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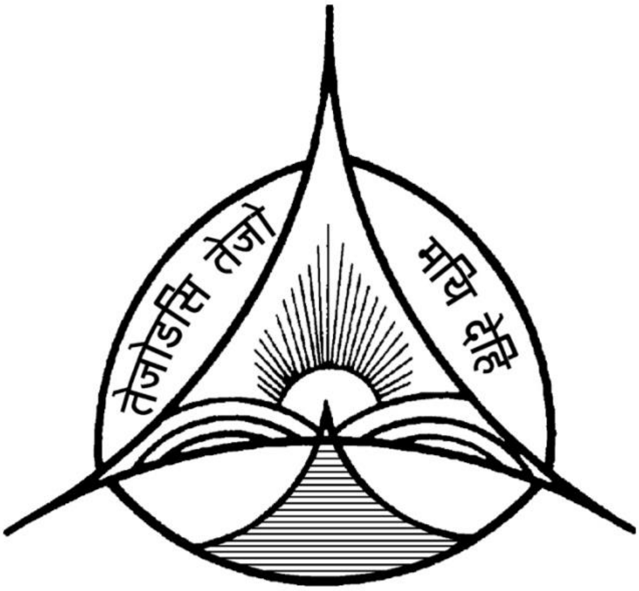
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The New Militancy Wave in Kashmir and the Masculinity Discourse

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I. Introduction

From the initial mobilisation of the local masses for the cause of *azadi* (freedom) in the late 1980s, to its peak in the late 1990s, and to the withdrawal of support by the locals, the militancy movement in Kashmir has undergone a number of contradictory phases. For almost a decade, the movement was at a standstill due to the inability to win freedom and lack of popular support. The next generation of local Kashmiri youth decided to show dissent by resorting to means other than the gun which resulted in the stone pelting episodes. However, the most recent developments in Kashmir suggest that the educated youth are yet again turning to the gun. While there are multiple reasons for the armed resistance, including the overbearing presence of the Indian state in every aspect of life in Kashmir, this paper, in its first half, attempts to understand these reasons through the testimonies of the boys who had pelted stones in the past by using a framework of masculinity. Here, it will also explore how the masculine ideals of a militant have undergone a change over a period of time. Such a discussion is incomplete without studying the role of women in shaping the masculine ideals of the *mujahid* in Kashmir, placing special emphasis on the motherhood discourse in the second half of the paper. This section will also include the narratives of mothers of sons killed in conflict in villages such as Palhaalan, to understand the role of women in shaping the new 'militant masculinity' in Kashmir.

II. Understanding the Roots of the 'New' Wave of Militancy through Testimonies of Stone Pelters

The new militancy movement of Kashmir spearheaded by young educated men who have consciously chosen to join the movement. This new group of militants used social media websites such as Facebook as a platform to post their pictures holding guns and wearing uniform. As Masood argues, 'unlike the militant of the old times who would never reveal

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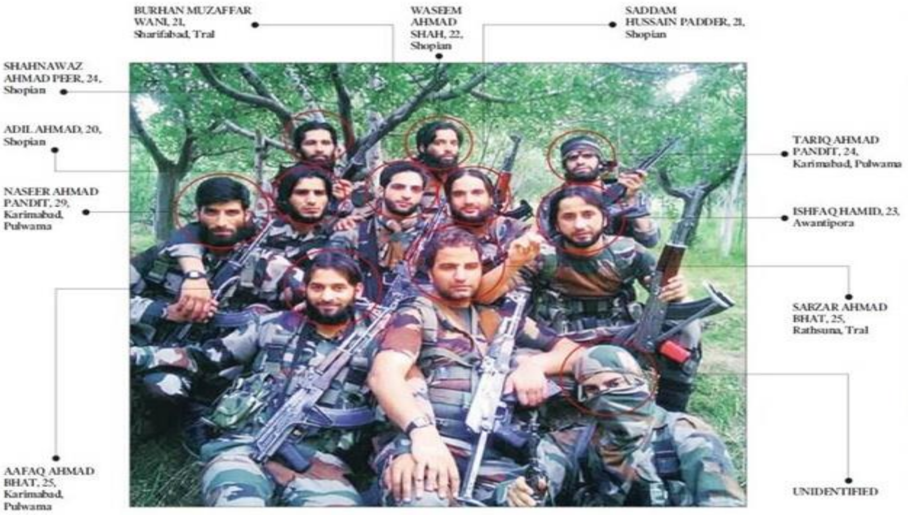
their faces in public, today's young Kashmiri militants are brazenly releasing their pictures and videos on social media. A senior anti-insurgency police officer termed this as an attempt to glamourize militancy and attract more youth.'[1] He cited a police officer who said that the number of local militants has been steadily rising over the past several years, but since 2013 there has been a sudden spurt. The militancy movement of the 1990s saw thousands of young men from Kashmir joining different militant outfits. After the mid-90s, foreign militants, mostly from Pakistan, formed the majority of militants in Kashmir. However, the new militancy of Kashmir includes mostly local militants.


