007) focus on core International Relations: issues of war, militarism and security. They highlight the dependence of these concepts on gender structures, e.g. dominant forms of the masculine (warrior) subject as protector/conqueror/exploiter of the feminine/feminized object/other—and thus the fundamental importance of subjecting them to gender analysis. In a series of works, including the early Bananas, Beaches and Bases: making feminist sense of international politics (1989), Enloe has addressed different aspects of the most overtly masculine realms of International Relations, conflict and defense, to reveal their deeper gendered realities. Enloe, Cockburn, Cohn launched a critique of the invisibility of women in theory and practice of politics. (Youngs, 2004 : 80)

Tickner, like Enloe, has interrogated core issues in mainstream International Relations, such as security and peace, providing feminist basis for gendered understanding of issues that have defined it. Feminist International Relations hence calls for ontological revisionism. It argues for broadening the definition of knowledge by including women's representation and perspective in the field of IR. It also emphasizes on redefining power by understanding power within socio-cultural structures, not just a top-down static conception of power that rests within one institution (Pettman, 1996).

Coming back to the construction of a woman's body as 'the other' in relation to the male body, it poses threat to both male power and the construction of masculine structure of the state. Tickner explains it through the philosophy of 'hegemonic masculinity' that has always devalued women as political subjects, bodies, and as experiences. The hegemony has existed right from Machiavelli, who constructs Greek gods "Virtu and Fortuna" as opposites with virtu as superior and Fortuna as "a woman who can be mastered and conquered by force" (Tickner, 1992: 39).

An ontological positionality of a gendered corporeal being (Corporeality theory) of a Kashmiri woman in this project, advances scholarly work by bringing the attention of Feminist IR to an intersectional identity, with a goal to generate a new genealogy of subjugated knowledge about Kashmiri women in particular. Such an approach has been utilized in studying conflict zones and women in conflict zones elsewhere, but has never been extended to the case of women in Kashmir. The nonexistence of such a study, thus, constitutes an important gap in the scholarly research and literature which this thesis is highlighting and trying to address to some degree.

2.6. Locating self and boundaries: Insider-Outsider

Unlike in quantitative positivist research that assigns careful control and measurement, qualitative research methods assumes that there is no single reality. Rather the nature of reality is defined by the interaction of the researcher with the phenomenon under study. Instead of keeping the researcher's experience, assumption and perception out of the research, I carefully reflected on my positionality and was able to utilize my unique positioning as an 'insider' (including my knowledge of local language, in-depth understanding of the socio-political dynamics) in order to conduct ethnographic research in a highly complex and 'hard-to-reach' context. Indeed, it has been important to reflect on my positionality throughout the research, analysis and write-up phases. As positionality implies, the social-historical-political location and background of a researcher – and indeed their 'social identity' influenced by educational background, ethnic gender and sexual identities and orientation, language knowledge, and so on – will necessarily influence their orientations and make it impossible for the researcher to remain separated from the social processes which they are studying (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Malterud, 2001). I have thus continuously reflected upon the experiences and understandings which may contribute to biases in my understanding and analysis of the research findings and process, as well as in my selection of sources, materials and research approaches. Hence, while we oftentimes hear that research should be a neutral or objective undertaking, it is my view that this can never truly be achieved; we always carry experiences and identities which influence our understanding and analysis of the world around us, and this is something we ought not to deny but rather cherish and utilize to the benefit of ethnographic research. I kept a self-reflection journal throughout the research, and I share further reflections on aspects relating to positionality in the following paragraphs.

My fieldwork was thoroughly guided by two objectives; First, a Feminist collaborative research seeking to reduce the distinction between the researcher and the researched. This was by incorporating the latter in a collaborative effort of knowledge creation that leads to empowerment and transformation of the research participants in some ways. Second, it fills gaps in the existing research paradigms and construction of new paradigms based on a gendered understanding of the reality, especially in Kashmir. Skeggs (1994: 77) differentiates feminist research from non-

feminist in the ways that "feminist research is premised on the nature of the world (in the West), being unequal and hierarchal." Mostly non-positivist in nature, feminist research acknowledges multiple realities, and in this approach lies not a weakness, but rather a key strength of the approach, as no work can absolutely claim objectivity either way. All the way from the choice of research topic, to the prior knowledge, values and opinions of the research, everything about my research is shaped by me as the researcher, and the importance of being reflexive about these engagements in the key in feminist research (see e.g. Margaret and Cooke:1991).

As already mentioned, I spent over a year with my fieldwork in 2017-2018 and then continued following up several cases for the next year till 2019, using several techniques and methods like interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Maxwell, 1996; Walcott, 1994), guided by phenomenological exploration, field observations, informed by an insider's understanding of the society and the formation of a women's collective for participatory action research. A native insider, a feminist activist, a social work researcher were some of the roles I found myself in, during the course of my ethnographic research.

Born, raised, and educated (for the most part) in Kashmir, I pursued a Master's in Gender and Policy on Fulbright Fellowship which made me explore the idea of research. Not many Kashmiri women based in Kashmir have had the opportunity and freedom to pursue their higher education in foreign countries, that too, after having secured a job in the local government as an administrator. Having the privilege of travel and education, I may be seen as more than just any other native-insider. However, I still feel that I am more of an insider than an outsider, by way of my investment in community work with women, my participation in local initiatives and my active engagement with women's issues in Kashmir. The progression of life in a small rickety and conflict-ridden valley of Kashmir is still very linear, with the most privileged women getting a higher education followed by a job. The literacy rate for women is still not even 60% and women in the formal work sector are not more than 10%, which is lesser than neighboring North Indian States.[5]

I, as a middle-class woman, who has been actively engaged with the community and has been writing about women's issues for a long time, see myself as an insider but an insider who may seem to some to be inhabiting oppositional worlds of activism, academia and a government

[5] Women in workforce, a study of the Department of Statistics, released in March 2019.

employment. Yet, I do not find friction between the three. Even, in everyday life, other than management of time and affect, I have not faced any conflicting moments until now as I am committed to highlighting and studying all forms of violence irrespective of the perpetrator of the violence: state, armed militia/insurgents, families, socio-cultural institutions and practices viz mohalla committees or religious norms of marriage. This thesis bears witness to my commitment to understanding violence in reflexive ways, that includes practicing reflexivity as an officer in the state government, as a local woman researcher whose personal experiences and the experiences of the conflict have shaped the ways in which she looks at the world in general, and the world of the women survivors of violence, in particular. For instance, my highlighting different forms of violence may not be taken well by the state, society, and can have repercussions for me, my job, my well being, but as a reflexive and committed researcher, I have often asked myself, should that prevent me from discussing the VaW across institutions? And, if not me, then who would? My job has given me an economic independence, which has helped me pursue my academic and activist goals. Without a job and a monthly pay check/cheque, my family would not support the pursuit of my academic and activist interests. Even my cross-continental physical mobility without opposition from family, was made possible only with my job. In some women's cases, it is made possible with marriage, if the husband and in-laws are supportive. I remember meeting another activist who I know from Kashmir, in London. While talking about the restrictions on women in our community, she told me how her family was not 'allowing' her to go to London, being 'young and single', and how she waited to be married to her long-time boyfriend who was supportive of her work, so that he would let her travel to London, on her own. She was in London soon after her marriage, which transferred responsibility of care and mobility over her, from her parents to her husband. Indeed, that is predominantly a discursive reality of women's lives in Kashmir, as was also my research finding through interviews. Such a dichotomy in the life of a woman activist who is fighting for the women survivors of rape by the Indian armed forces on one side and whose mobility is still watched and monitored by parents, somewhat challenges the neatly constructed oppositional binary of choice and control, victim and agent. Several examples throughout this thesis challenge such neat dualities. Similarly, experiencing silence and challenging norms vehemently both embody agency for me. Upon hearing the sounds of flying kisses from the military bunker in the old city of Srinagar mademe ignore it, rather than respond, or react angrily, thinking that I cannot oppose Indian armed forces as they can shoot; Kashmir being a conflict zone. Strangely enough, I was

silenced, when walking on Lark street in Upstate New York – 'the land of freedom', when some white boys called me a 'brownie'. I have thought over, contextualized and included snippets about silences,identities, nationalism, gender and religion from my personal journals – as it is my profound livedexperience. These similar experiences of using silence as a response, in different contexts; and different experiences, in similar contexts, urged me to interrogate my fellow women's experiencesand their different hues. I recognize the amount of privilege – that did not come to me through inherited caste and class of my family – but my hard work, education, and a drive to struggle andlearn. Many of my first cousins have not been to school beyond class 10 and I am the first personin my family to be educated abroad. I have a considerable role in acquiring my own privileges, but throughout my research and in general, in my life, I attempt to interrogate my privileges and make use of them in supporting lesser privileged I also tried my best not to impose my perspectives, or speak down to the ideas or opinions of any of myresearch respondents. In fact, I made the best use of my privilege in supporting victims of violence and started a voluntary chain of support network through which women continue to be supported. A few professional women, considered 'different' (rebellious/wayward/outlaw-ish) supported me in my initiative and a few young girls from colleges, upon seeing our social media presence, joined us too.

During the interviews, I often realized that the reflexivity about the power-dynamics between the listener and the speaker is crucial. So is giving space to a respondent to speak about their experience Making an attempt to retell it for the broader audience and interpreting it through researcher's knowledge, and academic learning raises the questions of entitlement and ownership of the story. The major question that was in my mind even before the fieldwork started was: what is there for the speaker/research participant in this interview? The researcher attains a degree, makes a career, and builds a social status by analyzing and interpreting someone else's story. It inadvertently makes them the author of the narrative and the experience too. And, therefore my model of research was deliberately participatory and action-based in nature. The respondents were provided with complete support – legal, psychological and sometimes economic too through fundraising, donations and provision of small jobs, and it was possible with more women joining the research and support group that I initiated. To claim the sole ownership of women's stories and even of the group's engagement and voluntary efforts would be unethical.

Carol Gilligan, while addressing the dilemma between the positions of 'care and justice', in

interpreting narratives, says that it is impossible to have a conflict free position for a researcher, as the act of hearing, recording, writing and interpreting brings in the subjectivity of the researcher which may not always be aligned with the research respondent's position, and the lens of interpretation that the researcher is using also determines the interpretation (Gilligan, 1991). Constant back and forth with the victims of violence about their answers and ideas was done, consciously.

2.7. Ethical considerations of collaborative field work: Limitations of researching in politically volatile environment

Needless to say, due to the sensitive topic addressed in this research, and due to the high risk of contributing to an exacerbation of risks of violence victim-survivors might face if the perpetrators were to find out about their participation in the research, a strong ethics protocol and careful research conduct was required at all times. My research protocol was approved by the university's ethics board, and followed throughout the course of the research. My ethics protocol included a consent process, through which participants were provided with clear information about the purposes and scope of the research, about the handling and storing of sensitive data and information, and the fact that identifiable information would be omitted to safeguard research participants and keep them from any potential risks and harm. As such, full and informed consent was sought and recorded prior to each interview, and I moreover ensured that participants had access to my contact details, should they wish to withdraw their answers or participation afterwards, without having to justify or explain why.

Indeed, ethical considerations in activism-based, action-oriented feminist research arise as it often involves disruption of personal and intimate lives of research participants, women here, and very often their wellbeing too. Judith Stacey (1988) refers to the reduced distance between researcher and the research participant, especially, in ethnographic research. As a reason, it often tends to mask the power that the researcher has over the research process, as well as the knowledge generation. However, by giving women power to decide what course in their life they want to choose and in supporting them through those choices over four years (which continues in many cases) and researcher's taking a proactive role in these choices, in form of accompanying them to police stations, law courts, doctors and advocating for them and on behalf of them, definitely made women feel more confident in their lives. The emotional dimension of the inquiry was immense.

This affective dimension of epistemological process involves not only recognition of emotion as a source of knowledge, but signals of rupture in a social reality or social process, that would provide an insight in the socio-cultural notions, around construction of a gendered subject of woman (Cook 1991, Collins 1988; Gilligan 1989). Ethics of caring, as researcher's way of resolving moral dilemmas and ensuring welfare of the researched were supreme in this research process. The roleof affect and emotion has been critically reflected on and included in knowledge creation by feminists like Jaggar (1989: 164), who says, that feminists "rescue emotions whose role has beendiscarded in the process of knowledge creation" making objectivity and un-emotionality as interchangeable. (in Cook et al., 1991: 11). Getting access to women survivors of domestic violence, or any kind of abuse (not in public domain) in a closed society – and ensuring that the research contributed to no further harm to the participants - would not have been possible had a support group not been formed and had I not been an insider. I have used anonymized names for all the victim survivors, and removed any potential identifies which could potentially put them at any kind of risk. The safety of participants would always take precedence over all else. Most activists' contributions have also been fully anonymized in the same manner, with the exception of some cases where activists preferred being named. In such cases, their wishes were respected and followed, but always following a full and informed consent process, and after having ascertained that the mention of activists' names would not risk putting associated victim-survivors at any kind of risk. No names of officers, lawyers, journalists have been used, unless specified, for any particular reason. Even though there is a realization that naming is a political act, as argued by Lorde (1982), story-telling (ornarrativization) here is utilized as a political act to make visible ordinary women's sufferings in life, in death and in a contested and misrepresented end of their lives.

Although I advocated for women at various forums, I could not impose my will or my perspective on them as a researcher and sometimes it was difficult not to push them in a particular direction, which I thought was better for them. Seeing women reconcile with their abusive husbands due to being economically dependent on them, or fearing social un-acceptance, were the moments when I felt personally defeated. It was at times hard not to speak on their behalf, or not to share the pain of my respondents. They participated in the direct interview process after meeting me several times, which made them comfortable, and at the same time made me attached to them. I found myself arguing for them at police stations. Indeed, it can be challenging to draw an ethical boundary between woman respondents who we supported through KWC, and myself as a

researcher, and to determine the role of other volunteers helping at KWC, with the victim-survivors of violence. To this end, the ethics protocol, which was cleared by the university, had to be followed at all times, which helped to ensure the ethical conduct of the research.

In addition to ethical considerations and complexities, the research project came with a range of additional challenges. For instance, the political and social climate within which the research project operated made logistical arrangements more complicated. Indeed, on many occasions, scheduled appointments were cancelled due to political unrest or killings and encounters of militants with the Indian Armed Forces, which created a sense of unrest and fear. Several other times, the respondents feared that revealing more about self, would lead to a dent to their familial honor and prestige. Many women backtracked sensing a threat by going against their oppressors, and frustrated the whole process of my accompanying them to police or law court - which I did voluntarily.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research process in terms of participatory fieldwork and analysis of data as narratives. The data collection process has been described in detail with a focus on boundaries and participation of research respondents. Throughout the fieldwork, it became evident that women in Kashmir are doubly marginalized – first by way of belonging to Kashmir, which is a violent political conflict, and then secondly, because of their gender identity as women. Reflections and discussion on research with marginalized communities like women of a conflict region, who are neglected or seen as hard-to-reach or difficult to work with, has been discussed from a feminist lens. In the following chapters, conceptualizations of 'in-community' violence and the 'out-community' violence will be proposed, drawing on the in-depth field research findings I have gathered. I moreover argue that it is necessary to interrogate the intersection of the two categories of violence; something which has been done in other conflict regions of the world, but not in academic investigations regarding women in Kashmir.

Espousing the resolution of everyday issues of women's lives, may seem petty to some observers, given Kashmir's context of overwhelmingly violent political conflict. By the same token, it invites suspicion, belittlement, and dismissal and is a significant challenge for the researcher to shoulder. However, I could see no other way, given the reality of women in Kashmir suffering silently and invisibly. My research work has, therefore, focused on unearthing these everyday violence(s) and

the thesis in general, highlights the reasons for denying and dismissing this violence by the society. I have pinned my study to the more prevalent, yet most ignored form of violence, while borrowing from the literature on similar situations in other conflict regions of the world, where intersectional lens is utilized to discuss and examine interlocking oppressions. I have made an attempt in my study by, pushing and expanding the understanding of violence against women, as a broad concept that is socio-politically constructed and experienced.

3. Gendered 'in-community' violence in Kashmir: Violence inside homes

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is an inquiry into the forms of violence perpetrated against women in Kashmir. The discussion is limited however, to violence against women which falls *outside* of conflict- related violence. By delineating examples of Violence against Women (VaW) in this chapter, an emphasis is placed on analyzing 'everyday gendered violence', experienced by women, in Kashmir, through their own narratives. This gives a voice to women's own experiences, which is also why the chapter is characterized by the use of extensive interview narratives throughout. In addition, ethnographic observations, interview excerpts with lawyers, police officials, and observations from the State Women's Commission's reports are also utilized in this chapter.

The academic research about VaW in Kashmir, particularly what Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) calls 'everyday violence' is inadequate if not absent. This chapter therefore makes a crucial contribution to both academia and practice, by shedding light on and bringing to center-stage the forms of 'everyday violence' which are perpetrated against women in Kashmir. Before going into an analysis of the field research findings in this regard, this chapter provides a conceptual framework for analysis of 'everyday violence'.

By way of background, everyday violence focuses 'on the individual lived experience that normalizes brutalities and terror at the community level and creates a common-sense or ethos of violence' (Bourgois: 2001). In a similar vein, Bourgois, finds it useful to distinguish violence as structural, symbolic, political and everyday violence (2001). Structural violence, a term coined by Galtung (1969), is often conflated with Hughe's concept of everyday violence (1992, 1997) both referring to institutional violence. However, Bourgois (2001) makes a distinction by suggesting that it is useful to limit the notion of everyday violence to the routine practices and expressions of interpersonal aggression that serve to normalize violence at the micro-level such as "domestic, delinquent and sexual conflict, and even substance abuse (Bourgois, 2001, 19).

With the overlap and co-existence of political violence and everyday violence in the life of women in a political conflict, it is easy to conflate the two or overlook one kind of violence and highlight the other, as has been observed in academia and in the community too. Therefore it is

important to understand in greater detail both the co-constituting categories which is not an attempt to binary-ize the two but rather an attempt to identify the intersection throughout the thesis, particularly in the last chapter. It becomes even more important because research on the everyday violence is little to none in the context of Kashmir. It has been called in-community violence as has been discussed at the beginning of this thesis also because it is the violence within the community (in-community). As was observed, it is buttressed in culture and religion, is downplayed, and is in need of exploration. Meanwhile, out-community violence is seen (by the interviewees particularly activist women) as the violence that normally does not emerge within the community unless the community is in turmoil or facing a larger issue like political conflict. Although the political violence in Kashmir further has two strands: perpetrated by the state and perpetrated by the armed militia; the actors may/may not be within the community (ethnic Kashmiris) but by and large, the community recognizes this violence as the creation of the state (torture, killings, rapes by Indian army, or harsh policy-decisions and laws) and the violence of the armed militia in often seen as a response to it. This has been categorized as out-community violence not because it is generated by the actors strictly outside of the community (Indian security forces and other apparatus of the Indian state) but because it is perceived as a phenomenon which is not a part of any regular community and is something that garners attention, interest, discussion and as a result overshadows the in-community violence. While as the out-community violence or the political violence has also been discussed in two chapters, I deemed it important to dedicate this chapter and the following one solely to in-community violence reiterating the fact that political and conflict- related violence has dominated the public life and academic discourses, meaning that one tends to lose sight of other forms of violence, including everyday violence, among women in Kashmir.

A note of caution in highlighting in-community violence is that exploring various forms of violence in a Muslim society, particularly, honor killings or domestic violence feeds into the trope of Muslim man as immoral, brutal, , the 'other' or the 'alien' which has its origin in the colonial western gaze of the Muslim world as has been explained in the works of Said, Fanon, Abu Lugodh etc. but in the current context of post 9/11attacks, such stereotypes have only strengthened across countries. This research should not at any time be seen as an attempt to stigmatize, stereotype or single-out the Kashmiri community, but is rather borne outof a desire to see a better community. As an insider, and a native researcher feeding into this stereotype worries me, however a fear of painting one's community as barbaric or backward cannot stop one from

pursuing research and commitment to gender justice.

3.2. In-Community Violence

In this thesis, the term 'in-community gendered violence', is used, instead of Hughes' aforementioned concept of 'everyday violence' (Hughes, 1992; Bourgois, 2001; Farmer 2006). The concept deployed here, includes all forms of violence against women, except those caused by the political conflict in Kashmir. Whilst discussing non-state violence faced by women in this chapter, and the state violence in the next chapter, does not mean that the thesis favours a dichotomous understanding of violence as personal violence versus political violence, nor a binary of 'society and state' The categorization aids in examining and unpacking different forms of violence perpetrated against women in Kashmir, before going into a discussion about how they are inherently interweaved and mutually reinforcing and co-constitutive. Indeed,, due to lack of literature on 'everyday violence' against women in Kashmir, a need to visibilize and examine it was felt, before focusing on the juxtaposition and the intersection between everyday violence and the state violence – which is the larger objective of the thesis. Theunderstanding and responses to everyday violence and state violence by the community differ based on the perpetrator of the violence, as was observed during the fieldwork and as shall be highlighted.

In-community violence experienced by women is discussed in detail in this chapter, and is based on extensive fieldwork that consisted of participatory action research (PAR), through Kashmir Women's Collective (KWC). Following the model of action research, that does not only collect information but makes a change in the lives of the research respondents, KWC was formed to provide legal and psychological help to women in distress, and in the process recorded their life-experiences with in-community violence, by way of interviewing, observations, group discussions, informal conversations and taking ethnographic notes. I have made an attempt to make connections between the experiences of as many women as I could, from the total number of 68 women, who self-identified as having faced violence, in order to understand the pattern. The narratives of women have been utilized to give credence to their experiences, to break the silence imposed on them due to socio-cultural practices that objectify and harm them. The narratives have been brought into play, in order for them to re-define their experiences of violence, not as aberrations or individual acts in isolation, as was revealed in multiple interviews, but as systemic experience based in gender dynamics embedded in socio-cultural relations. It was achieved by supporting them in their cases, which made my interviewing police officials and lawyers involvedan obvious

choice for this thesis. Victims were connected to other survivors through creation of aspace like KWC, where an attempt was made not to blame or judge women or to measure them against gendered cultural beliefs. Both the methods of PAR and Feminist Narrative Analysis – utilized in fieldwork, have been discussed in detail in the methodology chapter. Due to an absence of academic literature about VaW in Kashmir (other than the state violence), an analysis of newspaper reports about various kinds of violence against women and its representation and interpretation is carried out, in the second part of the chapter. Whereas, in this part, the gaps and silence in the existing literature is described as epistemic violence – as a form of violence itself.

Assisting women with legal and psychological support also provided an opportunity to understand how society and other institutions responded to women's experience of everyday violence. The attitudes and frameworks of various institutions were observed and recorded through their responses to the victims of in-community violence and shall be touched upon in this chapter. The institutions are ill-equipped, and their responses inadequate and parochial, as observed during fieldwork.

In the following parts of the chapter, in addition to reflecting on the social practices of gender construction in Kashmir, buttressed by culture and religion, an attempt is made to make visible the hierarchy of violence(s) in a conflict society. The chapter makes an attempt to outline the trends of violence in a society, where violence against women is not only seen as a secondary issue, but denied or trivialized as an attempt to defend the community, where political conflict is the major form of violence. The themes discussed in this part of the chapter are limited to domestic violence (DV), and the practices reinforcing or legitimizing DV along with an interrogation of familial, social and institutional attitudes towards it.

3.3. Epistemic violence/violence of silence: The present absence of gendered in-community violence in Kashmir in the existing literature

Non-recognition and the act of playing down in-community violence against women, makes it hard for women to articulate their experiences of inter-personal violence, in addition to the involvement of narratives of honor, shame and stigma, as shall be discussed. There is also an expectation that narratives of out-community violence should be the only publicly acknowledged violence, as the restof it is unimportant, personal or can wait, as was revealed by women in their interviews and

observed through ethnographic observations and notes.

Drawing a parallel between the experiences of African-American women and Kashmiri women, by invoking Dotson and Collins (2010), allows us to pursue an intersectional analysis that explains the striking silence about gendered in-community violence. By borrowing from Dotson (2011) who states that "too often, identifying practices of silencing is a seemingly impossible exercise," I am able to reiterate that, to establish any practice as violence which has not been recognized as such, and to identify ways and means of silencing it requires a deep, extensive and holistic engagement. And this thesis has attempted that.

Spivak (1998), while discussing epistemic violence, suggests that "one method of executing epistemic violence is to damage a given group's ability to 'speak and be heard'." My claim here is that the state does not acknowledge or respond to the violence committed by state institutions, but provides certain remedies against in-community violence against women (as is highlighted in this and the next chapter). The society, on the other hand, does not accept or address the violence created by the social institutions, but protests and resists out-community violence (as discussed in this chapter). As a result, it hampers being 'heard' for Kashmiri women. To Dotson's mention of 'the ability to speak', again, the state does not want anyone (including women) to give testimonies about state violence, while the community does not want women to discuss in-community violence. Therefore, the testimonies, narratives, voices and long excerpts from interviews have been transcribed in this chapter, to make ordinary Kashmiri women's experiences with everyday violence 'spoken and heard'.

Again, Spivak uses the concept of epistemic violence as violence generated by privileging one narrative over the other, mostly Western over the local, in postcolonial context. However, I borrow the concept of epistemic violence to show privileging of a nationalist (including aspired nationhood) narrative over gender narrative, when it comes to understanding violence against women in a political conflict. This claim in substantiated by the discussion of Violence against Women (VaW) in other conflict situations as well such as Palestine, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh during thetimes of war or political conflict, as discussed in the thesis.

The de-valuation of women, their voices, and their experiences is not new but to highlight it becomes necessary, as is highlighted in Patricia Collins' work about African-American women. In

her book, Black Feminist Thought, Collins (2000) claims that by virtue of her being a black woman in the United States, she was systematically undervalued as a 'knower'. Dotson says:

> To undervalue a black woman speaker is to take her status as a knower to be less than plausible. One of Collins's claims is that black women are less likely to be considered competent, due to an audience's inability to discern the possession of credibility beyond "controlling images" that stigmatize black women as a group. A set of stereotypes about black women, serves to make the unfair treatment and negative assessments of black women appear "natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life. (see Collins, 2000: 69).

She identifies four images that control how black women are perceived socially. According to Collins, they are perceived as; mammies, matriarchs, welfare mothers, and/or whores (Ibid.: 72–81). Black women belonging to an objectified social group, hinders them from being perceived as knower.

By analyzing the representation of Kashmiri women in the existing literature, one observes the politics of the ways in which Kashmiri women are represented in stereotypical ways. Kashmiri women are portrayed as victims of state violence (Bhat, 2011; Nazir et al., 2012; Zia, 2013), in an image of oppressed Muslim woman (Shekhawat, 2014; Mahnas Banoo, 2013), racist-sexist portrait of a beautiful white skinned woman as against the dark Indian counterpart (Kabir 2009; see also News18, 2019; Pandey and Ghosh, 2019; Money Control News, 2019), and the recently dominant agential woman who resists (Batool, 2019; Malik; 2019). In between these stereotypes, a more holistic and detailed subject of a Kashmiri woman goes amiss. This thesis limits such sketching in relation to various forms of violence (through nation, culture, religion and social customs).

Going back to Collins (2000) in discussing ways of perpetrating epistemic violence, by portraying certain people as unworthy of knowing and hence unable to credible speaking, the idea of testimonial quieting is discussed as an "act of silencing". "It occurs when an audience fails to identify a speakeras a knower. A speaker needs an audience to identify, or at least recognize her as a knower in order to offer testimony." Nancy Tuana calls it the ''ignorance produced by the construction of epistemically disadvantaged identities'' (Tuana, 2009: 13) According to Tuana, certain social identities can be made to indicate a lack of credibility. She writes: "In instances such as these [where epistemically disadvantaged identities produce ignorance] it is not simply facts, events, practices, or technologies

that are rendered not known, but individuals and groups who are rendered ‘not knowers’.” (Dotson, 243).

Another example of epistemically perpetrated violence is the non-recognition of in-community violence like domestic violence (DV) or sexual harassment (SH) prevalent in Kashmir in the next sub-theme. I use the old term domestic violence (DV) over IPV, as violence against women at home is not only carried out by the intimate partner; but by in-laws whose violence is not only very common, but culturally sanctioned, in the shared household – which is still the commonest family set-up. Similary the term VaW is preferred over GbV (Violence against women over gender based violence) because gender as a term is wider and not limited to women and for this thesis I had interviewed two transwomen as well but it could not be incorporated as it would require additional analysis and theorization of gender as a concept which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Applying what Collins and Tuana explicate, Kashmiri women’s experiences of in-community violence are dismissed or not taken seriously because: (1) the community prefers not to recognize that this kind of violence exists because violence is conflated with the state violence on ground, and in the existingliterature; and (2) the community does not accord respect to the voices of women, who are seen as ‘not knowers’, in the light of above discussion. Their experience is seen as personal, private, not political enough to be accorded importance and since women are seen as lesser human beings, giving credence to their experiences is harder.

3.4. Limited discussion about DV and abuse faced by Kashmiri women in literature

Everyday violence is neither discussed enough on its own, nor in its relation to the violence created by the political conflict explored; and analyzing the existing studies does not substantiate it. Globally, theresearch area of intimate partner violence is explored through multiple prisms – as a rights issue, a public health problem, a systemic and socio-culturally embedded issue (Heise and Garcia- Moreno, 2002) but none of it has been utilized in exploring IPV in Kashmir. It may seem surprisingthat only a single detailed study about domestic violence in Kashmir (Amin, 2013), has been conducted. It supports my claim that there is a silence around in-community violence, faced by women. This particular study enquires about DV in a ‘low-caste, low-economic’ sub-

community of Haanjis (boat-men community) in Kashmir. Not only does it lack a clear frameworkin discussing violence against women, but confines domestic violence to an issue of a 'low income and low caste community' hence: (a) denying a wide prevalence of DV; (b) preventing it from being addressed as a serious social issue; and (c) further stigmatizing and stereotyping a low casteand low-class sub-community of Haanjis.

The study reveals, "48 percent of the respondents were threatened by their partner or by in-laws, the data also reveals that 66 percent victims of domestic violence, did not register their complaint with any authority, such as the police or the women's commission. At the same time, 70 percent of respondents displayed a stark lack of trust about the police and their work efficiency" (Amin, 2013:16). The findings of this particular study highlight a very high prevalence of DV, with nearly no remedial institutional measures, within the research community, which in my understanding is not different for the larger community as well.

Again, there is only one study that has been conducted on the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace (Akhtar, 2013). The research respondents of the study admit harassment being commonplace, but the details of the types of harassment are not discussed or interpreted. The researcher, who has used 300 structured and pre-tested interview schedules on women through stratified random sampling, concludes, "sexual harassment was rampant, and was happening across the board, in educational institutions and offices. Moreover, women's responses to sexual harassment were more of endurance, than of resistance for the fear of double victimization. None of the abused women had ever informed their family members about the incidents of sexual harassment suffered by them" (Akhtar, 2013: 60).

Women's inability to seek support is highlighted, but not the reasons for it. Not being able to talk about harassment, even at home, comes often due to fear of curtailment of the social freedom for women, as a commonest response to prevent SH, as revealed by several young women who approached seeking intervention in their issues of being sexually harassed by a family member, friend or stranger. It again hints at the absence of frameworks, mechanisms and institutions that accept, understand and remedy SH against women, and tackle it as a serious issue, without putting the blame on women.

Although terms like gender inequality, discrimination, disparity, have been used while discussing

the issues of poor female education, declining sex ratio, harassment of women in the recently conducted studies (Lone, 2013; Tabasum, 2012; Bilal, 2015), no attempt has been made to connect it to larger (feminist) literature on VaW. Issues faced by women, even when investigated quantitatively in a few studies, lack the clear pronunciation or language of oppression or systemic violence. There are some studies which clearly show that women (both married and single) do not have what they refer to 'egalitarian power' (which is akin to decision-making power) at home, have minimal choice in deciding where to work, how to run household or who to vote for in the local government (Akhtar, 2007). The researchers have collected quantitative data, but seem either hesitant to conclude that it is 'violence' or leave it for the reader to interpret it on their own. (Akhtar and Jan, 2007; Jan and Masood, 2008; Ara and Gani, 2010; Amin, 2013). Women's case studies or the actual voices of women have not been utilized, to confirm these findings in these studies.

3.5. Domestic violence and its prevalence in Kashmir

Domestic violence can be defined as "any act of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, or the threat of such abuse, inflicted against a woman by a person intimately connected to her through marriage, family relation, or acquaintanceship." This phenomenon is universal and it has its root in the socio-cultural set up of the society (Heise et al., 2002). According to studies, perpetrators of domestic violence are often males, and the victims thereof tend to be their sexual partners. Moreover, internationally, one in every three women, "have been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in their lifetime by a member of her own family" (Heise and Garcia-Moreno, 2002).

A comprehensive study about domestic abuse has never been conducted in Kashmir, and there is no exploration of what domestic abuse consists of. However, looking at how DV is understood in the community, one comes across a few recent statistics. For instance, one finds the following findings:

> The state government recently revealed in the legislative assembly that over 4714 cases of crimes against women were registered in the state during 2017. The information revealed that the state witnessed 2850 cases of kidnapping and abduction of women while 5399 cases of molestation were reported from the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the past year. The report revealed that 1157 cases of 'eve-teasing'[6] were reported from different parts of J&K in 2017. Over the years there has been an immense escalation in violence against women folk in the state (Geelani, 2018).

[6] A term that discounts the act of harassment as teasing is still largely in use, reflecting lack of sensitivity towards various forms of VaW.

As moreover mentioned above (Amin 2013), in relation to a single empirical study about DV in a sub-community ofHaanjis, DV is often seen in Kashmiri community as an issue that occurs only in the homes of 'others' - poor uneducated families.Relevant to this topic, are two academic studies; one conducted by Aneesa Shafi, about the changing role of working women in Kashmir (2002), and another brief study by Shubeena Akhtarand Muzamil Jan (2007), which discusses the decision-making power exerted by married and unmarried women in Kashmir.

In Shafi's study, 75% of the research participants (working women) reported that despite their working outside of home, they are not being helped in their domestic chores. 78% women admitted that their husbands are satisfied with the management of their household responsibilities. This in turn, clearly points out that women are evaluated by the male members of the family, even in the most personal spaces of home taking away women's ownership of the same space called home (2002: 163). This goes to show that the working/earning women being independent economically, do not automatically translate into their social independence and independence in family. One can therefore argue that the power which women experience in running everyday affairs is more of a delegated or borrowed power of their husbands. As quoted in a news item (27th Feb 2017, ucanews) according to data released by the government in February, 1,170 cases of domestic violence, abetment to suicide, cruelty by husbands or in-laws was registered by police in the past two years in Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmiri women are reluctant to file complaints for fear of causing disgrace to their families, it said. Studies also show that more than half the complaints are withdrawn due to family pressure or after some sort of settlement between the parties. This leads us to the notions of 'acceptability' of violence, as well as the issue of measurement.

3.6. DV in Feminist Theory: Acceptability and Measurement

The acceptance of a 'culture of violence' in a society determines the degree of violence its women suffer, which is validated by Diana Scully (2013: 167). This understanding can thus hint at a higher acceptability of domestic violence, in politically violent regions. Normalization of violence makes it easier to ignore violence in more personal spaces, and in personal relations. A hierarchy of violence is created, wherein, violence against a particular group is seen as inconsequential, when violence is widespread to the degree of being normalized in a community. It is not to say that DV occurs only in violent regions, and men are responsible for it. In fact, studies emphasize that women can, and do, perpetrate domestic violence and abuse. "Although women can be violent in

relationships with men, and violence is also sometimes found in same-sex partnerships, the overwhelming burden of partner violence is borne by women at the hands of men" (Heise and Garcia-Moreno, 2002).

As we learn from Bograd (1988), "According to feminist theory, violence against women results from gender inequality on the societal level." Accordingly, the more unequal women are compared to men in a society, the more likely men are to be violent towards women. According to a feminist analysis, "violence against women, inside their homes, is not a problem with anger, but a behavior that has a goal of maintaining male dominance of the social climate" (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Pence and Paymar, 1993). To develop a valid measure of the status of women in their quantitative research, Bradley and Khor (1993) emphasize the political, economic, and social dimensions. Social status which is otherwise a theoretical concept, has been understood to include women's access to education as well as their sexual objectification and reproductive rights. Similarly, Straus and Sugarman (1988: 656-673) created a composite measure of the gender equality across the 50 states of the USA, in which they found out that better class position decreases chances of violence against women. "The status of women is a complex, multidimensional concept, which should consider women's access and position within social institutions," as discussed by Dobash and Dobash (1979). "The association between authority and domestic violence has been studied extensively in the Western academia", where household decision-making power is seen one of the most important predictors of rates of violence (Levinson, 1989; Hamby, 2005: 657). In this context, an attempt was made to understand the position of women victims by way of their property right and ownership, in practice.

3.7. How does the economic independence of women relate to/affect DV?

One may assume that being educated and economically independent makes it easier for women to consider quitting abusive and violent marriages, which is right to a great extent. However, the socio-cultural ways of limiting a woman's identityto a relational identity as a daughter, wife and sister, makes empowerment harder, as recorded during fieldwork in Kashmir. At the aforementioned Kashmir Women's Collective (KWC), through which substantive parts of my participatory action research was carried out, many educated, upper caste and urban women reported issues and concerns similar to rural, dependent and uneducated women. It is not to deny

the role of economic empowerment of women, yet it does not absolutely transform into independence from deeply ingrained mores, and values that women's bodies are gendered into; especially when it is constructed in a way that derives legitimacy from culture and religion, often seen as unchallengeable.

Women are economically secure if they inherit or own property and/or are salaried. According to a statistical compilation of gender related indicators about men and women in workforce, a report of Indian Ministry of Statistics, in J&K the workforce participation (organized sector) of women in urban areas is 14.5% as against male participation of 52.68%, in rural areas of the state, 20.8% women participate in working outside of home whereas men's percentage is 46.3% (Government ofIndia, 2018). With such dismal rates of women in the workforce, it is clear that only a minority ofwomen are salaried. Discussing ownership of property by women, a news report cites, "asset ownership in the state is largely dominated by men, while approximately 33% women (15-49 years old) own a house. In the case of land ownership, only 23% women in J&K hold property in their name, while 73% men own land" (Shah, 2019). The discussion about women owning property was initiated in the public domain, only when stamp duty (fees to register a property) for properties bought by women was made zero by the government order, by the first woman head of the state. The decision was reversed by another government order SRO 82 issued on January 2019, in less than six months, under the governor's rule, after the democratically elected government was dissolved. KWC was the only group that held protests, organized public meetings and voiced concerns against such a move, reiterating the importance of incentivizing society to buy assets in women's names. Through my fieldwork, by way of interviewing women and intervening in their cases, it was established that the only economic security that a Kashmiri woman had, was the gold given to her at the time of her wedding, by way of gifts from parental family (mostly) and some by her husband's family as well. In the case of any matrimonial dispute, it was revealed in fieldwork, that even that gold mostly stays in possession of the husband and his family. Many times it is sold without the consent of the woman. As long as a woman is in marriage, she is made to believe that it is her duty to give up the ownership of the gold, to keep marital peace intact.But when a woman comes out against a husband and family revealing abuse or violence, it was revealed in most of the interviews that woman lacks possession of this jewelry. Corroborating the findings of my study, a State Women's Commission (SWC) annual report of 2018 describes at least 35 cases of violence against women in which SWC intervened during the year. Out of these

35 cases, more than 25 cases reveal that the gold jewelry was in the husband's or his family's possession. Yet, instead of initiating an action against him for that, the Women's Commission takes a written promise or a bond from the men and their families to return the gold, or its value in as much as two to three years; this bond has no legal standing and violation of the same is extremely common without any repercussion.

The question of inheritance of parental property by women remains absolutely unaddressed, with no study, news report or document reflecting whether Kashmiri women inherit property or not. My study reveals that in around two years, most women (in hundreds) who came to KWC to seek support had not inherited parental property. It prompted us to seek responses from 100 random women in whose household parental property had been distributed. All Sunni Muslim women refused having received any share of the property, as they considered it 'embarrassing' to ask parents or siblings for a share of the parental property – despite it being mandated by Indian law and Islamic law (in Muslim personal law). Many women said that they relinquished it to their brothers in order to keep relation with their parental home better. Whereas a few women (three out of hundred – just to give an idea), were fighting battles in courts against their male siblings for wrongfully appropriating their share of the parental property. Many considered it customary 'to receive dowry in place of parental property share and found nothing wrong in it'. Most women had sold their gold jewelry, which they received as gifts at their wedding and had invested in buying their house or a piece of land, which was invariably in their husband's name. They admitted preferring a joint ownership, but said that they could not articulate it as it would upset the relationship dynamics. Therefore, the only economic means women had was their job, which most did not have, as discussed above.

Many women who were also employed had to give their earnings to the head of the family, invariably husband or father-in-law, and would receive monthly 'pocket money'. It was observed throughout the interviews that the chances of staying in an abusive marriage increase when a woman is economically dependent. Whereas at least, the nutrition, education and other material needs of women and children do not suffer as much if a woman has economic security. The fact that women are often emotionally involved with and economically dependent on those who victimize them (husband and in-laws), has major implications for both the dynamics of abuse and the approaches of dealing with it.

Also, the chances of further exploitation increase manifold if parental family support does not exist for quitting an abusive marriage, as was revealed in interviews. Yet the social taboos for divorced and separated women are nearly the same, "pitying us, and thinking of us as unfortunate", in the words of a woman who was a doctor and separated after her husband cheated on her with multiple women. The man's parents think that things can and should still work out between them and in multiple calls to KWC members, they unsuccessfully pressured us to "guide their daughter-in-law towards the right path", which is to save marriage at any cost.

Furthermore, social consequences consist of a single woman bringing dishonor to family, as does a divorced woman, which makes support from parental families to women in ending their abusive or violent marriages harder. The starting point of violence and abuse in a woman's life does not begin from her marriage, as many women admitted during interviews, reluctantly. It begins with the birth of a woman and her gendering as a woman. The gender expectations weigh her down in multiple ways. The literacy rate for women is only 60% and there is a high rate of female feticide as well. A study about domestic abuse supports this observation; it explores the difference in experience of domestic abuse in working and non-working (employed and unemployed are better terms) women in Kashmir (2015). It highlights that any discussion around DV is a taboo topic as, 'what happens behind the closed doors is seen as personal'. But the researcher claims that an alarming increase in suicides and suicidal attempts has forced people to acknowledge the presence of this evil.