BURHAN MUZAFFAR WANI, 21, Sharifabad, Tral
WASEEM AHMAD SHAH, 22, Shopian
SADDAM HUSSAIN PADDER, 21, Shopian
SHAHNAWAZ AHMAD PEER, 24, Shopian
ADIL AHMAD, 20, Shopian
NASEER AHMAD PANDIT, 29, Karimabad, Pulwama
TARIQ AHMAD PANDIT, 24, Karimabad, Pulwama
ISHFAQ HAMID, 23, Awantipora
SABZAR AHMAD BHAT, 25, Rathsuna, Tral
AAFAQ AHMAD BHAT, 25, Karimabad, Pulwama
UNIDENTIFIED

Photograph of the new militant group led by Burhan Wani that was posted on Facebook.

This wave of militancy gained popular support which was clearly visible when Burhan Wani, the leader of the group, was killed by Indian security forces on 8 July 2016, as lakhs of Kashmiris gathered for his funeral procession. It is important to understand the reason behind militancy regaining popularity and support from the masses in the Valley after almost a decade. The stone pelting movement could be a significant link in tracing the roots of this new wave. A number of young boys who were involved in the stone pelting incidents in 2008 and 2010 pointed out that due to innumerable instances of victimisation by state forces, they felt that they needed to take to the gun in order to fight for the cause of *azadi*. For instance, a stone pelter who was badly injured in the firing by the CRPF and was in coma for two days argued that:

> I took the opportunity to take part in the stone pelting because I thought I could express my dissatisfaction without having to leave my home and

> responsibilities like the militants do. But, now that I see myself and other stone pelters being harassed on a regular basis even after the movement is over, I think picking up the gun is definitely a better option where you are either this way or that. Either you are alive or dead, not dying a little each day.[2]

Similarly, a young boy who was only 12 when he pelted stones, pointed out that he went out on the streets to protest against the death of his uncle who was killed in firing by the CRPF. He recalled:

> I was very angry because they killed my uncle. We were not there to kill anyone but to oppose the injustice that we had to go through. But they were continuously firing at us. So many people were bleeding because of the pellets on their bodies. I was unconscious and my brother's friends dragged me to the hospital. My family did not know that I also went on the streets. When I opened my eyes I saw my mother crying. I was told that I had pellets in my face and one eye. I want to go and join Burhan's group because what life am I living anyway?

Some of the walls of the villages in south Kashmir had graffiti that read 'Burhan's Recruiting'. It was around August of 2015 when pictures of the new militant group were also doing the rounds on social media and there were rumours among the villagers that Burhan and the other militants were going from village to village to recruit young men for the new militant group.

BURHAN'S
RECRUITING

Photograph taken by the author on 30 July 2015.

On being asked whether they would be willing to join this new militant movement, young boys in different villages said that they would gladly pick up arms as they feel very harassed.

For instance, a student who was preparing for a medical exam and had participated in the stone pelting incident in 2010 pointed out:

> The day he [Burhan] comes, I will leave everything and pick up the gun. I still have pellets in my body, I am unable to walk properly but I will go anyway. When I was younger, I used to think that the gun will not solve any purpose because we lost so many of our loved ones without reaching our goal of *azadi*. That's why many young boys had decided to pelt stones. But what was our fault? Aren't we allowed to show any disappointment? How do we show dissent? Where do we go for justice? In Delhi you go to Jantar Mantar to protest. Do they fire at you as well? Here if someone utters the word *'azadi'* he will be killed. Why are we treated worse than animals? The CRPF has a record of names and they find out about our identity through videos. They detain us during Republic Day and Independence Day. Sometimes we are called for interrogation randomly. When I go out of the house they ask me a number of questions.

Some boys had pellets embedded in their bodies. They not only suffered physical injuries, but because the CRPF had a record of their names, they were detained on any public day or were called once in a month. The emergence of a new militant group comprising young, educated Kashmiri men demanding independence from the Indian state was fully supported by the frustrated stone pelters..

A student enrolled in the University in Kashmir, who had also taken part in the stone pelting, argued that:

> When the militant movement started in late 1980s, many people thought that men who joined the movement were unemployed and uneducated so they joined it. But now we want to change the belief. Educated youth are participating in the movement to prove that despite being educated and employed they will pick up the gun to bring about a change. Because *'azadi'* means everything to us. And our *'azadi'* is based on our religion and is to uphold our religion. We cannot turn a blind eye to the injustice done to our people. The change must come and will come, Inshallah.[3]

The Indian state's armed forces resort to violent measures like open firing and shooting with pellets to counter the protests on the streets; however, these methods, on the contrary, are leading to the rise of militancy and an increase in the number of militants. This point is made clear by the testimony of a young boy who had pelted stones in 2010:

> They [Indian state] think they can create fear in our minds by using force, by engraving pellets in our bodies. They have no idea that our struggle is

> much more precious to us than our bodies. We will keep fighting, we will keep throwing stones and we will keep picking up guns. They don't realise that the more they fire, the more we will fight back. They have left us with no choice but to pick up guns. Our religion does not allow us to be cowards.[4]

These testimonies suggest that the unabated harassment faced by the youth involved in stone pelting served as a tipping point in the emergence of the new militant movement. All the boys interviewed shared the common belief that they had pelted stones to be able to show dissent and not resort to gun violence like the previous generation. However, it is due to constant victimisation that they aspire to pick up the gun again and be a part of the new militancy movement.

III. Shift in Masculine Ideals: Coming Full Circle from Guns to Stones and back to Guns

The understanding of the transformations in the militancy movement can be extended to study the masculinities discourse in the Kashmir conflict. This is not only because there is the existence of unexplored, multiple overlapping and contesting masculinities in the Valley, but also provides an important means to make sense of state-inflicted oppression. The contesting masculinities include violent and aggressive forms represented by the Indian state and the militant groups, victimised masculinity of torture victims and ex-militants, more rigid forms of Islamic masculinity represented by the militants and separatist leaders, and finally, softer forms of masculinity of human rights activists and lawyers working against human rights violations in the Valley. There is an ongoing politics of these multiple masculinities in the conflict, operating under the garb of nationalism and *azadi*, which is not in the purview of this paper. However, this section will focus on exploring the masculinities discourse with regard to changes in the militancy. In doing so, it seeks to look into ways in which the masculine ideals of a *mujahid*/militant have also transformed along with the changes that the militant movement underwent. For instance, it was a matter of family pride for a son to fight as an insurgent in Kashmir in the 1990s. Devoid of higher education, jobs and other notable ways of scoring personal achievements, taking up arms seemed to offer an effective way out, by which a common Kashmiri youth could prove his valour and gain respect. For instance, the mother of an ex-militant said:

> When my son went for the *azadi* struggle, he picked up a gun, we decorated him like a groom, put henna on his hands, sang folk songs of glory as we bid him farewell. He became a hero for all the fellow villagers and they pinned hope on him for achieving freedom.[5]

The achievement of ideals of hegemonic masculinity thus heavily relied on taking up the gun when the conflict was at its peak, as it helped men achieve their masculinity. The gun changed a man from being an ordinary Kashmiri to a hero, thus fulfilling all the characteristics of an idealised masculinity—strong, brave, violent, risk-taking, fighting for his community, freeing his homeland from occupation and protecting the womenfolk. An ex-militant commented, acknowledging that:

> If a man picked up a gun in the 1990s, it was considered that he was going for war against enemies, he was treated like a hero in his locality and it was a matter of great pride for a family to send his son for the struggle.[6]

It was the ultimate expression of manhood if a man chose to participate in the armed struggle. However, with a change in a number of factors over a period of 20 years, there has been a shift in the expression of manhood which can be attributed to a decline in militancy. Some of the ex-militants claimed that due to fragmentation of the militant movement and the proliferation of new militant groups, it became hard for them to choose between innumerable outfits. Also, the corruption of militancy along with tough counterinsurgency measures by the Indian state had also brought about a decline in the number of men taking to militancy.[7]

With the secessionist movement petering out, there came a subtle realisation among the militants and ex-militants that guns are not the solution to the problem. Most of the militants who surrendered to the security forces have admitted that the gun culture has worsened the situation in Kashmir and added more melancholy among Kashmiri people. Following were some of the responses of ex-militants who were asked why they withdrew their support to the armed struggle:

> *Gun sai koi hal nehe Hota* (There is no solution with a Gun)
>
> *Gun uthanay sai bohat keemte janay chalyey gaye hai- is se koi hal nehe niklata*
>
> (Gun has claimed many precious lives there will be no solution on the gun point)

> *Baat cheet se hi hal niklay ga jab sab log apas mai bathay gay LOC kay dono taraf sai, jis kai haath mai be gun hai wardi walla ya hamaray haath mai… samjo ke Gun toh maut la sakta hai amman nehe*
>
> (The solution lies in talks and negotiations between both sides of the LoC, one who holds gun in his hand whether men in uniform or militants must know Gun only brings death not peace).[8]

The gun had lost the charm it enjoyed in the peak years of the Kashmir conflict. Now, a militant was looked down upon by society. The militants who were once seen as heroes were being ostracised, even seen as criminals. People looked at them with suspicion. They were emasculated in a number of ways: they were labelled ex-militants on their identification cards, they were often called for interrogation, they faced difficulties in travelling, their children found it difficult to get admission in schools, and so on. Hence, the idea of a man with a gun no longer appealed to a society which had seen a lot of victimisation of both women and men at the hands of both the state and the militant groups.

A hero is associated with the characteristics of the ‘protector’ of his community. However, the men who had taken to guns failed in the eyes of the local Kashmiri community since they were unable to protect their community or achieve *azadi*. The long association of valour, heroism and masculinity that went hand in hand with taking to the gun stands strained. Now, the Kashmiri locals, especially the younger generation, realised that it is not necessary that guns alone are required to prove their manliness, but even non-violent means can make men feel equally masculine.

Hence, the new generation of the ‘children of conflict’ thought of alternative methods such as stone pelting to feel a sense of heroism and vent their dissent during the years 2008 to 2010. A stone pelter from Palhaalan village, also known as the ‘Gaza of Kashmir’, who was involved in stone pelting in the year 2008 argued:

> Our village has seen a number of lives killed because of both military and militancy. We started pelting stones because we do not want to use violent methods, but we also want to express our dissent towards the Indian state. We started this new movement because we do not want to pick up guns and victimize our own people.[9]

A young boy who pelted stones believed that the stone pelting incidents of 2008 were even more aggressive than the militant movement:

> Many young boys pelted stones because we want a reformation of our society based on Islam. According to me, the stone pelting in 2008 was even more aggressive than the insurgency movement. But, due to the pressures from the state, the movement fizzled out.[10]

However, the constant victimisation of the boys who had indulged in stone pelting, as discussed in the first section, resulted in a crisis of masculinity, which means a fear of loss of male power and privilege. The attempts by the state forces to establish its hegemonic masculinity through suppression and victimisation has resulted in a feeling of powerlessness among the youth who were associated with stone pelting. The following argument of a young Kashmiri local makes it clear:

> They call themselves *mard* [men]. They can do that because they have weapons and we don't. We are powerless in front of them. They restrict our mobility, harass us and can make us handicapped only through the power of their gun. The only choice to prove our manhood is to pick up the gun or to keep suffering and crying like women and children. That is why young boys like me in Kashmir are again thinking of picking up the gun.[11]

These narratives on masculinity open up a new way of looking at armed resistance as they highlight multiple aspects of political subjectivity. On the one hand, violent masculinity is best reflected in the hyper-nationalism of the Indian state, and on the other hand, the *azadi* rhetoric is also painted with masculine aspirations. Also, the use of weapons becomes a significant way to reassert the manhood which is under constant threat. Here, it is important to note how gaining control of vulnerabilities becomes a prerequisite for taking charge of the nationalist ambitions. Since vulnerability is considered a feminine attribute, apart from weapons, psychological warfare through sloganeering, graffiti and other means is an important method to cover up one's own fear of vulnerability and challenge the other side to prove their manliness. The nationalist discourse which is often validated through explanations of protection and honour is actually a carefully crafted illusion carrying insecurities of loss of manhood.