It further states, "People blame the working culture of women as being one of the main causes of problems between spouses or partners, as their leaving the homes is considered to give the women lofty ideas" (2015). This particular research finds that there is no significant difference in domestic violence suffered by housewives and working women is in fact, no significant difference in the abuse suffered by women who are housewives and thosethat are working.

3.8. The approach of all-male Mohalla Committees: Social attitude of reconciliation

Nearly all women survivors of in-community violence, who were interviewed for this study, had taken their issue to an informal group of 'respectable men' in the local community called a mohalla committee, which is a widespread practice. Often the mohalla committee is same as the masjid

committee.[7] Analyzing a few case studies explicates the attitudes and operation of these committees. In a case where a woman wants to separate because of man's abusive or violent behavior, which is rare and a difficult decision given that there is hardly any parental or societal support for women to separate, the local mohalla committee intervenes and gets them divorced through Islamic law under which the marriage is solemnized in the first place. It was recorded during my fieldwork, that mohalla committees, listen to both sides in an attempt to be unbiased and fair. Men commonly and disproportionately blame women for being *'disobedient (to husband and in-laws), badly behaving, demanding, not responsible',* as a way to justify violence and abuse. Mohalla committees then hold women accountable for 'typical gender roles' and similarly blame them for being *'disobedient, uncompromising, negligent of family or irreligious'* to justify the behavior of neglect and abuse towards them. In addition to the interviews of women victims, the observations were made through deliberations of mohalla committees in cases of a few victims, who sought KWC intervention in their cases after being dissatisfied with the mohalla committee's role. There is an overemphasis on reconciliation and preserving marriage, despite the cost of women's well being. It is done not only by mohalla committees, but by formal institutions like police stations, the women's commission and even the judiciary. The difference being that mohalla committee membership is strictly male and their decision has social sanction but no legal validity. Also, the mohalla committee is culturally and religiously embedded into the society.

In a specific case of DV in which the victim was interviewed, she said that in his defense, her husband, who would beat her like an animal to the extent of ripping her trousers in front of the whole family, and hitting her on the private parts, shamed her, by saying that he would beat her because she was sexually aggressive and demanded 'un-Islamic sexual acts' from him. This silenced the woman, as it is a taboo topic and she could not counter her husband. After interviewing her, her husband was contacted who threatened and intimidated me on the phone, for interfering in his 'family matters'(Parveena, 9 October 2017 at KWC office).

In another case, the husband again submitted 'wife's aggressive and un-Islamic sexual demands' in response to his wife's complaint of DV in the law court. The concerned lawyer said:

> It is hard for me to argue vocally in court on these lines, it is sexually explicit stuff and the abuser knows that no discussions can be held on it professionally in a court, which makes the abusive man feel that it is an easy escape but I am going to submit a written response. (Sabreena, December 5 2018, KWC office)

[7] The committee was appointed in the mosque for addressing small local disputes and maintenance of the mosque.

Through KWC, I and the rest of the team intervened in another case of Shazia. Shazia was in her 40's from South Kashmir; she was in her second marriage and without a child and she belonged to a fairly rich family. Her husband worked for the police and using his powerful position started influencing KWC volunteers by calling their families, including mine. The accused man was not only making explicit dowry demands but resorted to extreme physical abuse with his wife. As Shazia explained at the KWC office:

> When he came to see me at my home for the first time for marriage, he passed sexually uncomfortable comments but I had no choice because I was divorced and my parents just aimed at getting me married. Although I have a job and earn well but what is the respect for a husband-less woman? (Shazia, Dec 5 2018, KWC office)

These details were revealed by Shazia to KWC, only after her husband submitted, in her language, 'immoral and inflammatory material' against her in court. Until that point, she would tell us, if he seeks forgiveness and admits his faults, "I would much rather be married than be a divorcee for the second time". She had stopped going to her office and was immensely disturbed due to social pressure of making her second marriage work at any cost.

The mohalla committees in her case were of the opinion that something must be wrong with Shazia as this was the second marriage which 'she did not succeed in', as one of the committee members had conveyed to Shazia. She told us that her first husband was greedy and divorced her for dowry as, "he was not happy with my ad-hoc job back then as he did not see that my work, an engineering job, will ever become a permanent position for me (fortunately it did)".

We had to work hard to lodge a complaint in this case, as the police would keep avoiding us on excuses of being busy with 'more important stuff', the accused being a policeman himself. After six visits over a month to the police station, a volunteer lawyer at KWC pleaded in court to direct the police station to lodge and investigate Shazia's complaint. The concerned police station was hostile towards us and kept intimidating us by asking us to prove the capacity in which we intervened in the matter, trying to discourage our intervention. The case is in the court and the court has ordered the man to pay monthly maintenance money to the abused wife under Section 488 of RPC.

In another case, Gori was a teacher and her husband a professor; she said that she got no help from him with children or household chores. Gori was in her late 40sand was a talkative, English-speaking, confident woman who was assertive and determined to resolve her marital issues. She

recounted: “He would always tell the children, I can kick your mother out any time, she is stupid, she is a ‘nobody’ and it is my house. I will get you another mother” (January 2018, KWC office).

Her husband’s family exercised a lot of control and power over her, and her father-in-law would tell her to leave as they can easily remarry their son. In this case too, the mohalla committee had passed the verdict in the man’s favor, as he produced a list of complaints against Gori. The list explicitly mentioned: “she is disobedient. She does not take care of the children. She visits her parental family a lot without husband’s permission.”

Obedience to husband is an accepted norm and a legitimized expectation often seen to derive support from religion, wherein men are described as Qawam (protectors and providers), for women (Chapter 4, verse 34 of Quran). The widespread belief is to ‘obey the husband’, a violation of which would cause repercussions. Saleem (2014) writes about Islam and Women:

> Owing to the relative superiority of men, women are directed so…if women had been more suitable for the task of heading a family, men would have been similarly directed to adopt this attitude of adjustment. (Saleem, 2014: 36)

The all-male, patriarchal committees yield a lot of non-formal power, propagate a traditional expectation of marriage and derive legitimacy from religion, especially when they are a part of the mosque community, which they mostly are. Police and judiciary also do not challenge their decisions, as they see it as a legitimate social institution as the committee’s interventiondecreases the workload for them. The identical attitudes were observed in police stations and interview with the Deputy Superintendent of Police, in-charge of the women's Police Station, discussed in section 3.10.

Women were not interested in answering many questions about the process of Mohalla Committees, and would cut the questions short during the interviews, jumping to the point, if KWC could resolve their matter. That served as the major motivation for them to reveal the details, which otherwise are impossible to obtain about the personal lives of women, validating that participatory action research was the best method to obtain such personal and sensitive data. Most were exhausted by the long winding processes and insensitive dealings that their cases met at both formal and informal institutions – police stations, courts andmohalla committees, alike. There were many women whose cases were resolved successfully by KWC intervention, and they promised to come back to help other women in similar situations butmost did not return. A

possible reason could be that a sense of justice, rights and responsibility is missing from everyday life, especially private life, which is governed by traditions, patriarchal beliefs and notions of culture. Even though public life is governed by (Indian) laws and a formal code, due to being a conflict, is not commonly seen as useful or agreeable, as has been responded by the research participants. Concepts like autonomy and rights have not yet permeated private life and are actively refused an entry, as was revealed from the language of women in the interviews. They defined their ordeal as 'an individual suffering', blaming their destiny; even in cases where women understood and said that it comes from being women, there was no desire or hope of initiating a mobilization or collective action.

In personal interviews, most women used terms like *'zulm'* (oppression), *'pareshani'* (stress), and *'zyadatti'* (intense/extreme behavior), to describe their experiences of domestic violence. At KWC we organized a few gatherings of women survivors of DV, which was a way to raise awareness for them. The last of which was held on the International Women's Day, which most of them said that they do not relate to (IWD had no relevance). In these gatherings, women informally shared their ordeal with each other; many of them said that they realized that they are not the ones responsible for their ordeal. Through sharing their experiences, they realized and articulated, 'how they were made to indulgein self-blame, pity and guilt for standing up for themselves', few said they realized how unsupported and unacknowledged they have felt by their families and the society, in general. Many said, 'corrupt police, painstakingly slow judiciary, unwillingness of people to believe women's narratives and misconstruing religious beliefs help men get away with abusing wives in particularand women in general' (March 8, 2019, Fine Dine restaurant (atop a houseboat), Rajbagh.

Figure A | Women's day (8th March, 2018) gathering of Kashmir Women's Collective: volunteers and victim-survivors

Focusing on mohalla committees, my observation was that they generally use a lot of time (from months to years), hoping that things are resolved, they focus on mediation and even out blame, if it comes to separation between partners. Papers of mutual divorce are written in a way that distributes the blame, even if the complaint is from a woman and the man is actually being abusive. Recognition of abuse is not the modus operandi. In delaying deliberations and decisions, the victims receive absolutely no support, especially the ones who suffer economic neglect or have been thrown out of their home by their husband. There is no shelter home for women in Kashmir although mandated by section 6 of J&K Domestic Violence Act of 2010. The dire need of Shelter homes, inaction of the government, and the opposition of the activists to shelter homes, follows in the next section.

3.9. Desertion and second marriages: violence embedded in patriarchal interpretation of religion

Desertion is the commonest kind of abuse that was observed at KWC and it is often a result of second marriage, as discussed through cases. Mohalla committees also do not see second marriage as illegitimate, even when it is done surreptitiously without the knowledge of the first wife. The rationale to such acceptance is that in Islam multiple marriages are allowed (Quranic Chapter 4, verse 3-4). Although, Saleem says that it had a historical context of women being widowed in wars and financially dependent Muslim men could marry up to four wives, but only if they can maintain just relations (2014: 47- 49). In many cases, it was observed that men had not even informed their first wife and would return home with the second wife and the child they had had with her.

In one case, the woman left her husband's house once she came to know that he had another wife and said in her interview to me: "I cannot have a child, which is why he has betrayed me, but he should have at least told me. This is betrayal." (15 April 2019 (over phone), the victim was in Mumbai as I was in London.

In another case, a wife asked her husband to at least provide a separate room and kitchen to the new wife. Extremely unhappy and stressed, she told me that being economically dependent and fatherless, staying with the man is her only option (30 September 2017, during a conversation in the margins of a seminar about gender rights organized by KWC, Rajbagh).

A woman's cry for justice is drowned in these norms embedded in religion and culture. Speaking to a few men about why they remarried, most did not think that they did anything wrong as it is allowed in religion. *"If it were wrong, how could religion allow it?"* one of them asked me (2 February 2018, KWC office).

It is not to say that desertion of women is only a result of a second marriage, as men desert wives even without a second marriage. But the legitimacy of second marriage in Muslim community, makes it hard to hold men accountable for second marriages that result in desertion of wives or psychological violence against them. Any discussion around 'second marriage as a form of violence' is seen as an attack on religion; lawyers, journalists, religious preachers and even public prosecutors avoided questions around second marriage. The common feeling was that it is a politically motivated discussion to challenge Muslims and Islam, not a genuine concern for

women. The basis of this feeling is also a recent law, criminalizing Muslim men for abandoning their wivesby way of divorce through pronouncing verbal talaq in India (banning of triple talaq in one sitting). The law received criticism by many Muslim activists throughout India. The critics of the law do not see it stemming from a goal of achieving gender justice, but a prejudice against Muslim community (Vrdarajan, 2018). It is interesting to note that many Muslim countries have also banned or de-operationalized this form of divorce in Islam but without criminalizing men who pronounce it.

In one case a woman, Suhana, was alleging matrimonial abuse, financial neglect and an extra-marital affair of her husband (with his student) for nearly a decade (the student was 16 then and is nearly 26 now, according to Suhana). The woman complained to the mohalla committee over the years and they always found her husband 'innocent'. Pronouncing him innocent was purely out of mohalla committees' belief in man's narrative as against his complaining wife. Suhana said that he convinced them that Suhana, his wife, is 'hysteric and delusional' which they actively believed. I also spoke to Suhana's brother by phone, who said that probably her husband has married that woman, in which case they were helpless. I argued, if she has been complaining for more than ten years about his affair and other behavioral abuse, and he has given it in writing to the mohalla committee, refusing it all, is it not a breach of trust? Will the committee not at least hold him accountable? He responded that since second marriage is allowed in religion, nobody is willing to go against religion, which I was not even advocating in my discussion with him. Unjust practices against women justified by way of religion and culture not only make women remedy-less, but aloof and blamed for being anti-religion and anti-culture, making them further ostracized and unsupported.

Since no one believed that her husband, with an ace 'public image', had an affair, she followed him to a hill station in desperation. She, Suhana – nearly 50 years old, from Shi'a background, stressed and disturbed over many years, took her cousins with her, and caught her husband with the woman who he had an affair with. They were driving, and she pounced on the woman in the car and tried to drag her out, and her husband instead of stopping the car kept driving, as a result of which the woman suffered injuries and was admitted in the hospital.[8] Suhana was still desperate about having her husband back, who according to her was 'psychologically abusive, hit her and did not maintain her and her two sons financially'. Her desire in getting her husband back was only accentuated by her parental family, who neither wanted to support her in holding her

husband accountable nor would they support her if she divorced him, as was clearly conveyed to her by them.

On one side, arbitrary and verbally pronounced divorce by men is socially validated due to religious basis, and on the other hand the religiously interpreted right of the man to pronounce as well as withhold divorce, hampers the wellbeing of several women. It is used as a tool of retribution, as discussed in the following section.

3.10. Violence in giving and withholding divorce: Disproportionate power dynamics

In Islam, a woman has a right to divorce, it is called *Khul'(Arabic) or Khula (Urdu)* (see e.g. Asthana, 2019). However, it is permissible in certain situations only, and is not absolute, unlike in cases of men divorcing women. In *khula*, a woman has to give up certain material rights which are granted to her, as against a divorce by a man. It is obvious that the power in marriage and divorce is immensely disproportionate and unfavorable towards women by way of these practices.

As observed in my fieldwork, many men hit women, abused them and still did not want to divorce them and kept them in the state of liminality, which would push women to initiate a *khula* and lose certain material claims or be separated for years but not formally divorced (preventing them from remarrying). In the practice of giving unjust divorces, because of men marrying for a second time or being abusive, it is the wife who suffers with lack of acceptability as a divorcee. And, in withholding divorce by men, it is the woman who is unable to move on with an absent husband, who neither maintains family nor lets go of the woman. Whereas, he may marry for a second, third,or the fourth time despite being in the first marriage without any repercussions. There is no research undertaken to ascertain the commonality of the practice of marrying multiple times, but interviews, interactions and field observations prove that it is not uncommon, but not readily accepted as a common practice, as shall be discussed ahead.

He feels no sense of responsibility or care towards wife and children and does not feel the need to come forward and resolve the matter; his family said the same – that their son will not divorce or continue marriage (May 2019, J&K Bank, Srinagar).

[8] Her cousin filmed the incident and put it in public domain, see: https://youtu.be/rlFxv-hrh8s

Lack of family support to divorced women, their economic dependence, taboo associated with dissolution of marriage, centering women's life in the institution of marriage, limiting woman's identity to a strong relational identity with men, a gender expectation of absolute submission and tolerating abuse, normalization of psychological abuse, control and domination, were strongly observed in nearly all the cases of DV reported to KWC. On the other hand, an unchallenged authority in the hands of (Muslim) men to divorce their wives, makes it hard for women to file DV cases. In many cases, when women gathered enough courage, felt heard and supported at KWC, and decided, as a result, to file a DV case in court, men sent them divorce on a stamp paper, which is considered as a valid divorce. The men, in doing so, frame the narrative that when divorced, women file DV complaints in retaliation and retribution, while the reverse was found true in my fieldwork. The dilly dallying on part of the police in entertaining women's formal complaints, andthe time wasted in attempts to mediate and letting things cool off, actually alarms the abusive husband, who files for divorce before the woman is able to lodge formal complaint under DV Act.

As observed during my fieldwork, this phenomenon is heightened by police (a) not lodging an FIR/complaint immediately when a woman approaches them and (b) informing the husband against who the complaint has been received, by calling him to the police station for mediation, without formally lodging a complaint against him "which is a way to get bribe for police", said many women during interviews. Women accused police of "immense corruption, shaming and blaming victims, dilly dallying techniques and rude behavior with women."

This observation was also made by me in a number of cases where the perpetrators were given enough time to approach police stations, whereas the complainant women would visit every day after filing a complaint, hoping that their husband will show up and would be reprimanded, causing what a public prosecutor who was interviewed for this research, called, "re-victimization of the victim by police and judiciary that further de-motivates the victim" (Interview with Mujeeb, Public prosecutor, October 2017, Sessions court).

A man's word is taken as an authority. If he says that he has divorced; even a verbal divorce is considered divorce. In some cases, men had sent divorce through the WhatsApp messaging service and even then, police refused to register DV cases with valid grounds. Women have no say in being divorced, although some challenge it in court, especially for economic support, and on

average thecases linger on for "three to five years" (Interview with Mujeeb, public prosecutor). Meanwhile, women have no state or community support during the time the case is in court, and therefore, it is little wonder that many women take back the complaints, making it look as if the complaint was frivolous in the first place. In fact, in some cases the court orders the husband to pay monthly maintenance for the woman and children, which is often not adhered to, as was observed.

It was also observed, even at this stage, most women are ready to go back with their husbands as getting out of marriage causes financial, social, and economic loss for most women. Women approach police stations with the hope that police will prevail over their husbands. Ideally marriage counselors or psychologists must be appointed by the state for this stage in a DV complaint. In fact, women complain that by taking bribes or acting under the influence of their husbands, police have often blamed women for complaining against their husbands. It is ironic that police which is otherwise perceived as an active agent in political conflict by the larger community is the only remedial force for women surviving abuse and violence at home; often an ineffective one as observed during my fieldwork.

3.11. Police Stations: Women are not a priority in political conflict

The institutional spaces established by the state with an apparent goal of helping women are rendered useless in absence of a proper gender framework, in addition to lack of financial resources and corruption as well.

There is an all-Women's Police Station in Srinagar for example which works more like a mediation center for marital disputes and is ill equipped in terms of human resources. The thrust is on withdrawal of complaints, reconciliation between the two parties which in turn means continuation of oppression and violence in many cases. There is an absence of well- trained police personnel to deal with women's cases There are no shelter homes or helplines whatsoever for women in distress (see e.g. Greater Kashmir, 2021; INS Desk, 2018). The proposal to construct a shelter home has been in pipeline for three years now. Due to lack of sensitivity and infrastructural limitations, the police, instead of lodging a formal complaint against the culprit/accused and presenting it in court for further action, wait for them to arrive and give their side of the narrative. It gives men the opportunity to send divorce to their wives before wives' formal complaint is registered and also prevents cases from being registered in black and white. No

formal record of the cases ismaintained when no FIR is lodged, meaning, thereby, that most of the cases that women report topolice are not registered at all. In my interactions with the Deputy Superintendent of the women'spolice station, Srinagar, I was informed that there are more than 40 employees for the single police station for women, in district Srinagar. My stating that, I have hardly seen four or five of them on duty, with women waiting unattended for hours, made him say:

> It is a conflict zone and we have multiple responsibilities. With any central minister's visit, the whole state is on alert, to facilitate state programs, we have to make arrangements and deploy our policemen from different police stations for these VIP duties.

"But that won't be every day", I asked. The question was not taken well by him. He responded:

> This is how systems work here. You have lived in conflict and you should know that the police's role is vast here. On rolls we have many people but we don't think that there are even as many chairs in the police station. You are also a Kashmiri with a clear idea of how the system works, don't you?

From this exchange, it is fair to conclude that addressing everyday problems which include complaints of women is not the priority of the state institutions like law enforcement agency. Dismissal of women's experiences as overly emotional and petty, stereotypical beliefs that personal matters should not be brought to a public institution and should not be seen in the framework of law is an overwhelming belief of police personnel dealing with women's cases as was observed during my fieldwork and in the training workshop for police about gender sensitization held by KWC, discussed in Section 4.7 under Honour Killings.

The most important observation in police stations was that, in synchronization with the larger narrative of preserving marriages at any cost, the focal point of police intervention is also mediation and reconciliation. Manyconsensus documents are signed by both husband and wife, much like in the mohalla committee, which have no legal validity, and often tend to even out the blame, without any accountability. In three particular cases women approached KWC and with our support reported to the police station after being physically brutalized by husband and/or his family (Mehnaz reported to Police Station Nigeen in April 2017, Rafiqa reported to Bemina in September 2019 and Bubbly reported to Humhama police chowki in July 2019). Instead of sending a constable (preferably female), with these injured women to the government hospital, as mandated by law, where they would be examined and their injuries recorded as acts of brutal

violence, police called the husbands to take their wives home in the first and the last case. In the case of Rafiqa, she was asked to get eye witnesses, who could testify that she was beaten up by her husband, his brother and brother's wife(which is not required by law). The very act of women approaching police is seen as going too far even by policemen, by getting out 'personal issues' in public, which often makes them judgmentaltowards the woman. Police doubt women who come to report, society disapproves of 'such' women who lack tolerance and very often they are made to feel guilty and indulge in self-pity and self-blame, as was observed in interviews. It is therefore not taken well by most men, who make up their mind to divorce their 'shameless' wives just for bringing personal matters to 'roadside' as in case of Sami and some other women I interviewed. I shall detail Sami's case here for the complexities and multiple layers that are analyzed, to highlight various social practices, reinforcing DV.

Sami, a soft-spoken petite woman of 38 years, with a college degree, from Sopore, insisted that she wanted to withdraw the complaint, and wondered if I could help her. I had accompanied her in the first place to the police station, as her husband had left her at her parental home one day. He then went on to communicate to her over the phone, that since she has told neighbors about him and his family being cruel to her, now he did not want her back and he was ending the marriage.

This was the sole women's police station in the whole city of Srinagar which was headed by a lady SHO who did not behave in a sensitive or responsive manner when we visited her. Not only did she make us wait for over an hour, but her only intervention was to take Sami's husband's phone number, telling us that he will be called to come to the police station, and the day he comes, Sami will be informed over the phone. Sami was hardly given five minutes to speak, with SHO interjecting with questions like: *Is your gold jewelry with you? Do you think he has an affair? And, was it an arranged-marriage (by family)?*

I observed that the standard procedure at the police station was women unfriendly, especially looking at the unattended pain and trauma of women who were waiting for hours in corridors and lawns of the women's police station, Rambagh.

Sami did everything to ensure that her husband takes her back; from pleading to making villagers intervene. Sami told me that she had had three miscarriages, because, *'she was made to work like a mule'* even during pregnancies. Her mother-in-law would monitor the amount of food that she

ate and criticized her for eating much. Again, this treatment of watching how much a daughter-in-law ate and directly or indirectly controlling that, was a common practice and not unique to Sami's case. Finally, she thought that, by going to the police, she could pressurize him to take her back or else she would file a DV complaint, for which there was sufficient ground.

Sami's husband had told the SHO over the phone that he had divorced Sami. When I called the SHO to enquire about the progress of the case after 10 days, she said that if the divorce has taken place, the chance of a domestic violence case going in woman's favor is nearly zero as the judiciary sees it as retaliation or revenge. It is by no means the police's job to decide if the case would be weak or strong in the judiciary but by such feedback, they discourage DV complaints. When I tried to tell her over the phone, she said that she knows her job and it is not my business to tell her what to do, and hung up on me.

Sami wanted me to plead with SHO on her behalf, requesting SHO to convey to her husband that Sami never complained. A relative of her husband had told Sami that his resolve to divorce her had strengthened since Sami complained to police, making Sami feel guilty. Her husband was enraged that Sami could muster courage to go to police to complain against him and no one found his attitude of blaming his wife, odd or wrong – including the husband's family, the relative, or Sami's own family, who were also not happy with "Sami's harsh step", in her own words. Sami cried over the phone, kept calling me for weeks and said in her phone call:

> I am helpless. My brother and father are ashamed to keep me home…the whole village knows that I have come to my parental home because there is something wrong between me and my husband… I just wanted him to take me home. Whatever the condition is there, I would tolerate. My sister-in-law has accepted it as her fate too, her husband beats her more than mine. It was my mistake to complain to a neighborhood woman about my personal life...I trusted her but she had recorded my voice on her phone...Husband said that he heard the whole audio clip and will not forgive me. I just want to go back, please help me. I will pay (bribe) the SHO by selling my gold but please tell her to call him...

I tried to intervene by calling her husband. I thought that maybe I could strike a conversation with him and try to help him see through things but he refused to come to meet at all. In the last conversation I had with Sami, she told me:

> He finally divorced me in the mohalla committee and said that he had divorced me earlier too. Can you now tell the police to pick him up and beat him? He has always hit me and would force himself on me too…

Sami mentioned about marital rape only when the marriage formally ended, and tried everything to go back in to the physically and emotionally abusive marriage, which is alarming at many levels. Understanding of women in cases like Sami and many others is shaped by the larger discourse of 'public-personal' divide which they uphold until they are frustrated and find no support. And this understanding does not exist in a vacuum, but is instead actively propagated when women are told tales of social wisdom that include adages like, 'better to suffer in marriages than break them'. A local Kashmiriproverb testifies such attitudes when it says, "whether it is short or long, life after marriage (at the in-law's) is like a grave (with no escape)".[9] Sami did not reveal all the dimensions of the abuse she faced, which included marital rape, until she was actually divorced, shows that women go to any extent to preserve marriage, which is not just a marriage per se, but also a signifier of being 'complete' and 'respectable' for women, with nearly no alternatives. The stigma towards having unmarried and divorced/separated women at home speaks to women's desire not to end abusive marriages which is often coupled by women's economic dependence.

Sami's husband's behavior, of abusing her and blaming her for revealing personal details (of abuse) to neighbors, again, found resonance in other cases. The husband in another case admitted that he had an extra-marital affair for the last three years, and had not even spoken to his wife for three years. However, he wanted to divorce her because *'she dared tell about it to their family peer (spiritual guide), brought him shame and made him look really bad'*. The sense of un-interrogated entitlement and male-privilege was reflected by most men, who would laugh off our KWC volunteers, calling them to discuss their marital issues based on their wives' request for our intervention. Their expectation that a wife has to bear it all was glaring, and somewhere reflective of the larger social expectation of a woman in marriage.

In light of the myriad of forms of domestic violence experienced by women in Kashmir, with little to no accountability for the perpetrators of this violence, it is highly relevant to turn to examining the legal provisions, in this regard.

[9] "Tschot cha zeeth chay, yi chay kadinn."

3.12. Judiciary, legal systems, Domestic Violence Act 2010: Mediation or Adjudication?

The Domestic Violence Act (DV Act) of 2005, is progressive in defining domestic violence as "physical sexual, economic, verbal and emotional abuse" (Section 3, Chapter 2), but in absence of shelter homes, protection officers and effective execution by the police, the law is rendered weak. KWC secured residence for a few women in their husband's home by way of court order (residence order), under the DV Act; some women continue to live separately in their husband's homes. Whereas, some whose husbands intimidated them (in violation of the court order), left for their parental home. Lawyers who volunteer with KWC have successfully gotten court orders directing the erring husbands tofinancially maintain their wives, even when not cohabiting. Laws like the Domestic Violence Act, favor women by recognizing the differential power dynamics between men and women in the society. But the weak execution, lack of seriousness of the state in prioritizing the requirements of DV act, and social attitudes of patriarchy and denying VaW, limits the law's role in improving theposition of women as has been analyzed in the discussion of several cases above.

When discussing the role of the DV law enacted in Jammu and Kashmir in 2010, in his interview, Mujeeb, apublic prosecutor, who deals with women's cases said:

> Women often compromise. DV act is sometimes misused to settle other scores and the rate of false DV cases is high. Women are indecisive and waste time of police and judiciary. Today they want to reconcile and tomorrow they want police to hang the husband. It is very frivolous.

Mujeeb was not the only one to say this. An informal interaction with a *Munsif* (judge of a lower court), revealed that they are sent on training programs that stress 'mediation and reconciliation' as the first step in the cases of domestic violence. In the absence of marital counseling and related services, domestic disputes are sent for settlement to judicial officers, who are neither trained in counseling nor in gender relations.

Studies conducted in China about the friction between "mediation and adjudication" (He and Ng, 2013), in the judicial system hold true for the Indian judiciary as well, but I am limiting the discussion here to domestic and marital disputes. Kwai (2014), makes a comparative analysis between the US, Canada, Japan and China, emphasizing that in-trial mediation isencouraged in

China, with the judge taking a proactive role that causes conflict with the judge, as someone, who has to adjudicate on the matter. In Kashmir, cases are sent for mediation as well, if the judge does not succeed in bringing the married couple to common ground. However, the existing mediation facility is a gender-insensitive process and does not account for disproportionate power difference between the two parties, leading to women feeling suffocated and forced into making certain decisions of compromise and reconciliation, with no recourse to further measures. Thrust of judiciary on negotiation, reveal that the "trials undermine the rights of women in DV cases. Even when DV is established by the judge, judicial mediation by inevitably focusing on mediation erases the suffering of women…with abusers simply denying or refuting women's experience" (He and Ng, 2013).

The lower court complex in Batamaloo has a poster on the wall that reads, "Why dream about him when you can have him?" corroborating the finding of my field-work that women's identity is hinged on her husband, making her existence relational, leaving a little scope for women to aim for separation as a happy or socially acceptable choice. And hence, normalizing and accepting violence and abuse in marriage, shrinking women's agency, and exercise of choice and sometimes hindering the very idea of making an independent choice itself.

Contrary to the public prosecutor cited above, the lawyer who volunteers for KWC has a very strong understanding of gender dynamics due to her education and interest in gender. I asked her if in her understanding women really are indecisive, as was said by the public prosecutor (see above). She responded by saying:

> As you know most of my work is pro-bono and with women only and not many lawyers like the way I work. They think I get too involved… which I do…. but not for no reason. One woman, whose husband deserted her for another woman, and abused her to the extent of pouring kerosene on her and even on her mother (to be burnt to death), was thoroughly supported by me. I took personal interest and pleaded in the court for him to pay 10 lac rupees, as the sale proceeds of the house which he had sold wrongfully as a woman had contributed in buying the house by selling her jewelry. Victim-survivor did not even have a bank account and I deposited the money in her brother's account, who dodged her after receiving the money. She came to me and I got a court order against her brother as well for cheating her of money. As a result of which, her brother abandoned her forcing her to go back to her husband who had tried to kill her and had accused her of being a slut in the court…her husband convinced her to take the case against him back and to depose against me… as many times I had told him that he will not be spared for his cruelty. I came to know that the woman had filed a complaint that I made her go against her husband and even took a huge sum out of those 10 lacs… I felt that the earth was slipping beneath my feet. I had taken this lady and her mother to my home twice sensing their

> helplessness andso many times I had paid their bus fare out of my pocket… I was angry, bitter and enraged but I knew how disempowered she was. In absolute social economic depravity, if women take back cases against their husbands, the statistics record each taken-back-case as a false case, isn't it ridiculous? As a result, even at national level, a discourse has been created that DV cases are being misused purely because at some stage they are being withdrawn.

When the gender lens is utilized for analysis, the result of the analysis is not the same as thatof an un-gendered analysis, as is revealed in the perspective of the public prosecutor quoted earlier and thelawyer associated with KWC. Not only is use of divorce made as a tool against DV complaints, as was done in the caseof Sami and many other women, but often divorce is not given in order to mentally harass thewoman. Therefore, use of divorce – bygiving and retaining, is made to harass and exploit women, as observed in multiple cases during my field-work. Abuse through not divorcing and taking children away, even against court orders,was also very common. Violation of court order rarely attracts any punishment.Social norms that make divorce difficult for a Muslim woman, and easy for a Muslim man, only exacerbates inequality and injustice in the existing disproportionate powerdynamics in a marriage reinforcing a woman as inherent subordination to man.

In another case, that of Mona, a Kashmiri Hindu woman whose parental family had migrated out of Kashmir after militancy erupted,[10] was married in a reputed Kashmiri Hindu family who had not migrated. It required her to leave a well-paying job in an Indian metropolitan city but her husband's family was well connected and promised that they would help her secure a job in Kashmir. She explained:

> Whenever I would talk about a job, I was made to feel as if I am a greedy woman who values money more than relations. I was shamed for asking what I was earlier told I will be provided.

Mona had a continuous argument and could not adjust to what she calls a 'choking environment' and moved back to her parents when she was pregnant. She delivered a girl who is 14 months now and nobody has visited her, including husband and in-laws. She filed a case of DV against him in the Indian city that she lives and works in. Mona said:

> It is so difficult to live in Kashmir. My husband found nothing wrong in not introducing me to his friends, he made me invisible. And his mother in particular supports whatever he does. He did not even come to see our girl. His family was disappointed to know that it is a girl. I earn and raise my daughter. Economic independence is important for all girls to fight patriarchal traditions in Kashmir. Even I, with an education and a job, sometimes

> think that I will go back to my marriage as raising a child alone is hard. Thank God, I have my parents with me. How can women who do not earn and do not have parental support even think of leaving bad marriages?

Mona has decided not to divorce him through extra-judicial mediation like mohalla committee, which he had proposed (I did not come across the intervention of mohalla committees in non-Muslim marriages), but plans to let judiciary decide, which she admitted is expensive for her. She expressed the following:

> It will take money and time, and I already feel frustrated but I won't divorce him without taking my daughter's due share (in property).

In Hindu law, a man cannot remarry till he is divorced, which places Hindu women at some advantage; even though this does of course not mean that Hindu men do not desert their wives and children at times. Many neglect their families financially too, but there is no apparent religious legitimacy for such acts. Whether it is the religion or its patriarchal misinterpretation that puts Muslim women at a disadvantage is a separate debate and not a mandate of this study. But Islamic feminists have been reclaiming Islam in ways that are more favorable to Muslim women (Wadud, 1992; Wadud, 2006; Barlas, 2002; Mernissi, 1975; Mernissi, 1996). During the course of my fieldwork, I did not come across any group or institution that identifies as feminist or even Islamic feminist. Islamic feminism is seen as a Western innovation and not taken well by most people, although many young girls whom I met in the course of my fieldwork were inspired by Amina Wadud's leading prayers, whereas most boys said it was blasphemous (See section 6.3.8 for more on Amina Wadud's visit to Kashmir).

[10] Many Kashmiri Hindus, known as Kashmir Pandits (KP), migrated out of Kashmir after the eruption of armed rebellion in 1989. Many KPs (in addition to Kashmiri Muslims) were killed as they were seen supporting the state and they, fearing for their life, fled out of Kashmir.

3.13. Abuse starts when a girl is born and abuse is reinforced in raising her

Deeply entrenched views of gender roles were thus identified in the previous sections. It is not to say that the society turns discriminatory and gender insensitive after a woman is married. The issues start from the birth of a girl, and the ways in which rigid gender norms are constituted and reinforced. By way of discussion of two cases that were reported at KWC, in this subsection, women's prior experiences in the family home will be explored further. Abuse in the parental home is even more discreet; women feel more responsible for not bringing shame to family by revealing the neglect and discrimination faced by them in parental family. Farhana[11] and Nelam sought KWC's intervention in their issues; Farhana's family wanted her to marry her cousin, someone who sexually abused her and Nelam was not allowed by her father to bring her only child from her broken marriage to home (father's home). Nelam's father said to KWC members, including myself:

> She is a woman; hence she is so stupid and indecisive. She wants to have this boy with her, what for? Who will provide for him? Having her child from the first marriage will make re-marriage impossible for her and will relieve the husband of the responsibility of providing a share in his property for the child. She is young and has to re-marry. There is no option.

This lack of options for women and social restrictions exerted on their exercise of choice affects most women, making them reduce themselves as 'victims' (*be-chari*) forever. *Be-chari* is the commonest term that was used by women to identify self and other women in similar circumstances. Be-chari literally translates into a term used to show pity with someone who is without a 'chara' (support, options). As her father was blaming Nelam for wanting to keep the child, Nelam was crying and wanted her child back at any cost. Her divorce was finalized by the mohalla committee[12] a year ago and they blamed her for not being *'patient and tolerant enough towards husband and his family'*.

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[11] Farhana ran away from home because her family did not believe her that the cousin, who they wanted Farhana to marry, had sexually abused her during childhood. They kept saying that she is disobedient and is lying whereas interviewing Farhana revealed that not only is she deeply disturbed by the abuse that she faced in childhood but had developed suicidal tendencies with the idea of marrying him. No one was willing to believe her as a result of which she ran away from home and sought our support. She is in another city in India at the moment and is living with a friend, undergoing counseling and therapy, and doing a small job to support herself. Her family blames us for encouraging her waywardness as we helped her escape the situation.

She told us that she knew that the man she was being married to was not suitable for her in terms of education and mannerism, but her father insisted, and she could not refuse, more so, because her earlier engagement was called off and it was already shameful for the family. When approached by KWC, for granting custody of the child to Nelam, they (Nelam's husband and father) still emphasized on reconciliation.

As discussed, reconciliation is seen as the first and often the only way out to solve domestic issues, irrespective of how severe or abusive they are. Reconciliation turned out to be another term for *'adjustment and compromise'* of women in otherwise unlivable and inhumane marriages, supported by the practice of *'sabr'* (forbearance) for women, which is emphasized as a virtuous social value. The child is finally with Nelam, but her husband, during the process, threatened us with police action but eventually agreed to give custody to Nelam, who is struggling to become economically independent by opening a tailoring shop of her own.[13]

Abuse and violence does not begin for women with marriage. Women are increasingly resisting the abuse at the hands of in-laws, yet they find it hard to go against the socio-cultural norms that are thrust upon them at a parents' place. It is obvious from the number of women approaching KWC, seeking intervention in marriage, not in parental control. The norms are either crueller at in-laws' or the trust in parental family prevents a similar questioning and scrutiny of norms. Seemingly, pointing out abuse and violence in interpersonal relations, especially with immediate family, is harder to recognize, accept and articulate. Hence, the information and discussion detailed in this research was challenging to obtain, and even harder to analyze in the actual social context. Being a native researcher has given me a huge advantage in the process.

[12] A locality-based group of men – considered respectable, who are involved for mediation over any family disputes, mostly matrimonial. Very often, they are also the members of the local mosque committee.

[13] KWC volunteers came to know recently that she returned the child back to her husband under pressure from her father and husband, rendering our and her own efforts futile.

3.14. Concluding remarks

This chapter has made a contribution to the academic body of literature regarding 'everyday violence' experienced by women in Kashmir, by analyzing in-depth research findings from Kashmir. It was found that lack of education, lack of opportunity to work and sometimes feticide of a female child, all begin since birth, along with inculcation of narrative of *'sharm o haya'* (shame and honor), *'bardasht'* (tolerance), '*sabr'* (forbearance) and '*farmabardari*' (obedience). A very strong traditional practice of patriarchy, buttressed by religious interpretations and culture, makes women endure in-community violence, in the name of normal regular social relations. And, these ordinary everyday practices interlock and collaborate with the out-community violence to make women's life in Kashmir precariously marginal, as shall be discussed further in the thesis.

Whereas, out-community violence faced by the Kashmiri community and its women, garners some attention; the researchers and the community itself have not focused on gendered in-community violence, making the suffering and ordeal of women in Kashmir invisible. Hence, it necessitated a detailed and long drawn examination of domestic abuse in this chapter, which has shed light on previously undocumented forms of abuse and violence suffered by women in Kashmir. In the following chapter about in-community violence, practices of suicide and 'honor' killings are studied, thus bringing these crimes into the public domain as forms of VaW. This is an argument which has not yet been made in any other academic enquiry relating to Kashmir, as we shall see.

4. Gendered 'in-community' violence in Kashmir: Suicides and 'Honor' Killings

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented an in-depth analysis of 'everyday violence' that is invisibilized in literature and played down in the community, owing to the prevalent violence of the political conflict in the region. Domestic violence has mostly been discussed as a type of 'in-community' violence in the first part of this chapter. In this chapter, further aspects of 'in-community' violence shall be examined, namely the themes of 'suicides' and 'honor killings' in Kashmir. In this chapter, I will be highlighting, through a feminist lens, the socio-culturally embedded everyday play of gender construction and the price paid to transgress rigid gender roles and expectations by Kashmiri women. This chapter utilizes 'body and body politics in feminism' as an overarching theme to discuss and examine suicides and honor killings, as forms of in-community violence(s) faced by women in Kashmir, that are unnoticed and unregistered as violence(s). The objective is to further examine in-community violence against women in Kashmir, by way of hearing, recording, and narrating, women's lived experiences, without trivializing them and conceptualizing violence against women (VaW) in a conflict region inclusive of both intra community violence (in community) and the political violence (out community) violence.

This chapter draws extensively on qualitative interviews with 68 women, which were conducted at the Kashmir Women's Collective (KWC). At least 50 of them were supported through legal and psychological intervention in their individual cases, making my research action-based collaborative research. All the narratives of women and their families that follow help understand how a gendered body is constructed and expected to 'perform', using Butler's (1988) term in a 'culturally constructed corporeal space', and how it understands and experiences violence. The body of women is not only a cultural text but translates as an actual power of social control legitimized by power structures of culture and religion. Discussion around violence experienced by women is rooted in their bodies, from the moment of their being born in female bodies to their death as female bodies, and the in-between process of gendering of their bodies as women's bodies. Therefore, the forms of violence(s) discussed in this chapter are contextualized in the framework of body and body politics in feminism.

In addition to women approaching KWC with their narratives of domestic violence, mostly seeking help, I approached families where women had committed suicide, limited to the course of my fieldwork (i.e. throughout the autumn of 2017, most of 2018 & 2019). Fieldwork aimed at identifying the families and visiting them was conducted through collaborating with local lawyers, journalists, and scholars.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the field research finding, this chapter will now commence by setting out the conceptual and theoretical lenses through which the findings are analyzed.

4.2. Understanding bodies and body politics in feminism: From Foucault to Butler

This chapter, much like the thesis overall, utilizes Standpoint theory (Harding 2004) focusing on 'the lived experiences' of violence and the postmodernist idea of 'body as a socially constructed gendered performance' (Butler 1988, Harcourt 2009). Body politics in feminism does not view the body as a purely biological reality determined by the physical manifestation of its sex, sexuality, or sexual physiology, but as a material 'facticity' grounded in "lived experience" as is revealed by Butler's discussion of Ponty and Beauvoir's work (Butler, 1988). Standpoint comes from experience which may or may not be dependent on possessing a physical body but depends on the assigned (or forced) gender – gender roles and expectations or any other social location. The body is hence central in the experience of violence. More so, a female body is a highly complex category as constructed by "scientific discourses and social practices" (Harding, 2004; Harcourt, 2009). What does female embodiment translate into, in everyday life of an ordinary Kashmiri woman for whom the immediacy and intimacy of the in-community violence that she suffers or survives within the family, a perceived safe space, is a pressing but unacknowledged reality as the violence in public spaces takes the center stage? Feminists, by highlighting inequality and injustice inside the boundaries of the home have helped to challenge the notion of family or home as an inherently 'safe space' (McNaron and Morgan, 1982; 1998; Alyce et al, 2000; see also Cisneros. 1991). The understanding of domestic violence and sexual abuse through the feminist framework has not been undertaken as a serious exercise, academically in development work, or other socio-political discourses, in Kashmir. This thesis contributes to the nearly absent body of scholarly work that

examines through feminist lens domestic violence and sexual abuse in Kashmir, thus advancing our understanding thereof, and filling knowledge gaps by discussing relevant case studies in other conflict regions in the subsequent chapters.

Turning our attention back to the theoretical framework for this study, it is noteworthy that gender relations are not only inscribed on bodies, but the binary categorization of male and female prescribes certain rigid gender roles with specific gender expectations. The usage of duality in understanding the world often oversimplifies the complex realities and obscures many others. The binary understanding of mind-body, rational-emotional, and material-spiritual often constrains the nuanced understanding of the world. Through this philosophical framework, the dominant construction is ascribed to masculinity whereas the subordinate force is attributed to femininity. These body politics refuses to acknowledge women's diversity of race, ethnicity, age, experience, political belief, and so on, by forming a nexus of power and knowledge that fuels a stereotypical construction, as described by Foucault (1988) in his seminal work. Foucault indeed puts the body at the center of the discussion of power, knowledge, and control. However, Foucault did not describe this interrelation from a gender perspective. The facets of exerting power to control people's bodies and mind is described as "complex, invisible and embedded in language and practice – making bodies the center of both oppression as well as power" by an Australian feminist philosopher, Liz Grosz (1994) who analyses bodies as the sites of social experience and political resistance. Like Foucault, other poststructuralists are credited with discussing the body as a subject being disciplined through concepts like biopower, by the play of micro politics, to form docile bodies, even though French feminist such as Irigaray, Wittig, Cixous, and Kristeva use the body as the site of production of new modes of subjectivity. The female body as a construction of social and historical realities is also revealed by feminist writing (such as: Herman and Stewart, 1994; Diprose, 1994; Conboy et al., 1997; Shildrick, 1997). Bordo credits feminism for placing or rather regaining the definition of the body at the 'centre of struggle for power' (1993, 17) after neglecting and negatively portraying it for too long.

A female body has been historically seen as 'a disfigured male body' with the male body being the standard. The Abrahamic religious belief of the female body emerging from a male's rib privileges the male body with completeness and portrays the female body as essentially flawed (Bowen, 2013). The embodied 'natural processes' like menstruation, reproduction, and lactation,

for example, were seen to devalue the human body. These processes were seen as a weak corporeal specificity of a female body, strengthening the notion of women's bodies as weak and prone to irregularity (hormonal changes) (Tickner 1992). This 'natural and normal' (Collins 1988, Enloe 2000) corporeal specificity of a woman's body has been read as a woman's incapacity and justified her subordination by a stronger male body. Relying on 'essentialism, naturalism and biologism' a patriarchal and misogynist discourse that dominated knowledge creation was reinforced. This hostility towards 'femininity and women's bodies' rationalized through 'deprecation and derision' of women's bodies prevented earlier feminists from using bodies as an analytical concept. If anything, discussions around the body went against women's individuality and independence, and female embodiment was perceived as shameful and weak. Feminists like Bordo (1993), Butler (1988) and Grosz (1994), by asking which bodies matter, and why?; who has the power to decide it?; and for whose advantage?; threw open a re-examination of bodies as contested sites of power and oppression, and the continuum in between (Enloe, 2000; Cockburn, 1988; Harcourt, 2009), thus reclaiming female bodies in feminist literature over the past two to three decades.

Reclaiming power through reclaiming the female body was not an isolated affair, as quite early on, Simone De Beauvoir claimed that the body is a 'historical situation rather than a natural fact'. In stating this, Beauvoir, according to Butler, underscores the distinction between 'sex, as biologicalfacticity, and gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity'. To be female is, according to that distinction, a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to becomea woman, "to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body tobecome a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility"(Butler, 1988: 242).

Bordo also credits feminism for placing, or rather regaining, the definition of the body at the 'centreof struggle for power' (1993: 17) after neglecting and accepting the negative portrayal of the female body. Susan Bordo, (1993: 6) also states that contemporary feminists and some phenomenologists (such as Pontey) believe in the undeniable material dimensions of the body, which is reconceived as distinct from the process, by which the body comes to bear cultural meanings. The body is understood to be 'an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities, a complicated process of appropriation.' (Butler, 1988).

This diversion of academic gaze from the body, for a long time, was challenged with re-exploration of female corporeality, retrieving and representing women through women's standpoint, which in Collins' words (1988), brings in "oppositional consciousness" (Sandoval, 2001). This oppositional consciousness is the parallel of everything "andocentric, economically advantaged, racist, Eurocentric, and heterosexist conceptual frameworks that ensured ignorance and error about not only the lives of the oppressed, but also about the lives of their oppressors and thus about how nature and social relations in general worked" (Harding: 2004). This framework of corporeal specificity of bodies – racialized as brown bodies, gendered as women's bodies, sexualized as lesbian and gay bodies, constructed as disabled and ageing bodies; focuses on the agency of specific corporeality giving rise to corporeal subjectivities.

The analysis of corporeal specificity of the female body hence slowly shifted from being understood as a limitation for women to access their rights, or as a hindrance to complete participation in political and public life, to a perspective of pushing the boundaries of rights, privileges, public and political discourses to include all bodies, irrespective of age, sexuality or gender.

Based on this theoretical and conceptual framework, this chapter will now move into an analysis of the field research findings. Bodies, in the context of this chapter, are seen as repositories of *'honor, haya and sharm',* as seen largely by the Kashmiri community. Throughout my fieldwork of interviewing women victim-survivors of DV, it was observed that women's bodies are seen as weak and deserving of discrimination, beating, maltreatment, and sometimes even death by the perpetrators. And, there is support for inequality of men and women in prevalent socio-cultural norms and formal institutions like judiciary and police.

In the forms of violence that Kashmiri women endure, the body has a very strong position in the ways in which the violence is perpetrated for possessing a female body, or as a punishment to control the female body. In the words of Butler, "gender is instituted through the stylization of the body" (1998). Women are still perceived as the weaker sex, incapable, in need of protection, and allowed to have only restricted public participation which women are fighting in their ways, without much support – practical and discursive. Women sometimes have accepted it as their fate in order not to be socially ostracized or targeted which shall be clearly presented in the case studies.

This knowledge is vital to challenge the hegemonic ways of denial or trivialization around the narratives of gender-based violence, in addition to making change in the lives of the research participants. It is beyond the scope of this research to prove that the cases under discussion were murders and not suicides; however, the case details analyzed in the context of 'shame and honor' in Kashmir, one cannot completely overlook the huge possibility of these murders being disguised as 'suicides'. Under the larger themes of Suicides and Honor Killings, many ideas about gender construction and violence against women have been unpacked.

4.3. Suicides or Murders: Why is murder passed as a suicide?

A critical theme which emerged from the field research findings, was that of the phenomenon of suicides among women in Kashmir. This is evidently a multi-layered and highly complex matter, but has nonetheless received no academic attention prior to this thesis. During my field-work, which was conducted over several months during the period 2017-2019, there were many reports in local newspapers about women's dead bodies being found. In most cases it was attributed to suicide due to political violence, but I tried to dig deeper through interviews, family visits of the deceased, analysis of media coverage and the larger societal understanding of suicides. This part of the chapter will try to explore the feminist nuances of suicide, which are overlooked, ignored, or assigned no meaning by the community, largely. Many bodies that are denied a choice in life resort to suicide, but they are even blamed in their death, as suicide is considered a sin in Islam, with many people believing that it is forbidden to join the last rites of a person who has committed suicide (from Interview). Again, there are women who actually commit suicide, because they are unable to tolerate the cruel familial and social expectations, and abuse that is normalized in interpersonal relations. Then there are women whose murders are disguised as suicides, so that the blames lies with them, even in their death.

I have tried to challenge the unexamined and blanket attribution of suicide by women, directly and linearly, to political conflict. During my field-work I followed three cases ethnographically for nearly two years, to understand the suicides of the three women. Interviewing their family brought out various details which are telling. I was compelled not only to question if the women killed themselves or were murdered, as the interviews with their families revealed, but tried to examine the practices, beliefs and norms that brought women to the point of either killing themselves or

being murdered. Associated responses of families, the wider community, and the state institutions were also observed, and have been examined and highlighted throughout the chapter.

I examined the case studies and narratives of three married/divorced women, who were in their thirties. Their deaths are contested by parental families, saying that they were killed by their husbands and in-laws, whereas; the matrimonial family said that they committed suicide. Aadila was divorced and committed suicide for being harassed by her colleague at work, whereas; Mastoor and Sumaira were married at the time of their death. Pseudonyms have been used, even though the three cases were reported in the media and are in public knowledge, in order to keep confidentiality amongst their family members who gave me their precious time and were interviewedin detail. Even though there is a realization that naming is a political act, as argued by Audre Lorde (1982), story-telling (or narrativization) here is utilized as a political act to make visible ordinary women's sufferings in life, in death and in a contested and misrepresented end of their lives. The detailed narratives of the three cases follow, as spoken by the families of these women, followed by a discussion.

4.3.1. Mastoor: a body that paid with its life for making a choice

Mastoor was a young engineer, who was married for six years, and had a four-year old boy. Her husband was also a distant cousin, whom she had married after some opposition at home. On May 5 2017, she was reported to have committed suicide by jumping into the river Jehlum in downtown area of Srinagar. The news pieces which reported her suicide focused particularly on Mastoor being *'educated and economically independent'.* 48 days after alleged suicide, police in the district Bandipora district retrieved Mastoor's body from the river.

Her husband worked in Dubai and lived between Srinagar and Dubai. Mastoor, as her brother Imran told me, was not allowed to go to Dubai by the in-laws even after planning it thrice with her husband. She was sent back from Delhi, on one pretext or the other.

In June 2017, police booked three persons from her in-laws family including her husband (his sister and aunt being the other two), under sections 306 RPC (abetment of suicide), 498A RPC

(domestic violence) and 120B RPC (criminal conspiracy). Family managed to get anticipatory bail for ten years in response, following which they were not arrested.

Her brother, who is a sports professional was interviewed in two meetings, each lasting two hours – once in a playground where he was coaching girls, and the second time in an event of KWC where he was invited to speak to victims of violence another audience. Imran, in his forties, urban, and educated, spoke in English and Urdu (not Kashmiri). He said at the very beginning:

> Seeing how common and severe violence in Kashmir is, our threshold for violence has increased. We have become 'violent savages'. There used to be a time when a dog was hit by a car, and the whole traffic would stop, now things are different. We have lost 'kashmiriyat'[14]. When I went to the court to follow my sister's case, I got goose-bumps looking at how severe and heinous crimes are taking place in the community and we do not know!

In an emotional outburst he de-coded how it was not a suicide but a murder:

> Her husband told us that Mastoor ran away from home after an argument and jumped from a bridge. She did not drive that day and still went at least 13 kilometers away to kill herself? She could not have walked that much, and if she hired an auto-rickshaw, would not the auto-driver have witnessed her distraught condition? Why was her phone switched off all the while and why does the IT examination of her husband's phone reveal that he was present on the bridge at the time the family is claiming that she committed suicide. ….I have been going there every day for at least 20 days, I could not believe it. Her body was recovered after 48 days. Police sent me a picture of her dead body saying could it be her and I knew from the photo that it was my sister's hand.
>
> My sister was a topper. The day she finished her education, she was hired for working in a Polytechnic College. Her passion was to design structures and she even opened an academy at home before marriage. She went for a national course that most people finish in four years; she finished it in two years. She was brilliant…..my other sister studied 'sustainable development', she is intelligent too but her husband did not allow her to work. He believes that a woman should work only when the men of the house are not doing economically well.

About Mastoor's suicide he remarked, "She was bullied, mentally harassed, taunted for not bringing enough jewelry in marriage, for being "too independent" as their women are not

[14] A term that symbolized the ethos of humanity and tolerance for which Kashmir has been known or portrayed to be known.

employed. Once her gold was stolen by her sister-in-law and when Mastoor tried to enquire, she was told that she earns and can buy more for herself".

A Special investigation team (SIT) was constituted under Chief Minister's directions, which the interviewee managed through some political connections. In the first instance, he said, "police wasn't listening to us and was serving tea to their (Mastoor's husband's) family when I visited the police station…we wanted her friend to depose before police, but she refused saying her husband and in-laws would not like any stress or hassle for themselves and they have informed her not to be involved in a police case as it may involve her going to police station and court which 'good women' do not visit".

He further said, "When we had to bury her, we got her post-mortem done and her husband claimed that he is the legal heir and the body should be handed over to him, to which we contested. After the post-mortem, we were with her cut-and- stitched dead body for 6 hours, it was so disturbing to have a dispute even on a body when it is dead. Finally, the magistrate allowed us burial permissions asking us to allow her husband's family to participate, if they wanted to."

He then added, "It is a punishment for me to go through this process, to see her body being torn out in post-mortem because I did not take her issues seriously. She hid it but I should have realized that things are not so smooth with her."

4.3.2. Sumaira: A sharam-daar (honorable) body that tolerated

Sumaira was educated up to year 12 and was asked to discontinue education by siblings to care for her sick father, nearly a decade ago. She was in her thirties and had five sisters and a brother, as well as an aging mother. Her parental home was in the suburbs of Srinagar and it was a middle-income household. She was married in 2011 and had two young boys through her marriage, one of whom was cruelly taken away from her and given to her sister in law, who had three daughters of her own. Her boy was three years old when separated coercively from Sumaira; she was pregnant with another boy. In this case too, the husband, the husband's sister and mother were arrested under the same sections (abetment to suicide) and released on bail.

A visit to her family in August 2017 provided me with an opportunity to speak to her sister, brother and mother and the interview lasted for more than an hour.

Her brother, like Mastoor's brother, was skeptical of the police's role and said, "They will take money, forget the case and that ends the story."

Her sister said, "In the first pregnancy, she was at home for eight months" - a local custom in which pregnant women stay at their parental home during the whole or some course of pregnancy followed by delivery – all the expenses during pregnancy and childbirth are borne by the parental family, in most cases. This custom not only gets rid of a body in need of care but also gets rid of the responsibility to bear expenses of child birth of a child who is later claimed as 'child of man's family'. "During second child's delivery, she stayed with us and returned after mediation of 'mohalla committee'[15] only."

When asked why her in-laws did not want her back, her sister seemed reluctant at the beginning to give out more details. She emphasized, "It was personal, between husband and wife and she did not share much with us. She was very 'sharam-daar' (honorable)."

Upon asking, what you did after not taking her home after the second boy, she said, "We sought intervention of a few 'respectable men' in the community and after they had a discussion with her in-laws, they agreed to take her back after 17 months of the second child's delivery. Her husband did not visit even this time, he did not even see the child for 17 months. To give her first boy to her sister-in-law was one of the several ways to torture and dominate her. Her husband's family was cruel and thought it was a way to punish and stress her out and fulfill her sister-in-law's desire to have a male child. They had someone living as a tenant in a property in the same lawn and she was scolded even for speaking to her and was accused of 'leaking personal matters' to the tenant. She wasn't even allowed to use phone," said the brother, after some discussion. Sumaira's sister-in-law's adolescent daughter recorded the phone conversation of Sumaira with her sister, and put it in front of everybody in the family in the evening. They broke her phone then and never allowed Sumaira to keep the phone again. This bit of information was revealed to us by Sumaira's sister's young daughter, who was the only person appalled by this. Her brother said:

> She had two boys, not even girls. And still they did this to her. They beat her up for talking to the tenant and in the process she must have died. I had told her that if your in-laws don't allow you to speak to the tenant, you should not.

[15] A locality-based group of respectable men who are involved for mediation over any family disputes, mostly matrimonial. Very often, they are also the members of the local mosque committee.

> I will tell you that her husband did not beat her up. It is very normal in relationships. Once I slapped my wife, and my sister, Sumaira said, 'my husband is better than you as he doesn't at least beat me.'

'Whether intentional or not, they killed her', was their clear message. "Even if courts/judiciary doesn't punish them, God will punish them, else God doesn't exist", and they all gravitated around this idea making me strongly feel that they would not pursue the case.

Their mother further revealed that they demanded dowry, implicitly, even after she was given jewelry worth 10 hundred rupees in marriage. "We gave her everything we could and she was reluctant to burden us with their demands, because she has no father and hence kept things mostly to herself", said the sister. Sumaira would always say, "I will tolerate for my kids", "because she was a sharam-daar (an honorable) woman".

4.3.3. Adila: a body that was tired of resisting

On April 8, 2017, a 32-year-old woman, Adila who was an employee at a private bank, Sopore, committed suicide, leaving a note that her group head, Mr Nehvi, used to harass her and is responsible for her death. In the case of Adila's suicide, the news reports focused on the fact that the man who she accused, worked in a different branch of the same bank which was separated by a distance of some 50 kilometers; casting doubt on the suicide note and on the man's involvement. Media and police in their insensitivity played down accused's role in Adila's suicide, whereas; under law a deceased's suicide note can be treated as evidence. Under abetment to suicide, Section 306 of RPC, police registered a case but the accused's role was constantly being played down.

The nature of abuse was not mentioned in the suicide note, and further investigations couldn't reveal if the harassment was sexual in nature or not. But the concerned police official said that they had no way to ascertain it which certainly is not true. Her bank colleagues, CCTV details and some effort could hold the culprit accountable. Despite there being a Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplaces Act, 2013, her employing bank was not held liable for not having a complaints committee, which is mandated under the act. Police and family accepted it as an unfortunate incident of suicide – such acceptance neither required police to work more nor did it require familyto follow up with police and judiciary which is quite cumbersome procedurally.

At KWC, we advocated for her case by writing to her employer to compensate her family and wrote a piece in a known web-portal about this case to highlight it and shame the employing bank such that they would act (Rashid, 2017).

Through interviewing her mother and brother I came to know that, Adila was married while she worked at the bank. Her husband and in-laws did not allow her to continue working at the bank, as the working hours are long and working for an institution that charges and loans with interest is seen as un-Islamic by many Muslims. She then started working at a school instead, but domestic abuse did not stop and Adila fought to get a divorce. She tried to get her job back at the bank after divorce as it paid well but the bank did not let her, citing that it was against their job policy. Finally, due to some family intervention, she got the job but a senior official at the bank used to 'harass' her. Despite trying to know the dimensions of harassment, the only information that was revealed wasthat he used to taunt her for having a job as an act of mercy which hurt her dignity. He was fired after KWC continuously campaigned against him through social media activities. After persistent advocacy and follow-up, the bank also offered compensation to the family, which was a huge success for us.

At KWC, we also offered legal and psychological support to the family, as they seemed determined to fight; multiple visits and phone calls were made. But recently they stopped taking our calls, when the case was presented by police in the court. Through their relative, we came to know that the bank asked her abuser if he could get the case against him dropped, he would be reinstated at his position and he offered Adila's brother a huge sum of money, reportedly 500,000 rupees to withdraw the case. We had no way to verify this but know that Adila's father was bed-ridden and her brother is a student and they had no source of income.

4.3.4. Discussion: Deaths of women as an extreme form of VaW in Kashmir

Mastoor did not inform her family about the mental torture that she suffered in detail, because she had chosen to marry this man and felt responsible for it. Especially, in a society where women making decisions is neither common nor acceptable. Newspaper reports quoted her husband saying that she had married him out of her choice; therefore, the question of murder did not arise. The cost of decision making in a society where women's bodies are accepted only as symbols of

submission was high for Mastoor, who could not explicitly state her actual ordeal to her parents and siblings – just because it was her decision and she felt responsible for it, as was revealed by her brother.

Not only is there a lack of decision-making among women, in general, but in many cases, womenleave their jobs after marriage, as was revealed by Mastoor's and Adila's family. It is still not seen as anunfair expectation, as a woman is socially expected to choose family, in case of any real or perceived (by husband and family) clash between work and family. For instance, Adila chose, rather was made to choose family – over a hectic but high paying bank job. Interviews with morewomen revealed that it was common to subject working/earning women to emotional abuse for being *'too independent'* as was the case with Mastoor, as well.

A study conducted by Aneesa Shafi about the changing role of working women in Kashmir (2002) and the other brief study by Shubeena Akhtar and Muzamil Jan (2007), discuss the decision-making power exerted by the 'married and unmarried women in Kashmir, working and non-working women' (employed-unemployed). Both discuss that women hardly have any say at home or in public life, whether married/unmarried, employed/unemployed.

Other than these two brief studies about women's decision-making, a study was conducted by D'souza (2016) with half-widows (whose husbands were subject to enforced disappearance by the Indian armed personnel) in 140 villages. One of the findings of Dsouza's study is that, the vulnerabilityof the women of Kashmir is compounded due to the prevalence of "strong traditional patriarchy in the Kashmiri society" (D'souza 2016: 32). This is one of the few studies that finds patriarchy (also) responsible for the existing condition of the half-widows, as most researches analyze only the violence of the state in creating a half-widow. Analysis of the hardships faced by half-widows is incomplete, when limited to the analysis of the direct out-community violence (responsible for disappearance), but requires an analysis of everyday in-community violence as well. According toD'souza, 37% of the half-widows interviewed have been in a liminal phase for 20 or more years, ever since their husbands disappeared. Little over 52% of them have been in this transition phase for 11 to 19 years with primary reasons being "the absence of justice and lack of intervention of the community which is extremely patriarchal and exacerbates the suffering of the women" (Dsouza, 2016:39- 40).

Unacceptability of independent women and women making life-decisions, results in liminal living for widows and half-widows and it also resulted in the death of Mastoor, as discussed above. Athar Zia (2013) describes, what she calls the 'micro-politics of the life of a half-widow', Sadaf, with three children. Zia's scholarship (2013) substantiates what Dsouza's study (2016) reveals about the role of the community in exacerbating the suffering of half-widows. Zia highlights the ways in which Sadaf 'de-feminizes' herself not to catch the attention of men, in order to avoid slander. "The fault lines in the gender-based identity are made exceedingly visible when this half-widow makes her way through highly discriminatory social norms and tries to negotiate with a powerful institution of state", says Zia (2013, 6). How the choice of clothes, Sadaf's moving around in male-dominated spaces, her being lonely and economically deprived, is used by the community against her, highlights the plight of Kashmiri women on an everyday basis (2013: 7). Half-widows are pushed into an independent living with barely an education or experience of public life, and it is ensured in most cases that they do not succeed at it by limiting a woman's identity relational to their men.

Mastoor is unlikely to have killed herself according to her brother. Irrespective of whether she jumped into river, was pushed, or her body was thrown into the river after murder. The fact is that she faced immense psychological torture at her in-law's place, such as her in-laws not allowing her to travel to Dubai where her husband worked "because other daughters-in-law had also accepted that they won't go", is likely to have caused her death. This commonality of submission and docility as the supreme quality of a gendered body of daughter-in-law, in particular, is deeply prevalent as is obvious from Sumaira's case too, where her husband actually broke her phone andthen forbid her from keeping a phone. He wanted her not to speak to the tenant and he chose to give their son away to his sister, without consulting Sumaira and against her wishes. An absolute submission to husband and family was expected of her, which she failed at. The female body is scrutinized for transgressing the boundaries of patriarchal socio-cultural norms, and accordingly punished. On the basis of this discussion, the chapter now proceeds to discussing the role of patriarchy in more or less extreme forms of violence against women in Kashmir, including in relation to murder and alleged suicides.

4.4. Patriarchy, its critique, and the critique of its critique

The norms of 'discipline and punishment' are not uncommon (Foucault, 1988). Many women who suffered severe domestic abuse reported during interviews, that their husbands do not let them have phones, do not let them talk to some people, expect them not to go out without their permission and often accompany them. The irony of this restricted mobility for women is that a woman who seeks her husband's permission even in visiting her parents is considered a 'good woman'. The trope of a 'good obedient woman' is utilized as patriarchal bargain by the majority of women, who not only accept these norms but monitor other women for deviation in such prescribed behaviors. Raina (2009) observes, "Elders of the house often seek spouses for their children or grandchildren, women spoke about the popularity of well-behaved and pious women as prospective brides. Women who wore the headscarf, had no makeup and seldom appear unaccompanied in public were perceived by men as 'good Muslim women'."(Raina 2009: 246) Thus women had to uphold the honour and reputation of the family. "There was a distinct impression, through the conversations of women, that the men in Kashmir have self-assumed the role of moral and religious vigilantes of the Kashmiri society" (Raina 2009: 246; 247).

Such behavior arising out of women's internalized patriarchy has been used as a critique of the concept of 'patriarchy' by various scholars like Nancy Berns (2001). Berns calls 'patriarchal resistance' - de-gendering the problem and gendering the blame (in men) in which women are seen as a party to patriarchy, as one major critique of patriarchy that prevents further work on it. Further, when it comes to collecting data on patriarchy, the issues of translating this theoretical concept into tangible and measurable entities becomes hard as argued by Gwen (2009) and Fox (1988). Gwen (2009) and Fox (1988) say, "Although feminist political action is essential, we have not yet fully developed a gender-centered theory of violence against women."

Beginning with the pioneering work of Susan Brownmiller (1975), the radical feminist literature on violence against women evoked patriarchy as a theoretical concept. Yet the term patriarchy, quickly became heavily contested; it was criticized for being "undertheorized" (Kandiyoti, 1988), and the effort to construct a theory of patriarchy to explain violence against women was derailed.

Following this widespread critique, the term patriarchy was largely abandoned, yet its meanings were imported into terms such as male-dominated society, sexual inequality theory, and general feminist perspectives. The core concept of patriarchy – systems of male domination and female subordination— continued to appear in the literature in disguised language (Gwen, 2009, 553). Yet there are many feminist scholars who maintain that explanations of violence against women should center around gendered social arrangements and power (like R. P. Dobash, R.E. Dobash 1979, Wilson & Daly, 1992, Mooney 1992). In my understanding of patriarchy as a theoretical and analytical concept, it is a holistic concept that can be and must be defined structurally along with accommodating postmodernist criticism of patriarchy - about little attention to language and discourses that perpetuate and reinforce it. Read together with the concept of structural violence, by Galtung (1969), seen as an "avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs," and his concept of cultural violence (Galtung, 1969), "any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form" (Galtung, 1990), patriarchy can be utilized to theoretically explain violence against women. A need for an umbrella framework for analyzing all forms of violence against women was felt during this research. It shall discuss all possible forms of violence like structural, every day, political and symbolic (Burgois, 2001).

The all-male mohalla committee; the self-assumed righteous team was successful only in controlling the female body of Sumaira, in sending her back to her husband's but could not prevail upon her husband to bring the child back to his mother.[16] Sumaira was sent back because the body of a 'married woman who is back at parental house causes people to gossip and brings dishonor', as was stated by many women who struggled to leave abusive marriages but could not, during personal interviews at KWC.

Sumaira's brother even failed to draw a linkage between his act of slapping his wife which, for him was normal, and his sister's death/murder due to similar behaviors of her in-laws. People failing to see linkages, patterns, structuralism of the issue is what justifies and normalizes VaW. This refusal to acknowledge one's own actions and complicity in propagating VaW is widespread and serious.

Qurat Agha, a Kashmiri academic-activist and a survivor of domestic abuse in her marriage, says that in Shi'a community, a famous saying goes that a woman in Saudi Arabia was visited by Fatima, Prophet Muhammad's daughter. Fatima saw a rope, a club and other tools at her home and

she asked the woman, what are these things used for? The woman responded that once her husband was back from work, he might want to beat her up to relieve himself of the stress and she kept these things for him. To which Fatima, feeling very happy, says that you are a real woman and an obedient wife (*farmabardar* in Urdu/Kashmiri) woman. The camel that I will ride to heaven will be held by you, meaning that she will enter heaven even before Fatima.

It is an inauthentic saying, Qurat quickly adds, but such sayings in the name of religion are common and they end up legitimizing violence. "No one seems to have a problem with them. Even in Sunni Islam such sayings are in abundance. Such narratives churn out quiet, docile bodies not opinionated and questioning women, which the community does not seem to be ready for", she added.

An infantilizing narrative of 'seeking permission and allowing' is reflected in all these suicide cases. Women are clearly considered subordinate and under man's guidance. This politics of power in seeking permission is a complex point of analysis. Mastoor's brother revealed that his other sister was not *'allowed'* by her husband to work and it is not uncommon. Mastoor's friend was not *'allowed'* by her in-laws to depose before the court. In Sumaira's case, the tenant was again not *'allowed'* to depose. Aadila was not *'allowed'* to work at the bank, when in marriage.

This narrative of subordination of the female body comes from the belief that women are not complete or equal humans, and need to be monitored and guided. Irrespective of the intention, such essentialist and naturalistic notions of womanhood about docility and submissiveness, and even tolerating and accommodating, only highlights the ways in which gender is constructed as a trope to control women's bodies and their subjectivities.

When it comes to understanding the reasons associated with the dominance by men, Leacock (1983) for instance, links it closely to patrilocal marital relations, much like colonization or market relations that develop inequality or what she calls 'ranking' in the society (1983: 5). Relegation of the very forms of family as patrilocal (and patrilineal) to secondary questions is what hinders us to comprehend the very structures of the society (1983: 13).

A woman moves to her husband's home and is expected to come with a dowry at the time of the wedding, as is ingrained in multiple traditions. In Mastoor's case as well as Sumaiya's case, there

was a reference to dowry. Since Mastoor earned and contributed to the family economy, she was still not exempt from dowry. Her jewelry was stolen, and she was told that she should buy more as she earns, in such a situation, being economically independent comes out as an added burden to her. In Sumaiya's case, she was embarrassed as her father had died and her brother single-handedly managed her dowry. It is the rigidity of the social customs including dowry in various customs (hash-kanth, zaem-daej etc)[17] that prevents girls from low-income backgrounds from getting married due to the un-affordability of the whole affair.

A report released by Indian Government Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in March 2017, highlighted that women in Jammu and Kashmir are the oldest to get married. Mean age for marriage for women in J&K state is three years more than the national average (Shaikh, 2017). Interestingly this gap of three to four years has existed much before the eruption of conflict (since 1961 to be precise), which is otherwise seen to be the cause of all the social problems.

A local sociologist, Dr Dabla's study points out that, the reasons for late marriage are; 'poverty, modernization, heath issues, customs, traditions, caste preference and dowry' (2017)[18]. The reason for acknowledging 'late marriages' as the only social evil, are again interlinked to bodily transgressions. Late marriages translate as increased pre-marital relations, which is seen as irreligious. Marrying off a girl is still seen as a huge financial and social burden, and marriage has a religo-social sanctity. Also, women may not produce children and have may have fertility issues due to marrying late, which constitute a widely discussed theme in local media and public discourses (Nissa, 2015). An excerpt from an article in a local newspaper emphasizes the social anxiety with infertility and premarital relations when it mentions, "youth are in colleges and universities, they date with different girls and commit sins; they don't want to get married because marriage has become a big hassle […] contributory causes being dowry and unemployment" (Kashmir Reader, 2019).

[17] Local tradition of gifting of gold mother-in-law and sister-in-law by daughter-in-law which is not seen as dowry by the community but is mandatory in any Kashmiri Muslim wedding in the valley of Kashmir.

[18]See eg. Article in Rising Kashmir, available from: http://risingkashmir.com/article/right-age-to-marry

Whereas no effort is made to make marriages a more equal and just arrangement, cruelty and injustice in marriages and interpersonal relations is not even acknowledged, but the thrust on the inability to get women married is a widely discussed debate as it is seen as a threat to morality and procreation. In such socio-cultural contexts, the bodies of girls are expected to embody tolerance which is called *'sabr'* in common parlance. Mastoor tolerated, Sumaira tolerated, Adila did as did many women. Tolerance and patience were taught to them, expected of them and they did not findmany alternatives to it. And many women continue to do *'sabr'*, as commonly articulated by themin interviews.

Mastoor could not come back to her parents as it was her decision, Sumaira could not come back, as her other sisters were yet to be married and her coming back would hinder their marriage prospectus. Also, she was fatherless and did not earn her living. She was dependent socially and economically and was sent back by the parental family. Adila fought an abusive marriage in which she had gone through a lot of trauma and could not safeguard herself against harassment at workplace.

Mastoor's brother was shocked to see the cases of violence in community, at the court. Until then, he did not realize this reality, which is true of most of the society that is in denial about gender-based violence. Sumaira's brother admitted hitting his wife and considered it normal. He did not even consider her sister's husband's behavior - breaking her phone or not allowing her to keep a phone, as something objectionable. Normalization of violence in society also increases people's acceptance of violence as a way of life (Moreno, 2006; Jewkes, 2002; Collier, 2004).

None of the families had faith in the judiciary or police. In Mastoor's case, had her brother not been well connected, a special investigation team would not have been called to investigate Mastoor's death. He is still following the case and thinks that the legal system is *'corrupt, flawed and slow'*. Sumaira's brother, for the fear of being re-victimized through long and unending court trials decided to drop the legal case, as was done in Adila's case, where the family choose not to pursue the case by accepting money. The KWC lawyer who guided the family with the legal process was not shocked but said:

> A sense of justice is not strong in the community because justice has been historically elusive in Kashmir. My experience is that if someone cheats another of money, the case is followed till the end as there is an expectation of reversing the wrong by a favorable court judgment. In case of women's murders and violence, people believe in God's justice more than system's justice especially when the system is tedious and re-victimizes people. Dimensions of crime are dynamic but the investigation system that deals with the crime against women is stagnant and traditional. Lawyers often brief the family that the chances of conviction are less, which discourages them. Murder cases require an investigation by police which they are mostly not willing to, as there is considerable lack of infrastructure and a disbelief that they are suicides. It probably matters who is being murdered. What is the value of an ordinary woman's life and death in a place where people are killed on a daily basis? In abetment cases, even judges, who belong to the same society feel that the one who has died is gone, why hold someone responsible for another's choice of ending their life. That is how suicide is seen as a weak case against murder.

This fallacious naming of 'murder as suicide'; misconstruing a crime of a family or husband as a woman's weakness is aided by the society and the system. Police, lawyers, media, and the larger community plays their part in creating, reinforcing and propagating this narrative of devaluation of a woman's death (and life). In the case of reportedly a suspicious death of a woman, police instead of filing a case of murder under section 309 files, cases under section 306 - abetment to suicide. Not only is abetment harder to prove legally with evidence, but it also lessens the involvement of the murderers and misconstrues a murder as a suicide, which is then carried by media as a news of suicide and consumed similarly by the larger society The only people who contests the suicide narrative is the parental family of the dead woman, but often give up the fight for justice as they either find it tedious or believe in God's justice more than a system's justice that has perpetually wronged a society (due to political conflict). Also, there is no movement or discourse that links violence against women to gender justice and that explores the systematic and structurally shaped ways in which such crimes are not only committed, but obliterated as well. To contextualize these claims about suicides, we shall understand how suicides are reported in the local media, Human Rights Reports and the associated studies. The same follows.

4.5. Suicides seen as un-gendered and attributed strictly to conflict

Suicides (in general) in Kashmir have increased manifold as has been reported by many local newspapers. Another way of stating it is that suicides are coming into public domain, increasingly,

due to the reach of the media and particularly social media. It is hard to tell if suicides have actually increased or their being reported has. A news report cites, "A survey was conducted by Nations Premier Institute Bangalore in 1989 in Kashmir, in which it was found that rate of suicide was 0.5 per cent per 100000 people. A survey, using the same tools, it was repeated in 2010 and rate of suicide was 15-20 per 100000" (Maghribi, 2012). Another news item states, "During the last six months alone over 53 cases of suicide were reported in SMHS hospital. Last year, (2017) the premier hospital received 563 cases of self-poisoning" (Shah, 2018). Even the National Human Rights Commission in their press release mentions that they have taken a suo moto cognizance of a news report that mentioned, "20,000 people have attempted suicide during the 14 years of socio-political turmoil in the Valley. About 3,000 of them have died and most of them were in the 16 to 25 age group. In Kashmir, it is alleged, suicides are said to have claimed the second highest numberof lives after militancy. While it is estimated that more than 60,000 lives have been lost in the State since militancy erupted in 1988, the suicide toll through the years runs into thousands," it highlighted.

To measure suicides accurately in quantitative terms is not possible. Nor is it easy to delve into the conditions that result in suicide, qualitatively. In fact, suicide is a taboo, more so in a religious society. The common belief is that religious people suffer less from hopelessness, indicating that a person committing suicide was not religiously anchored, and last rites are often denied to someone who commits suicide as ending life is seen as a grave sin. People mostly believe in Kashmir that a religious person is less likely to commit suicide as 'suicide is an un-Islamic act' (Jahangir PTI, 2007; Shah 2016). A local researcher, Shams-u-Nisa who has also been quoted in a news report says, "Most cases of suicides are hidden because it is 'haram' [forbidden] in Islam".

The attribution of increased suicides to political conflict is common in community, as indicated by the local news reports, whereby "indulging too much in material gain and going far from religion" (Jahangir PTI, 2007) are other reasons that are seen to lead to increased suicides, in addition to political conflict. Suicides among youth due to drug abuse and failure at school have also been reported in the media.

Interestingly, there is no examination of gender dynamics of suicide. Specialists like doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists, who deal with people whose attempt to commit suicide fails, or

who examine the dead bodies during post mortem; recognize that "women commit suicides more than men and it is either due to household violence or due to failed relations." (Jahangir PTI, 2007).

A study about health of women states, "doctors estimate that 4-10 percent of Kashmiri women suffer from PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome), and its prevalence in the Kashmir valley is much higher than in other states of India […] doctors are also concerned over the high rate (20-25 percent) of Premature Ovarian Failure (POF) - commonly referred to as early menopause - among infertile Kashmiri women, which stands in stark contrast to India's national POF rate of 1-5 percent" which is again attributed to political conflict related stress without any sociological examination or interrogation. Discussions around mental health also stop at political conflict, and a gendered dynamic, which could possibly be shaped by critically analyzing the socio-cultural position of women, is completely ignored.

A senior psychologist is quoted to have said in a news report, "women are far more sensitive and emotionally weaker than men. They have lesser tolerance levels than men, which explains why a higher number of persons who commit suicide belong to the fairer sex" Rabia Rashid, a local psychologist, said (Jahangir PTI, 2007; Shah 2016). Instead of locating and examining gender-based experiences that lead women to commit suicides, the essentialist notions of women being 'emotional' are still largely utilized to explain the phenomenon of more women committing suicide in Kashmir than men, the exact numbers about which are not known over the years. However, a web portal reported on 3 March 2019, that out of 750 suicide attempts reported in a major city hospital in Srinagar, SMHS, 490 were attempted by women. In a survey conducted by Kashmir university 'with a random sample of 164 para-suicide cases showed that 112 were females and 50 were males. Meanwhile, another survey hypothesized that "fear, stress, tension, and uncertainties prevailing in Kashmir" were main reasons behind the incidence of suicide (see e.g. Shaikh, 2017; Nissa, 2015; Kashmir Reader, 2019).

Despite having been reported by several newspapers, there is hardly an attention to the social issue of women committing suicide, and no attempt is made to understand practices, environment and behaviors that build up to a point where women commit suicide. Such behaviors shaped by sociological practices and cultural approvals have been so deeply ingrained that there is no interrogation or counter of these sociological mores and practices. Also, because such examinations will

challenge the social fabric, in-community violence is ignored and grossly blamed on political conflict. Again, interviewing families whose daughter commits suicide is a tedious and emotionally exhausting work that no researcher in Kashmir has attempted.

In the oversimplified discourse around suicides, the misrepresentation of *'suicide-committing-weak-women'* and *'political-conflict-causing-suicides'* are the two major stereotypes that the community is unwilling to look beyond, resulting in no acknowledgement of in-community violence like suicides and killings of women. This thesis is therefore an attempt to fill that gap.

Upon discussing a theme like suicides with a fellow Kashmiri researcher, my findings were validated, when she said that she submitted a term paper in which she did content analysis of English-language newspapers of 2016, for the reports of suicide. She found out that news items report that women with burns were brought to hospital and squarely state that the woman committed suicide (Rising Kashmir, 2016, 2017). No questions are raised if it were a suicide, no detail is given if police are investigating the causes of deaths, as in most cases it is left uninvestigated being treated as a "personal matter", and media or any local org does not even advocate for the same, as they neither interrogate it nor find such questions useful. My fellow researcher gave me confidence because discussing questioning and contesting suicides from a gender perspective has not previously been done in Kashmir.

In-depth analysis of these narratives reveals that in the act of committing suicide by a woman in Kashmir, it is the society, its norms, traditions, religion-culturally embedded beliefs, and misogynistic ideas that are responsible for bringing death to women's bodies. At the same time, it is a sign of protest, an agential act through which women are saying that they choose to die than to live life on unjust terms of the society. A society where women find agency in ending their lives, is in a state of crisis. In order for anything to change for the marginalized, society cannot wait for our-community violence to end or political conflict to be resolved, in order to acknowledge and address the in-community violence.