The case of Kashmir is also seen as entailing an emasculated existence due to the politics of colonisation and the resulting anti-colonial politics taking the form of recuperating masculinity. However, such a perspective may create rigid categories of the coloniser and colonised, without taking into account the vulnerability and fear of loss of manhood that cuts across these binaries. In that sense, more than the complexities of armed resistance, this paper is an attempt to show how armed conflict and masculinity politics go hand in hand; and whether the coloniser or the colonised, the state or its subjects, are all complicit in upholding the traditionally privileged masculine values. Having said that, women have also played an important role in reinforcing masculine values in the Kashmir resistance, which is discussed in the next section. It is imperative to point out that this in no way denies the agency of women; on the contrary, it puts forth a paradox of their multiple shades of liberating yet complicit agency.

IV. Role of Women in Shaping Masculine ideals of a *Mujahid*: Past and Present

In most armed conflict zones, women have made significant contributions in establishing a militant masculinity. They have done so as mothers, sisters and wives by facilitating and supporting nationalist causes and motivating their menfolk to follow the same. While it is important to explore the role of women in the making of the militant movement through the private sphere, it is also crucial to carefully examine how the domestic activism of women is 'targeted by the war propaganda in the cultural battle to capture citizens' hearts and minds' (Byard de Volo 1998: 240).

Here, it is significant to throw light on Cooke and Woollacott's argument that the most traditional and extreme representations of masculinity and femininity are found during war and conflict (see for details Cooke and Woolacott 1993). This is also examined in studies such as those by Elshtain that show dramatic dichotomies constructed between men/war/battlefront and women/peace/homefront (for a detailed discussion see Elshtain 1995). The 'homefront' characterises femininity, yet it is implicated in the 'warfront'. This is because without the support of the homefront, the warfront could not exist. This necessitates acceptance of certain warfront values within the homefront.

The extreme division of the public sphere and the private sphere—where the first is considered the domain of men and the latter a feminine space—serves a number of purposes. First, the masculine/feminine political socialisation process creates a situation that results in a disenfranchisement of women within the social and political institutions. Second, the relegation of 'women's issues' such as peace and personal security as 'soft issues' (Horn 2010: 62). As Tickner notes, 'associations of women with peace, idealism and impracticality have long served to disempower women and keep them in their place, which is out of the real world of politics' (1998: 8) or instance, the wives of men in the military are socialised to accept their role as caretaker and peace-maker, and further socialised to accept that these issues are secondary to nationalism. Thus, to maintain the hegemony of masculinity, it is necessary that the battlefield be clearly delineated from the 'homefront', in that the battlefield must reflect the need to protect a greater good, and the homefront must act to serve and reinforce the needs of the fighting force in battle. As Horn observes, the national interest is thus served through an elaborate homefront support system which is marked by a 'natural' division of labour (2010: 62–63). In this context, Harrison and Laliberte rightly argue:

> Like other gendered organizations, the military community takes for granted the naturalness of patriarchal notion of masculine-feminine polarity, or the idea that men and women are fundamentally different....The military uses its socially constructed polarity between masculine and feminine in order to use masculinity as the cementing principle which unites real military men in order to distinguish them from non masculine men and women (1997: 36).

Likewise, the role of women in the domestic sphere of conflict in Kashmir points towards the socialisation of the binaries of 'warfront' and 'homefront'. The militant and separatist leaders reinforce the naturalness of the masculine and feminine polarity by laying down the gender division of labour at the time of conflict. While the public domain is marked by physically fighting and dying for the community interest, the private sphere is symbolised by women's sacrifice within the home to uphold the masculine values of the warfront. These roles are further socialised through the use of religion. This can be illustrated by the women's support to the militant movement during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, when women acted as facilitators and providers. While the more rigid forms of Islamic masculinity defined the duty of women to stay at home and run the household, it was also expected that they would support their menfolk in times of trouble. A Kashmiri woman who supported the militancy describes how women accepted the role of supporting the *azadi* movement and also felt duty bound to help the militants due to their religion:

> I was very enthusiastic about *azadi*. I have three brothers and all of them had picked up arms. It was a very common thing to pick up arms in those days. I insisted that even I want to pick up arms, because being with them I used to hear a lot about the revolutionary movements around the world. My brothers scolded me and told me that if I really want to be a *jihadi*, I should support all the militant brothers with food, shelter and transferring funds and obey their commands. That is what the duty of [a] woman is as per Islam. Henceforth I did that. I prepared food for the militants who crossed our village, we gave them shelter and also helped them transfer arms.[12]

The women made food for the militants at home, and kept aside some money every month to buy rice and other food items just for the militants. They would let them stay at their homes and also help them in whatever way they could. Shameena, a villager, said that when she went to the farm, she often carried arms that militants would give her to pass on to other militants who came to collect them from her on the farm. Similiarly, Zaheeda pointed out:

> Once a raid by the Indian Security happened in our locality, there were two militant brothers to whom I gave shelter and I kept arguing with the Security personnel, until then those two could hide and after the Security personnel left, I made the brothers stay with us, gave them food. Most of the Kashmiri people have helped the militants in giving food and shelter as we feel that they are fighting for our cause.[13]

Saima recalled:

> I helped a number of militant brothers to cross check posts since there were mostly men at the check posts and we could make hue and cry if the security personnel would try to unveil our burqa. I have also carried arms from one place to another inside the burqa.[14]

These narratives of women reflect how they supported and facilitated militancy in Kashmir within the confines of the household responsibilities imposed by patriarchy. This is in concurrence with Bar-Yosef and Padan-Eisenstark's argument that in war and conflict, women become traditionalised. They represent the 'homefront' and are expected to stick to traditional roles, to cook, to stay mostly at home, to nurture. They are the supporters who have to maintain stability in times of crisis (1977: 135–45) Additionally, the identity of the Kashmiri woman is defined by her husband, children and community, and the very roles she plays are all in relation to them. Her agency can be seen as seeking to preserve this identity.

The attempt by patriarchal forces to bring about a sharp distinction between public and private spheres is paradoxical, because the private sphere of Kashmiri women is far from apolitical—cordon and search operations, enforced disappearance of their sons and husbands, and random imprisonment are definitely within the realm of politics. For instance, Julie Petreet, who has conducted research on the links between women and struggle, writes: 'The mobilization of the domestic sector during a protracted crisis disputes any facile dichotomy between formal and informal spheres, and domestic and public domains. When a community is under attack domestic boundaries are shattered, revealing the illusory character of domesticity as the realm of private familial relations distanced from the spheres of formal politics' (1986: 22). Kashmiri women too feel that their private lives have been politicised. For instance, Fatima argued:

> We are not living normal lives like other women in non-conflict zones. In normal circumstances a woman cooks, nurtures and takes care of her family, but in return feels protected by her husband or son. We perform all household responsibilities as our public duty—to prepare food for militants, tending to the wounded, educating our children to fight for the cause and sacrificing our husbands and sons. The conflict has engulfed our private lives.[15]

The socialisation of this politics was most evident when women accepted their role as supporters to the militant movement in its initial phase. This socialisation process was powerful to the extent that women in the private sphere virtually worshipped men who became militants. For instance, young girls who had entered marriageable age desired to marry militants, whom they viewed as heroes. In social events such as marriages, young women sang couplets praising the militants: *kalashmikov lagai balayai yenav ladayat path fairaleh* (don't give up this fight for freedom, I shower my life on this kalshnikov), or *main mujahidov behan paraie hideouts* (O my beloved militant, I will wait for you at the hideout). There was competition among women supporters to compose pro-militancy couplets (Sobhrajani 2008). Marrying a militant was a matter of pride in the whole village. Sadiya, wife of an ex-militant, pointed out:

> My husband's eldest brother had picked up arms in the late 1980s. The entire village was so proud of him. I was not married to Altaf then. We met at a wedding in my village. All young girls sang songs to motivate men to join the movement for *azadi*. I remember composing a couplet too. After a few days, Altaf's mother met my family to talk about our marriage. She also told us that Altaf wanted to join the movement. I was so happy and proud to hear that. I always wanted to marry a man who was brave to take up the cause of *azadi*. We didn't care about ourselves at all.[16]

Women who married militants said that it was a great honour to marry someone who was brave enough to take up arms to fight for the cause of Kashmir. Some women admitted that they still kept pictures of militants they loved, since they were the heroes.

The politicisation of the domestic is, however, most evident in reproductive politics, embodied in the 'mother of the martyr'; the maternal sacrifice of a son is the supreme political act and the mother becomes the symbol of the trauma of exile and resistance (Neugebauer

1998: 178). In this context, Bayard de Volo argues that motherhood is critical to the study of conflict for several reasons: First, in light of the nearly universal portrayal of women as nurturer, peace-maker and giver of life, we must wonder how a nation (or any cultural group) manages to convince women to support their sons' entry into war. Second, maternal imagery is emotionally evocative and thus a powerful symbolic resource in garnering public support for war. Finally, the construction of maternal identities for the war effort has implications for women's place in post-war/conflict societies (Byard de Volo 1998: 240).