Finally, in cases where murders are disguised as suicides in Kashmir, the bodies of women do not even get to choose their death and are blamed for ending their lives in 'an un-Islamic way'.

4.6. ‘Honour’ Killings: No honour in killing women

The notion of so-called ‘honour’ killings being disguised as suicides in Kashmir is a crucial discussion, which has not made its way to public discourse, media analyses or the academic realm. Family matters being seen as something deeply personal prevents any such inquiry into honor killings. Even in actual suicides committed by women, structural violence, which seems to have nodirect author and no enforcer, kills women, after surveillance of women’s bodies and failing to discipline them. However, in case of honor killings the involvement of immediate family is not only absolute, but also conscious and direct.

After discussing the cases of Mastoor and Sumaira, whose parental families allege were killed by in-laws and husband, and Adila, who committed suicide after being harassed at work, attention is drawn to two other cases, wherein; I was not allowed as much access due to the families’ non-co-operation. The two cases relate to the deaths of two even younger, unmarried women (19 and early twenties). Marriage is an important boundary and differentiation here, as will be discussed further.

In one case, a lawyer and I informed the local police station about murder disguised as ‘suicide’, an unreported incident, which had taken place in the lawyer’s neighborhood. A constable reluctantly went to collect the details of the suicide, upon the directions of the station house officer (SHO), who we had requested to intervene in the matter. In a few days when we returned to the police station, the constable said that he was scolded and reprimanded by the family for visiting a household who has just lost their girl. He was also told that it was a personal matter and they do not want to report it. The lawyer discussed with me that the family lived in a politically volatile pocket, which is particularly reluctant towards any police intervention, which could have further added to the denial of the family to discuss the conditions of the ‘suicide’ with a police constable. Therefore, we decided to approach the family to interview, they clearly told us that they do not want any discussion on this personal matter. We realized that reluctance was not limited to police involvement only but towards any kind of description or discussion about the incident.

The lawyer, whose specialty is women’s cases, remarked:

> In married woman’s suicide cases, the husband’s family is bent on proving that it was a suicide, whereas; the girl’s parental family often contests the claim in nearly all cases that I have come across, doubting that it is a murder.

Therefore, marriage often becomes a marker in suicides, with unmarried women's suicides with a high possibility of being honor-based killings and married women's suicides' domestic violence cases. In young unmarried girls' 'suicide', the community is unwilling to interrogate the parental version, more than in married women's cases of 'suicides', making marriage an important factor. "Women are nobody's priority in this goddamn place", she would repeat, which was apparent in fieldwork.

This girl had died of burns, due to kerosene sprinkled on her body before lighting a match. While leaving the place, disappointed and inquisitive, another girl in the neighborhood informed us that the deceased girl had a relationship with a boy who was not from the same caste as theirs. The deceased girl also endured physical torture and beatings by family. The neighborhood-girl further said that the same is known to many in the neighborhood, as they would hear her scream, but since it is a personal matter, no one intervened. Investigating this case further could have revealed more but I did not consider myself in an investigating capacity beyond that point. It was a disturbing scenario. As was the case with another suicide. A young girl in her early twenties had consumed poison and the family was reluctant to talk to us. I was informed about these two cases by the above-mentioned lawyer, who has a firm belief that both of these were 'honor killings'. She accompanied me, and knew about both through her work with police and the community only.

A mention of one more contested death of a girl in the Murran area of Pulwama district is necessary, as it highlights clearly the gap between perception and reality in cases of VaW. The case was reported in media as a suicide on March 8, 2019. The girl's parents had said that she consumed some poisonous substance after a man had posted "some objectionable pictures of their girl on social media which forced her to take the extreme step."

Hameeda Nayeem, a woman political activist, on her Facebook wrote about the 'suicide', describing it as an "extreme reaction to being stalked, which is a grave issue. When masculinity/virility of boys and men is challenged by military oppression, they find ways of satisfying/upholding their masculinity by violence against women in domestic/civilian space" (Posted on March 8, 2019).

This narrative is problematic as it focuses on 'challenged and provoked masculinity' that has to unleash itself somewhere and directly links the 'suicide' with state oppression. The connections aredrawn even without making any attempt to look at the case details, obfuscating with ease the ways in which gender relations make it easy for masculinized subjectivities to ravage women without accountability. Reflexivity on how the gender relations pre-date state-based conflict and exist independently of it, is also a missing voice in such narratives. Understanding violence against women as a manifestation of political conflict, is to simplistically portray it as a pure consequence of discrimination against men. It is not to deny the cycle of violence as discussed by Enloe 2000, Cockburn 1998 and Kelly 1988, but the cause and consequence extend beyond this single link. As Crenshaw (1991) states, "Racism is linked to patriarchy to the extent that racism denies men of color the power and privilege that dominant men enjoy," denying the causal unitary connection between the two. Reinforcement of existing gender relations exacerbated by political conflict and violence is often cyclic. But political conflict although reinforces and exacerbates the existing power relations, but does not cause gender violence in a linear fashion, especially the in-community violence where armed forces are not involved. Since analysis of in-community violence challenges this simplistic blanket causal connection between violent conflicts and gender-based violence, such discussions are brushed under the carpet.

Reverting back again to the aforementioned case, it should be noted that the next day, on 9 March 2019, the deceased girl's boyfriend's YouTube video appeared, claiming that he and the girl had been in a relationship for seven years and that their respective families had planned to get them married. However, the girl's cousin instead forced her to marry him. Four years earlier, the cousin had visited the girl's place and physically harassed her by kissing her. No action was taken by the girl's family. Again, two years thereafter, the cousin physically assaulted her and snatched her phone on which there were some intimate pictures of the girl.

This man uploaded her pictures blaming her boyfriend for uploading them. However, according to her boyfriend, who spoke in another YouTube video on 5 March, the cousin and his siblings went to the girl's home and beat her to death as she did not want to marry him, the cousin. He says:

> Her cousins used to intimidate me by calling and saying they will murder me. They finally beat her up to death." The boy breaks down and wails. "I requested them on the phone not to be cruel to her and involve their sister to speak to her instead of them beating her. The

boy says in the video that they put this cousin who wanted to marry her against her wishes with her in the room. He could have raped her, fed her poison or whatever.

He ends the video by saying, *"I request people to get her murderers killed (punished), even if you want to kill me too, please do."* I did not visit the place but on speaking to the concerned Deputy Superintendent of Police about this case, asking him to take cognizance of the video according to which it was an honor killing not a suicide, he said that the man (her boyfriend) has been arrested after the family made noise, and he added, "the girl was having affairs with multiple men and was not of good character", in a way that seemed justifiable of the end that she met. It would not be hard to ascertain if the intimate pictures were uploaded by her boyfriend or her cousin utilizing the services of IT/cyber cell of police but police had made up their mind and did not even want to consider the possibility of it being a murder by cousin, and not a suicide.

In police officer's saying that 'she was not of good character', lies the subtext of the girl's body being measured against a narrow acceptable sexual conduct, deviation from which justifies violence against her including her death. The girl was of bad character - she had an affair with that cousin also, was the underlying message. Even if she did, should that prevent a fair investigation? Should her family be believed when they say that it was a suicide, and not her boyfriend when he says that her family murdered her because having boyfriend/pre-marital relation is still not acceptable, and hence family's version weighs heavy on the balance of honor and shame?

Assuming that it was a suicide carried out upon seeing her inappropriate pictures on social media, what made her take such a harsh step, instead of holding the culprit responsible? The narratives of shame and honor were pointed against the girl and she either chose to die or was beaten to death. Police's unwillingness to investigate the possibility of murder, not only makes one doubt their integrity, but also points at their lack of understanding in the matters pertaining to gender dynamics, and the politics of morality around bodies. The police are as much caught in the web of the same narratives that most of them do not understand or acknowledge honor killings

Women are packaged into bodies that can be raped and cannot be raped. And in a culture that determines the value of a woman's morality by her having or not having a boyfriend, a woman who has a pre-marital relation is already understood as a woman who cannot be raped or murdered. Therefore, suicide becomes an easy trope that allows the disguise of her murder.

4.7. Discussion: Bodies killed for transgressing

'Honor killings' are extreme acts of domestic violence culminating in the murder of a woman, by her family or community. 'Honor' killings as a phenomenon started being investigated in ethnic minorities in some Western countries (Germany, UK, Netherlands) in the late 1990's. Following which the investigation was undertaken in what is known as MENA region – Middle East and North Africa - dominated by Muslim communities. Honor killings take place in the South Asian region of India and Pakistan as well, but linkage to Kashmir has not been made till date (Gill 2013, Stewart,1994, Gupta 2003).

Honor-Based Violence (HbV) is part of a spectrum of VaW that is premised on the perpetuation of men's control over family and community life (Gill, 2013). "The punishment 'required' to restore a family's honor varies depending upon the nature of the perceived shame. HbV manifests in numerous forms, including physical abuse (e.g. beatings), sexual abuse, emotional abuse (e.g. coercion), psychological abuse (e.g. threats) and/or financial abuse (e.g. withdrawal of financial support)." (Gill, 2013). "Although honor has multiple connotations and overlapping meanings relating to respect, esteem, dignity, reputation and virtue, most societies with honor systems equate it with the regulation of women's sexuality and the avoidance of deviation, especially on the part of women, from social norms and traditions." (Gill, 2013)

Anthropological research demonstrates that the honor system punishes women for harming honor, but does not glorify them when they validate or elevate it (Stewart, 1994). As women's behavior either upholds or damages men's honor, thus garnering shame, women are placed in a secondary position that is reinforced by their exclusion from the public domain (Stewart, 1994). It is partly for this reason that women's major life decisions are usually determined for them by male relatives (Kurdish women in this study). Indeed, women's attempts to make their own choices are often seen as selfish and, thus, shameful." (Gill, 2013).

So-called 'honor' killings and other forms of 'honor'-based violence occur across the world according to Gill et al. and Gupta (2003), who emphasize that they are by no means restricted to the 'religions of Islam or Sikhism, or tied to any one particular ethnic group' (2012). Gupta (2003) argues, "Women are beaten and murdered across the globe for similar reasons. She argues that

domestic violence cuts across race, class, religion, and age. Patriarchy uses violence extensively to subjugate women — it is not an issue of racial or ethnic differences. It is a question of the economic, political and social development of a society and the levels of democracy and devolution of power within communities". The assertion, however correct, should not discount the fact that HbV takes place in the cultures which associate honor with women's bodies. In order not to single-out or stereotype any religion or community, generalizing or equating HbV simply with murders, and violence against women seems like a compromise.

The types and peculiarities of violence, its forms and manifestations vary and are often context-specific, context being a derivative of culture, religion, class or ethnicity. In diverse countries and regions, there is a possibility of othering of the whole community which is often vulnerable and racialized, when HbV is reported from with-in that community. There is a tension between racism of state agencies and negative media representation on the one hand, and the need to raise the issue of gendered violence, and protect women's rights in these communities, on the other (Morrison, 1993). Such tension is politicized in Kashmir, where the community by and large does not want to be seen or portrayed as committing violence against women, as it might be utilized by the Indian state to stereotype the whole community. Hence being one reason for community's denial or downplay of in-community violence, among others (discussed further in conclusion chapter). The political utilization of VaW to stereotype a community further exacerbates the denial and ignorance of such in-community violence like HbV. However, the absence of political conflict would possibly not lead to acknowledgment of HbV violence on its own. Had political conflict been the only hindrance in the acceptance of HbV as a form of violence, then in the non-conflict countries or areas, HbV would have been identified and classified as a practice of VaW. But the fact is that HbV was identified in ethnic minorities in the western countries.

The patriarchal narratives of honor and shame underpin the expectation that women will spend their lives under the guardianship of a close male relative, so that their behavior may be constantly scrutinized. This is due to the fact that women are symbolically (and, to an extent, literally) viewed as 'the vessels that hold the family's honor' (Gill, 2009). While men of the particular culture are seen as responsible for guarding women against any behavior that might be seen as shameful. As a result, women are often objectified in relation to notions of family honor to the point where they are perceived as mere commodities. As Mojab and Gorman (2007) suggest, at the time of marriage

the ‘ownership’ of a woman transfers from her immediate male blood-relatives to her husband, who assumes rights over her actions and her body. This holds very much true in case of Kashmir, as a woman after marriage is handed over to husband for guardianship, which is buttressed by religious notion of men being ‘qawam’ (the maintainers) of women in Quran. Quranic legitimacy makes it easier for women to accept the guardianship of husbands, as, Qurat Agha, an activist and academic, who comes from a clerical family and is separated from her husband for being a ‘disobedient (na-farmaan in Kashmiri and urdu) wife’,says. She further states in her personal interview conducted for this research:

> He tells his followers that I am a bad woman because I wear sports shoes (which have laces) and I drive. Earlier, I did not drive in my home district so even my father (who is a cleric) would feel uncomfortable if anyone would tell him that your daughter is setting a bad example. But one day, only a few months ago, I just took my father’s car and drove. Thank God I had learnt driving in Delhi. I felt liberated. Today when I look back on my life, I had so much internalized the societal values that I actually blamed myself for being a ‘nafarmaan’ wife. While as whatever he did which involved sleeping with women outside of our marriage[19], he had a religious backing for it.

This speaks to the discussion of honor killings, because certain prescribed behaviors derived from religion when violated, make violence in the name of honor a justifiable option, for example; separation in marriage is legitimate due to ‘disobedience of women’. Women who are victims of honor killings are invisible within the private/public divide which characterizes the domestic violence discourse. (Meettoo, 2011). The phenomenon is studied as “intra-family femicide in defense of honor in Jordan” (Faqir, 2011; Hadidi, 2001) and “murder of a woman by her male kin after something she has done is interpreted as tainting her family’s honor” in case of Turkey (Sev’er, 2005).

In Kashmir, there is no discourse or understanding around Honor Killings, which shall be clearer by this ethnographic observation. On November 23 2017, KWC organized a gender sensitization program of police officials in the city of Srinagar, in which we tried to discuss HbV among other things. Most police officials at the level of Investigating Officers (IOs), who were 43 in number, unanimously said that they had never heard of it. A few, two to three, said that they heard of a few

[19] In reference to mutaah marriage which is still practiced by some sects of Muslims like shias in which a man can enter a temporary marriage on contract and call it off varying from a few hours to days by paying meher/ dower.

incidents where for marrying outside of caste and religion women in India and Pakistan are burned. They admitted that similar incidents take place in Kashmir once the concept of honor violence was explained, but also said that they did not use this term or keep any such data or record with them.

It is important to reiterate, that it is beyond the scope of this research to prove that the cases under discussion were murders not suicides. However, the case details analyzed in the context of 'shame and honor' in Kashmir, one cannot completely overlook the huge possibility of these murders being disguised as 'suicides.' This claim is strengthened by the evidence that HbV has been disguised as murders in nearly all the communities where it is practiced, as is highlighted by the referenced studies like (Gill 2009,2013, Krenshaw 1994; Faqir, 2011; Hadidi, 2001; Mojab and Gorman, 2007; Mettoo, 2011; Sev'er, 2005; Stewart, 1994; Morrison, 1993; Gupta, 2003).

The effect of overall militarized violence in the society, its individual members, and its trickling into the households, cannot be denied, as is discussed by Kelly and Enloe (1999; 2000) through the cyclical continuum of violence. But my contention is that political conflict is not the unitary cause, and sometimes not a cause at all, in women's suicide or murders. Sticking to the political narrative alone makes it harder to identify the actual causes, and devising mechanisms and policies to address any form of gender-based violence. The impact of overall militarized violence and thus, the intersections between in-community and out-community violence against women will, therefore, be the focus of the following chapters.

4.8. Conclusions

In a place with 'multiple oppressions' (Menjivar, 2011) it is easy to lose sight of everyday violence, academically, and at the community level. Any discussion around in-community violence endured by any minority group in a conflict-ridden society, looks like a commentary on the society and the rejection of the society itself – its values, culture, and moreover its religion, as is discussed in this or the following chapters.

Whereas, in academic discourse, violence against women due to political conflict and political violence, has been taken into ambit of studying regional politics by approaching it through a feminist lens, as has been discussed in the chapter. However, in analysis of 'Kashmir and women',

using a feminist approach is limited by not paying attention to socio-cultural construction of women; both corporeal and discursive. Lived experiences by way of membership of a marginalized community places the native researcher at an advantage of understanding the in-community violence, even when it is not visible to the outside world, but it comes with a risk of stereotyping and singling out one's own community.

Un-gendered understanding of women and the un-gendered representation of everyday life of a Kashmiri woman, in addition to a selective gendered understanding of out-community violence, as is visible in academic investigations about Kashmir, reduce women into being used instrumentally instead of understanding gender as an important cross-cutting analytical category. It also prevents any attempt to highlight in-community violence, by seeing it as a deliberate competing narrative against the larger political dispute in the region, coercing all the identities, and experiences to be subservient to the national-ethnic identity of Kashmiri political movement.

Furthermore, this chapter has emphasized that violence is heavily delineated from the perspective of the perpetrator, and the mode of violence utilized in general, meaning that a narrative of violence centered in victim-survivors of violence is also needed. It requires not just the analysis of the act of violence, but the socio-political relations that manifest as violence in everyday life or which builds up to the point of physical violence, and the long-lasting impact of that violence. It calls for a categorical scrutiny, such as expanding the definition of violence holistically, to include remedial action and rehabilitation for the victim-survivors of violence, in addition to focusing and advocating change in the possible ways, and structures that make violence possible, acceptable and normalized, in the first place.

Paying attention to women, their lived experiences, and the way in which they understand the world around them helps explore the situated-ness of women from which an 'alternate epistemic knowledge' or 'oppositional consciousness' can be explored (Foucault, 1988; Collins, 1988; Sandoval, 2001; Harding, 2004). Moreover, an exploration of this position can guide us in generating knowledge, especially about women in complex political environments, like Kashmir.

Understanding the ways in which bodies are controlled, surveilled and disciplined gives a broader conceptualization of power, as against the sovereign power confined in the state. Power that comes from the society, apparently non-authoritarian, and informal, can and does produce power to

create, reinforce and normalize relations of dominance and subordination. Therefore, it becomes necessary to broaden the academic and community analysis, shifting away from dualism of the oversimplified binary of the 'oppressed and the oppressor'. It is the paradigm of nearly all the investigations concerning political conflict of Kashmir; especially the post-colonial literature, that engenders role of the state against community and its women, but de-genders in-community violence, obscuring it, thus obliterating the gender identity (of a Kashmiri woman) in its own right, unless it acts as a building block of ethno-national identity. This chapter has demonstrated the importance of uncovering the realities of in-community violence against women, in order to seek a more just society.

Linking back the discussion to Bordo (1992) who suggests, while understanding Foucault's definition of power, that "power is not as a possession, instead a dynamic or network of non-centralized forces", that these forces are not random. They are configured to assume historical forms through social beliefs, culture and even religion and play into the hands of dominant groups – in terms of class, caste, race or gender. But they are not sustained by 'design/decree' from the top, instead are a result of multiple processes regulating exertion of power. These multiple powers manifest themselves in many ways, as discussed, an example being the un-interrogated social expectation of the in-laws, and the husband for the woman to be subservient. A dimension of this community generated power makes it normal to verbalize murders of women like Mastoor, Adila or Sumaira as 'suicides'. It standardizes overpowering the collective agency of the community to even articulate violation of women's rights as human rights violations, whereas, actively employing the HR discourse to protest against the out-community violence/ state violence. It is obvious that the families have reasons not to call it murder, as they could be the direct perpetrators. Whether the power prevents the community from understanding it as murder, or prevents its articulation as murder, is a matter of further investigation. But how this power shifts narratives and swiftly blames women's bodies in death too, is a way to understand the operation of these multiple powers.

These multiple powers buttressing into culture and religion are structurally constructed and continue to operate silently and surreptitiously (invisibly), away from the gaze of the community and academia. More so, because the focus of the community and academia is limited to challenging the exercise of power of state, rather shifting focus to the repressive power dynamics within the

community. Analysis of women as political subjects, throwing stones at military, or being violated through rapes by state forces or militia, cannot be holistic unless the construction of corporeal and discursive subject of a Kashmiri woman that contextualizes its everyday realities, is included in the larger political analysis. It requires attention to be paid to the language and discourse that women utilize about the experience of violence – which may not always be the vocabulary of the dominant discourses in community. In the words of Spivak (1998) "subaltern speak, but the question is, can you hear?" To hear is to acknowledge and minimize biases, by exercising reflexivity about them, and to hear is to re-conceptualize the definitions of power and violence, and push its boundaries to include women as embodied beings. The physicality and 'everydayness', of violence is consequently to be viewed politically from the vantage point of complex social, cultural and economic processes, of which this thesis is an example.

5. ‘Out-community’ violence: Security, Masculinity, and Exclusive Politics of Nation (Indian) and Aspired Nation (Kashmiri)

5.1. Introduction

Having pursued an in-depth exploration of various forms of in-community violence in the previous two chapters, this chapter proceeds with a discussion regarding what I refer to, as forms of institutionalized and militarized ‘out-community’ violence. This is done firstly through an interrogation of the concept of security and masculinity through the lens of Feminist IR. It includes analyzing an extensive body of ethnographic field observations from my fieldwork as well as auto-ethnographic reflections of my own experience of living in Kashmir for nearly 30 years. Furthermore, the chapter presents a discussion regarding the shrinking space for women in (oppositional) politics in Kashmir - both Indian national and Kashmiri national narratives.

In the second part of this chapter, I highlight the direct and indirect impact of ‘out-community’ violence on women in Kashmir. The chapter thus elucidates the responses of women to the out-community violence, incorporating observations and experiences of a number of women activists, who were interviewed for this thesis. Linkages with other societies that have faced out-community violence like; war rapes, have also been drawn, to understand the violence faced by women in conflict zone, holistically. In brief, this chapter contributes to knowledge with a theorization of the entanglement between in-community violence and out-community violence, anchored in extensive field research findings from Kashmir, with women’s voices being placed at the forefront.

I argue in this chapter that militarization emboldens masculinity beyond accountability, whilst placing upon survivors of in-community violence the burden of silence. It coerces them to think about the bigger picture of conflict and not bring up ‘the petty things’ taking place within the community.

Moving between theoretical and empirical discussions and juxtaposing some of my auto-ethnographic reflections with the lived experiences of my interviewees - women activists, helps

me to seek a feminist methodological departure from dominant ways of doing and writing research work (see methodology chapter). It is worth noting here that the choice of my interviewees was a purposive one; with some women aligning with separatist politics, some with mainstream/electoral politics, while others identifying as protestors without any political position. Hence the activists interviewed for these two chapters self-identify as activists and are known in socio- political circles in Kashmir. Unlike most studies on Kashmir, my work includes interviews with women with varied political thought and affiliation.

For a protracted political conflict, like Kashmir conflict, there is no clear boundary between the idea of wartime and peace-time. As a consequence of adopting a narrow binary reading of war and peace, the politics of everyday violence is neglected, what Laura Shepherd (2009) calls "the violence(s) of the in-between times that international politics recognizes neither as 'war' nor 'peace'". Therefore, instead of differentiating the times of war and peace, this thesis simultaneously presents violence as emerging from state and the community and is distinguished such that its interaction is explored. This moreover builds on Cynthia Cockburn's (2004) 'continuum of violence' theory, where forms of violence range from small everyday acts on the one end of the spectrum, to catastrophic forms of violence such as genocide on the other.

When discussing 'out-community' violence in Kashmir, this thesis refers to those forms of violence perpetrated against women by politically generated violence : by the state and the armed militia. Out-community violence is the wartime violence, militarized violence and the violence experienced by the people in 'societies in conflict'. The term 'out-community violence' is used because it is generally not found within any community but in a conflicted or stressed community. Mostly, the perpetrators of the violence are outsiders or are perceived as outsiders (by Kashmiri community); or those who do not fall within the regular categories, which may include acommunity like the Kashmiri policemen who are collaborators with the Indian army in fighting militancy/armed insurgency. The use of in and out community violence ruptures the neat categorization of war time and peace time violence, or the violence of war and everyday violence. Out-community violence includes the politically generated violence perpetrated by the Indian state and its various institutions against the Kashmiri population and the violence of the armed militia/insurgents.

Historically, it can be traced down to the division of the Indian sub-continent into India and

Pakistan upon withdrawal of the British colonial project in the Indian subcontinent, after the end of the Second World War in 1947, and a certain political trajectory that resulted in an armed rebellion in 1989 in Kashmir.

In an effort to curb the political movement in Kashmir seeking accession from India, assorted forms and kinds of violence were put into practice by the Indian state – against the local armed militants as well as the civilians. According to Seema Kazi, the Indian State relied on a policy of "massive military mobilization and unrestrained repression" to crush the rebellion. Kazi quotes Prof William Baker, "Consider that the Valley consists of approximately 4000 square miles, and India has more than 600,000 troops crammed into this small area. Kashmir has the dubious distinction of having the largest concentration of occupation forces in the world."

There is no doubt that the aim of the military through repression is to crush the political movement for self-determination. To quote a Human Rights report by Federation Internationale des Droits de Homme (FIDH), jurist Patanjali Varadarajan writes:

> Repression is widespread and palpable... The Indian security forces operate with complete impunity, engaging in acts of repression of innocent citizens. These acts include torture; murder or extra-judicial executions; rape; molestation short of rape; 'disappearances' (in the sense of Latin American Desaparecidos); arson; arbitrary stops, searches and detentions in public places; violent entry into private premises; and theft.

Although, largely the direct target of the Indian military has been a predominantly male-run political movement, my work asserts that seemingly male-fought, male-led and male-targeted state violence also has a gender component to it. It impacts women disproportionately – sometimes apparent and at other times, more obscure. This chapter will highlight this veiled impact using the concepts from Feminist IR, security being one such concept. Feminist IR is utilized as a theoretical lens, as it allows the analysis to move beyond traditional paradigms and binaries found in the mainstream and Realist traditions of IR. It moreover allows for an in-depth analysis of the experiences of women within the wider context of political conflict. Before delving into the analysis of out-community forms of violence perpetrated against women in Kashmir, the following section will first discuss how 'war' is understood in Feminist IR theory, in order to provide a robust framework for analysis of the extensive field research findings of the thesis.

5.2 Understanding war in Feminist IR

According to feminist International Relations scholars, each war fought has not only an international component, but importantly also constitutes a social institution (Sylvester, 2013). Both these layers in understanding war, and re-conceptualizing war beyond the tension between the two nations/state institutions, are some of the nuances and complicacies that feminism brings to IR in the sub-field of Feminist IR. Feminism is grounded in an epistemology that takes social relations as its central category of analysis and hence, analyses war as a social institution. As Tickner says, that in traditional IR, ontology-based on unitary states operating in a social, anarchical world, provided few entry points for feminist theories (Tickner 1997, 616). Shepherd (2009) Sylvester (2013), Enloe (2007), Steans (2013) and others through their work have helped in understanding war as a complete social institution.

By saying that wars are international, feminist scholars of IR suggest that war is not only a direct confrontation between the state machinery (perceived as the only nodes of power) of two countries. "The provision of funds or military equipment outside of a country can internationalize a war or activities breaching international laws", thus adding an international dimension to war (Sylvester 2013). This alternative conceptualization of 'war' lends a useful framework of analysis for the thesis when understanding out-community violence, as we shall see in the subsequent sections. Indeed, the definition of wars as social institutions, also suggest that wars are institutionalized through the use of "heroic myths and glorifying masculinity of war heroes, memories of war, working of elaborate defence departments and militaries, and aspects of global popular culture about accepting and celebrating warlike themes of movies, games, songs, and advertisements around wars" (Sylvester 2013). This is particularly relevant in the context of Kashmir, where the long-standing and ongoing conflict is seen merely as a 'border issue' between India and Pakistan, with three wars having been fought between the two neighbours and with China's stake in the matter as well. The United Nations declared Kashmir (under both Indian and Pakistani control) as a disputed territory in its Security Council Resolution adopted on 21 April 1948, "calling for a ceasefire and directing the States of India and Pakistan to resolve this conflict through a plebiscite" which is still awaited.

Both India and Pakistan wanted the whole territory of Kashmir – a Muslim majority princely state ruled by a Hindu king at the time of partition. A total of 565 princely states decided their political

future to either join the Union of India or the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, while Kashmir continued to be the contentious and unfinished business of the partition. The political aspiration and demand for political self-determination turned into an armed rebellion in 1989 with the impetus from elections being rigged in 1987.

The war heroes of each side are celebrated by the Indian state and the Kashmiri community too. The language of martyrdom is utilized by both – with Indian state claiming its soldiers martyred in the service of motherland while killing the terrorists who aim to defile the body of mother India (by wanting to secede). On the other hand, a narrative of martyrdom in Kashmiri community refuses to see militants as terrorists, it instead celebrates them as freedom fighters. These contesting narratives to view expressions of masculinity – armed combat, and the representation of male bodies as heroic when perpetrating physical violence on the body of the enemy, represent the role of body and violence in waging war to preserve or create nation – in case of an Indian soldier and a Kashmiri militant, respectively. This emboldened conflict, as we shall see, has a significant impact on women, as it serves to silence the suffering of survivors of gender-based violence, who are expected to not speak up about what is referred to as 'minor issues' in thecontext of the larger conflict.

On the issues of war and peace in IR, feminists ask why wars have been fought predominantly by men, and how gendered structures of masculinity and femininity have validated war and militarism for both women and men. Why are women disadvantaged politically, socially and economically? Why is war primarily a male activity and what are the causal and constitutive implications of this forwomen's political role, which has been constructed as a 'protected' category. Such questions haveled to a redefinition of security to include the effects of the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender. (Pettman, 1996: 187-188)

War in Feminist IR is aptly defined as "a politics of injury" with everything in wars aimed at "injuring people and their social surroundings as a way of resolving disagreement or, in some cases, encouraging disagreement if it is profitable to do so." (Sylvester, 2013: 3-4; Parashar, 2013). "This militaristic-capitalistic institutionalization of conflict and war is delineated by feminist interpretation and analysis of concepts like masculinity and redefinition of traditional and realist definitions of national interest and security" (Shepherd,2009). In the feminist understanding of

war, taking women's own experiences of war, of political violence and understanding the concepts of security, peace, and violence in their own encounters, seriously demonstrates valuing women'sunderstanding of their world, as Pettman (1996: 757) rightly suggests.

5.3 Security as a contested concept: Who is securing who?

Since war and conflict have traditionally been central issues for early IR, the place and significance that security as a concept occupies "with its set of archetypes of male experience, in the foundation of the discipline of IR" is huge (Grant, 1992: 84). Discussions around security in IR traditionally revolve around issues of "war and peace in an international system of sovereign and self-interested nation-states with a focus on issues of military strategy". In analyzing the experiences of women in Kashmir, it is essential to go beyond the traditionalist IR approach and explore the situation through Feminist IR which allows for an analysis beyond binaries of 'war' and 'peace'.

Indeed, Feminist IR highlighted that 'Security' means very different things for most women (and other marginalized identities as well), than the meanings given to it by IR. The acknowledgment of the differential impact of the concept of security on different identities, is the contribution of Feminism in IR. Studying the everyday experiences of violence by variously located subjects, feminists find that questions of identity and security are fundamentally interwoven; any security narrative is also a narrative of political identity (Peterson, 1992; Stern, 2005, 2006; Sylvester,2013) (Wibben, 2011: 593). This approach to security is highly relevant to the research findings of this thesis, where the security narrative of Kashmir, and the narrative of political identity, also serve to exacerbate the situation for women and their exposure to both in-community and out-community forms of violence as we shall see in this chapter.

"Violence that is poorly understood through the lenses of the dominant logic of security," writes Maria Stern, "could be better understood if we began asking questions about the damage that can occur at the confluence of competing for identity claims and the efforts at securing subject positions" (2005, 11). This is why the ways to ensure security to guard national interest, may or may not coincide with the experience of safety and security by the community. In guarding the

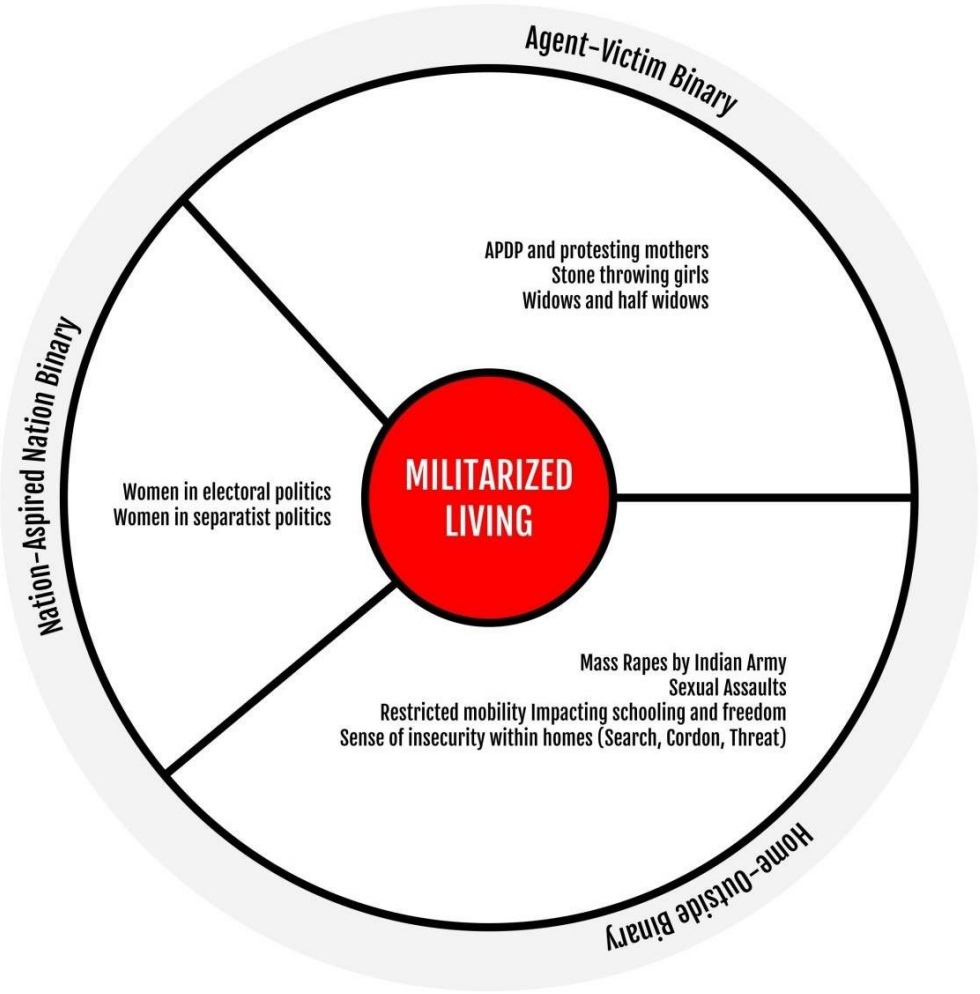
national interest, national security is the major area of focus for most scholars from realist school in IR.

Core insights of feminist security studies, an emerging sub-field of Feminist IR, change the way in which we view the world or understand 'global': "the centrality of the human subject; the importance of particular configurations of masculinity and femininity; and the gendered conceptual framework" (Shepherd, 2013).

In state-terror and civil war, as in family violence, perpetrators are sometimes known, or/and may stay around, able to continue to perpetrate the violence rather than being held accountable. A more comprehensive view of security, which begins by asking what, or who, most threatens particular groups of people, will disrupt any notion of 'national security'. For the greatest threats to people's security in many cases are; local state agents, or military personnel, or 'home' men who are constructed as soldier-protectors, or sometimes liberators of the very people they endanger. This discern challenges the very conceptualization of home as haven, or national security as the topmost priority of the state (Pettman, 1996). For this reason, my thesis emphasizes the importance of looking at both in-community and out-community violence.

Indeed, it encourages us to look beyond the binary of security and insecurity and brings in the complexities of security as a concept. Sometimes, for example, the security of one group may come at the heightened insecurity of another group. In alternate terms the perceived or constructed securitization of a group can be experienced as insecurity by them, in practice. In a political conflict like Kashmir, where the state and the larger community are at conflict, the attempts of securitization of the nation and (Indian) national interest – which are often envisaged as the strengthening of military and military operations and machinery, can be antithetical to the community's sense of security. Hence the concept of out-community violence is used from the perspective of the community that is threatened or experiencing violence at the hands of a power perceived as an outsider - India and the Indian state, in this thesis/project.

Figure B | Understanding out-community violence through disruption of binaries.



Tickner (2014) recognizes that the masculinity of strategic discourses relates to the hegemonic masculinity of states. The security of the state is perceived as a core value, and a basic need by citizens. National security and the maintenance of its interests continue to be an almost exclusively male domain. Through its association with war, national security has been valorized and celebrated in several cultures. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that hegemonic masculinity cannot be applied generically to all males. Effeminate men, trans people, non-normative sexualities are devalued by way of their closeness to femininity. This is a passionate brotherhood, a 'virile fraternity' (Parker et al., 1992: 6) that forms the nation. "The nation finds itself compelled to distinguish its 'proper' homo-sociality from more explicitly sexualized male to male relations, a

compulsion that requires the identification, isolation, and containment of male homosexuality" (Parker et al., 1992: 6); hence moral panics about homosexuals, and women (usually seen as alternatives), in-state militaries. Drawing on the concept of hegemonic masculinity can help understand better how masculine ideas of security, and nation get institutionalized to become rigidified truths.

5.4 What/who are the 'security men' securing on the streets of Kashmir?

Many scholars have highlighted in their work about security forces, that are stationed to safeguard the border between India and Pakistan. But having security forces in every neighborhood, on everyroad and weaving the landscape with khaki increases the threat perception, and insecurity of people, as shall be explained. Various scholars, HR reports and organizations have highlighted that security forces have often violated the human rights of the Kashmiri community, which is often seen as a 'hostage community'. Even though most of the violence on border remains undocumented with its sufferers being the most marginalized people living nomadic life, in the mountains surrounding the valley, who Kashmiris often discriminate against and do not consider ethnic Kashmiris as they do not speak Kashmiri but pahari or gojri. They barely have any representation within the politics, mainstream Indian politics and more so Separatist politics. In the bowl of the valley of Kashmir, Human Rights Watch (1993) and Amnesty International (1995), "drew a direct correlation between the extremely high figures for custodial deaths and extra-judicial killings in Kashmir, with the widespread phenomenon of illegal and arbitrary and incommunicado detentions, coupled with the pervasiveness of brutal torture methods in custody". The densely militarized landscape of Kashmir involves a complex grid of police and other military and paramilitary agencies, "deployed on counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency duties like Central armed police forces (CRPF), Border security forces (BSF), and community-based state militia like village defence committees (VDC) and pro-government militia or the *Ikhwan (Hassan 2018)*." The physical occupation of space is a way to exercise control and authority. Hassan (2018), says that the military bunkers were placed on the important entry points across the towns and villages. "Located at strategic locations after every 100 meters of distance these bunkers acted as check-posts for constant observation., they controlmobility.

In fact, the distinctions between the police and military institutions, and between insurgency-control and law enforcement, are blurred in Kashmir, as Indian forces not only guard the border between India and Pakistan, but are also stationed in the residential areas in makeshift bunkers. Many of the Indian armed forces have forcefully occupied many houses, stadiums, hospitals, recreational clubs, government guest houses, schools, and vacant cinemas. There is also a subordination of the police to military authority. "Clear demarcation between the police and the military has been considered a pre-eminent feature of the modern nation-state (Giddens, 1985). The failure of a government to demarcate the two is usually seen as an indicator of repressiveness and lack of democracy" (Kraska, 2007).

Interestingly, these forces are often the first responders to any everyday disruptions like community quarrels and massive traffic jams; the floods of 2014 being an example (Shukla, 2014). These interventions are also seen as strategic good-will exercises by Indian forces. "Operation Sadhbhavana", an initiative of the Indian state to "win hearts and minds' of the people of Kashmir, is an exercise of militarized humanitarianism, which effectively enables increased interference of the military in civil governance." Schools are opened under this operation, hospitals are run, and livelihood and sports activities are supported as well.

The spatial arrangement with overwhelming presence of military in residential areas, coupled with legislations like AFSPA - a legislation that empowers the Indian armed forces to arrest or even shoot a person on suspicion without any judicial review or remedy – means the Indian paramilitary in Kashmir is widely seen as an 'unjust, abusive, immensely powerful, and an unaccountable force operating with impunity'. Kazi (2014) writes, "in its 54-year-old history not a single member of the security forces has been prosecuted for murder, rape, and the destruction of property including the burning of villages. By shielding security forces from public accountability, the AFSPA perpetuates a gross abuse of power by State forces. A member of Kashmir's State Human Rights Commission described the legislation as "hated" and "draconian" " (Dhar, 2012, cited in Kazi, 2014). Upon asking my women interviewees about security, they echoed the feelings of insecurity, much as has been my own experience with security personnel and their security exercises like crackdowns, having grown up in Kashmir. An interviewee, Nayeema Ahmad Mehjoor, who is in her 60's and served as the chairperson of the Women's Commission in the state of Jammu and Kashmir at the time of the interview, said:

> In the 1990's everything changed with militancy…women's living normally, peacefully and comfortably became difficult. The whole family felt insecure; there was hardly any sense of socialization or security. Suddenly there were armed forces everywhere, bunkers came up overnight. We lived in Dalgate. I worked for Radio Kashmir and I had to pass through barricades and bunkers and was asked for identity (ID) card all the time (by Indian forces). If I forgot my ID card, I would feel even more insecure. Women stayed in their homes, men were taken outside during search operations and (Indian) armed forces went inside the homes. It was absolute insecurity. Politically so much was going on – killings, crackdowns, search operations, cross-firing. It was a miracle and a great opportunity for me to go to London. I had two kids, 1 year and 2.5 years old. My priority was to give a safe and secure environment to my children and I ran away… but only to return. (August 2017, the office of State Commission of Women) [20]

'Socialization' is used to mean both 'mobility and everyday support system' of family, as was elaborated by the interviewee. Both were disrupted. The experience of war is not only outlined by killings in war but by disruption of normal life. In Kashmir, this disruption has become a permanent feature affecting the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of the population for decades now. Another activist, Sehar Iqbal, who I interviewed for the thesis, said:

> Being a kid in the 90's in Kashmir was hard…. we grew up in the middle of shoot-out, people tortured… A single experience of getting caught in a crackdown in Kursu area in auto comes to my mind. I was 10 and we were coming back from school in an auto-rickshaw. Police and CRPF kicked my auto-wala (driver) and humiliated him which was not uncommon. Some gun-fight was going on but how did they expect the auto-driver to know and hence be off the road? I was a horrible precocious child…(laughs)…. who was in class 3. I told the armed guys that I am taking other kids home. So, we walked from Kursu to Sonwar (as they held back the auto-driver along with his vehicle). The kids were scattered (walking all over the road) and scared too. I took them to my home, we (her family) called their home to inform them that they are well and can be picked up, we fed them… I realized that one person can make a difference, even if it is a child. (Personal interview, August 2018, Café Winterfell, Srinagar)[21]

These activists' experiences of 'militarized living' (both of whom later participated in the Indian electoral exercise in Kashmir), highlights that (a few) women have chosen to move beyond the binary of silence and protest. However, the question of how they feel about this is also a matter of

[20] She was a journalist with BBC Urdu who turned into the mainstream (Indian electoral) politician but identifies as an activist given her work about women in Kashmir that she highlighted in media.

[21] Sehar Iqbal is a development practitioner who also was a Ph.D. scholar at the time of the interview. She contested elections on People's Democratic Party's ticket - a mainstream party but lost the elections in 2008.

discussion. In between the binary of victim and resisting Kashmiri woman, are Kashmiri women who exercise their choice by participating in democratic process – however flawed and conflicted. Nayeema Ahmed Mehjoor additionally said that Kashmiris never believed or rather understood the importance of the electoral process. "*My father voted but never believed that anything is going to change due to elections."* Such a paradoxical position is reflective of a conflict situation where people have lost faith in the institutions, but still hope for things to change, somehow. Long chequered histories of being marginalized and oppressed could collectively build such attitudes and understandings. Sehar Iqbal and Nayeema Mehjoor wanted to resist and rather change the state's excessive control over their and their fellow Kashmiris' lives. Whether they succeeded at it or not (according to them) will be discussed in the last section of this chapter. Interviewing the activists about feelings of safety and (in)security of life in Kashmir helped me reflect on my experience of living in Kashmir in the following section.

5.5 Control of bodies and spaces as an essential military exercise

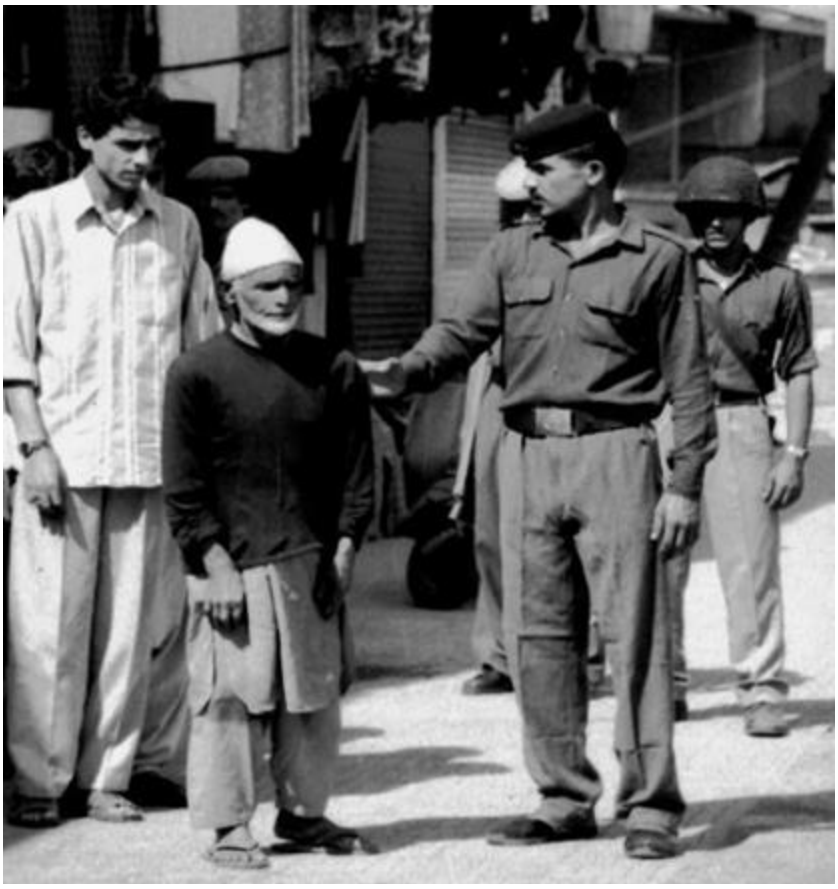
Crackdowns or Cordon And Search Operations (CASO) have become a part of lived reality for Kashmiri. Indian military and paramilitary forces lay a siege in an area to catch suspected militants. Another objective of CASO was to humiliate the civilian populations, by way of exerting absolute control and authority, as was largely perceived by the Kashmiri community. A descriptive, auto-ethnographic reflection of my childhood experience about this exercise of securitization, corroborating the above-mentioned experiences of fear and anxiety, of my interviewees, Nayeema Mehjoor and Sehar Iqbal, follows as a vignette:

5.5.1 Vignette: Crackdown

Many a time, our family – parents, brother and I, would wake up to the announcements of a curfew being imposed in the wee hours. Women and children were ordered to stay home and a crackdown on men would begin, who were ordered to gather near the mosque. Some young boys would often get beaten up for not coming out when the military came to search the homes, for they looked like grown-up men, in their puberty, blurring the boundary of male adulthood which is seen both as protecting and threatening to the institution of a nation-state; depending on whose maleness it is: a soldier's or a rebel's. The Kashmiri men who were ordered to move out of homes by the disciplining voices of Indian armed men were then interrogated. They would be insulted, beaten

up and finally walked in front of a van with the masked informer (mukhbirs/informers) whose job is to raise a finger or nod his head to point out the 'suspicious men'.

Figure C | Photo of a crackdown. Source: Habib Naqash.



'Suspicious men' is a broad category, including militants or the people with any connection to militants. Actual militants mostly have their sources who would inform them before the Indian forces cordoned off a neighborhood. Such that the militants could flee before the arrival of the armed personnel or enter a direct combat resulting in the loss of lives and property. As a child I witnessed many: hand grenades were hurled, land mines close by shattered glasses in our home, a few hundred bullets punched holes in our compound wall and sometimes human flesh too.

An ugly and destructive encounter would last a few hours, or a few days, holding community, a hostage. As a young boy or adult, even if you were not a militant, your cousin, neighbor or friend

were one. You grew up together, played with each other, attended schools and colleges together. So potentially any and every young boy and man remained under the threat of being picked up at the signal of the masked informer, even by their distant association with a militant. These men were later rounded up and taken to interrogation centers.

When Kashmiri men with threatening masculinities, which did not align with the nation-building masculinities, were ordered out of homes, the (Indian) armed men would barge into our homes. We were reduced to prisoners in our own houses, at the mercy of a brutal outsider. Touching our clothes in the closet, pots in the kitchen, ransacking them and rummaging through them, looking for some imaginary weaponry was harassing and fearful. We would move in our own home on their instructions.

What if a gun appeared somewhere in our house, I would think as a child, knowing well that we never had one? My books and school bag were hit by the gun butt and thrown off the shelf; the coal and firewood in the storeroom were mixed up. The rice, pulses and flour containers were emptied on the floor, mixing their contents which often left my mother with a few days of work and wasted food. My mother could not complain, instead, she had to open the doors leading to different rooms, with me and my brother holding on to the hem of her kameez (dress). 'How many people live in the house? What do they do? How many of them are militants? Where has she hidden them? – All these were the routine questions they asked my mother. Someone walking over your bed with muddy khaki colored rubber boots, throwing your dolls to the floor.

Moreover, the fears of my mother that the military would abuse her and her children, 'disappear, beat or kill' her husband who would be standing on the roadside in rain or snow, was visible and clear to me as a child. As soon as this precarious crackdown would be over, another such situation would befall. There never seemed an end to the insecurity and threat, which had become so common that it indeed had become our 'normal'. Even as a child, I wondered why would these armed men be called 'security forces' when they made all of us so insecure?

My experience serves to highlight the construction of a highly insecure and threatened environment, which is likely to have an impact on inhabitants and their coping and social mechanisms. The act of militarized male hegemony over women and children involved taking over

most private space - making it unsafe and insecure, and yet local men felt unable to protect their home spaces and families. It leaves a perpetual feeling of subordination in the hearts of Kashmiris, more so, for the generation that grew up in the early 1990's when crackdowns were a very common occurrence. The power of the military is exercised visibly by their control of bodies, spaces, and mobility. It is in fact, also exercised invisibly too, as it shapes the very psyche of a population that has lived a militarized life. According to a report by the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the period of violence considered was defined by the local population as starting in 1989, continuing until the time of the survey presented in the MSF report (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2006). At the time of interviews, almost half (48.1%) of the respondents said they felt only occasionally or never safe. In the period 1989-2005, people frequently reported crackdowns (99.2%), frisking by security forces (85.7%) and round-up raids in villages (82.7%). In the same period, damage to property (39%) or the burning of houses (26.3%) was considerable. Interviewees reported witnessing (73.3%) and directly experiencing themselves (44.1%), physical and psychological mistreatment, such as humiliation and threats.

CASO, as a military exercise doubly disrupts a sense of public and private - by making the private realm unsafe, and at the same time constricting the public spaces, especially for women. Hassan (2018), states that as the militarization increased, the presence of women in the public sphere was constrained in Kashmir. With 'security forces' overwhelmingly occupying all the public spaces, it "led to limitations on the movement of women as there were restraints put even by their family members" (Hassan, 2018). Many young girls, especially in rural areas, left school because their family feared for their safety as they had to pass a militarized landscape to reach schools. It also reinforces the lack of importance attached to the education of girls as the dropout rate for girls is much higher than for boys in India – with or without militarization. Hassan (2018) emphasizes that, by enforcing stringent timings on when people were allowed to come out of their homes, the Indian military force denied the right of Kashmiri men as well as women to use local public spaces. The culture of evening outings or late-night wedding receptions were absent for nearly a decade of the 1990s as a sense of 'absence of security' prevailed with the presence of 'security forces.'

In crackdowns, the segregation of the community, followed by different ways to control male and female bodies brings out the play of gender at the heart of militarization and the militarized process of exercising 'authority, control and discipline'(Foucault,1988). Men would be taken to torture

centers and subjected to brutal treatment. Tales of torture would be heard, and said as a community exercise of remembering humiliation, but have been documented too. In a recent report, released by the Association of Parents of Disappeared People (APDP) and Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS) in 2019, Torture, for example, is described as Indianstate's "instrument of control in Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir,"[22] which is based on 432 cases of torture (2019). Out of 432 case studies, admits the report, only 22 cases are those of women and 410 are those of men. "The number may not be proportionate to the actualnumber of women tortured and the under-representation is caused by the reluctance of women to openly talk about torture – physical as well as sexual" (2019: 87).

Studies show that silence around sexual violence is due to a combination of shame, confusion, guilt, fear and stigma. According to this report, stigma about sexual violence among women is much higher when compared to men, in Kashmir. Meanwhile, there is a stark under-reporting of rape and sexual violence perpetrated against men in wars, more so than in the case of sexual violence against women – most likely due to the humiliation of masculinity which such violence entails (Sivakumaran, 2007). The fact that the figures relating to the rape of women are lower in the report, suggests that the rape perpetrated against women entails a long-term consequence for rape-survivors. It reduces their sense of acceptability in the society, which is discussed in greater detail in the second part of this chapter.[23] Meanwhile, rape perpetrated against men tends to be received more sympathetically and have less of a long-term consequence in terms of social stigmatization of the survivor, not necessarily so about emotional and psychological consequences of the rape.

5.6 Absolute control of world(s): Real and virtual

Gender power relations are neither contingent nor incidental but systemic, as Cockburn points out (1999). Despite that, "the theories of democratization and nationalism often tend to be articulated in non-gendered ways, either ignoring women or assuming their experiences to be the same as that

[22] Released by APDP and JKCCS (Association of Parents of Disappeared People and Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies).

[23] For instance after the Congo war, in total, 44.3 per cent of raped-women reported suffering rejection after sexual violence. The majority of women felt that their status in the household (58.0 per cent) and community (54.9 per cent) diminished after rape. See also Albutt et al (2016).

of men" (Tolz and Booth, 2005: 1). About the experiences of militarization and its impact on young minds, one of the interviewees, Ezabir Ali, who does 'peace- work' (in her own words), said that her young daughter (when she was 10) asked Ezabir once: *"Mamma you keep talking about peace all that time. Is it 'piece or peace?' Like so many, I fear that you will come back in pieces someday!"*

Even being a kid, the understanding of militarized violence of space and body control, physical violence by bullet injuries, bomb blasts or hand hurled grenades, is profound. Militarization shapes the political understanding among children from a very young age.

When we look for definitions, Militarization; is the implementation of the ideology of militarism. "It is the process of arming, organizing, planning, training for, threatening, and sometimes implementing violent conflict. To militarize means adopting and applying the central elements of the military model to an organization or particular situation" (Kraska, 2017). And, *"Militarism*, in its most basic sense is a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that stress the use of force and threat of violence as the most appropriate and efficacious means to solve problems. It emphasizes the exercise of military power, hardware, organization, operations, and technology as its primary problem-solving tools" (Kraska, 2017).

In Kashmir, the practice of the masculine state controlling spaces is not limited to marking physical spaces with armed men living in (ugly) bunkers, and practicing dehumanizing military exercises like CASOs. It has taken a new form and shape of controlling virtual world/on-line spaces as well. At the same time, there is an erasure of the boundary and distinction between who's a militant, a civilian, and a political worker. The distinction has particularly been blurred through the Article 370 abrogation, in which the Head of the State of J&K, democratically elected through the process of Indian elections, has been imprisoned along with scores other political leaders. The repression of violent militant movement has spread out to repress Kashmiris allying with Indian nationalist thought, including the elected representatives, the Head of the State being no exception (Ashiq, 2020). As I struggle to write this chapter between Kashmir, New Delhi, and London, it is exactly six months that there has been an internet clampdown in Kashmir since August 5, 2019. Extreme communication repression that includes an absolute blockade of phone

lines (including fixed phone lines) and internet has become a new way to exercise militarized control of Kashmiri bodies, thoughts, emotions and desires.

The Indian government's clandestine de-operationalization of Article 370, that defined the political arrangement of Kashmir within Indian union, limiting the power that Indian state could exert on the state of Jammu and Kashmir is widely abhorred. Although, the article had been weakened over time by various political exercises, its brazen abrogation which is described as 'de-operationalization' by a legal expert, represented a violent attack on the Kashmiri identity (Economic Times, 2019).

The unacceptability of this political act of out-community violence, the de-operationalization of Article 370, can be gauged from the fact that all the mainstream/electoral politicians that represented India in Kashmir were imprisoned since 4th of August 2019, because of their expression of acrimonious dissent and absolute disagreement on abrogating Article 370. The militarized control is not limited to physical spaces but even the internet, as a space for dissent, is blocked for Kashmiris, with India being the only democracy in which the internet keeps being regularly shut down each month;[24] Kashmir often experiences the highest number of days of internet shut-downs in the world (Nazmi, 2019). The political leaders who within the Indian political narrative encouraged people to participate in electoral politics, stand imprisoned for their political differences with the BJP government at New Delhi. And ironically, the unaccountable legislation Public Safety Act[25] enacted and misused by the mainstream political dispensations in Kashmir, (to curb pro-freedom activists) has finally been used against them.

Militarized violence perpetrated in the name of national interest and security, without any accountability or review, over three decades, has become a norm in Kashmir. More so, when it has not even spared the advocates of Indian democracy in India, as has been reflected. Human rights violations by the state, counter-insurgency measures which involve brutal encounters, that often fail to differentiate combatants from non-combatants, psychologically disturbing search operations and the impunity of the Indian armed personnel in form of various legislations, crushing any

[24] Refer to: https://internetshutdowns.in/
[25] The controversial PSA was enacted in 1978 to deal with rampant timber smuggling but was used to book anyone with any perceived anti-state/anti-India stance that includes separatist activists.

political dissent expressed through protests or on Facebook - all these out-community violence(s) have become an everyday reality in Kashmir. Absolute militarized control renders ideas of accountability and justice redundant. For example, according to a written submission by the Union Minister of Defence to the Rajya Sabha on 1 January 2018, of the 50 requests for sanction for prosecution of armed forces personnel, sanction was denied in 47 cases while in three cases the matter is pending. 17 cases pertained to the killing of civilians, 16 to custodial killings, 8 to custodial disappearance and 4 to the alleged rape. There is blanket impunity that the central armed forces enjoy in Kashmir, which is exceedingly exacerbating the state-people conflictin the valley of Kashmir, which is highlighted by Gossman (1991). The situation in Kashmir might not look like a 'war' when viewed through the lens of traditional understandings of war in IR, and might be left to unfold with impunity due to the fact that the conflict has been going on for decades and because the loss of some lives is 'ungrievable.' (Butler, 2009) However,this does not mean that the situation ceases to constitute a 'war' or that it has never been a 'war' according to the conventional definition thereof. It may not look like a war for generations who were born in it and grew up in it, because it is their everyday 'normal.' Moreover, it may not seem to need international attention as the dying population is not 'important'. For anyone's life, time and expression to qualify as lost, it needs to first qualify as meaningful or important; once assumedto be meaningful, the frame of precarity can apply to it. To such a humanized subject's pain, our effect can include anger, rage, support and solidarity. As Butler suggests, precarity of some lives is unrecognizable using our frames. "Indeed, there ought to be recognition of precariousnessas a shared condition of human life (indeed, as a condition that links human and non-human animals), but we ought not to think that the recognition of precariousness masters or captures or even fully cognizes what it recognizes" (Butler, 2009: 17).

In gunfights between the Indian army and the rebel/militant groups, many civilians have died, been maimed, and a lot of civilian properties have been destroyed as well without any reparations. Several young boys have been arrested under legislations like PSA (Public Security Act) which makes one question, whose security is at stake and whose security is being guarded by making insecure the lives of the Kashmiri community? And should the Indian military and paramilitary forces stationed in Kashmir still be called 'security men'? The question is also that, who does it impact the most and in what ways which is discussed in detail in part second of the chapter.

5.7 Masculinity in Politics: shrinking spaces for women in Kashmir

After discussing the gendered concepts of securitization, militarization and their linkage as lived realities of Kashmiri women's lives, women's place in political spaces shall be discussed. If there is one thing that is common in the oppositional political narratives in Kashmir, it is the place that women occupy within them. Both the competing political discourses in Kashmir – Indian nationalist/electoral, which is the dominant discourse, and the popular separatist/secessionist discourse, that represents pro-independence sentiment, are predominantly male.

5.7.1 Contours of Indian politics in Kashmir

A conflict region like Kashmir is characterized by normalization of abnormal and unusual everyday experiences and practices like CASOs, torture or high mental health challenges, and ab-normalization of normal things. For instance, an otherwise democratic exercise of voting and forming a local government is a contentious exercise in the political conflict of Kashmir. The people who form or join electoral politics are often seen to accept the Indian nationalist discourse, and are threatened by the militant groups and increasingly criticized by the Kashmiri community for aligning with the Indian state politics.

In fact, the failure of Indian democracy to accommodate the electoral mandate of Kashmiris in favor of Muslim United Front party (MUF), who were supported by pro-independence groups in 1987, is seen as the reason for armed rebellion in the region. The MUF leaders and supporters werearrested by the local Indian nationalist party, the National Conference (NC) – whose history with India is itself chequered. This event proved to be a watershed moment that instituted an armed uprising, a new chapter of Kashmir conflict in 1989. Elections in Kashmir since armed rebellion have taken place amidst threat, insecurity and militarized control to ensure the continuity of a political engagement with India. This exercise however, has not prevented the demand for self- determination in the community.

There are a handful of women active in electoral politics, but their emergence can easily be traced back to dynastic influences, according to Zia (2013), and a class privilege, according to Malik

(2019). While both the assertions are mostly true for male politicians as well (class and family privilege), they also highlight the absence of women from electoral politics, in general. Zia, says, "With a political process that not only has a shaky foundation but also lacks popular support, it's no surprise that Kashmiri women have rarely joined politics." This statement is not false, yet it fails to analyze that if electoral politics is as unpopular and problematic, why do men in Kashmir join electoral politics? Why does its unpopularity prevent women more than men from joining electoral politics? It may have more to do with gender dynamics than with politics itself, as shall be examined. However, these questions have been considered irrelevant; else they would have been reflected upon in the existing academic work on Kashmir or even in policy work. Such academic assertions, which on one side are very vigilant to the larger political landscape in Kashmir, do not take cognizance of gender identity of women in participation or rather non-participation in electoral politics, for example.

Since 1972, the number of women in the state assembly of Jammu and Kashmir has never been more than 3%, with 5% women being highest in 1972 (Masoodi, 2016). If one contributes such dismal representation of women in electoral politics with the 'unpopularity' of electoral political discourse, as claimed by Zia and others, one assumes that women's representation in separatist politics will be better. Such assumptions are popular, with a professor of politics in Kashmir University, Mr Wani. Like Zia, he too stresses that women's participation in electoral politics is less because it is a contested space, and that the oppositional separatist spaces have more participation of women. He says, "it is unfair to look at the role of women in politics in the state only through the prism of electoral wins…we should also look at the separatist politics in Kashmir and women's role in it." (cited in Masoodi, 2016: 13) He proudly names Zamruda Habib and her role in separatist politics whereas, Zamruda Habib in her interaction with me (at her home), told me that she is among a very small number of women in separatist politics and lamented that she feels betrayed and forgotten, not only in her political circlebut in the larger Kashmiri community as well.

It shows that women's participation in the competing political narrative, also called as separatist movement for azadi – freedom, is not only dismal but a counted few women present in the space, feel side-lined there as well. This is a stark contradiction to the claims of popularity signifying

participation and non-popularity signifying non-participation, made by Wani or Zia. Again, scholars like Zia unquestioningly bracket the role of women as 'political supporters', "Kashmiri women are proving to be keen supporters in this emerging political environment (separatist)." Although a recent work by Malik (2019), undoubtedly the first work dedicated to political participation of women in Kashmir, analyses participation of ordinary women (without political family backgrounds or class privileges). Even this work does not give a gendered analysis of social and institutional factors that prevent women's participation in politics. It is limited to highlighting women's agency within resistance politics.

Role-setting for women in politics is very strict, and the understanding of gender roles and their boundaries in the society can be gauged from the experiences of activists in political spaces, as is highlighted by Malik for women in resistance politics. The same is said for mainstream politics by Shamima Firdous, a member of state assembly from 1999-2005 and the president of the women'swing of a main political party (NC) (as quoted by Khan (2008)). She says that women legislators are not consulted in the matters of government policy, despite them being well educated and wellarticulate. There is a 'reductive objectification' of women in legislature due to the 'strident machismo of the male legislators.' My assertion is also that the experiences of my interviewees, Sehar Iqbal and Nayeema Ahmad Mehjoor, who joined electoral politics in Kashmir generally referred to as the 'mainstream politics', is not very different from the experiences of Zamruda Habib and others like Zaine or Farida (Malik's interviewees- political mobilizers) who supported/joined separatist politics. Even though the state repression faced by Zamruda and Farida, by wayof harassment and imprisonment, has put them in a highly vulnerable and disadvantageous position,these sacrifices are not appreciated or acknowledged in their own political spaces or largely in the community. This can be characterized as a form of violence; 'violence of invisibility and obscurity'perpetrated against women.

5.7.2 Separatist Political Spaces

Swati Parashar (2009), while discussing Mogadham's (cited in Davis, 1997) distinction between ethno-nationalist and religo-political separatist movements, asserts that former focus on women's participation and emancipation by using women as a symbol of 'liberation and modernization',

whilst religio-political movements control and exclude women using them as symbols of the national culture and tradition. It is therefore not surprising that in ethno-national conflicts, like Sri-Lanka, women's participation in militia and politics increased, whereas, in Kashmir, it has decreased. Cynthia Enloe asserts that when women are seen as 'instrumental' in achieving a cause, there is no need why the instrument would not be rested after the cause is fulfilled (2013, 15). This statement necessitates the interrogation of the pro-women narratives in the valley of Kashmir, which support women, as long as women help in legitimizing their political cause or stay within the parochially defined boundary of 'good-women' trope – as discussed in detail in the part 2 of the chapter.

"Although leaders of the Azadi were ostensibly struggling for democracy, democratic rights did not figure in their agenda; their disinterest and lack of concern within their political outfits reflects the maintenance of gendered status quo" (Bhat, 2017). Political spaces in Kashmir, which are generally reflective of the larger society and the institutions, lack genuine participation, democracyand even secularism - most pro-freedom struggle draws from Islamic understandings of politics and aspires for a Muslim nationhood, defining which, is not the mandate of this thesis. I had a conversation[26] with Zamruda Habib,[27] the only female head of one of the many organizations, Muslim Khwateen-e-Markaz (MKM), that converge under 'Hurriyat' amalgam – 29 pro-freedomgroups. She informed me that she was imprisoned in Tihar jail after being given a five-year sentence under POTA (Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act). She told me that two more Hurriyat activists (male) were arrested along with her in 2003, but their release was facilitated by Hurriyatwho did not consider it important for Zamruda Habib to be released. She has documented[28] that her imprisonment was a result of the betrayal of her own party members, as is quoted by Parasharin her book, as well. Upon interviewing Zamruda, she told me that one famous Hurriyat leader had told Zamruda's mother and brother sarcastically that Zamruda is a 'very independent woman' andit is alright if she will be released in three to five years, not much can be done from his or his party's side. To Zamruda's shock some more leaders (not naming them for Zamruda's well-being),

[26] It was a pre-interview interaction on dates in which we fixed a date for an interview which never took place due to curfews and hartals as everyday life is highly ambiguous in Kashmir.
[27] I am not using Habib to refer to Zamruda Habib or Ali to refer to Ezabir Ali because it is not their family name but father's name. I am sensitive to this because it is awkward for me when I am referred to as Rashid because Rashid is my Father's name not my family name. Therefore, I refer to them with their first name or full name.
[28] In her book, Prisoner number 100.

had refused to know her at all, when she went to jail, *"disowning her",* in her own words.[29] She further said:

> All our male separatist leaders are married to highly educated and beautiful women, despite their being uneducated, and their only merit being their politics. The same politics when supported by an educated woman like me who was also incarcerated resulted in isolation for me. I live alone. Imprisonment did not make me a hero, why? No one wanted to marry me or considered my politics important.

This conversation with Zamruda brings out the entrenched bias based in gender that is practiced in the separatist political spaces in Kashmir, which are essentially patriarchal, and male dominated. Khalid Hassan, a Kashmiri scholar, in his lecture about politics in Kashmir in Agha Khan university in London (February 2017), highlighted that the foremost eligibility criteria for participation in these spaces is that one must be a man because they refer to each other by the term *'rukun'*[30] which means a male-member. It is widely believed that in religion of Islam also, political participation of women is limited to supporters or sympathizers.

My further conversation with Zamruda revealed that her first initiative was not political but an organization in Anantnag/Islamabad, which she started as a response to a dowry burning of a teacher from the same school where Zamruda taught. I asked Zamruda why she chose to ally with Hurriyatwhich is a thoroughly political organization when she wanted to work for women?
Zamruda answered:

> To bring light to women's issues as no one considered women's life and death important. Everyone's attention was caught by politics and I think that politics cannot be aloof from social-issues, but I failed in both areas, it seems.

Her desire was to give a larger platform to women's issues, only to see her mission of standing up for women's rights spread thin. She did not get the due space and voice which she deserved due to her contribution and sacrifices in the political circle of Hurriyat, which is overtly masculine and often regressive. Zamruda further said that if she talks about non-state violence today, like dowry deaths or domestic violence, which still disturb her, many of the working women feel uneasy to align with her in the cause, due to the label of being a separatist politician. *They fear that there could be a crackdown (by the state) on them if they visit me. Even today, common women*

[29] Her ordeal is mentioned in her book, Prisoner number 100, translated from Urdu, 'Qaidi number soa'.
[30] This https://hamariweb.com/dictionaries/member_urdu-meanings.aspx describes the definitions of the word Rukun. It has been described here with maximum details, different synonyms for the word are 'Member, like Appendage, Extremity, Penis, Phallus'.

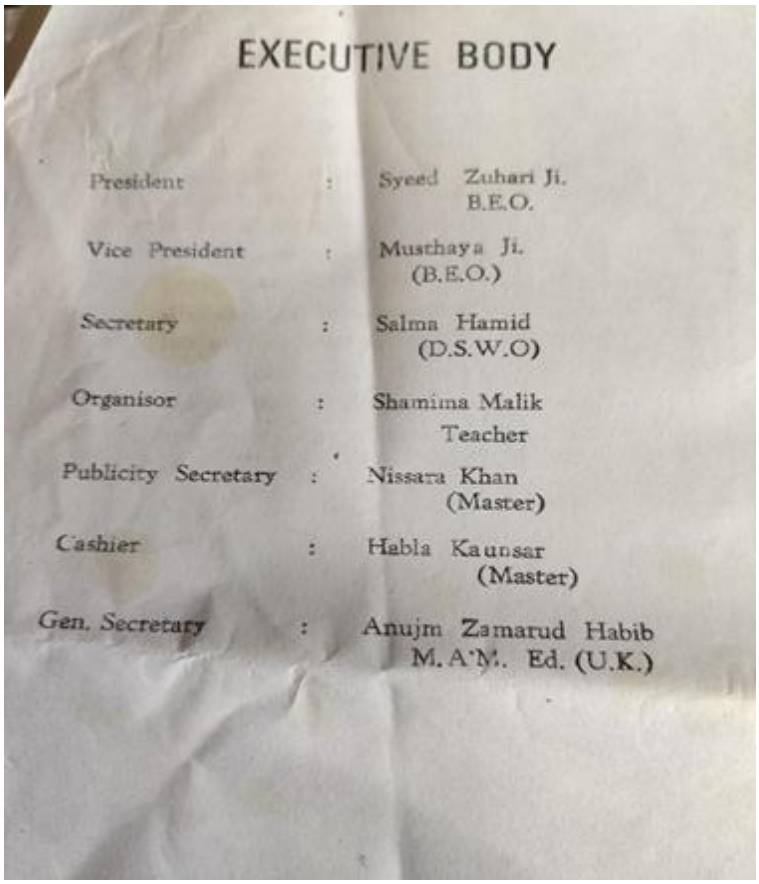
hesitate to come out in public and rally against anything – be it state violence or a dowry death because there is no space for women in politics and women have to fight for it. How many battles shall a woman fight? On Aug 16, 2017, after I had met Zamruda at her home, I attended a book release (Bashir, 2014) in Srinagar, where she was present as well. The novel was about the mother of a disappeared person and during the post-launch discussion session, some young girls tried to talk about their difficulties of being in professions like law (sexism in the workplace)– in the context of the novel being about a woman. They were shut down by the men on the panel, who reminded them that we (Kashmiris) are faced with a major oppression, which we should not lose sight of by highlighting 'small things' and such small issues are anyway present in all the societies. The author himself said that, *his grandmother used to eat the biggest piece of meat in the house*, as an example of Kashmiri matriarchal values according to him. Such examples cannot be ignored, he said, laughing. The audience laughed too, and the attention was swiftly brought back to the political discussion. Zamruda Habib who was also present said to a smaller group of girls, *I do not need a man in my world to make my world better. I am the queen and people must make way for me; I do not need to tell them to do so.*

Strong and independent Zamruda in the book release was different from a lonely and betrayed Zamruda in her kitchen, challenging the neat categories of a victim and an agent[31]. Possibly, Zamruda Habibdid not want to tell the women what the cost of speaking up is, what it is like to be associated with politics. A victim can be an agent and an agent can be a victim. However, in emphasizing individual self-sufficiency, a dismissal of the experiences of young girls, compounded by a social value of concealing the in-community experiences of discrimination or hurt, was visible. Again, when faced with a major form of oppression in the form of outside occupation of Kashmir, women are expected to highlight the everyday forms of violencewhich are present and which takes the shape of in-community violence. As such, Zamruda's life is a living example of state/out-community violence, but when a deeper inquiry is made, an interaction with in-community violence is waiting to be discovered, and should not be overlookedand the other highlighted, based on the politics of the researcher. Although, an absolutely objectiveinquiry is not possible, but a selective politics is being encouraged in the name of feminist research.

[31] She was loving and warm and gave me some locally made bread which I brought home and shared with my mother for afternoon tea.

Interestingly, Shahnaz Bashir's (author) response was not very different from the response that my question received, about 'absence of Kashmiri women in politics', in an event at SOAS (University of London). It was a political discussion with a few Kashmiris from Pakistani side (HR activist and politician in the UK)[32]. It was followed by a performance of young Kashmiri performers from Indian side of Kashmir and a film release about the 2016 uprising of Kashmir. My ethnographic note reflects (corroborated by the video recording of the event which I found online).[33]

Figure D | Women's Welfare Organisation started by Zamruda Habib and other fellow teachers


EXECUTIVE BODY

President	:	Syeed Zuhari Ji. B.E.O.
Vice President	:	Musthaya Ji. (B.E.O.)
Secretary	:	Salma Hamid (D.S.W.O)
Organisor	:	Shamima Malik Teacher
Publicity Secretary	:	Nissara Khan (Master)
Cashier	:	Habla Kaunsar (Master)
Gen. Secretary	:	Anujm Zamarud Habib M.A.M. Ed. (U.K.)

[32] On 29 Oct 2016, two young Kashmiri singers, based in Kashmir, performed at SOAS and showed a film that they had made during the uprising in summer of 2016 in Kashmir when a young militant commander Burhan Wani was killed. Hundreds of the protesting men were shot down with many more losing eye-sight to pellet gun shots.

[33] See: Timeline 41minutes onwards. https://www.facebook.com/KashmirOlympics/videos/wounded-kashmir-soas-event/714297442051449/?__so__=permalink&__rv__=related_videos

5.7.3 Vignette

In response to my question, Lord Qurban, a member of the house of Lords, said that he has been active in politics for 30-35 years and he still cannot convince his wife and (three) daughters to engage in politics. "If I ask my wife to come out of the house, with me, she gives me 101 reasons not to. This is our culture, largely Kashmiri culture", the Lord said, at which many people in the audience chuckled. The discussion was followed by the performances of young Kashmiri men. I listened to the mesmerizing voices of the artists from Kashmir who performed resistance poetry and music. I kept wondering why no Kashmiri women sing and perform similar resistance-poetry in public. Thankfully, one of the speakers, Dr. Nitasha Kaul, also observed the absolute absence of the women even in a short film made over this summer in Kashmir (2016) by a group of young Indian people. Dr Kaul asked the movie-makers for it, suggesting that they could include more girls. But, having lived in siege for three months in Kashmir in 2016, I could tell that they filmed the raw situations as appeared to them – devoid of women. In these 100 plus days of curfew, it is again the women who are suffering the most. Their presence in public spaces is very limited and only curtailed further by state lockdowns.

Figure E | Kashmir Women's Collective: Protest on Stamp-duty Revocation.

Framing the justification on absence of women in public life around 'culture and religion' by the politician seems to justify why women do not like to participate in public life, as both 'culture and religion' are important aspects of one's identity, especially in an ethnic minority that has been suffering persecution historically (Schofield, 1999). It is a complex issue when interrogated, as it investigates the power-play within the community, but is often left uninterrogated, even by feminist scholars' analysis of Kashmir. Zamruda's lived experience of lack of participation of women in political actions like public protests was corroborated by another auto- ethnographic experience; a call for a public meeting and protest revoking 'zero stamp duty' on women bought land/properties by my PAR (participatory action research) group, Kashmir Women's Collective[34]. The law that had recently been passed incentivized the properties bought in the name of women by exempting such sales of any stamp duty – a form of tax that was otherwise between 3-10% of the cost of property. But, this historic move was revoked within three months' time, in 2019. It was neither hailed as historic by mainstream politics (other than the ruling party, PDP that made the decision) nor by the separatist politics; implying that being financially independent, is neither a policy priority nor an agenda in resistance politics. What was more shocking was that public opinion, and particularly of women, around the issue was not formed. It is the regional political narratives only that determine public opinion, and when issues concerning women are not owned or prioritized by either political discourse, they are rendered invisible and unimportant. This example highlights the subservience of women's issues to the larger regional politics. To demonstrate the same, I highlight ethnographic reflections from a protest that KWC organized to challenge withdrawal of no-stamp duty on women purchased properties.

Some ten to fifteen women participated – mostly student volunteers at KWC, victim(s) who received support from KWC, and some friends (mostly in higher education outside of Kashmir who were visiting home). (See Irfan, 2018; Zargar, 2019) The issue received no public or political attention, which compels one to question not just the political understanding of common women and the absence of a strong feminist narrative, but also the disinterest of all the political ideologies in the practical empowerment of women.

[34] On 04-02-2019; refer to previous chapter of 'in-community' violence for details regarding the law.

In earlier decades, Zamruda explained, "women were more active. The threat and violence that society has endured can break the resilience of any people." Her mobilization on a social matter does not help enable women's participation, but when she offers her political analysis on matters which are overtly political, her voice is '*drowned in masculine Hurriyat'*. Shekhawat (2014) in her work has also quoted Zamruda, saying, that women have been in the forefront and have suffered on all fronts but "the nation is not aware of their sacrifices" and they are not given the "political space in decision-making which they deserve" (2014: 151-153). As Zamruda suggested:

> What is a matter of pride for men often becomes a matter of discrimination for women, especially if women transgress their boundaries of being mere sympathizers and play an active part in politics which they being women are not expected to.

It is indeed interesting that even young children remember by name the male separatist politicians and the militant commanders like Burhan Wani, as was observed with several gender sensitization workshops across colleges, but most of them are unaware of women like Zamruda Habib or Parveena Ahangar (founder APDP, highlighted later in this chapter). It emerged that Zamruda recognized the multiple oppressions she faced, both as a Muslim woman and as being Kashmiri. However, a strong sense of *betrayal, invalidation and trivialization* by the state machinery and the ethno-nationalist movement in Kashmir is visible in the interviews of the women conducted by Inshah Malik (2019). Even though Malik's work is limited to the dismissal of women by the state and does not take into consideration gender identity beyond the context of resistance towards Indian state by Kashmiri women. For any scholarship to reveal the agency of women in conflict, dismissal of the local patriarchies is not necessary. In fact, to discern the nuances of gender identity of a woman in complicated surroundings like political conflict, conflation of gender identity and ethnic-national identity is common in general, as is the invoking of gender identity 'only' in response to state violence.

5.8 Women in electoral politics

The similarity of experiences of being shut down threatened and not taken seriously apply in the political spaces across, irrespective of the political ideologies of the groups. The treatment that these women are facing in their respective political spheres is also a kind of violence - 'violence of exclusion'. Interviews with Sehar and Nayeema further highlight it.

Nayeema Ahmad Mehjoor who has worked as News Editor (Urdu) at BBC World Service in London for 22 years, joined a political party- People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 2013. She worked as party's media advisor before taking up the charge as chairperson of the State Commission for Women (SCW) in 2015. On asking, why you joined mainstream politics when you used to highlight state repression in your stories, she said:

> I had joined on the condition that if this government cannot give aazadi (independence) to people, they should at least give dignity and safety to people. I thought that as a journalist I highlighted so many issues about Kashmir, now it is time to put my knowledge and understanding to practice in policy making. But I feel that the government has miserably failed at providing people anything. I wasted my time and reputation by joining this government. Allying with BJP was a huge mistake for them.

While reflecting on her political career she further says:

> I would describe myself as a social activist rather than a political activist. I have political aspirations, but I find myself as a failure in politics. I feel like a misfit here…There is a lot of deceit in Kashmiri politics. Most people were angry with me when I joined politics - my fans, my supporters because they feel that politics in Kashmir is dirty and unfair.

Reflecting on the working of the state institutions, she said:

> I have realized that being in a system is different. It has done a lot of damage to me. I always ask myself why I am in the system. I had wanted to contribute. People are fed up by the working of institutions in Kashmir, they are dead institutions. Police do not listen to the SCW for example, despite SCW being a quasi-judicial body. Police are used to anti-militancy work not social policing. For them domestic violence is not a big deal. So much work is needed to improve these institutions but when people are disgruntled with them, how can it be done?

Sehar Iqbal, my other interviewee, contested state assembly elections in 2008 from Acahabal, Kokernag constituency and received 11000 votes, but lost the elections by 2000 votes. She is in herlate 30's. About the mainstream politics in Kashmir, she says:

> To get recognition from peers is so hard in this place. Men promote men. And, always look down upon women. Senior leaders would humiliate me in public and think that it is alright because I am young and a woman. Their attitudes are immersed in immense unchecked male-privilege and no one challenges that. I think our women still do not have the necessary language and framework for it. One of my ardent supporters and voters, an illiterate man, wanted to kill his daughter because she wanted to marry out of caste. Can you imagine? He came to me with the hope that he will have my support in this. I had to keep his girl at my home for months together and convince him that it is a crime and a person contesting election cannot save him if he kills her. Such is patriarchy, and such is lawlessness. Living amidst violence makes people feel that they can get away with anything.