The motherhood image of women as rightly pointed out by de Volo is mobilised to garner support for the armed conflict. Also, mothers of soldiers and of combatants are themselves mobilised into various mothers' organisations to subdue their resistance to violence. At the peak of insurgency in Kashmir, all mothers wanted their sons to become militants and free their homeland from the Indian state. Mothers sent their sons to join the movement dressed as bridegrooms, and asked them to bring *azadi* as their wives. Ex-militant Javed said:

> I was reluctant to pick up arms, but my mother motivated me, she said that I need to fight for *azadi* for Kashmir. That time was such that there was a wave of desire for freedom in the hearts of all Kashmiris. I had got married two years back and had a very small child and I didn't want to leave him, my mother motivated me to join the *tehriq*. The day I went I was decorated like a groom, with henna on my hands. My mother made me wear garlands. The entire village was singing folk songs of pride. It was the same story everywhere.[17]

A significant aspect of the motherhood discourse in Kashmir involves the readiness and pride of mothers to sacrifice their sons to war. Slogans that were used by the mothers during the initial phase of the militant movement also suggest that mothers were proud to sacrifice their sons to the 'war for freedom'. Some of the slogans by Kashmiri Muslim mothers whose sons had become militants were: *Hamein Apne Beton par garv hai* (We are proud of our sons), *Ae Mard e Mujahid ja Zara, waqt e shahadat aa gaya* (Awaken! O Holy fighter, the time for Martyrdom has come!), *Hamare Bete Kya Banenge, Mujahid Banenge, Mujahid Banenge* (What will our sons become? They will become fighters, they will become fighters) (Shekhawat 2014: 86).

Here, it becomes imperative to ask the question articulated by scholars like Scheper-Hughes : 'Why do mothers arm their sons and send them proudly almost joyfully, into war? What of the perception that those who give birth are "by nature" less likely to support killing and war?' (1998: 227). Ruddick (1980), in her understanding of 'maternal thinking', answers such questions by throwing light on the contradiction of women who take 'authority's side' in promoting wars, explaining it in terms of women's political powerlessness. She further explains: women ineffectively press their moral visions of peace-making because they live in a world where maternal values and thinking count for little. Since their public thoughts are so rarely solicited, women abdicate their maternal authority and surrender their children to the war machine. Similarly, Scheper-Hughes points out in her study that Israeli mothers who encourage their draft-age children to face military service cheerfully and proudly do so to make sure that their children are rendered socially acceptable by their participation (1998: 228).

Bayard de Volo, on the other hand, talks about the drafting of 'maternal symbolism' and the 'good mother' discourse to understand the willingness of mothers to send their sons to war (1998: 241). Here, she argues that in rallying support for the war effort, a key problem lies in the mother's opposition to the conscription and death of her children. This potential maternal opposition, according to her, is checked through the drafting of maternal symbolism, which means that mothers as images are enlisted in propaganda efforts and posed in relation to hearth and home and all that is not war. The maternal imagery is linked to the protection of the homefront and national way of life—that for which the soldiers are fighting. Also, the ideals of a good mother are drafted in a way that does not hinder war efforts. As Byard de Volo puts it:

> The good mother discourse is remoulded in order to fit the wartime circumstances. This good mother does not resist her son's entry into the war but instead supports his ideals through a variety of volunteer activities. Mothers are mobilised in a passive sense as they are honoured for the sacrifices- their children lives- that they have made for the greater good (ibid.).

This can also be seen in Malathi De Alwis' argument of 'moral mother', which she borrows from Ruth Bloch, who describes the 'Moral Mother' as 'someone who primarily speaks for peace, who is nurturant, compassionate...the sovereign, instinctive spokeswoman for all that is living and vulnerable' (Bloch 1978: 101–26). A mother's will to let her son take up arms and support the militaristic activities is framed in terms of patriotism and not violence. The double identity of mother and patriot is also what enables her willingness for violence without reducing her femininity and vulnerability. Just like Bayard De Volo, Alwis also points out that the reason why mothers provide support in war efforts and are even willing to see their sons die is because of their commitment to a greater good.[18]