Honor-killings, a kind of in-community violence is another denied phenomenon in Kashmir, as hasbeen discussed in detail in previous chapters. Patriarchy is not just in politics but in academia too,but people do not seem to register it, according to Sehar Iqbal. Sehar said that there is no child care available in the University of Kashmir. As a PhD researcher, she had to lock her child up while she taught an M.A class. Sehar said that the state in Kashmir is immensely repressive as she was harassed for having *Human Rights* in the name of a non-profit that she had started in the name ofher brother, who had died in an accident: "*I had to give up on the name as police raided the officeand froze our bank account too."*

Widespread violence, distrust of people in the state institutions, and patriarchal attitudes of the society make Zamruda, Nayeema and Sehar feel that their spaces in their respective politics is shrinking. Women do not want to associate either with separatist or electoral politics, women often do not recognize themselves as political beings and women are made to feel guilty of participating in any kind of politics- *Zamruda for being too outspoken, Nayeema for aligning with amainstream role and Sehar for being young and inexperienced.* The difference is that Zamruda rejects the Indian institutions outright, whereas, Nayeema and Sehar participated in political institutions and processes. They also admitted to *not having much faith in them* but were *desirous of changing them, even if incrementally,* but they think that *could not succeed at it*. Zamruda also feels that she has been *'betrayed and not received enough credit for her political beliefs and action'.* All three recall how the state has been brutal in ways of militarizing Kashmir's landscape or challenging Nayeema into *'showing her id card'*, in not letting Sehar choose '*the name and nature of work her group wanted to do',* and in many brutal ways, *'incarcerating and abusing Zamruda'.*

Women's lack of participation in politics is not only prevalent within the context of political contestations. In full-on war and conflicts, the dimensions and nuances are further complicated as is discussed in greater detail in the second part of this chapter. How socio-cultural values restrict women's political participation, and how there is a limited acceptability of the ways in which women can dress, behave and be represented in politics, means transgressing which has consequences.

In a few focused group discussions with young women (19-21 years old) conducted in five colleges in 2017 and 2018, none of them wanted to be a minister in the state, because they said

that their families will not allow them. Many said that it is a *'shameful'* job because women, if they must work outside of home, should work in more 'decent' jobs which many of them defined as '*jobs with minimum dealing with men'*. On asking if they knew who Zamruda Habib was, none of them had any idea, even in boys' focused groups. I was interrupted by a teacher and told that I should not hold 'any such political discussions in my interaction' with children as it is not allowed.[35] Political spaces for youth are ever-shrinking. Student politics in the Kashmir University has been banned since 2010 (Ashiq, 2010), but the university authorities deny even acknowledging KUSU (Kashmir University Student's Union) as a legitimate body, "besides academic and amenities issue, no politics will be allowed" (Ibid: 22). "*There were no women in KUSU…when men are not allowed student politics, how can women be?",* said a lecturer in one of the degree colleges, who had recently graduated with her master's degree in English literature from the university of Kashmir. Upon my asking why men need to pave the way for women? *She said, this is how it is and will always be*. Zia's and this lecturer's suggestion that *men's absence explains women's absence (in politics)* acknowledges that men must be the first ones, yet there is an unwillingness to engage or interrogate the *why* part of it. The hesitation in calling out societal patriarchies, trivializing it and un-problematizing it is not uncommon, especially if it is constructed exclusively for the most important cause – regional politics. There is a lack of politicization of gender-based identity, because any such politicization makes it seem like a threat to nation-based identity as the two categories are practiced exclusively (as referred to in the conclusion chapter in detail).

What women have said and experienced is clear, but can we make connections or do we hear it? Khan (2008), Parashar (2011), and Malik (2019) all discuss some aspects of women in Kashmir being excluded from resistance politics, though women side-lined in mainstream politics has not received any academic attention yet. The religion-culture shutting women down is a difficult discussion, especially for native researchers. Any attempt to participate in the public and political sphere or to change women's position (by Zamruda, Ezabir, Nayeema, Sehar or KWC activists) is trivialized or side-lined as discussed through ethnographic observations throughout the chapter. In such situations silence is often used by women, but in no way should be read as women's lack of agency, as Parashar cautions. And, the fact is also that silence is not always women's expression

[35] As I had obtained permission from principals about FGD on gender and women in general.

of agency. They speak, they question and they push boundaries, the question that feminist critic and literary theorist, Gayatri Spivak, raises is, do we hear it?

When women in Kashmir – whether in electoral politics, separatist politics and even as activists, protestors and supporters, do not find their voices heard, how do they imagine themselves in any idea of a new nation? The issues that are not even considered issues today will not automatically be resolved tomorrow. Structural inequalities, socio-cultural attitudes and various militarized repressions shall continue, unless a feminist movement that puts women ahead of the questions of nation and nationalism finds roots. Or at least, prevents the current politics being the gatekeeper of women's public participation or genuine empowerment.

The mutual aspect between existing political spaces and narratives in Kashmir, is that, being highly patriarchal, they are not inclusive, and stifle any voices in support of women, in all spaces: government and separatist, social or political. Similar assertions are made by Shekhawat (2014) and Kazi (2008), when they argue that the resistance movement ostensibly seeks greater democracy to exert political will but the democratic assertions by women are side-lined. In all this the question is not only, where are the women? as Enloe asks, but the question is also who is qualified *to talk as women, or about women* in Kashmir, when women from all politically oppositional spaces are shut down? Obfuscating the roles and position of women in public life and denying any gender-based oppression is a very common paradigm of understanding socio-political reality in Kashmir that acknowledges only repression and violence against women that is political in nature, and at the same time not allowing politicization of identities beyond national identity.

5.9 Concluding Remarks: A nexus of (in) security, masculinity and exclusive politics – what do women do?

Discursive practices around gender, as outlined in the in-community chapters, often look like 'another cultural norm'. However, they constitute and reinforce non-discursive practices that include; practice of hegemonic masculinities through violence against women, or translation of security into militarization of landscape and bodies.

Broad gender investigation and analysis requires interrogating the meanings of masculinity and femininity and how these meanings create and wield power, and to whose advantage and

disadvantage. An analysis of gendering of power through studying violence is an important concept in Feminist International Relations which IR lacks. However, FIR needs to be cognizant not only of the different violence(s) in conflict, but the politics of violence(s) as well, as is further delineated in the second part.

Masculinity of the militarized state intuitions is often unleashed in the form of bodily violations, which is similar to every day masculinity violating women. But it is more complicated due to an institutional support which it receives in the form of unaccountability. It is to say that the military's morale is more important than the life and rights of any woman, because military institutions are celebrated for being the guardians of nation, national interest and national security. In addition, no attention is paid to whose nation, whose national interest or whose national security, if it is guarded by violating bodies and silencing them about all kinds of violence - both out-community and in-community. It makes people living in conflict, especially women, doubly marginalized or puts them at the intersection of multiple-violence. As a part-conclusion of this chapter, I offer another personal anecdote – which is no doubt political; but, prompted me, as a native researcher, to look at the *politics of violence and its interaction in a conflict region.* The following vignette will further make it clearer.

5.9.1 Vignette: Silence as a response because the abuser is faceless but powerful; silence as a response because the abuser is known but weak: The dilemma of privileging community well-being over individual safety

As a teenager, in 2002, when I would walk up to the bus stop, I had to pass by a huge bunker which was at least made of a hundred and something sandbags and had a tin roof on top. It was covered on all sides by concertina wire. I did not have the luxury of counting the building blocks of the bunker. I did so, only when I reached the bus stop and kept looking at the bunker: fuming in anger. When I passed by it I heard the sounds of flying kisses. I almost got tearful by the time I reached the bus stop, a few yards away. The kisses soon transformed in to "hi sexy, and hi baby, want to kiss you, touch you, fuck you!" I would be determined to walk as fast as possible to hear as little as possible. I did not tell my parents any of this, as all they could do was to send my brother to accompany me to the bus stop, which is not uncommon. Waiting at the bus stop, I would see many elderly people stumbling on being caught in the prickly wire, children getting hurt, and girls trying

to walk faster and faster. Only the stray dogs and cats getting hurt by those wires had the luxury to stop and yell back at the bunker, as they did not understand the fear of being hit by a bullet.

Small spaces left unfilled in the structure of the bunker which acted as windows had a loosely woven net covering them, with barrels of guns in the net, pointing perpetually at the locality and the passersby. Sometimes, I would ask my mother, if these CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) people held those guns through the makeshift windows for all the twenty-four hours without being tired? They would either be taking turns or just fooling people by keeping the gun positioned there without anyone holding it, I told my mother once. She jeered at me, saying that I had a useless occupation and a weird imagination, which cannot save me from doing my homework. Any such discussions were discouraged. Her comments further buried the half-formed desire to share my ordeal with her. We never spoke about it again.

Another day, a few years later, in 2010, I walked through the city in a rush as I had to meet a few friends to discuss some college assignments. I took a shortcut through a deserted lane, ignoring my parent's advice, not to take desolate roads or lanes. It was late afternoon and it was quiet. I could hear my fast-paced footsteps. Suddenly I was held in a groping embrace from behind and my notebooks fell from my hand and I shook in fear. The young boy let loose his hands from around me as I screamed meekly in fear. He ran past me as I kept shaking in fear. All I saw was that he looked younger than me from (his)behind and ran away very fast. I was in tears and upon telling my friends, they suggested that the big bunker is close by and they could request the army to catch hold of him. I squarely declined. I was faced with a choice of getting one perpetrator caught by another. I was faced with a choice of complaining against a Kashmiri boy to an Indian armed man knowing that latter's gun, power and strength could disappear this young boy, get him killed in a false encounter or the least, kept them in illegal custody with the help of police and beat him up – not because he had physically abused me as they themselves verbally abused me and other girls, but because they could. Who would dare question them, their might or their gun barrels?

A year later, in 2011, when the bunker was removed and relocated elsewhere, I witnessed a huge protest in support of the removal of the same bunker on the bridge. The protestors, mostly young adults from the vicinity were burning tyres on the road and chanting anti-India and anti-military

slogans. My happiness was short-lived as I saw the same young man who had groped me. My happiness fizzled out.

This vignette not only reflects on how militarization emboldens masculinity beyond accountability, but also reflects on the burden that a woman from an ethnic minority, in a conflict situation feels, when faced with multiple violence(s) – from within the community and from outside the community. To put it in material context, there are still no specialized agencies (state or community-run) that a girl can approach in case of assault by a non-armed man, other than the police. And in case of an assault from an armed paramilitary person, even police are not an option. However, in the latter case, some support may come from the community, as it serves a strategic purpose of highlighting the brutality of the state as opposed to when the assault is by a community member. When the state – which has a weak ethical standing – tries to start services for women in distress, there is a fierce opposition by local women academics or activists, who want the state to punish the culprits of war rapes first before trying to help build any institutional mechanism to help women. Such politics is stationed in the politics of 'either-or' not 'both', as shall elaborated on within the second part of this chapter (next chapter), as well. Therefore, the impact of out-community violence is not only direct, but its politics prevents the well-being or voice of women from being recognized as important.

Drawing on Gayatari Spivak, who examines the practice of a *white man trying to save a brown woman from a brown man;* in desperation, if a Kashmiri woman seeks help from an Indian armed man, not only does she fear for the life of the in-community perpetrator – fellow Kashmiri, but also fears the criticism of the society, which expects her not to complain against in-community men. And the armed man who himself harasses her can harm the native man without accountability due to his being the guardian of the state and his possessing a gun. Such a double-bind is enhanced by militaristic masculinity, which carries a gun and harasses from behind the bunker. It controls the spaces, in the real world and in the virtual world too.

A sense of individual and personal security that is under attack due to gender identity, takes a back seat to accommodate the wellbeing of a fellow community man's national-ethnic identity, which is threatened by the militarized masculinity of the Indian forces. Although, the gender identity is under attack by both the masculinities – armed Indian man and a local Kashmiri boy, yet former

is institutionalized masculinity that is awarded for guarding borders; in which threatening the safety of a local woman can be considered as something trivial and ignorable.

Kevorkian's (2009) assertion about the life of a Palestinian woman aptly applies to a woman from Kashmir:

> The range of conflicting loyalties that Palestinian women experience - their perceived responsibility to be loyal to their men, to the idea of nation, in addition to their need to protect themselves - compounded with the lack of alternatives immobilizes some women from being able to adequately address their own right to live safely and free of abuse. (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009: 79)

This chapter has hence contributed with a theorization of the entanglement between in-community violence and out-community violence, arguing that militarization emboldens masculinity beyond accountability. While also placing upon survivors of in-community violence the burden of silence, as they are told to think about the bigger picture of war and conflict and not bring up 'the little things' taking place within the community. In the following chapter, the analysis of out-community violence against Kashmiri women will be continued. The chapter will analyze, based on extensive field research findings, the de facto impact of out-community violence(s) on women's lived realities. The chapter shall also, and importantly, look at how these forms of violence also co-constitute women's agency, resistance and political activity.

6. 'Out-community' violence: shaping women's political position and response

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the entanglement between in-community violence and out-community violence, and concluded with the argument that women's gender identity and safety from violence are under attack by two forms of masculinities; the armed Indian man and the local Kashmiri boy. The former takes the shape of institutionalized masculinity that is awarded for guarding borders; in which threatening the safety of a local woman is often of no consequence.

In this chapter, the exploration of 'out-community' violence is continued, but now with a significant shift in focus. The chapter will steer its focus onto the political subjectivities and resistances which can be found among women in Kashmir, in the face of the multiple forms of violence that they encounter. Thus, after having reflected on the nexus between the concepts of security and masculinity through the framework of Feminist IR in the previous chapter, this chapter will discuss the indirect and direct ways in which out-community violence impacts women in Kashmir, and also how the same violence co-produces women's subjectivities and agency. This chapter moreover contributes to knowledge in bridging an important gap in existing academic work, by counteracting the harmful dichotomy of Kashmiri women being portrayed as either 'helpless victims' on the one hand, or as romanticized heroes at the forefront of resistance movement on the other hand.

Indeed, in discussing the impacts of violence on women, it is easy to construct a victimized narrative of women which is not the purpose of my analysis of out-community violence. A critical post-structural feminist lens is utilized to problematize the victim-agent binary, which most academic scholarships on 'Kashmir and women' subscribe to. In fact, the impact of out-community violence on women is not a one-way phenomenon. How women negotiate and respond to it, and the associated constraints that they face, have also been critically touched upon in this chapter. In addition, this chapter recognizes that out-community violence is not a singular violence survived by Kashmiri women. In this aspect it differs from the existing scholarship that constructs a Kashmiri woman as a quintessential victim of state violence (Jan and Masood 2008, Rashid 2011,

Chakraborty & Ganguly 2013, and Naik 2015). And, this chapter, in gendering women beyond their resistance politics, takes a departure from the existing scholarship that highlights Kashmiri women as resistors of (only) state violence like Kanjwal 2011, Rashid 2011 and Duschinski & Hoffman 2011. In both the representations, women are discussed only in relation to the state.

Whereas, this chapter offers critical ways to look at the lives of women in Kashmir, without falling into the trap of making (linear or singular) causal connection between state violence and women's victimization. It shall attempt to address complex questions, such as; how a woman can be a victim and an agent at the same time; how the influence of violence sometimes pushes women to agential roles, and how representations of protesting women make women visible and invisible at the same time. By addressing these questions, this chapter will explore the politics of violence faced by women in Kashmir, which is one of the larger objectives of this thesis.

Out-community violence against women in Kashmir, shall be discussed as indirect and direct violence. Indirect violence – state violence not directly aimed at women, is discussed in the first section of this chapter by delineating the violence(s) experienced by mothers, half-widows and stone-throwing girls. This chapter argues that in out-community violence survived by women, the gendered perspective is (made) visible - in community and in academia, whereas such visibility obscures other violence(s) experienced by women which is not subject to gender-analysis. War rapes of women have been discussed as a direct form of violence on women, towards the end of this chapter. All these known and unknown, visible and less visible, highlighted and denied forms of violence, have been discussed utilizing the lens and the concepts from various strands of feminist studies like Black Feminism, Critical Feminism, Body Politics in Feminism and Feminist IR.

6.2. Women's body in the project of 'Nation and Nationalism'

The complex debates on nationalism – in academia or within national movements, have not provided an explanation or adequate framework for analyzing the prospects and dynamics of women's liberation. Several scholars have noted this omission (Enloe, 1989; 2000; Jayawardena, 1986, 1996; Sarkar and Butalia, 1995; Kandiyoti, 1996). These scholars have argued that women's bodies are used as sites of contestation to express nationalism in various ways, as we shall see. In fact, nationalism appropriates modernization, capitalism, post-colonialism, and feminist

ideology, to further a traditional agenda by using women as national symbols. In indirect ways, women's bodies, labour, and vulnerable status have been manipulated to achieve nationalist agendas. Both Enloe (1989; 2000) and Jayawardena (1986; 1996), have elaborated on women's contribution to nationalism, and contributions to employment of women by the state to further a national agenda. Locally, in most cultures, there is an attempt to ensure the purity of the woman through various nationalist agendas (Enloe, 1989; Yuval-Davis and Floya-Anthias, 1989). Women, they argue, are seen as "most valued possession," main transmitters of culture, ideology, and values to the next generation, reproducers for the community, active "participants" in national economy and social process, and simultaneously, "members of the community's most 'vulnerable to defilement and exploitation' by oppressive alien rulers, and lastly most susceptible to assimilation and co option by insidious outsiders" (Enloe 1989, 54). All these presumptions have made women's behavior important in the eyes of men and a token of national pride.

All the above interpretations of women's place in nationalism form the basis of hegemonic resistance to women's independence, and autonomy in multiple ways. In the context of Kashmir, Indian nationalism is contested by the ethno-nationalist movement in Kashmir, as described in the previous part of this chapter. Although both are oppositional - one being dominant and the other marginal, with one guarding the neat cartographic reality of rigid borders (of India and Pakistan) and the other imagining a political possibility of self-determination. Yet both are no different internally in understanding women, and their roles in the context of nation and nationalism. As Gosh argues, "it is the woman's femininity, purity, submissiveness, mothering, caretaking instincts, compassion, and morality that are evoked by the (Indian) nation to extol its honor" *[emphasis added]* (Ahmed-Gosh, 2003).

Anthias and Yuval-Davis' (1989) exploration of narratives constructed around women as guardians of 'the race' can also be used as an analogy to women as 'guardians of nation'; national honor being seen a part of culture, and culture, in turn, an essential part of identity. Considerations of identity and its preservation are placed disproportionately on women. Whereas, men are free to change with the times, constructing culture as a stagnant space of which men are the gatekeepers, and hence are authorized to punish those who transgress the boundaries. Such transgressing bodies and voices are dismissed as they may disrupt the political scene. It may change the "coherency and normalcy of a given space" (Charrette, 2019). In Butler's examination of the regulatory ideal of

distinct binaries based on gender, gender expression is described as a performance which when goes wrong, can have punitive consequences. "We regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right" (Butler, 1988). Such cases of contestation over female bodies transgressing 'culture-religion domain' have been observed during uprisings and revolutions. They were observed during Arab Spring with women occupying public spaces during the night; they expressed themselves as loud and angry protestors and embodied a political subjectivity – breaking the rules of the space, body and disrupting the norms of femininity, perceived to bring shame. Hence, women's bodies were put to surveillance and tagged immoral for fighting for the same political freedom, which their male counterparts did. The surveillance came from the paternalistic disciplinary state, and it built on the community belief of 'sexual purity being important for moral women'. The women were hence subject to virginity tests. "Moral frame was used in Egypt by both the state and the media, despite the first 18 days of the 2011 revolution being dominated by women's presence" note Najjar and Abusalim (2015). Baydoun (2013), also suggests that women were not recognized as political individuals but seen as mere female bodies.

Similarly, in April 2011, President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen, invoking religion, said that the anti-government protests in Sanaa were "violation of Islamic law because women are not allowed to mix with the men" (Najjar and Abusalim, 2015: 140). The selective use of highly patriarchal interpretations of religion is a useful tool to exert control over women in many (Muslim) societies, cultures and states. In Egypt and Yemen, state institutions used this framing and in Kashmir also such framing is not uncommon, especially by the nationalist movement. The militant movement in 1989-1990's imposed diktats of 'moral dressing and conduct' on Kashmiri women, which Shekhawat (2014 & 2015) highlights as one of the reasons, for a decline in the popularity of the militant movement in Kashmir, in her understanding. Although, there is no evidence about the unpopularity of the militant movement being caused, due to the women-targeted practices of the militant groups, such as enforcing veiling or increased control of women's mobility and participation in public life, without any caution to stereotype Muslims. If on one side, Shekhawat highlights the control of women in a Muslim society like Kashmir, there are scholars like Kanjwal (2011) who challenge such notions of Muslim women being under control. Kanjwal witnessed a protest in which women were present on the road and threw stones at the armed personnel, which she says, challenged her notion of 'docile and passive' Kashmiri women. Such a reflection

although important to counter the victim representation of Muslim women, is laced with a diasporic romanticism, among diasporic Kashmiri scholars. This generalization has a. danger of obscuring the oppression that women face, not only at the hands of the state but at the community level (discussed in the in-community chapters), by a tendency to see a 'free liberated' woman protesting for her rights in a Western context, without understanding the nuances of the local context in which the protesting woman is embedded. Without analyzing the actual socio-political context of women living in Kashmir, it is easy but incomplete, to frame them as 'victims' who would have been suppressed by men and by society, and supposedly been forced to cover themselves with scarves or hijabs..It is conversely similarly limiting to portray women as 'empowered', emphasizing photos of women with stones in their hands, ready to take on the occupying power on their own initiative. As important it is to re-claim the agentic image of a woman against the orientalist stereotype of 'hijab-clad victim of Islam' or 'silent victim of state violence: widow, half-widow, rape victim', it is necessary to remember that a single act of stone throwing should not obliterate the realities of a Kashmiri woman's life. The solitary act of physical defiance should not obscure the veracity she faces, due to the state and community structures. And an individual act of stone-throwing in isolation does not (or is not allowed to) cumulate into a women led or women run movement of resistance. In fact, women who have tried to claim legitimacy and seek participation in the existing political spaces (diverse) are disheartened, and think of themselves as 'failures' as do the women who participated in mainstream politics, as has been examined in part first of this chapter.

The socio-economic position of women in Kashmir discussed in the previous (in-community) chapters; suffice to reiterate that Kashmir still lacks in female literacy, as against the average female literacy in India and against the male literacy in Kashmir. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has also figured as one of the states with highest female feticide rate[36] (Tawhida, 2013; Naik and Selvarajan, 2015; Kholi and Jasrotia, 2014). Even with women who are employed, as revealed in studies conducted by local researchers in Kashmir, (Shafi, 2002; Akhtar, 2013) the decision-making powers (even) in urban, educated and working women are negligible. Zutshi (2013) has found that among the research participants, only 12 per cent women were free to move out of their

[36] During 2001 to 2011 sex ratio in 0-6years age bracket decreased from 941 to 859 per thousand males. Overall sex ratio of the state has also declined from 892 to 883 per thousand males during 2001 to 2011.

homes and did not need any permission to go to market and only 8% women could visit families or relatives of their own.[37] The rest of the women needed permission of parents/children/spouses to even visit other family members. Portraying a politically empowered woman, unaware or dismissive of her socio-cultural realities is not a complete portrayal. It is as incomplete as the proclivity to understand women in such a context as 'victims.

In making of a nation – with little or no space for women, Tickner (2014), recognizes that the masculinity of strategic discourse relates to the hegemonic masculinity of states. Through association of masculinity with war and national security, the nation itself has been valorized and celebrated in several cultures at the cost of insecurity of multiple-identities and communities. It is this, a passionate brotherhood, a 'virile fraternity' (Parker et al., 1992: 6) that forms a nation.

6.3. Section one: Indirect out-community violence against women

6.3.1. Rules of visibility: women surviving and resisting violence

In the context of suppressive militarized living highlighted earlier in part first of this chapter, and the rigid socio-cultural norms around femininity, and patriarchal structures, discussed in the in-community chapters, the following section aims at discussing several forms of indirect out-community violence experienced by Kashmiri women complicated by their gender-based-identity and the violence associated with it. Thus, due to operation and institutionalization of hegemonic masculinities and militarism in Kashmir, women face indirect and direct forms of violence as shall be critically discussed in the following sections.

6.3.2. Enforced Disappearances in Kashmir

The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 December, 2006 and opened for signature in Paris on 6 February 2007, with India as one of the signatories. According to the convention, the elements that constitute enforced disappearance for the purpose of the convention by virtue of the definition in Article 2 are essentially fourfold: (i) detention/any deprivation of liberty; (ii) carried out by agents of the State or with State acquiescence; (iii) followed by a refusal to acknowledge the detention, or a concealment of the fate of the disappeared person; and (iv) placement of the

[37] Pertinent to mention here that this study was done on a large scale, interviewing a total of 2744 women (both in Jammu and Kashmir region).

disappeared person outside the protection of the law (Mc Crory, 2007). The efficacy of international conventions and conferences in guarding the marginalized has its limitations and is in many ways debatable. Goldie Osuri (2018) has pointed out in her work that Mathur, in the context of Kashmir, suggests, "Geopolitical alliances in relation to a protection of national interests become more of an imperative in drawing attention to some human rights violations as opposed to others". A detailed discussion on precarity of lives – whose life matters and whose does not, and non-universality of HRs is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is however necessary to acknowledge that despite extensive knowledge and definitions in the area of HRs (like enforced disappearances), HR violations blatantly take place with no international intervention (Osuri, 2018).

Focusing on the discussion of enforced disappearances in Kashmir, Qutab (2012) mentions that, the forced disappearances here are mostly carried out by armed forces to pressurize men suspected to be militants to surrender, or to intimidate men from joining militancy, or to discourage people from giving aid and shelter to the militants, or simply because they are the only male members at home during crackdowns (Amnesty International India, 1999). Militants or surrendered militants are also responsible for (some of) these disappearances, as there are many instances of inter-group rivalries as well as of revengeful killings, and abductions of surrendered militants or informers of the state by the militants (Human Rights Watch Asia, 1996). In a decade old data and statistics, "60,000-70,000 are estimated to have been killed, some 4,000 are believed to be missing, more than a million have been displaced and the number of widows and half-widows is more than 15,000" (Butalia, 2002).

6.3.3. Association of the Parents of Disappeared People (APDP)

Women's activism in Kashmir has a very marginal acceptance – due to state repression (which is true for male activism as well) and due to rigid gender norms shaped by the local patriarchies. Whereas, most of the scholarship, especially more recent, on women and Kashmir recognize former, but choose silence when it comes to highlight the latter. On the contrary, a few scholarships that highlight the local patriarchy in Kashmir do so without a caution of feeding into the stereotype of 'Muslim men as oppressors of Muslim women'. This becomes even more necessary considering an upsurge in the Hindu right-wing totalitarian government in India, termed as 'proto-fascist trajectory of Indian democracy' by Nitasha Kaul (2019), that tends to exploit such representation

of Muslim community, more so Kashmiri Muslim. As Dibyesh Anand (2007) argues that assertion of the new Hindu identity is produced as an opposite to the 'Muslim other' in India, and this is an active practice with contemporary Hindu right-wing government in India. However, that in no way should obliterate or render invisible women- survivors of everyday violence(s).

Parents, mostly mothers of the disappeared men are seen as an 'apolitical mass of mothers' in the community, by media, by the local separatist leadership, with the hope that mother's protest is recognized by the world as epitome of state repression, as shall be described. The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), on the website of Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS), is defined as "technically not a human rights group but an association of persons demanding the truth and whereabouts of the disappeared." Any family member of a disappeared person can be a member of the association, it further states.

The differentiation made between the victims who have actually survived/suffered state violence and the 'professionals' who examine the state violence is amply visible in the definition of JKCCS. This definition of 'collective mass of women' is symptomatic of how APDP women led by Parveena Ahangar have been pushed to the margins of Human Rights work in Kashmir, which consequently led to the split of APDP in 2007. The website does not differentiate the two APDPs, rather limits APDP to be a collection of desperate parents looking for their missing children. The reasons behind the split of APDP were not discussed in detail by Parveena Ahangar in her personal interview[38]. However, an activist who had associated with APDP before its split said that Parveena Ahangar was often put down as an 'uneducated' woman who does not understand the political. As a result, APDP led by Parveena Ahangar started operating independently. Parveena Ahangar said, that it was since 2007 that APDP was divided, with Pervez Imroz leading another faction of APDP. "*They kept the documents and the reports, and we were left with the old ailing parents and poor families of the disappeared men "*, she said to me during an interview in March 2019, suggesting that their politics is devoid of care for the victims.

APDP chairperson, Parveena Ahangar, said that they practically support families of the disappeared people – with education, marriages, medicinal supplies etc:

> My focus is people… parents…children…wives. We give subsidized medicines to old parents who are still waiting for their sons, whilst on their deathbed. We cover nearly 90%

[38] I interviewed Parveena Ahangar in the APDP office on March 4th 2019.

> of Budgam, Bandipora and Anantnag (districts). Norway awarded me for my humanitarian work in 2007, but very few people here understand the importance of my APDP work. The issues of families only start (does not end at) with the disappearance of a man but no one sees that.

With practical support work on ground, including a nomination for Nobel Prize in 2005, APDP is definitely more than 'a collective mass' of the parents of the disappeared.

The history of Kashmir movement in dismissing women's activism, and in utilizing women strategically, especially ordinary and unlettered women, is not new. Malik (2019) says, "the Plebiscite Front leaders[39] were acutely aware of the gendered context in which women of 'lower' class operated and were willing to use such a context for a nationalist cause". Malik reflects that regardless of how the nationalist leadership saw the contribution of such "mass of women", women themselves were "prioritizing national good/public good, over personal good" (2019: 42; 72).

Participation of women as low rung political activists does reflect some political awareness but at the same time such participation being possible by 'prioritizing personal over political' has been left un-interrogated by Malik. This prioritization was reflected during my interviewing of Parveena Ahangar, as well. She showed hesitance in discussing the patriarchy faced by her at home, in community or in the formation and split-up of her organization. Interestingly, despite the very political nature of her work, she does not want to be recognized as a political voice[40]. She said,

> I am not a political leader but a victim. I am a mother. I am Javed's[41] mother but I am everyone's mother too. But there is a difference between me as a mother and our chief minister as a mother.[42] She was a mother in chair, had power and authority. And she used

[39] The Plebiscite Front was founded on 9 August 1955 by Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, a senior leader of the National Conference and lieutenant of Sheikh Abdullah, and formally launched in 1958, after Abdullah's arrest in 1953 by India. The PF opposed the government and advocated for a plebiscite. But, in 1972, the Front had emphasized that any plebiscite was not intended to contest Kashmir's accession to India which paved way for the 1974 Indira-Sheikh accord that confirmed the support of Sheikh Abdullah and the Plebiscite Front for Indian sovereignty over Kashmir and ended the demand for a plebiscite in return for extensive autonomy and self-government under Article 370 of the Constitution of India which was further de-operationalized in Aug 2019 along with removing the status of the state to Jammu and Kashmir, bringing it under the direct control of the Indian central government.

[40] None of the ADDP women interestingly wanted to identify as activists, but only as 'wives or mothers'.

[41] Her son, Javed Ahmed, 16, was picked up by the National Security Guards (NSG), NSG being one of the many anti-militia creations of the Indian Central government. He was taken away from his home in Batamaloo on 18th August 1990 (Khan 2010:117, Misri 2014:139). Many boys, like Javed, estimated to number around 8,000, were subject to enforced disappearances by the Indian state.

[42] Referring to Mehbooba Mufti, the last Chief Minister of the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and daughter of Late Mufti Mohammad Sayed, founder of People's Democratic Party (PDP). PDP allied with BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) in 2014 and came to power in J&K. Most of its leaders including the CM are under detention since Aug 5 2019 when Article 370 was de-operationalized.

> it for blindening Kashmiri children[43] while her two children were away (implying safe)... She is (in reality) not a mother. Mother is someone whose son is hit by a pellet.

Not only her activism has, but Ahangar's sense of identity comes from being a mother (not necessarily as a political subject). Her defining chief minister as a mother also suggests it. The true realization of motherhood for Ahangar comes from an encounter with state violence. Not only is state violence a perpetual reality which comes with living in Kashmir; it has indeed also occupied a prime position in shaping how Kashmiri women, like Ahangar, would self-identify. However, such a subjectivity is shaped by community gender-expectations that accept Parveena, primarily as a mother not as a political subject, as shall be discussed in the light of my ethnographic observations of the annual APDP protest.

Parveena Ahangar's identification as a victim also challenges the neat dichotomy of victim-agent debate. As Osuri (2018) highlights that in Butler's work, "vulnerability can be a way of being simultaneously 'exposed and agentic' as it presumes the vulnerability of bodies as a collective experience, and such collective forms of resistance are structured very differently than the idea of a political subject that establishes its agency by vanquishing its vulnerability" (Osuri, 2018: 235). Osuri's assertion that Ather Zia, Deepti Misri, Inshah Malik, and Manolagayatri Kumarswamy's works 'substantiate the nuances of Kashmiri women in the double-ness of victimhood and agency' overlooks the fact that none of these works problematize the local patriarchies critically. None of the works discusses the actual material facticity of protesting women or looks for its structural causes in socio-economic and cultural framework.[44]

Parveena Ahangar has increasingly become a symbol of resistance, through tapping into her motherhood and grief. "The vulnerability of a young mother going mad with grief as she searches for her son is gut-wrenching. Yet, it is that vulnerability which mobilizes Ahangar. As she searches for her son, she begins to recognise the grief and desperation through which other mothers or wives search for their loved ones at police stations, detention centers, hospitals, and morgues. Through

[43] Refer to the claim of the Indian gov about use of pellets as a non-lethal way of protest control in Kashmir. More than 100 protestors and non-protestors lost sight due to pellets. See: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-46368231 & https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/pellet-guns-have-killed-24-blinded-139-in-kashmir-since-2010-report-119080200151_1.html

[44] No doubt that Zia's, "The Spectacle of a Good Half-Widow"; Malik and Kumarswamy, "Sexuate Agency and Relationality" or Misri's "This is Not a Performance!' Public Mourning and Visual Spectacle in Kashmir" hint at the operation of gendered norms but none have described, detailed or interrogated it. It needs to come out of its footnote-position which this thesis is attempting.

this understanding of her own experience as a collective one, Ahangar co-founded APDP in 1994, and has been leading the movement against enforced disappearances in Kashmir since then" (Osuri, 2018: 235)[45]. Use of motherhood as one of the few legitimate positions for Kashmiri women's participation in resistance, is critically analyzed in the following section.

6.3.4. Rule one - Motherhood: A 'moral mother' as a legitimate role

Motherhood is a trope through which a woman is relatively seen as moral and complete enough to participate in a public or political project – outside of the domestic realm, which is otherwise conceived as the only legitimate space for women, more so in traditional and religious-driven movements for justice.

The activist stance based on the concept of women's strengths as "moral mothers" has a venerable feminist history. "Through the manipulation of images of women as morally superior mothers and wives, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century feminists claimed the right to enter the public world as moral reformers and "social housekeepers." However, second-wave feminist scholars have shown how this ideological strategy provided short-term gains, but a long-term stalemate for women. "Using the 'Moral Mother' image to enter the public world also meant that it could be used against women to push them back into the home" (Leonardo, 1985: 602). Such a threat is obvious in a political project (religio-political) constructed on a moral stance of resisting immoral state power in Kashmir.

Neither is deployment of motherhood to legitimize women's voices new, nor is its removal to keep women out. For example, the anti-war protesting women who participated in 'Embrace the base' on 12th December 1982 in Berkshire, England (see Leonardo, 1985) were criticized for being 'lesbians and feminists' until the epithet, 'good grannies' was utilized by some reporters in the news to 'save' them from the backlash – based in crossing the gender and sexuality fault-lines. Yet again, in horrific virginity tests of women protestors, in the protest of Arab Spring, women were subject to the tests of accepted morality. Motherhood used as an agential tool is even more complicated in a conservative society, where several women think of their inability to be mothers (suffering infertility) as a legitimate reason for their abandonment by husbands, as was revealed

[45] Ibid

by women in KWC.[46] The test of women's worthiness of political participation by way of testing their sexual behavior or their ability to bear children is, at best, limiting, and at worst dehumanizing. Reducing women to their ability to reproduce or to be 'chaste' takes away the seriousness of the political work that they do, and classifies everything they do as less serious. It consequently genders what is seen as less serious work as normatively feminine.

Therefore, even though some feminists like Cockburn, find motherhood utilized by women in conflict regions of Philippines and Argentina (especially at Plaza de Mayo by which APDP protests are inspired) to express agency, such a way is fraught with essentialist notions, and instrumentalization of women. Such notion ends with their strategic non-requirement, especially in post-conflict regions, like Zalhi discusses about Algerian conflict, and Kumaraswamy about Sri-Lankan conflict. Using normative femininity has its limitations as a political strategy, as it opens up itself to an easy critique in which any deviation from normative femininity like a label of 'lesbian or feminist (falsely understood as aggressive man-hating women), can be used to invalidate both the women and the politics that they stand for.

Malik (2019), without acknowledging the disparity in a gendered expectation of 'moralistic Kashmiri woman' suggests that MKM[47] women were changing their lives by reflecting a "strong character and altruistic behavior" (2019: 73). Fulfillment of such an expectation of being moralistic on which is contingent, a woman's participation in public and political spaces, is deeply problematic when analyzed from gender perspective. It not only makes women's political subjectivity conditional on their being moral, but subsequently prevents women from engaging with politics or public affairs by dismissing politics as 'immoral and dirty' (for women). In such a patriarchal bargain, a woman may internalize a morally superior position by disengaging with politics, which she tries to (and is encouraged to) preserve in many ways. She tries to internalize by staying away from or quitting politics, complying with normative behaviors and dressing codes (as shall be discussed), or by identifying self primarily as a mother devoid of political subjectivity. Not much space exists to maneuver the political subjectivity for women in Kashmir, confining

[46] In my research group, KWC, many women who I interacted with were abandoned by their husbands for their not being able to bear a child.
[47] Muslim Khwateen-e-Markaz (MKM) found in 1987 is an all-women's pro-freedom organisation. Interactions with Zamruda Habib, MKM's current chairperson have been excerpted in this thesis.

them to being mothers primarily, even in their political representations, as is the case with Parveena Ahangar.

Upon my asking Ahangar about India and Pakistan's role in Kashmir, she said, *"I do not speak on this issue. I stick only to human rights violations"*. It reveals imbibing a limited political subjectivity as a mother, who must resist regional politics but not opine about it, certainly not in public.

Inshah Malik's (2019) other interviewee, Zaine, an old woman who used to be a political activist, admits that "corruption" and "dishonesty" in the movement's leadership was the reason why women were pushed to the margins in the movement. "When politics is ethical and principled, more women feel at ease to enter and participate in it." (2019: 47). It somewhere also speaks to the construction of an essentialist notion of women being morally superior and hence cannot engage in the 'dirty arena of politics' (which was admitted by most of my activist interviewees). Hence deceit is normalized as a masculine trait, which is necessary for politics, which as a corollary has very serious consequences for the society, as is reflected in the chapters about in-community violence. Many scholars on Kashmir rightly analyze violent behaviors of men in domestic spheres as consequences of increased violence in the society. But at the same time, they sideline the impact of discursive constructions of masculinity and femininity, which reinforces such violence within homes or in more private spaces. For instance, a woman like Parveena Ahangar, doing everything a person could politically do, still does not self-identify as a political voice or is still being represented only as a 'mother' by media, fellow 'specialized HR' activists and the media, as is further discussed.

6.3.5. What do the protesting mothers not represent?

I attended the annual protest of APDP on August 30, 2017, International Day of The Disappeared in Kashmir. There were around 30-40 women protesting in the public park located in the heart of the city center and tens of media men with their cameras. Protesting women wore headbands saying, 'justice delayed is justice denied' (much like the women of plaza de mayo in Argentina during the military regime). Many men, young boys, and other local activists were standing, talking among each other (in solidarity). I observed the protest through the questions that Deepti

Misri's (2014) paper had raised. Misri examines APDP protests as an example of visual representation of violence, and raises difficult questions about what kinds of gendered violence are easily representable visually, and what kinds of violence and activism are not to be found in public consciousness. Building on her work, I reflect, through my ethnographic observation, why is women's protest every year in a public park allowed by the state, despite the state being coercive and brutal to the street protests by men? Is it because it is 'only a women's protest'? Otherwise wary of any protests, in 'allowing' APDP protest, is the state trivializing these protests by understanding them as 'mere (non-violent) women's gatherings'? Is the local media trivializing women's political participation in public protests by directing all the questions to the 'only male political leader? Is this how patriarchies (of the community and the state) borrow and build on each other? Baxi (2016) argues that, the protestors of the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP) are not just "icons of grief" but also generate counter-knowledge around the forms of violence enacted by the state." Ethnography of the protest follows.

6.3.6. Vignette

Younger women appeared quieter, more covered, with young children, whereas older women are wailing: in remembrance of their sons. They are not wearing burkha or face veil like the younger women. Older women wail and sob, they remember their sons by way of calling out their names. My ethnographic notes read the wails of an old woman: It is my time to go now (die), will you still not come? Why did you leave much before me, leaving me all alone? I remember breaking down then and I still struggle to revisit these notes. I am mostly not a procrastinator. But these women's grief is not just research work. Maybe, because I speak their language and maybe, because I witness their struggle. This woman is wailing in my language, like my mother wailed over her dead mother. 'Is there a language of grief, my untidy notes ask?' The process of recording and re-narrating their lived experience is important, yet so inadequate - as my research will not change their lives, in any tangible way. As a feminist researcher, these feelings are a valid part of knowledge-generation.

Women wail and talk amongst each other. In the protest, on a sunny August day, Yasin Malik, a resistance leader comes into the park, with nearly ten other men and all the media runs towards him. Parveena Ahangar stands up to welcome him. Most women make space for him, telling each other not to talk and 'make noise' as he will address. Malik in his address talks about the barbarity

of the Indian state in violating HRs of Kashmiris – to the media men and not to the women who embody this barbarity. He sits next to Parveena Ahangar and media directs all the questions to him, as Parveena keeps sobbing. Yasin talks about people's political aspirations which are denied and the criminal silence of the international community's dead conscience. A woman reporter asks Yasin about the role of any group (state or separatist) in supporting women. Yasin says,

"They are poor but not beggars. I am proud that they did not go to anyone's home to beg. Government offers them money surreptitiously (with an aim to buy them) but they decline. I salute them, and I give them the credit that they deserve."

On the emphasis of another reporter on 'Hurriyat's role' in meeting their needs, Malik first says that they can answer better, pointing towards the protesting women. Then, he tells the reporter, in Kashmiri, that he should not ask such questions which can create trouble – possibly fearing state monitoring of finances[48], which increased in the following years with raids on political workers, their offices and homes, with an aim of strangulating the freedom movement. And finally Malik says that if anyone of them needs money, do refer her to me, I won't deny. Reporters ask him questions like, 'Why are these women sitting here and what do you think they should do?' I remember vividly that this question irritated me as it does today. I have scribbled angrily on the corner of my journal 'go ask them as they can speak!'

No question was directed to Parveena Ahangar, she kept crying and wiping her tears as the 'political leader' spoke. She interrupts in between saying that "the state is awarding the killers like Momme Kanne[49] instead of enquiring the issue of mass graves[50]. 26 years now that I am fighting. These women are my family", she says.

Yasin Malik is from Maisuma. Inshah Malik in her work (2019) and calls it a 'matriarchal center of resistance'[51]; Yet Yasin is the only leader widely known from Maisuma - corroborated by my

[48] For instance: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/ngo-funding-case-nia-conducts-searches-in-jk-for-2nd-day/articleshow/78938833.cms

[49] Ghulam Mohammad Mir, also known as Muma Kana is a trained counter insurgent, and has been accused of murder and human rights violations. Mir claims he is a key information-gatherer and he claims to have helped in the arrests of more than 5000 militants. State awarded him a national award. See: https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/now-controversy-over-this-kashmiris-padma-shri-410223

[50] In 2017 the state-run human rights commission(SHRC) has told the government in Kashmir to investigate at least 2,080 unmarked mass graves discovered in border areas of the restive region.

[51] Because many women from Maisuma have their husbands living at their place instead of women going to husband's, in a traditional marriage and because of some women from the region being active protest-mobilizers .

interactions with women victims and youth in colleges. A local news channel uploaded the video of this APDP protests – particularly/only covering Yasin Malik's speech. The comment section on the social media upload of the video[52] (13 comments) refer to Yasin as *'our hope, our great leader, good caring leader'.* There's no mention of Parveena as a leader, a hero, or even a victim. Yasin Malik is one of the few (or the only separatist leader) who supports APDP in public, having himself been a victim-survivor of torture and repression of the state[53]. Malik is incarcerated now, and a vicious case is being framed against him with many Kashmiris (Hussain, 2019) fearing that one day they will wake up to the news of his 'secret hanging in Tihar jail much like Afzal Guru's'[54]

This visuality of a protest, despite rendering APDP women visible in some ways, makes them invisible, in many other ways. People's recognition of Yasin as a leader and rendering women as invisible is problematic. Inshah Malik (2019) in her recent work points out that Kashmiri women are seen as 'victims'. However, her critique of victim-representation of Kashmiri women in academia is directed to Indian scholars like Manchanda and Asha Rai, failing to acknowledge that such victimization is a part of the local narrative too, as is obvious from the social media comments, and, reporters' directing all the questions to the only 'male political subject' in the park. *Yasin Malik's sacrifices for the nation are huge* (as he was incarcerated), I overheard a group of young men talking in the backdrop of the protest. Zamruda Habib was also incarcerated but no one knows or remembers her (refer to her quotes in the previous chapter in section 5.7.1 &5.7.2).

In the protest, a woman from Dargah area (roughly in her 60's) had her young granddaughter along who studied in grade 5 in a government school:

> She is the orphan of my son who was 'taken away/picked up' (tulukh), 12 years ago. I received no support from the government or any other political leader. Had it not been for APDP, I would have died for the want of medicine for diabetes.

[52] Free Press Kashmir Videos: https://www.facebook.com/FreePressK/videos/1494320533923639/ August 30 2017.
[53] Yasin Malik Yasin Malik is a former militant who advocates the separation of Kashmir from both India and Pakistan. He is the Chairman of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which originally spearheaded armed militancy in the Kashmir Valley. Malik renounced armed militancy in 1994 and runs JKLF for the settlement of the Kashmir conflict.
[54] The government of India secretly hanged Afzal Guru, prime accused in the attack on parliament in December 2001, and interred his body in Delhi's Tihar jail where he had been in solitary confinement for 12 years. None, including Guru's wife or son were not informed about it. For more, see: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/feb/10/hanging-afzal-guru-india-democracy

Another woman who was from Ashmuqam (in South Kashmir) wore bourka – a complete body and face cover said:

> My in-laws are not giving my children a share in their father's property and my father is sick as well. I want my husband back. Do you think that our sitting in this park will change anything – Indian state's heart won't melt with our grief? No one cares whether we live or die, why should India (Hindustan)?

These women's grief is symbolic of the state's brutality. But it goes beyond that. Being victims of state violence comes with profound material needs, which neither the state nor the community acknowledges or fulfills. Yasin Malik's congratulating women for not begging, even when well-meaning, seemed to focus on the sentiment of higher morality, that women must uphold against the unjust state repression. Why is upholding morality still a responsibility of the sufferers?

I also met with the Social Welfare Officer in his office to enquire about any social benefit programs for the protesting women. The Department gives a paltry sum of 10 pounds a month to widows but *"the lack of funds, corruption in the government and indulgence of the deceased man in 'subversive' activities"* prevents the department from reaching out to all old mothers or widows, said the Social Welfare officer. *"For the women of the disappeared men, even such a provision does not apply as we do not have a government policy catering to such a category (of women) yet".*

Figure F | Protest of Association of Parents of Disappeared People in Srinagar, Partap Park.

The mothers and wives of militant men are discriminated against even in providing monthly stipend. Although, the disappeared men are remembered through the protesting bodies of their mothers and wives, why does the embodied pain and suffering of these mothers, widows and half-widows, which is not limited to loss of a loved one but is constituted of the material strife and struggle (after the 'disappearance') garner no visual representation? Their protests that marks the recognition of their disappeared kin obscures their own corporeal needs; like livelihood, and marriage (discussed ahead in greater detail), and the government has squarely failed to recognize

them as vulnerable or in need of assistance. As such, "the actions and discourses of bodies as performances of a space, a particular social space, which has been embodied by the protestor/performer" (Charrett, 2020: 28), brings conformity of the bodies to rituals of space, providing a sense of belonging to the performer/protestor, but on cost of being 'invisible'.. The community wants the mothers of the disappeared to embrace this and they have more or less, embraced.

These men have been missing for 3 to 30 years now. Certain incidents of 'fake encounters' and 'mass graves'[55] have increased the likelihood of disappeared men being killed, but the protests serve as a memory of resistance. However, acts of resistance need not continue perpetual suffering and precarity for women.

Women, who on one side continue to express their political agency, also demonstrated despondency, dependency, and depravity. Romantic representation that does not entail actual material, and corporeal suffering of women is not an agential representation. However, in no way does the presence of victimhood erase the political agency, and resistance which women continue to express despite occupying precarious spaces. The condition of material-want and neglect continues to be (but need not be) seen as an essential ingredient of a legitimate resistance. And, one cannot help but ask, does it apply similarly across gender, class and caste, in the society? The concept of justice, which, to APDP means *'the right to know the whereabouts of their loved ones',* can expand to include proper rehabilitation of the families of the disappeared men without a guilt of *'being sold out' which many women said that they will be accused of if they received government financial support*. There are not many takers of such a narrative – neither in the state nor in the community. My auto-ethnographic reflections and ethnographic observations and interview (with Ezabir) in the following section, further highlights the nuances of violence of erasure and threat that women bear as half-widows - yet another category of women surviving 'indirect out-community violence'.

[55] Fake encounter: An incident of army killing three local youths in the Machil (Kupwara district) on the ground of being foreign militants (possibly for rewards and awards for killing foreign terrorists) was revealed to be a fake encounter. These three men were made to come to Machil by a former special police officer and his accomplices with the offer of jobs and later handed over to the Army personnel for 50,000 INR (500 pounds) each. For mass graves Ibid at 28.

6.3.7. Widows and Half-widows

Rita Manchanda (2001), an Indian scholar, writes about half-widows in Kashmir that in the absence of a male member, women must fend for themselves and their families. In some cases, they also run a risk of being driven out from their in-laws' homes. Inshah Malik, a Kashmiri scholar (2019), argues that while this (being driven out) may be true of any society, Kashmiri society is explicitly seen as a product of its "ethnic or religious values" because of such narratives as Machanda's, which is not the case.

My fieldwork inquired about the practice of half-widows being driven out, and it was revealed that the custom of depriving a woman (and children) of her husband's property share (inherited) is uniquely Kashmiri and is called *Azal in* the local language. It derives legitimacy from (some interpretation) of Islam. Azal – depriving the children and wife of a man who has died, from the share of his family (parental) property, is seen as logical and legitimate because the husband has not inherited parental property before he dies, or is subjected to disappearance, and hence is not the owner of the property. *Since, the link between the woman and in-laws is broken (by way of husband's death), she and her children are deprived of property*, explained a few clerics, in their interviews conducted during 2019 (interviews with clerics are discussed further). It indeed is unique to Kashmir, contrary to Malik's (2019) claim, as will be clear from this vignette, which relates to Malik's possible anxiety about portraying Kashmiris in a certain way.

6.3.8. Vignette

I asked, Amina Wadud, a globally known Islamic feminist during her visit to Kashmir in November 2013, what her understanding of Azal was? She wanted me to explain what it meant as she had never heard about it. Upon my explaining, she termed it as 'inhumane tradition' which is un-Islamic and unheard of anywhere in any Muslim society. This interaction was being held after her talk at the University of Kashmir was cancelled due to opposition (her leading mixed gender prayer is considered anti-Islamic), but she met certain students and activists, including me. Hameeda Nayeem[56]*, a locally known pro-freedom women's activist and academic interrupted*

[56] I had scheduled my interview with Hameeda Nayeem twice but due to bad political conditions in 2017 and lack of communication in 2019 due to state clampdown of phone and internet, I could not schedule an interview with her.

Wadud's answer to my question, saying these questions are irrelevant and 'internal matters' of our community. She discussed with Wadud the HR violations by the Indian state, imploring Wadud that it is her responsibility to take the story of suffering of Kashmiris to the world, especially to the Muslim world. In the rest of the conversation, most students, activists, and academics disagreed with Wadud's ideas of women leading prayer and reiterated women not being equal to men.

Any such discussions are repeatedly referred to as 'internal matters', as if to say that they are our little secrets which cannot be revealed to the world as (a) they take away attention from the larger issue of nation liberation and (b) they portray us in a bad light. During my fieldwork, I found that not much attention goes to these 'internal matters' even internally - at the societal level. As if to say that either they do not exist – absolute denial of in-community violence(s) as discussed in the previous two chapters about in-community violence, or, leads to conflation of women's liberation with national liberation. Such conflation, as has been observed and analyzed by feminists, in various conflict and post-conflict societies is deeply problematic, such as Zalhi's (2000) discussion regarding the context of Algeria. Zalhi (2000: 109) suggests that national/racial identity is privileged over gender identity. Any such dialogue is difficult in conflict situations or when dealing with minority groups, as it is seen as an attempt to "destabilize the race/gender hierarchy", as also highlighted by Diane Bell (1996) while working on intra-racial rape in Aboriginal Australian communities. Bell says, "it is more convenient to accuse feminists who speak out, of being divisive, than it is to address the conditions that give rise to violence against women" (1996: 111). And I have experience and further anticipate a similar response to my work from the community.

Many studies show that war time changes the roles of women as discussed by Parashar(2014) and others. Ironically, public space becomes more open to women who are pushed into masculine roles as men are killed, disappeared or tortured and they fear more violence and repression by the rival groups/state. However, in Kashmir, women who are widowed, (or half-widows - whose husbands are missing for years altogether) despite being pushed into public realms and becoming bread winners for the family, do not experience a stark change in their power or authority. This is because of the underlying socio-economic deprivation that women in Kashmir face, which most scholars have not found worthwhile to engage with. As discussed, an acknowledgement of intra-community

patriarchies is perceived/assumed to threaten the political project of Kashmiri ethno-nationalism, as the interviews with most of the women revealed, as did my ethnographic observations.

Most separatist[57] politicians do not consider widows and half-widows as political subjects with a political voice. Rathet they utilize them as symbols of state repression, whose victimhood is an important state that must continue, giving rise to the question about who benefits from such politics? To substantiate the assertion, I quote an excerpt from a personal interview of Ezabir Ali. She reflected:

> A politically beneficial victimization-narrative prevents empowerment of suffering-women. Half-widows are a face of conflict; they are subjects of films, books and research. These images sell at an international level. My work strives for a better life for them and not many people like it. One known Islamic scholar told us that our work is 'anti-movement work'. He dropped this bombshell with that statement and we got worried…you know how labeling works in a conflict. You label someone and the consequences of the label follow (implying death). I had to go underground from 2015-2016. I went off all social networking sites as I had started observing some abnormal activities from different (social media) accounts and then I started getting weird calls also. Then we had to strategize on how to go ahead. We sought meetings with big resistance (separatist) leaders and started explaining to them what we are doing and why we are doing it. We met Geelani, Mirwaiz and others - ulemas and their seniors, too. We had to convince everyone. One leader (I am withholding the name for Ezabir's safety) started talking about an ideal situation of 'nizam-e-mustafa' (freedom by way of Islamic law). I told him that women who are hit by conflict haven't been supported by anyone. It has been 27 years of conflict. They have 2-3 children each. On one side we talk about social evils in the society and on the other side we blame women for them. How can we blame such women who have no support? What other ways do they have to support themselves? (this could imply prostitution as it is seen as the most unforgivable social evil). He said that there are many government schemes that help women. I argued that from where shall they acquire the death certificate of a missing person in order to avail schemes for widows? They automatically fall out of such a support system. After advocating strongly for our work, we asked him what his opinion on the issue is. Interestingly, he has never mentioned half-widows in 27 years. You can check all his speeches and statements. His advisors said that it is a sensitive matter and to respond so quickly on this won't be sensible. After a few days, a press statement was issued by him saying that all those groups working on the issues of half-widows should be encouraged and I appeal to all the ulemas to find ways to address this issue. He did not mention our group's name in particular…. laughing… I was also happy that he did not because I did

[57] I prefer the term secessionist and separatist over pro-freedom because many of these groups publicly proclaim preference of acceding to Pakistan over independence of Kashmir as a nation, while as many fight for absolute independence from both the nation-states. In both cases they want to separate and secede from the Indian union. The term secessionist or separatist has been rejected by several post-colonial authors on Kashmir who even question the merger of Kashmir with India in the first place, hence terming separating or seceding as an acceptance of being a part of India – which to me, one can hate or contest but cannot historically deny. It is an undeniable fact that Kashmir is controlled by India.

not want to land up in any surveillance by the state for being endorsed by him." (Interview in Café Coffee day, Srinagar, October 2018)

In an environment of heightened insecurity and mistrust, the separatist political movement is wary and suspicious of the state's agenda. The suffering of the people and inattention of state and any political movement to it is compounded by the existing disadvantages of the sufferers in terms of gender, class, sexuality and even geographical location (urban-rural). Under the weight of a discourse of threat from separatist politics, such necessary conversations like welfare of widows are pushed into margins and consumed by the need to react and respond to the next move of the state. This violence from the separatists, because of their fear of the state motives is in a way 'violence of threat and intimidation' which one can sense in the very fabric of the society. Like, Ezabir's mention of 'unknown killers' - militants, state militia, renegades, disgruntled people, who have easy access to weapons due to high degree of militarization of the society; these 'unknown killers' have killed thousands of activists, political workers and even civilians. The excerpt also reveals how political endorsement is the only way to ensure safety of activists and the legitimacy of their engagement. It further makes life and accessibility to resources harder for women like widows and half-widows, as people fear engaging with them as it requires navigating this difficult local politics. On one side, separatists feel that it is anti-movement work as Ezabir explained, and on the other hand, the state may increase surveillance on any person or group that supports widows. For instance, in our research group KWC's office, different policemen from CID (Criminal Investigation Department)[58] visited at least four times (not in uniform) to enquire about what our mandate is and who funds our activities.[59] And, half-widows also fear to transgress the fixed boundaries of gender norms, for making their ends meet as transgressing and questioning socio-political norms in a conflict has dire consequences.

6.3.9. Vignette

My parents, as I grew up in the 1990's, in Kashmir, would often teach me not to question. They would say in irritation, you will be killed somewhere if you continue to question the politics of the place. You need to learn 'not to question' as 'halaat'/(political) circumstances' are not alright. As

[58] An intelligence wing of Jammu and Kashmir police.

[59] I, with some like-minded women, established the Kashmir Women's Collective office in Srinagar as a resource for 'women-facing-violence'. We continue to volunteer our time and monetary resources in providing women legal, psychological and emotional support and have assisted hundreds of women since the establishment of the group in 2016, many among whom I interviewed for my PhD thesis. KWC is non-funded and voluntary.

I look in hindsight, maybe that is why I questioned everything – is spite and/or despite the control they exerted on me to ensure my safety. The result was that I was 'disobedient'. It is seen as disobedience towards families, religion, culture and community, if half-widows demand their rights as people, and, as women.

As mentioned, women in Kashmir are mostly deprived of their parental property share (especially in the majority sunni community)[60]. In case of death (or disappearance) of husband, they are deprived of husband's property share which is legitimized by the practice of Azal – based in patriarchal religious interpretations[61]. A half-widow, whose husband's death is not ascertained yet, must wait for her husband and cannot immediately remarry, if she wants to. Ezabir Ali told me that she strove hard to create consensus between different scholars (Ulema) of religious denominations about the re-marriage of half-widows. On 30th November 2017, her group, Ehsas, held a consultative workshop of Ulemas (religious scholars) and civil society to arrive at a consensus on the waiting period of half-widows before remarriage, which Ehsas advocates should not be more than four years. In one of her interviews with a local newspaper, she says:

> All the major schools of thoughts in Islam, the Hanfia, the Maliki; Shaafi; Hambali and Jafria provide different guidance about remarriage. Thus while the Hanafi school says that a woman should wait for 90 years after her husband's disappearance some scholars of Maliki school put the wait period as 4 years and some as 7 years. There is also an opinion that if the husband remains missing, without informing about his whereabouts even after proper investigation, the marriage is deemed dissolved.[62]

In the same workshop a prominent locally known man, an HR activist said that most half-widows do not want to remarry. He also said that if state intervention is needed in religion to guarantee property rights to half-widows, then they are better off without it. It is not different from Yasin Malik's apprehension, as discussed above.[63] The belief is that if state involvement is required, women are better left suffering. It generates a kind of violence - 'violence of non-intervention', which is practiced in the political discourses and spaces. As if saying, we won't intervene, won't

[60] See the details of how a random sample of 100 women who sought intervention of KWC in their DV matters responded to the question of inheriting their parental property in the in-community violence chapter.
[61] The custom is locally called Azal by which parents of the deceased/disappeared son, disown wife and children, and it is 'believed' to have religious origins.
[62] Refer to Conciliation Resources (2014) for further detail.
[63] Refer to Rising Kashmir for further detail:
http://risingkashmir.com/news/ulemas-civil-society-discuss-property-rights-of-half-widows

allow any intervention, if it attacks or is perceived to attack our political standing. But then, the question arises, if the state should not intervene, what are the alternatives? Non-intervention is more harmful than helpful in certain cases. One can accept in general the assertion that the Indian state as an oppressive institution with brutal laws and poor track record of HRs, cannot have a well-meaning intervention in securing rights of marginalized, but the reality is more nuanced. How long the price of non-intervention of the state shall be borne by the most marginalized? Such antagonism is obvious and is born out of an understanding of the Indian state, not just as anti-Kashmiris, but as anti-Muslims. But what are the options? It was felt by my other interviewees as well like Zamruda Habib (a separatist political activist), who said that the treatment that she met in Tihar jail was compounded because of her being a Muslim. *All three identities – Muslim, woman and Kashmiri were under attack by the nationalist state project of India that finds all the three identities a threat to the Indian nationhood.* She was called a terrorist by the jailer and the inmates at the jail and recalls with dismay a sense of deep betrayal at being abandoned by her political comrades (Habib, 2018).

Sacrifice of the disappeared men is acknowledged and the victimhood-agency of the half-widow in a relational manner is discursively used a symbol of state repression. But when it comes to embodied suffering of societal violence, by way of denial of property rights and the personal liberty to marry, there is no support.

Brutality of the state, the community's extreme apathy towards women compounded by traditional attitudes like the ones highlighted by Zia (2013), discussing the contours of visibility and invisibility of a young half-widow further highlight the limitations placed on women. Zia (2013) describes in detail what she calls the micro-politics of the life of a half-widow, Sadaf, who after the 'disappearance' of her husband is left alone with three young children and 'de-feminizes' herself not to catch attention of men, in order to avoid slander. She is expected not to look 'beautiful' to be seen as 'loyal to her dead husband' and in order to avoid being exploited. It echoes what Dsouza's study also (2016) reveals about the role that community plays in exacerbating the suffering of young women who lose their partner, especially to political conflict. How Sadaf's the choice of clothes, her moving around in male-dominated spaces, her being lonely and economically deprived, is being used by the community against her, highlights the double-oppression faced by Kashmiri women on an everyday basis, not just by the state violence but the

social institutions (Zia, 2013: 7). D'souza (2016) who interviewed 150 half-widows in 140 villages spread across 8 districts of Kashmir valley, and Poonch area of Jammu district. In his findings clearly states that the vulnerability of the women of Kashmir is compounded due to the prevalence of "strong traditional patriarchy in the Kashmiri society" (Dsouza, 2016: 32). This is one of the few studies that find patriarchy (also) responsible for the existing condition of the half- widows. His findings show that little over 52% of them have been in a transition phase of liminality for 11 to 19 years (2016, 33). The author discusses that despite attempting to break this permanent cycle of liminality, half - widows fail due to a clear absence of justice and the lack of intervention of the community, which is highly patriarchal and exacerbates the suffering of the women (Dsouza, 2016: 39-40). The height of the suffering can be imagined from what Ezabir said; while affirming that the suffering of the families of the disappeared is a priority for nobody. She said:

> There is a half-widow from South Kashmir, a separatist leader visited her and gave her a Quran (Muslim holy book), telling her that, this is her protector from now onwards (after her husband). More leaders went and gifted her Qurans. When she needed money, she was left with nothing but Qurans. She went to a nearby mosque and told the imam that she wants to sell the five copies of Quran (which were expensive). She was rebuked by him for having thought of selling a 'religious holy book. This is the kind of support these women get although at big platforms they are highlighted as victims.

6.3.10. Young bodies, best when invisible: angry girls throwing stones

In a society where the norms of feminine respectability do not let Sadaf be beautiful; where Sadaf has to de-feminize in order not to be exploited by the state, not to be seen as a loose woman by the society, and mothers can protest because they are mothers, what happens when some young college girls embody being 'un-respectable' by throwing stones, by emulating boys of their age? And by expressing their dissent and rage through 'unrespectable' practice of stone through the lens of the state?

One can say that the narratives of honor, modesty, religious duty often intersect with each other and the militarism present in a conflicted or a war region – and working against militarism often entails a struggle against the other oppressing narratives. On one side women are celebrated as agentic by some, but on the other hand warned by the militant group to stay indoors. It highlights the fragmentation and multiplicity of understanding women's lives. Both narratives are opposite

but, in many ways, point towards the peculiarity or the newness of resistance, by way of women pelting stones, which amply points at an absence of women from the resistance movement in many ways. The following sections will reflect on it.

One incident of stone throwing by girls on 24th April 2017 witnessed among public protests, that are otherwise predominantly male, went viral. A few young females, dressed in college uniform and head scarves pelting stones at the police and other armed forces. In a picture accompanying the news report, one of the girls is holding a basketball in one hand and a stone in the other, undoubtedly challenges the image of a passive Kashmiri woman.

Figure G | Girls throwing stones in a protest. Photo by Sofi Suhail. Source: Alamy.com

This caught the attention of the media all over the world, including the Washington Post, (Gowen, 2017). Similarly, a New Delhi based online daily, 'The Citizen' carried an opinion piece, as did Hindustan Times (27 April) describing the girls as "a new face of the protest in Kashmir," whereas, The Hindu (28 April) and the New Indian Express (27 April) reported that an All-Women India

Reserve Battalion will be raised in Jammu and Kashmir to primarily deal with incidents like stone pelting by girls.

Kashmiri woman representation/protestors were portrayed as heroic by the media in Delhi and elsewhere, but it was challenged in around a week's time, locally, shattering the narrative of many scholars that Kashmiri women are locally known as strong and portrayed as victims by non-Kashmiris. On May 7th, 2017, a news report in a local daily, Kashmir Dispatch, which carried a news item stressing that militant Zakir Musa[64] argued that female student protesters of Kashmir Valley must abandon stone-pelting and stay in their houses, saying: "your brothers are alive yet to fight". His message further read, "Whatever you are doing is against Sharia (Islamic ruling). As pelting stones without veil is un-Islamic. In Islam, there are no such protests and that is why Allah is punishing us in the form of occupation," he said. Zakir said: "I would like to request my sisters to stay from these acts and sit inside their houses. By doing these things, they are going against Islam. It is hurting our Islam, it is hurting our movement for establishing Islam because due to this (protests by girls) we can be punished by Allah. So, we request all our sisters to stay away from these acts and be inside their houses."

Interestingly, the pictures of these young girls in the newspapers clearly show that their heads were covered, and they wore college uniform (mandatory for girls not for boys in colleges across Kashmir)[65]. Most had even their faces hidden with their head scarves, possibly to avoid media attention or their family's attention. No criticism from the community to Zakir Musa's statement was recorded in the media (although his other statements have been criticized in the media). The issue was *unimportant or again an internal matter*.

This romanticized hyper-visibility of an incident of stone throwing without taking into account the local discomfort with it, is again a partial representation.

[64] Zakir Musa later claimed to be the chief of Al Qaeda in Kashmir and succeeded Burhan Wani, the militant who was killed in the summer of 2016 and whose killing was protested against widely killing at least 76 civilians over summer.

[65] Both college uniforms and everyday attire comprises long tunic and trousers called kameez salwar and is worn predominantly by women across South Asia and is usually accompanied by a dupatta/shawl.

6.3.11. The place of stone-throwing in the local politics

The silence about Musa's sermon is not surprising as the rules of visibility set by militant group, which refers to women relationally as 'sisters' and is concerned about their transgressing the religio-cultural lines, by way of their un-islamic dressing, behavior and public visibility, are not very different from the common dominant social gender expectations. The eruption of militant movement bears witness to it.

Women were dictated to cover their heads, dress conservatively; many were even killed on the suspicion of spying for police or army in early 1990's. Seema Kazi (2014) states:

> [W]omen's bodies are humiliated by the movements that claim to liberate nations and women in particular; they attack women first – sometimes in the name of religion or morality and other times as child-bearing machines and victim symbols. Attempts at controlling women's mobility and dressing were made by the earlier militant groups in the 1990's by issuing diktats on closing down of beauty salons and by ordering women to be dressed in Islamic clothing. (Kazi, 2014: 26)

During peak militancy, women's group of Hurriyat conference, DeM (Dukhtaran e Milat), led by Aasiya Andrabi, also advocated for throwing paint on *un-respectably* dressed women. Portrayal of Asiya as a feminist by Inshah Malik (2019) is a unique position, even though Asiya denies being one. Due to fear of Asiya and her allies, humiliating couples celebrating Valentine 's Day, (she calls it 'cultural aggression') or walking together in public, many young girls in colleges during focus group discussions echoed that *people should not tell us what to wear.* Most agreed that parents have a legitimate position to say so, not *others.* Who are these others? *Random men suggesting why do not you cover your head,* said most. One girl in Vishwa-Bharati college in Rainawari said, *some women in burkhas..like ninjas…[giggling].. are standing outside of college, especially in downtown.* Another girl said, *they are DeM women, they attacked stationary shops and tore apart valentine day cards and broke heart-shaped gifts, last year. I saw their protest.* Did you click their pictures? *No, but media was there;* I found some links of their protests in which they are calling valentine's day a day of 'lust, immodesty, vulgarity' and a western tradition[66] and telling youth to desist from such celebrations (The Hindu, 2014).

[66] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2ZBJ3v_h2A & https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7qscKpJIo8

Although not very famous for their aggressive activism among youth, Asiya Andrabi is one of the few women activists in the separatist political space in Kashmir. Andrabi is vehemently anti-west, pro-Islamic rule and a vocal political activist who advocates for Kashmiri independence but within the Islamic framework and refuses to be termed as 'islamic feminist' despite Malik's (2019) attempts to represent her as one.

Andrabi advocates for women's participation in politics, but only by way of a certain dress code as advocated by Zakir Musa. Asiya's opposition to women dancing and singing on stage is portrayed by Malik as an opposition to the state's role in luring women by 'emancipatory narratives', which opens up chances for their exploitation, whereas, the agency of women who choose to sing and dance is swiftly ignored. Asiya's politics will still oppose women's public singing and dancing whether sponsored by the state or not – as such, Malik's justifying Asiya's politics in uplifting women remains questionable.

For this thesis, which has a commitment to highlight all forms of violence, irrespective of the regional politics and its influence, it is important to highlight the targeted policing of female bodies in the militant movement during the 1990's. It is equally important to interrogate the criticism, leveled against girls protesting in public by throwing stones, by Musa, as much as it is to celebrate girls reclaiming public spaces. And these responsibilities are no less than highlighting the larger state institution for its hegemonic masculinity. With the curbs by the state as well as inviting the community's disdain, the question then arises, whose bodies are these (in the context of young stone-throwing girls)? Who owns them? And who controls them?; building on the provocative idea of Bell Hooks, when she asks, 'whose pussy is it?' during the Black Movement of the 1960's and 1970's of black women challenging the violence generated on black bodies due to the intersection of race and gender.

While as the Indian soldiers and the larger military-complex curbs the Kashmiri bodies from protesting, by using the most inhumane means of crowd control like live bullets, pellets and pepper gas (Ahmad, 2015), the community through endorsement of Zakir Musa's statement, (by way of silence[67]), and Andrabi's political activism also ends up controlling women's bodies. Although the analysis is not aimed at creating equivalence but instead aims to highlight violence faced by

[67] Opposing Zakir Musa's one statement about corruption in separatist politics and silence over his diktats to girls.

women in a nuanced way. Therefore, as a corollary, it may not be wrong to ask, are the young girls protesting everything that hinders them, and prevents them from protesting, or only protesting to call for an aspired nationhood, like the boys are doing? I could not speak to the exact same girls who had protested, in the college (whose pictures were published in newspapers), but the act of throwing stones by young girls is definitely symbolic of a community rising against the brutal ways of the Indian state to control it.

Women did not throw stones while in hiding; they used their bodies in the centre of the city, to shower stones on armed personnel who were trying to contain the protests of the boys. Use of their bodies in a 'doubly disrespectful' manner, expressed not only anger towards the state but towards the suffocating noose of the community norms.

Most girls from several degree colleges (5 colleges across Kashmir valley) who I spoke to during FGDs, said that they have never thrown stones because *'their families won't let them'*. Do the boys who throw stones at the security forces have family support? All of them, across colleges, said no. They do not think that boys are supported for stone-throwing by families. Then why do you look for family support? Most did not answer this question, but one girl in M.A Road (Maulana Azad) college said, *we are not allowed to do many things that boys do, or boys do not think that they require approval for such things.* Like? *Smoking, bunking college, swearing and watching us. They all laughed.* Do you feel harassed with them watching you? *Yes, mostly*, was the unanimous answer. And what do you do in such situations? *Avoid and ignore was the commonest response, other being wearing hijab*. There was practically no help in college or home, or at community level to address the issues of harassment. What do you think of the girls who threw stones from your college? They were in newspapers everywhere. *"Such publicity is not good for girls. My parents would stop my education if they see my photo in the newspaper, that too throwing a stone",* said the same respondent who mentioned that girls require approval more than boys. Further, probing why girls find stone-throwing inappropriate was responded to in similar ways in other colleges too: *displeasure of families, college authorities, and the community, bad publicity which can hamper marriage prospects*. The girls were certain that it was not a 'respectable act for them' to embody. I kept pushing to suggest even one single positive about stone-throwing, to which the same girl replied that it can be a way '*to express anger with everything*.' What is everything? *There is a lack of freedom for Kashmiris. Mostly girls.* Another girl said, '*but none of that (stone-*

throwing) gets us a better life or freedom.' Clear that stone-throwing exercise is neither a result yielding exercise for girls nor is it something that girls should do, several young girls in colleges said that never have they thrown stones, which contrasts with the discussion with boys in colleges, who said that *stone-throwing is their right and hitting Indian soldiers was their national farz – call/ duty.* A few debated the efficacy of stone-throwing as an act of resistance, but predominantly they felt that it is a legitimate act for boys to throw stones – many added the rider that as long as it does not hit Kashmiris or break local cars. The difference in political knowledge and politicization of identity was different between the boys and girls of the same age group, across rural and urban colleges.[68] Whereas, for the girls, community gender-norms created a nearly impermeable obstruction, preventing them from throwing stones. It also made the whole exercise look ineffective for them, whereas boys had internalized no such guilt. Many boys admitted throwing stones and most agreed to it being a legitimate practice, even if they did not throw any. Boys looked at it as an act of resistance whereas girls judged it from its efficacy and often called it futile, trendy or yielding poor results.

[68] FGDs were carried out in Gandhi college, Vishwa Bharati college, M.A Road college, Sopore and Baramulla degree colleges in 2017-2018.

Figure H | A picture from the gender workshop/ FGD in Baramulla, one of the six-degree colleges in Kashmir.

6.3.12. Stone throwing by girls: A diss to respectability

As a method, "respectability politics" that prevents the visibility of young girls throwing stones in public spaces, "attempts to map and choreograph that which is respectful, consequently failing to understand or accept how respect is a particularly contextualized as a raced and gendered concept, already excusing and always at the expense of the marginalized subject-hood" (McCune et al, 2019).

I borrow the term, respectability politics (Smith, 2014) – a term used to denote justification of racial and gender discrimination based in disavowal of the legitimacy of black political expressions for its non-compliance with the 'mainstream'. Through the lens of respectability politics, the marginalized are to be blamed as they are not doing it right. The interpretations of the implications

of respectability politics for women's agency are more complex than a brief discussion here can indicate. However, various Black feminist scholars have recognized an exercise of gate keeping through reflecting on respectability politics used as a tool to keep blacks as a race out, and then respectability politics within the Black community to keep the Black women out, particularly (Harris, 2003). The imaginary of an angry violent black man or a hyper-sexualized black woman are the constructs of respectable politics, in the context. The concept of respectability politics when applied in the ethno-nationalist and gender context in Kashmir represents (a) Kashmiri population not seen as worthy of political self-determination because Kashmiris use violent means like militancy, or because Kashmiris are Muslims and hence easy-to-brand as terrorists to the Indian state. (b) a Kashmiri woman, for instance, a half-widow or a mother allowed a political subjectivity (or even everyday acceptance), only within the limits of recognizable decorum set by the respectability politics (borrowed from religio-cultural framework), like dressing, by the Kashmiri community itself. For instance, Zia's (2013) description of a half-widow, Sadaf, brings home the point:

> With the kind of attractive beauty she possessed, Sadaf almost had to de-womanize herself to appear plain. She heightened her modesty by projecting a look of piety often associated with strictly observant Muslim women in Kashmir…..Sadaf attempts to combat the punitive policies of the Indian state and the disciplinary influences of society by how she recasts her body." *[emphasis added]* (Zia, 2013: 165)

The women with stones embody the politics themselves – *politics of rebellion against the state, against the community gender-norms, against the random men telling them what to wear*. In that, they embody the practice of stone-throwing as a dismissal of community norms and state's inhumanity. In closer proximity to South Asia, the concepts of honor and shame feed into the idea of 'respectability politics.' Black feminists (such as White, 2005) argue that some women are seen as worthy of respect, and that worthiness is again defined by the same patriarchal institutions, which in the first place propagate the idea of honor/respectability as linked to female bodies. Power to characterize women as respect worthy or unworthy is a trope through which the power to define boundaries for women remains with the patriarchal institutions and leads to policing of women's bodies. In this way a burden is put on women that in order not to be harmed or slandered, they would require to prove through their worth as respectable women by way of their dressing and behavior.

Respectability politics speaks to the South Asian concepts of *sharm o hayya or izzat* (honor politics). As Parashar (2009), mentions that a nation and religion idealizes women as the bearers of the cultural honor and religious identity of the nation, and that 'honor' is best kept at home. She argues, "Ironically, this seems to suggest that there is something inherently wrong and 'impure' about the public spaces that men inhabit and also that homes and families are devoid of any politics." Such a position is not only under severe criticism by Feminist IR but by all the strands of feminism – liberal or critical.

6.4. Section two: Direct gendered violence by the militarized institutions: Masculinity and Rapes

6.4.1. War and Rape: marking borders and bodies

Violence in the form of rape and sexual abuse of women in times of conflict has recently started to emerge from the literature about women during war, especially after analysis of rape in former Yugoslavia. Women have been raped in every war—as retaliation, as damage to another man's property, and as a message of humiliation to the enemy. Rape; is used as a weapon for demoralization and humiliation of men and the whole community. To understand cultures of violence and rape, whether practiced institutionally by the state or anti-state forces, or 'privately' against women in their homes or their neighborhoods, is a way of challenging the public/private dichotomy, that has for so long positioned women and violence against women away from state or public concern or responsibility. Such analysis also reveals the sham dichotomy, presumed by IR, "between an international space where violence is legitimate in the name of war, securing border or militarized intervention, and a domestic or private space where individual morality is opposed to violence." (Pettman 1996, Enloe 1989). Whereas, a lot of attention and resource goes into the violence legitimized in the name of defending the nation, and national boundaries, no consistent attention goes to the violence in more 'personalized' domains, during war. In fact, an increase in violence in the domestic area due to the larger political violence becomes a subject of political sociology, but is not as widely analyzed in IR. Many women's accounts reveal that the gun used by the soldier or a rebel on the ground by day, is turned towards the wife at home at night. Then why should not the violence in less-political spheres of life in general or particularly in conflict-societies be an integral component of understanding politics and IR? Such

understanding of VaW in conflict-societies can reveal the complicacies and nuances in a conflict that are otherwise obfuscated. Use of women's bodies in wars is one such area which is relatively widely shaped through feminist analysis in IR.

Using women's bodies as battlegrounds on which men of opposing nations have fought wars is not new. Women's bodies have been ravaged and marked to threaten and humiliate the enemy of the opposite nation, perceiving women as property of the nation or even the carrier of honor. Feminist philosopher, Rada Ivekovic who has studied comparative partitions in India and former Yugoslavia argues that, it is the ideology of the masculine state that accounts for gendered violence of the modern state (in Das 2007,30). Similarly, In World War II, Russian and Jewish women were raped; soviet soldiers raped German women during the "liberation" of Berlin; and Chinese women were raped by the Japanese. In more recent wars, Vietnamese women were raped by Americans; Serbian men raped Bosnian Muslems, and Hutu men raped Tutsi women in Rwanda. In Rwanda, Layika says that the rape was of a scale that surpasses the imagination (1996: 39); there are some areas of the country where every woman still alive has been raped - by gangs and individuals and in refugee camps (1996,40). The same is the case with Congo (see e.g. Holmes, 2007; Black Bird Whistling, 2007).

Susan Brownmiller (1986) compiled evidence of the pervasiveness of rapes in war time in 1975, including rapes of Scottish women in 1800 during the English occupation, German occupation of Belgium and France in 1914, and in the Second World War. Mezey notes, "Rapes of German women by Russian soldiers during the liberation were widely reported, and charges of raping of Chinese women in the 'Rape of Nanking' were heard at the trials of Tokyo in 1946. 2000 rapes were reported in the city during the first month (Mezey, 1994 in Susie 2000).

"The extent of rape is such in war that "women's bodies become like letter boxes" (Warner, 1994). To apply Levi-Strauss's concept of "objects of symbolic exchange," rapes can be interpreted as messages signed on women's bodies from one fighting side to the other (Rener, 1993). The rape of women in Bosnia is also seen to have a visible political aim. According to Slavenka Drakulic (1994), it is an organized and systematic attempt to clean (to remove, resettle or exile), the Muslim population out of territories. The Serbs want in order to establish an ethnically clean nation-state of great Serbia. Zajovic (1994), claims that; when a "territory" is cleansed, women, as part of the property of enemy males, are seized and colonized. Zajovic sees rape as an effective instrument of

territorial cleansing, because men will not return to the place where they have been humiliated by the rape of "their" women. When women are raped, it is experienced not as women's pain, but as male defeat on the grounds that they were too feeble to defend their own property. "Rape was used in former Yugoslavia to terrorize populations and inflict maximum humiliation on communities; but it was women who carried the shame, who were later shunned and excluded, because they embodied the failure of the militarized men to 'protect' their homeland. Staja Zajovic, from Women in Black Belgrade notes: "A patriarchal brotherhood demonstrates its 'male strength' through war. However, the rape of their women is not lived as pain in her body but as a male defeat: he could not protect his own property." (Zajovic, 1993: 5, as cited by Kelly, 2000: 53)

An analysis of rapes as a form of direct violence by the state militia shall put in perspective the work of Kelly, Brownmiller and Morgan, in the context of Kashmir.

6.4.2. Militarized Sexual Violence in Kashmir

The Indian state's practice of, and response to, rape by Indian 'security forces' in Kashmir, exemplifies an institutionalization of hegemonic masculinity, which is strengthened with impunity and unaccountability. Since the response of the state to out-community violence against women has consisted of a blatant denial, dismissal and contestation, there appears to be no possibility for redress for survivors within a system which itself supports the perpetuation of this violence.

Khalid Hassan, Rita Manchanda, Seema Kazi and Nyla Ali Khan in the context of Kashmir valley discuss how rapes have been used against women as a weapon of war, to attack the Kashmiri community and its sense of identity as noted earlier. Hassan further stresses that a threat of militarized sexual violence has also led to the curtailment of the some of the basic rights of women by their own community (see Manchanda, 2001b: 30-36; Khan, 2010: 115-214; Kazi, 2014: 110-122). The fear of being 'raped by the enemy' somewhere surpasses the 'fear of being raped' in general, in the imagination of the subordinate community's sense of honor and national sentiment. But the identity of the perpetrator may or may not matter to a victim of rape, who undergoes an extreme form of bodily violation. I did not interview any survivor of rape who was raped by an armed man in Kashmir. Many of them have been repeatedly interviewed for a few recent studies and books, and some older newspaper and HR reports too.

Seema Kazi says, "the response of the government authorities to allegations of rape by security forces in Kashmir is, at best, muted. Such allegations have often prompted official denial rather than investigation or prosecution. For instance, the allegation of mass-rape at the twin villages of Kunan Poshpora, Kupwara district, north Kashmir on 23-24 February 1991 by soldiers of the Rajputana Rifles (RR) was initially denied by government authorities. State denial was followed by a Press Council of India report 26 exonerating the Army of any wrongdoing." (Kazi 2014: 24). "Police investigation into the crime never commenced because the police officer assigned to the case was on leave at the time and was subsequently transferred by his superiors; the case was subsequently closed by the Director, Prosecution, on the ground that the perpetrators were untraceable" (2014:32). In such situations of conflict, the privileging of armed forces rendered law courts incapable of working independently. "Kunan Poshpora is a telling example of the willful obstruction of the course of justice for rape victims by State authorities. According to Harsh Mander, an Indian scholar-activist, Kunan Poshpora was the single largest case of mass sexual violence in independent India (pp63). Ever since the re-opening of the case on the orders of the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) in June 2013, the police failed to record statements from the victims, witnesses or the accused security personnel; the Army and the Superintendent of Police on the other hand sought an extension of time to provide the required information" (Mander, 2013). Essar Batool and four other Kashmiri activists re-opened the case and documented the ordeal of the women of Kunan and Poshpora in their book (Batool et al, 2012).

6.4.3. Critical reflections on rape: Uncomfortable discussions

If on one hand rapes like Kunnan-Poshpora are much remembered brutal rapes of Kashmiri women by the state, implicit rape threats to Kashmiri Hindu community by Kashmiri militants is also a reality. Slogans like, *"Yeti banni Pakistan, bataw rosti, batenen saan"* (Kashmir will be a part of Pakistan (annexed to it), excluding Kashmiri Hindu males but including Kashmiri Hindu females), threatened Kashmiri Hindus to leave Kashmir, along with the environment of insecurity created due to armed militancy in Kashmir (which was perceived by anti-Hindu by Kashmiri Hindus). The claim is contested, with many of my interviewees asking, *if Kashmiri Hindus were so threatened, why did not Kashmiri Sikhs or Christians leave?* Whether it was an increasing environment of insecurity due to religiously-charged environment and armed conflict that made Kashmiri Hindus permanently leave Kashmir, or whether targeted killing of various people (seen as) working for

the state, that included Kashmiri Hindus, threatened the minority community – it is a question of debate, that is marred with contestations but not for this thesis to probe further. But, in a chapter about out-community violence against Kashmiri women it is important to acknowledge that even if the state rapes were rampant, institutionalized and aimed at humiliating the Kashmiri community, a few Kashmiri Muslim and Hindu women have been killed and raped by militant groups on the pretext of spying or working for the state machinery (Khan, 2010).

Kashmiri Hindus leaving Kashmir was an unimaginable ordeal for them, but it has in turn impacted the community in Kashmir in many ways as well. When I asked, one of my activist interviewees, Ezabir Ali, what prompted her to be an activist, her response is reproduced here:

> An incident that prompted me to do activism was my classmate who was a Hindu and had to move out of Kashmir. Her father was shot dead by the 'unknown gunmen' and this unknown thing is always very scary. Her family moved out quietly after that. They were enterprising and prominent people, but we did not know when they moved out. An element of mistrust has crept in and I was suddenly not a friend to Vandana anymore but just a Muslim. I was seen by her as a person from the perpetrator community. That was hurtful……everything had become hollow, the social relations, and the trust was lost. I will always feel it as a huge personal loss [even though they reconnected in the recent past].

Identifying rapists and killers by an 'identity or construct' also explains the underlying community dynamics. When Kashmiri pandits identify Kashmiri militants as 'Muslims not Kashmiris' and Kashmiri Muslims identify the rapist-soldier of Indian armed forces as 'Indians not Hindus', it gives an opportunity to understand the perception and belief of construction and contestation of various overlapping identities. Similarly, the identity of the rapist and the killer is utilized in creating political narratives, privileging the dominant political narrative that sees a rape only through the identity of the rapist. When there is an in-community rape, it may be hidden, as was observed during my field-work,[69] but an out-community rape is politicized and garners support. It will not be wrong to conclude that the outcry is not against the rights violation of a woman or for

[69] The case of a 17-year-old girl from Handwara district who was raped by a neighbor with whom the family were on friendly terms came to KWC in the winter of 2018 with a hope that we could help them with the termination of pregnancy. Since it was already the 7th month of pregnancy, we strongly advised against it but the family neither reported to the police, even on our insistence, nor did they seek our further help. They wanted a silent abortion and the man/the rapist was willing to pay them to get it done, which to them looked like a viable option. We were worried about the wellbeing of the girl and had suggested that we will help her with anonymous delivery and the adoption of the child as well (going out of our way), but they never turned up and stopped taking our calls. We wrote letters to the district SP and to the head of the police, Inspector General of Police as well, who declined to intervene terming it as a 'personal and a sensitive' issue.

restoring woman's well-being, but for an instrumental use of woman in which a woman is seen and highlighted as raped only when raped by an enemy force.

This claim is supported by the fact that a raped woman's victimization does not end at rape only. They are victimized again by the male members of the family and community who make it known that their sense of personal honor and dignity has been attacked (Essar et al, 2012). This is particularly the case when the latter is conceived as directly related to, and dependent on the sense of moral propriety of the women in their family. Examples of this are to be found not just in Bosnia but also in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Latin America, and Palestine (in Dobash et al. 1998). "Turned out by family, community, and society, they become the dispossessed in both war and peace." (Macwilliams, 1979: 114-115). The case of Kunan Poshpora is not very different. As Ritu Dewan (1994: 2655) states that even after three years, no marriage has taken place in the village. Raped and un-raped women are single. Two women committed suicide. And seven sisters who were gang raped were left to fend for themselves. There has been no compensation from the government and no support from the community. Essar's work (2012) not only highlights social ostracization of raped women, but along with four other young activists, she reopened the case after 21 years through a public interest litigation (PIL) in a law court. Calling out holistically such a violence - not just a physical violation by military but compounded severely through social ostracization by the community. She argues that such a voilence lies at an intersection of violence(s) (inter and intra community) and is not easy especially by the women of a community in a perpetual state of political conflict, and hence it creates a hierarchy of violence.

"Rather than view sexual violence in war as different, many feminists before and since chose to see and make connections: that militarized sexual violence is perpetuated by men who are some women's lovers, sons, brothers and neighbors. That their behavior towards women in one context is connected to their actions in others" (Kelly, 2000: 53). War only provides a platform for hyper masculinity to unleash in violent and unaccountable ways, reinforcing itself through institutional support provided by the framework of nation and national security. But otherwise too, it does come out in individual acts of rapes, and other forms of violence against women in everyday life. And, in a political conflict or in the time of war, both ways of perpetrating violence, not only overlap, but politically interact to reinforce each other yet the intersection does not garner attention of the academics or policy makers – as discussed in case of Kashmir.

To recognize that violent sexual acts are beyond individual crimes, more so in a war environment, where the power dynamics are compounded between the raped and the rapist, due to the power-play of multiple identities, other than gender, Liz Kelly, suggests that understanding how sexual violence is implicated in armed conflicts is important, but it is also important to understand how violence against women has been minimized, denied and hidden in the documentation of these events. "How does violence which is an essential part of armed conflict articulate with gender relations? Does militarism construct a form of brutal or brutalized masculinity? When is a war a war and what constitutes peace from the perspective of women?" (Kelly, 2000: 47)

When I asked my interviewees - survivors of in-community violence, activist women, from both, electoral and separatist politics, protesting women and young college girls, what peace or *azadi (freedom)* means to them, they had similar responses. Some of them are:

> Absence of abuse, development, no military on roads, no fear of forgetting id cards, continuous drinking water supply and electricity, self-respect and dignity, return of our disappeared men, freedom of mobility, end of poverty, end to unemployment, safety on roads, pride not abuse for Kashmir identity, return of pundits and revival of harmony, end to Indian rule, our own flag and prime minister (like pre-1953 political autonomous position of Kashmir).

Diverse, yet the responses are broad. For women, the political (regional politics) aspect is only a part of their lives – whether analyzed in a positive frame or negative; it could be a consequence of keeping women out of politics or it can very well be the construction of world and their identity, for them, yet this project cannot induce any representative claims. To women, peace is not just absence of political violence or time between two incidents of massive violence, what is also called as negative peace by Galtung (2011).

6.5. Conclusions

In this chapter, the thesis' exploration of 'out-community' violence was continued from the previous chapter, albeit with a noteworthy shift in focus. The chapter emphasized the political subjectivities and resistances which can be found among women in Kashmir in the face of multiple forms of violence they face. I contributed to knowledge through analyzing the indirect and direct ways in which out-community violence impacts women in Kashmir, based on first-hand field research among women and also by referring to the recent research done on Kunnan Poshpora, for

instance. I also generated a detailed account of how the same violence co-produces women's subjectivities and agency. Thus, the chapter contributed to our understanding of the complexities of gender relations and violence in conflicts such as the one in Kashmir. It bridged a glaring gap within academia by counteracting the harmful dichotomy of Kashmiri women being portrayed as either 'helpless victims' on the one hand, or as romanticized heroes at the forefront of resistance and struggles against occupation.

This indeed built on the previous chapter, which had highlighted the entanglement between in-community violence and out-community violence, concluding with the argument that women's gender identity and safety from violence are under attack by two forms of masculinities; the armed Indian man and the local Kashmiri boy. The former takes the shape of institutionalized masculinity that is awarded for guarding borders; in which threatening the safety of a local woman can be considered as a normal occurrence and can be ignored.

These two chapters, taken together, have explored the politics of violence faced by women in Kashmir, analyzing the entanglement of in-community and out-community violence perpetrated against women. The entanglement also highlights the complex nature of women's lived experiences and the detrimental impact on their lives. Violence; our understanding of violence, its representation, impact, and ways to resist violence, is shaped by complex socio-political realities which must take into consideration institutional and structural power-plays. These institutionally and structurally enforced violence(s) are not perpetrated in isolation and hence should not be studied or understood in isolation. With amplified understanding of state violence on Kashmiri women, in academia and in community, other intersecting violence(s) need to be highlighted as well. Like the 'violence of erasure' explained through obliteration of women's experiences, 'violence of threat and intimidation' explained through gate-keeping, violence of non-intervention and violence of respectability politics as experienced by Kashmiri women; in the first part, violence of exclusion in section 5.7.2 about the treatment of women in electoral politics as well as separatist politics which has been termed as the 'violence of invisibility and obscurity'.

By discussing the experiences of women in Kashmir, which is the world's most militarized region, the first part of the chapter focuses on how militarization is gendered and how politics – whether national or aspiring for an alternative nation, is also gendered. As Enloe (2000) argues,

militarization is never gender neutral; it relies on the existing hetero-normative ideas of femininity and masculinity and reinforces it further. Although inclusion of women in military or in politics is not all it shall take, to balance the gender-power by way of mere inclusion, yet their presence in such institutions does not change the gendered nature and framework on which the institutions rest. The concepts of nation, war, political conflict, militarization and securitization when understood and analyzed as social institutions, helps examine their gendered nature, which is the contribution of Feminism in IR. Feminist IR understands war (conflict) from an epistemology of a social institution, that challenges the dualisms like national/international, masculine/feminine, private/public and personal/political, state/society, but blurring the boundary between the binaries is possible when these dualisms are interrogated and challenged. Without analyzing the actual socio-political context of women living in Kashmir, it is incomplete to term them as victims or agents. In fact, this binary, like other binaries, is not useful, as one can occupy both the positions at the same time. It just depends on the context in which victimization is being felt or agency is being exerted. From a critical feminist lens, any representation of women that definitely asks, what is being seen, cannot miss the question, what is not being shown/seen? The visuality of a protest, despite rendering APDP women visible in some ways, makes them invisible, in many other ways. As does the life of half-widows or rape-survivors of the Indian armed forces in Kashmir.

The first part of the chapter describes the ways in which militarization acts on bodies, as does the second part by discussing war-rapes. It made an attempt to show that militarization is gendered, and hence the authority, repression and control aimed at attaining absolute subordination, or obedience of a body borrows from existing gender norms and reinforces them as well. Women's bodies are seen as the classic 'other' to the state and to the male body, too. They are seen as a threat to the nation and hence must be contained and controlled by limiting their participation in politics, which as analysis of women in politics examines. Other times women are raped to humiliate their men, and their imaginations of a new politics. Women are seen to pose a threat to the boundaries of culture-and religion, which makes reinforcing control over them not just important but pertinent, especially in a society and political movement that is embedded deeply in culture-religion. Using the frames /tropes of motherhood, morality and honor or respect, a woman's political subjectivity is made conditional and a woman is subject to multiple forms of violence(s) which interact with the pervasive militarized violence in Kashmir.

Violence in Kashmir is executed through unaccountable legislations, massive violations of bodily rights – deaths, disappearances, torture, impairment of mental health, over-all wellbeing, and the quality of life. It is achieved by an absolute control of spaces – real and virtual. In such an environment where militarized violence has become a norm, it is very easy to lose sight of any other form of violence, other than the ones perpetrated by the (sinister) state structures. In such a context, violence becomes conflated with state violence, and obfuscates the nuances of violence(s) - in community and in academia, alike. Exploring the experiences of women helps to make them visibilized. The politics of violence(s) in a politically volatile/conflicted place is complex and nuanced, as has been portrayed particularly in this chapter. No representation is complete until it takes into account the material and corporeal facticity faced by women due to being positioned at an intersection of in-community (everyday), and out-community (state) violence. Gendered analysis of women in relation to the state, (violence) is incomplete without an overall gendered analysis of women; the everyday socio-economic position and patriarchal violence(s) that they survive. This thesis has provided precisely such gendered analyses and enabled a unique understanding and insight into the complex lived realities of women in Kashmir, which can be extended to other similar conflict areas beyond this particular case study.

7. Conclusion: Overlapping violence(s) and intersectionality: an end to 'one violence obscuring the other'

7.1. Introduction

All that has been written about the border region of Kashmir is centered around its spectacular beauty or the ravaging inter-state conflict of India and Pakistan. Moreover, whatever little is said of the women in Indian-administered Kashmir today is usually through trope of a Kashmiri woman victim of state violence. Both the geographical region and its women have been fetishized through nationalistic imaginations which Kabir (2009) says has been portrayed as a "special" place and "the missing piece of Pakistan and India".

This thesis has made a clear departure from these narratives, advancing an in-depth understanding of women's lived experiences in Kashmir in their voice, through their narratives. An in-depth examination of various forms of violence(s) survived by women in Kashmir in this thesis serves to center violence in the perception, understanding, and reflection of Kashmiri Women. This thesis has assessed VaW as an understudied phenomenon, more so in a political conflict. Therefore, by expanding our understanding of violence experienced by women in the conflict region of Kashmir to include both what I have conceptualized as 'in-community' and 'out-community' violence as an everyday reality. This thesis disrupts and challenges dichotomies of public-private, victim-agent, war-peace,security-insecurity and personal-political. It advocates strongly for the adoption of a spectrum to examine violence broadly as discussed by feminist activist and academic, Liz Kelly (1988) and Feminist IR theorist, Cynthia Enloe (2007). Feminist theories that study gender violence have adopted a continuum to understand violence against women or any kind of gender based violence, in policy or practice, particularly. A continuum helps recognize the grey areas of women's experiences: violence that is not named violence, silence as an agentic response, overlap of multiple violence(s), violence reinforcing and exacerbating violence. It is this continuum thinking that poses serious challenge to dualistic/binary pattern of understanding violence. This thesis by way of exploring these grey areas has adopted the continuum of violence rather than using violence as a monolith of political violence or interpersonal violence. Conflation of violence, as argued throughout the thesis, creates erasures of women's experiences and makes designing remedial measures difficult when acknowledgement of multiple violence(s) is not there in the first place, one gets discussed on cost of the other, as demonstrated

in detail.

Seemingly two disparate strands of violence, interpersonal violence and violence of the nation (the latter which includes both statist and political movements) are actually not mutually exclusive, as has beenhighlighted by feminist scholars examining violence in different conflict regions around the world, such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Palestine, and Algeria. In addition to applying a similar lens to study Kashmiri women, this thesis has challenged the binary of victim-agential woman of Kashmir by discussing what constitutes the victimhood of a Kashmiri widow or half-widow (the women protestors of APDP in section 6.3.3 to 6.3.6) and what constitutes the agency of a womanpolitical activist who struggles to carve space in mainstream/electoral politics in Kashmir (in section 5.4, 5.5 and 5.8) and ones who join/support the resistance/separatist political spaces in a desire to make a change (section 5.7.1 and 5.7.2). The common thread of violence that binds the women in different socio-political spaces and the women in various political conflicts is the experience of violence, what Menjivar calls multiple violence(s) in case of Ladina women in Guatemala (2011) or what Holt (2014) calls multi-sided violence(s) for Palestinian women, or what Collins (2000) refers to as the intersection of race, class and gender for Black women in the USA. Intersectionality, studied in detail by Kemberle Crenshaw discusses how experiences of women of colour are "frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism" and are under-represented within both the "discourses of feminism and anti-racism" (1999:1242-1243). On same analogy, it has been argued about women in conflict as to how competing narratives over nation or ethnicity intersect with everyday violence against women and one leads to obscuring other. In fact the community often demands that one be prioritized over the other and competing political narratives, as discussed about Kashmir throughout the thesis, create more violence and acknowledge only the violence of the opponent downplaying its own violence. To make sense of this complex politics of violence, this thesis by way of two chapters established the presence of interpersonal and community based violence and called it in-community violence, and thereafter discussed the more acknowledged and known political violence prevalent in the region called the out-community violence. Yet in discussing out community violence, the lesser known perspectives and analysis was presented based in gender as a tool of analysis. Overlap and intersection of these two broader categories creates windows through which an intersection emerges which has been highlighted and discussed throughout the thesis and has been summed up in this chapter.

7.2. Multiple Violence(s): Types and forms of overlapping violence

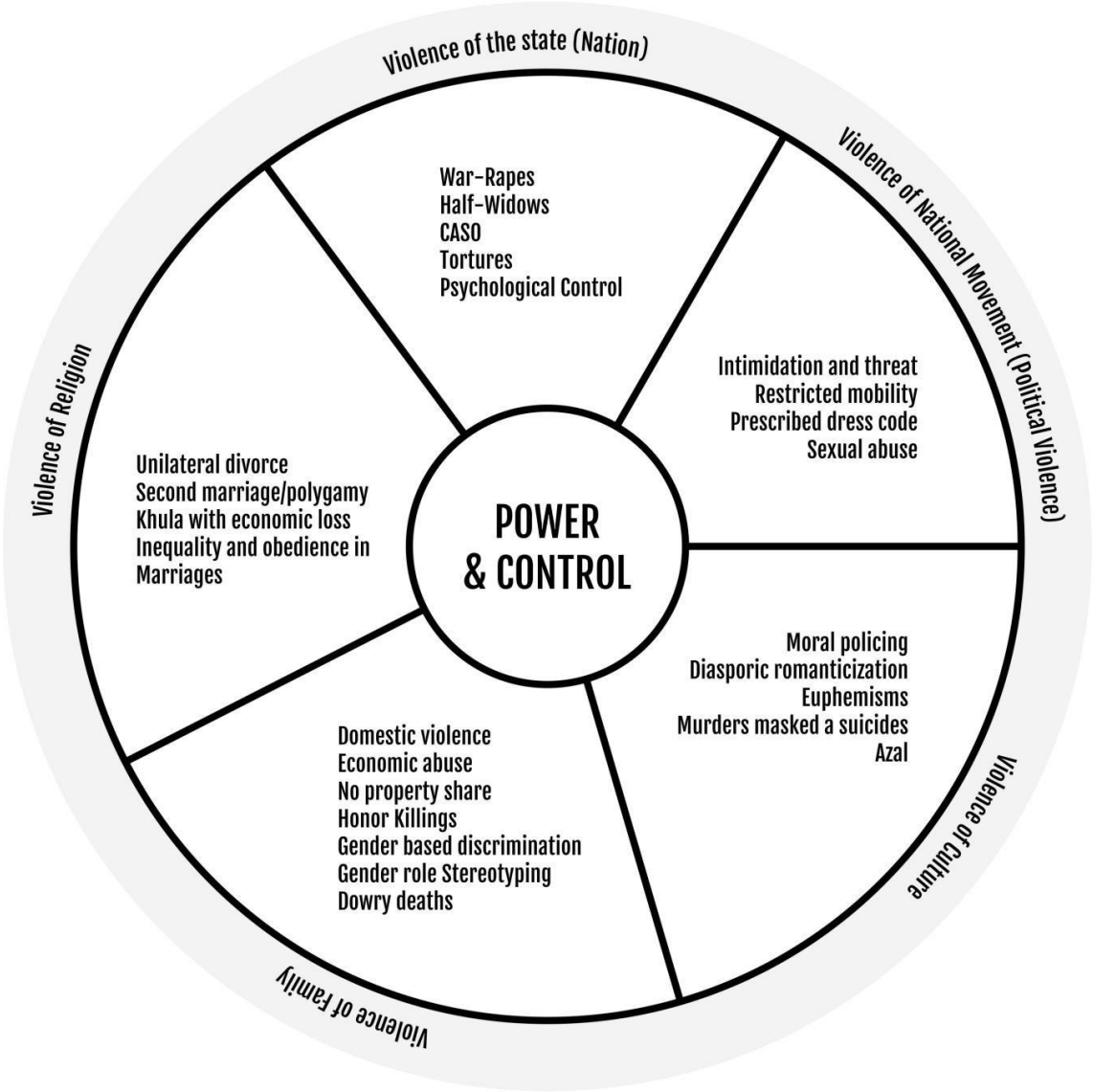
In chapter three of this thesis, which concerned with 'in-community' violence, epistemic violence was examined through the highlighting of gaps, silences and selective examinations of Kashmiri women by various scholars. Subsequently, the chapter highlighted the various forms of violence(s) buttressed in religion and culture like the practice of withholding divorce and a unilateral power of divorce with men. The practice of depriving women of their share in parental property as a cultural norm, despite religion unequivocally ruling for a share in property for women, was also discussed. Patriarchy in both the institutions was discussed through highlighting several practices and norms of discriminatory gender constructions and roles.

Violence(s) of silence have been extricated in the values of forbearance propagated for 'good' women to follow as discussed in the context of women who have been widowed or women who throw stones on Indian army. Whereas in section 3.7, economic violence against women was highlighted as a form of violence based in culture; similarly, in section 3.12 the violence generated by ineffective institutions like police and judiciary is ethnographically highlighted through the experiences of the individual research participants. Militarized living and re-interpreting security from feminist IR perspective was undertaken in the chapters addressing 'out-community' violence(s), discussing the militarized violence experienced by way of 'indignity, humiliation, threat and insecurity', through the experiences of research participants. The experiences of women with/in both mainstream and separatist political spaces have been termed as 'violence of exclusion' in section 5.8. Whereas the violence of not catering to material needs of the victims of state violence is examined even when their participation is used to highlight the state violence like that of enforced disappearances of the men related to the protesting women. How in one way of making visible a particular violence, another violence against women is perpetrated, is a constant theme throughout the thesis whether in violence perpetrated through police stations, judiciary towards IPV victims or community's 'violence of ostracization and stigma' towards victims of rape by Indian army. This thesis highlights multiple violence(s) faced by women in Kashmir through their own narratives. Building up on the concepts of 'bodies as controlled and disciplined' in chapters three and four and discussing 'bodies as battle-fields of nations' in chapters five and six, the feminist lens has been utilized to frame the argument, leaving a scope on building it further. Emphasis has been laid upon gendering the woman to understand violence of state, nation and war without un-gendering her in examining everyday violence or vice-versa.

This politics of acknowledging both broad categories of violence, not either/or, highlights the need for intersectionality which when used as a tool of analysis and practice reveals the politics of hierarchy of violence and the overlap of violence(s). This has previously been explored in other conflict regions in the world, but not in Kashmir. To illustrate this, I have drawn up a diagram inspired by the Duluth model (1981), also called as power and control wheel of Pence and Paymar (see Figure I below). This has been prepared to highlight various forms of violence against women in (Indian administered) Kashmir. The Duluth model was prepared in Minnesota when domestic abuse laws started criminalizing IPV in various states of the US. The model is actively used in policy and community organizations with the aim of protecting the victim and holding accountable the perpetrators of violence. In this thesis, it is used to bring together the forms of violence identified through the field research and analyzed throughout the chapters. As such, the diagram represents various violence(s) against women prevalent in Kashmir that have been named, identified, and/ or examined in my research work.

In practice, various criminal justice agencies like police, judiciary, mental health practitioners, doctors, counselors, even law makers and other political stake-holders can be brought on board, especially in case of a political conflict, with the sole motto of ensuring wellbeing of women, irrespective of the political beliefs of the women or the perpetrator of the violence. It is thus a proposed policy plan which could further be utilized to address the specificities of the violence that women in conflict regions face keeping in view the socio-political context as well as the hierarchy/politics of violence created by the intersection of multiple violence(s) as analyzed in the thesis. In view of the violence(s) discussed in this thesis, here is the Pence-Paymar model for Kashmir, which centers violence in the victim-survivor and not the perpetrator and without Equating or competing, counts and registers, all the gender-based violence(s) acting on a woman in a militarized region. It does so without losing sight of the gendered violence(s) inside home, public place, society and the larger cultural-religious belief system acting on her pervasively disrupting several binaries generally invoked to understudy violence against women, as has been discussed throughout the thesis.

Figure I | Diagram of violence for women in Kashmir including both 'in-community' and 'out-community' violence(s)



7.3. Denial and downplay of in-community violence

In a community that faces a high degree of political/state violence over an extended period of time, quotidian violence against women is discounted, obscured, and relegated to a secondary role, political conflict obviously being the primary concern, as has been revealed by the interviewed interlocutors like the police officer and the religious leader, within this thesis. The same is highlighted through ethnographic observations reflecting on the acceptance of violence and a desire to safeguard the community in the face of pervasive state control. Through the narratives of the research participants for this thesis, and the many conversations and observations which include analysis of newspaper articles and reportage of murders masked as suicides or a lack of knowledge and denial of honor killings by the policemen, it has been established in this thesis that various forms of in-community violence(s) are not framed well in policy contexts, due to a lack of feminist and holistic narratives. The glaring absence of inclusive narratives do not place women's being and experience of violence at the center. Women and the violence that they face, in personal spaces or the pervasive militaristic control and has not met a detailed and result-oriented treatment, in academics as well as community or state programs.

In such a challenging and complex situation, the vulnerable groups, notably women, especially ones with disadvantages of class, educational background, and the women directly affected by conflict, suffer the most. Women, in general are also used as strategic and instrumental tools by different political ideologies who do not genuinely seem interested in women as people with less power but a group of people who are instrumentally utilized to further political narratives – either statist or separatist in the context of Kashmir.

Therefore, investigating an intersection of politics of everyday lives and the larger geo-politics of the region is important, which interrogates the life of a Kashmiri woman as agential but still understands them as living in the margins of separatist and state political spaces, in-community and out-community violence. It could also be defined as an exploration the Subjugated Knowledge (Foucault, 1988) of Kashmir women experienced by navigating marginality of the 'double-sided oppression' or what Menjivar calls 'multi-sided' oppression (2011). Foucault (1988) refers to such an exploration of knowledge from the standpoint of the vulnerable as a necessary addition to the existing epistemological genealogies (1988).

An initiation of discussion on the condition of women in the community is often perceived as opposition to the movement for political freedom of Kashmir as has been discussed by way of certain examples in the thesis. For instance, interview with the activist who received threats for working with half-widows, for instance (refer to section 5.6). A narrative of absence, denial or downplay of in-community violence in Kashmir can be explained through a framework that I choose to call '3E's framework' based in the interviews, ethnographic observations, and collaborative action work of advocacy and intervention in women victims' cases. One or more of the three broad narratives are utilized by the community to deny and downplay the in-community violence against women:

a. **Exceptionality**: Framing the violence against women by the state as the only violence against the Kashmiri women is the basis of the Exceptionality narrative. Conflation of state violence with violence against women is easy as the former is visibly pervasive and publicly known due to presence of a national movement/ resistance politics. The advantage of the 'Exceptionality Narrative' is that it becomes a binding force in protesting against the state like the APDP protests as discussed in detail in the thesis, or in general a public outrage against Kunnan Poshpora or even Shopian case.[70] 'Exceptionality' highlights the violence of the state but at the same time sidelines the violence within the community.

   A potent example that establishes the 'Exceptionality' is the "whataboutery" that creates a hierarchy of violence. In-community violence against women is trivialized by rhetoric of "whataboutery" at the receiving end of which are women and the political gains are made by the politicians of varied ideologies indulging in such rhetoric. In an instance, Aasiya Naqash, the Minister of State for health, on the 6th of October 2015, while responding to the question of Anjum Fazili, another woman legislator, in the state assembly said that the cases of domestic violence in Kashmir are serious and the victims are under "social and parental pressure" and the government will construct special shelter homes, one in Jammu and one in the Kashmir region. While the one in Jammu is ready as per the official reports,

[70] Kunan Poshpora mass rape has been discussed in detail in the thesis; it is a case of mass rape by Indian army in 1991.Whereas, Shopian double rape and murder case took place in 2010 in Shopian area when death of two women was declared as drowning by the state but was widely contested by the public who believed that it was rape and murder by the Indian armed forces. It resulted in massive public protests across the valley that lasted more than a month by the public and resulted in many killings.

there is no seriousness or progress on the shelter home for women in Kashmir, highlighting the state's lack of commitment to women's welfare. Interestingly, Mr. Rashid, an independent legislator rebuffed Asiya Naqash in the state assembly when she proposed a shelter home for women survivors of domestic violence, asking her what about "Asiya-Nelofar, Asiya Andrabi and Kunan Poshpora victims".[71] As a result of such persistent narratives, both the victim-survivors of in-community and out-community violence receive no support and services. The state that shields armed forces for crimes like murders and rapes cannot ethically justify its concern about the survivors of domestic violence but if the state is not even serious about its policies and actions that support women survivors of non-state violence, women are left with nowhere to go and no institution to support. The question is not only the selective concern of the state but also the subservience of the resolution of one kind of violence to the other.

b. **Everywhere Angle**: It frames in-community violence against women as a global phenomenon and serves to hence normalize it. Through this narrative, violence against women is understood as an issue that needs no special attention as it is prevalent in all societies across the world. Therefore, ignoring it in political conflict is seen as only acceptable and obvious, akin to what Enloe calls "normal and natural".

The most common feature of violence against women is that it is globally present. In its being global or 'Everywhere', two common responses are generated; the conservative one which hints that women must innately be inferior in order to be seen as inferior across the world for so long in history which is highlighted by the examples and narratives of women's treatment in marriages, and social expectation of their being "docile, obedient and forbearing" as highlighted by the research participants. The more liberal 'Everywhere' response acknowledges that there's violence against women in all societies and though it

[71] Largely believed to be a double rape and murder case which the state officially declared as drowning in Shopian; the head of an organization which is a Hurriyat affiliate, Dukhtaran-e-milat; a case of mass rapes in the twin villages of Kunan and Poshpora, Kupwara. In case of Kunan and Poshpora, the culprits, armed forces, stand unpunished and the case was shut. It was reopened only this year by five young women activists, possibly to linger on in the court without any just conclusion. Also see: Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora? A Book by Essar Batool, Ifrah Butt, Munaza Rashid, Natasha Rather.

is a reality but not much can be done as it is a 'normal'! It is akin to saying that since it is a global issue, how can it just be our responsibility or priority when we have bigger and more pressing issues like political conflict, at hand?

Such is a response of Kashmiris when violence against women is discussed in the community or even on social media, as referred to in several instances in this thesis. Merry Engel Sally (2009) suggests that gender violence is hard to fight against as it is conceptualized as "deeply embedded in the system of kinship, religion, warfare, and nationalism. Its prevention requires major social changes in 'communities', families and nations." Since gender violence, as per Sally (2009) is deep-rooted, change is often vehemently resisted as it seems to challenge the understanding of religion, culture, kinship and hence identity, in many cases. On the face of it, no one justifies gross human rights violations like murder of women or bride burning but the link between everyday acts of control and domination that build up to the actual act of cruelty is denied. Everyday acts are too small to be challenged theoretically and the actual crimes are seen as regular crimes devoid of a patriarchal footing that sustains them. That makes women's rights probably the most contested set of human rights, and for it to be contested in some communities like Kashmir it first needs to be accepted as a set of human rights, in the first place.

Moreover, there appears to be no motivation in the community or the existing political discourses to use the language of human rights around women as it will challenge the prevalent gender norms and practices. The state's attempt at promotion of women's rights as human rights in theory is mocked or frowned at, as it is dichotomous for the state to violate the rights of some Kashmiris while pretending to uphold the rights of Kashmiri women. Consequentially, the discourse of women's rights as human rights or violence against women as an issue has very less takers unless it is for a political strategy. Those who are interested in the gender issues are often accused of diverging attention from the political issue of Kashmir or spreading immoral and Western beliefs as has been observed in the focused group discussions with youth in college, as referred in the thesis. The adoption of rights framework is certainly easier in public and political life whereas the more 'customary and personal life' (read: concerning women's rights) is still seen best

governed by the beliefs of 'natural and normal' and preserve it as it exists. It prevents any attention on in-community crimes from being named and addressed.

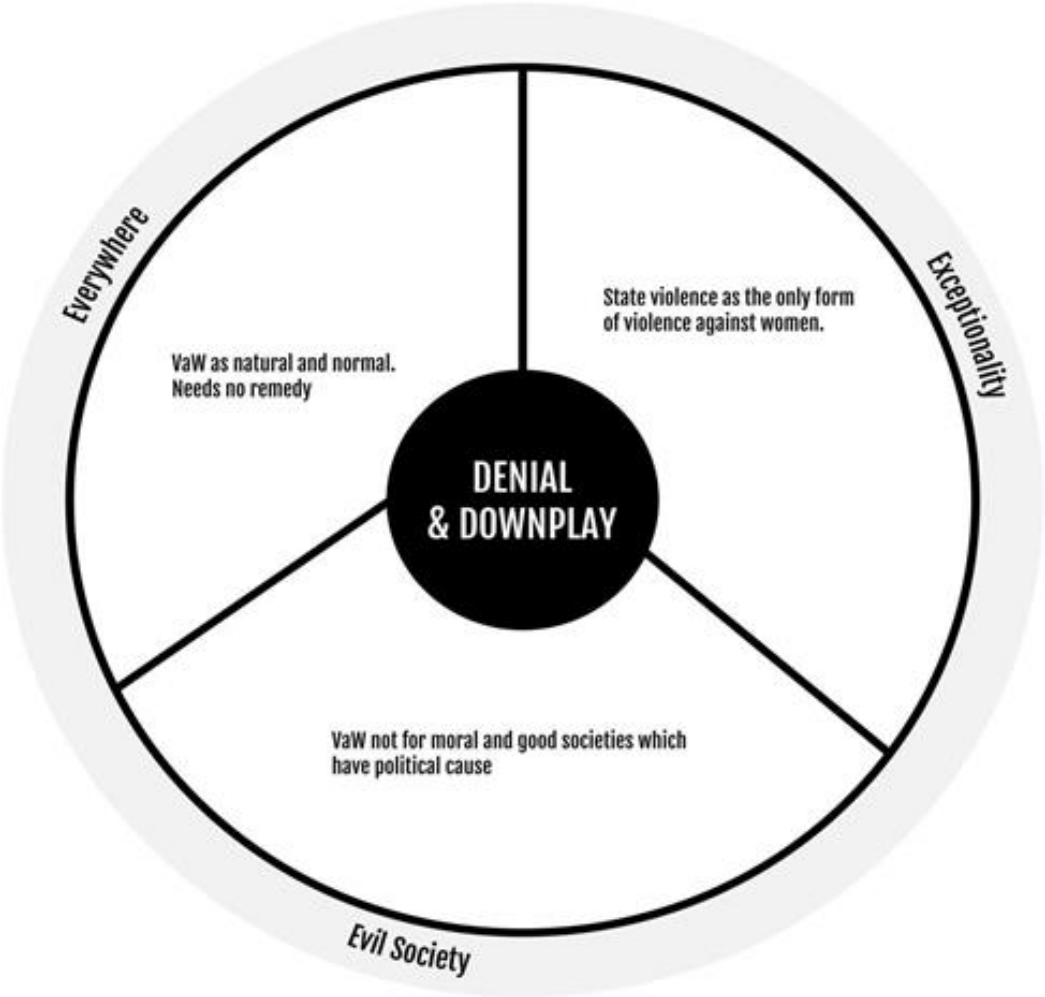
c. **Evil society**: framing violence against women as something that only normatively 'bad people and bad societies' do. By analogy, since the oppressed community is being constructed as more ethical and moral (read: religious, as explained below) one compared to the oppressing one which is the 'Evil' one, any kind of violence against women is seen as improbable. Hence, denying any such violence or seeing it as aberration to the normal is the outcome. In a politically insecure environment in which India and Kashmir emerge in opposition, the framework of 'Evil society' helps build a discourse that Kashmir is not as bad as India when it comes to treatment of women. It is apparent that this argument is a result of the political relationship which Kashmir and India share, where India leaves no chance to prove that Kashmir is a conservative, radical place by being a majority Muslim state. This narrative has gained currency since an overtly communal and regressive environment in India has come to prevail that actively has been explicitly dividing India on the lines of caste and religion. The brazenness of the narrative has been successful in generating a social environment of hate against minorities and has resulted in killings of Indian Muslims on the pretext of beef-eating or love-jihad (see e.g. Singh, 2020).

In such a narrative where Kashmiris are oftentimes labelled as terrorists, seditionists, naive mountain people, anti-national Pakistan supporters or radical conservative Muslims, Kashmiri society has adopted a stance of defensiveness that tends to hide everything capable of pulling down Kashmiri as people. In such situations, one can only imagine how difficult a conversation about ordinary women and their lives would be which is capable of pointing a fingers towards Kashmiri society or men, specifically. Such conversations are more difficult than the political conversations because they have the potential to go against all the institutions, starting from family and ending at militarization, in form of state supported or militant led militarization.

Therefore, in denying in-community violence against women, the incentive for the society is to take moral high ground which in turn is shifted to the resistance politics being the

politics of a morally upright society again an evil external control. As a defensive stance, the 'Evil Society' framework provides a cover to the community but it is the women who pay the price as the burdens of honour and morality plunges on their shoulders to preserve and their rights when violated are shadowed in assertions such as "but that does not happen here!" and "we are good people, we cannot be doing this". Several narratives of women and their families as well as interlocutors refer to this framework aimed at denying and downplaying the in-community violence against women, pushing women into the "margins of the margins".

Figure J | 3E's framework explaining the 'Denial and Downplay' of in-community violence in Kashmir.



7.4. Kashmiri women in margin of the margins: Ways out?

Inhabiting doubly 'marginalized identities' of being Kashmiri and Since I approached the conceptualization of violence against women in Kashmir from the stance of an insider who is deeply invested in making a change in the lives of the women, it is through this thesis based in Participatory Action Research that I want to initiate a discussion on transcending politics that foregrounds a woman's identity not only in nationalist discourse but also in gender discourse. A politics of care is needed to contextualize all forms of violence against women prevalent in Kashmir, without any prejudice or selectivity to any regional political narrative.

Therefore, it is all the more necessary and important to create a space for women's voices on all the platforms and in all the existing power structures such that they are heard in totality not just dove-tailed to the geo-political narratives. This tight rope has to be walked when women are to be centered. This "centering of lived experiences and the use of dialog (collaborative research) imply that knowledge is built around ethics of caring" and is seen as a tenet of alternative (feminist) epistemologies emphasizes Collins (2010). It is also a characteristic of black feminist knowledge, among others. This thesis is an example of applying this framework to the suffering of women in Kashmir - due to Indian militarization of the region, aspired nationalism or the community values and practices. At the same time, a caution has been voiced against portraying the already battered Kashmiri community as "exceptionally violent or patriarchal". By highlighting the violence prevalent in the society, the attention is drawn towards the "identifying, naming and categorization of violence", not necessarily calling it "special, unique or the most brutal" form of violence. Just that it has not been discussed does not make it particularly condemnable.

What rather is a matter of concern is the lack of institutional support to women who experience violence, as basic as a free counselor or a shelter home. At the same time, a life under a highly militarized terrain, with no end in sight to the sense of insecurity and violence from political and state violence based in gender. As Kazi (2011: 225) suggests:

> [B]y illustrating the link between state behaviour and social relations, a gender frame illustrates the link between national (and international) military processes on the one hand and gender transformations at a local level on the other.

When the struggle for bodily integrity is a daily challenge (Zalewski, 1995: 348) as is in case of mass rapes or sexual assault by the Indian army or even in certain cases of dowry deaths, murders

and other physical violence, it is a question on the concepts of "security, institutions of criminal justice system and also alternative mechanisms of redressal like mohala committees or social interventions". In fact, gendering everyday life as well as gendering the phenomenon of militarized life is the larger objective of thesis, exploring the intersection of the two, to reveal the types, forms of violence faced by Kashmiri women necessitating its prevention and remedy at the level of community as well as formal institutions.

This thesis, through women's narratives, underlines the paradox of "security forces causing insecurity, home not being a safe haven", and a need for an "intersectional politics and politics of care" that centers understanding violence in the identity of women – gender based and national and at the same time focuses on the "politics of violence in a conflict zone". This thesis contribute to our understanding of the complexities of gender relations and violence in conflicts such as the one in Kashmir, and bridged a glaring gap within academia by counteracting the harmful dichotomy of Kashmiri women being portrayed as either 'helpless victims' on the one hand, or as romanticized heroes at the forefront of resistance and struggles against occupation. By highlighting the entanglement between in-community violence and out-community violence, women's gender identity and safety from violence are described in detail being under attack by both forms of masculinities; the armed Indian man and the local Kashmiri boy.

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