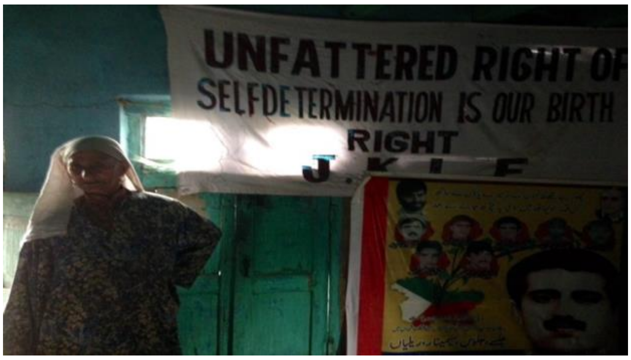
In Kashmir it is not the abdication of motherhood but its strong affirmation that strengthens militant masculinity. The legitimacy of the militant movement was built, to some extent, on the encouragement received from the mothers. The motherhood discourse became, on the one hand, an instrument for the militant groups to mobilise more women to sacrifice their sons for the movement, and on the other, to reinstate traditional norms of femininity, where women belonged at home. For instance, the Lashkar chief, Hafiz Saeed, has often in his conventions and rallies appealed to mothers to make sacrifices for the cause of *jihad*.[19] Motherhood provided greater justification for *jihad*, as appeals are made to the mothers of Islam to sacrifice their sons—those sons whose duty it is to protect their mothers.

Paradoxically, while the motherhood narratives are a part of the public face of militancy and women are encouraged to have a political voice in the *jihad*, their roles are nevertheless constructed within the accepted norms of femininity. The established militant masculinity drafted the 'maternal symbolism' and made the rules for the 'good mother', who does not do politics or get directly involved in militancy, but who is ready to sacrifice her sons; her grief, sacrifice and mourning is used to serve their political objectives. For instance, a militant-turned-educationist pointed out:

> Once you remove the mothers, it affects the functioning of the militants, pressure starts building upon them. So if you remove the mother you remove the social sanctity. If your mother is with you it is but natural that your sister is with you. If the women are working in the cause then they are the ones who push you and once they feel that the cause is of no worth then they may help you to get back.[20]

A 'good mother' is honoured by the society when her son is martyred in Kashmir. Those sons killed by Indian security forces are called *shaheed* (martyr), and their mothers would deliver emotional speeches before the funeral procession. There are a number of instances where mothers of 'martyrs' did not mourn, but rather sang songs of pride at the funeral procession of their sons. For instance, Shahmali Begum, who is the mother of the first 'martyred son' of Kashmir, Maqbool Bhat, the founder of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), shared similar sentiments when asked about her son's hanging by the Indian government in 1984:

> I don't have only one Shaheed, I have four Shaheeds. I have no regrets. I am happy that I sacrificed these sons for a noble cause, one son hanged, one son disappeared and one son died fighting. I have no remorse. Today when I walk down the streets people say that my sons have made me proud. I want *azadi*, so that I can give my dead sons a tribute.[21]



Photograph by author during interview with Shahmali Begum on 10 June 2013.

Similarly, the mother of the youngest boy killed by state security forces in Palhaalan during the stone pelting in 2010 also argued that

> It was the will of God that he came in our life and it his will to take him back. I have no regrets of whatever happened. I just feel proud that my son is a martyr and I am his mother.[22]

Another woman who had lost her son in the firing that took place in Palhaalan village said:

> I have lost a son. He was a very brave man. I remember him a lot and cry. But who can do anything against the will of god. At least I am certain that he has received a place in heaven because he died for the cause of *azadi*. I have always supported the struggle as we have been oppressed for too long. I have two more sons and if they decide to choose the path of fighting for *azadi*, I will always encourage them. That is what God wants us to do.[23]

A woman with two sons who had lost her militant husband in 1994 said:

> My husband had joined the militancy in 1991 and it was a time when most of the men were leaving their homes to participate in the movement. My sons were very small when their father died. Now, my sons are married and have their children too but if there is a need to again pick up guns not just for freedom for Indian state, but for the reformation of our society based on Islam, I will myself ask them to join the cause. This is the duty of mothers in our religion. My Allah [God] will not be happy if I think only about myself and forget the suffering of my Muslim brothers and sisters.

In normal circumstances, 'maternal thinking' talked about by Ruddick, begins with a feeling of protectiveness, 'an attitude governed...by the priority of keeping over acquiring, of conserving the fragile, of maintaining whatever is at hand and is necessary to the child's life' (Ruddick 1980: 350). However, when martyrs are fashioned out of the dead bodies of those who die young, as Scheper-Hughes points out, 'maternal thinking' most resembles military, especially wartime, thinking (1998: 230). The ideas of 'acceptable death' and of 'meaningful' (rather than useless) suffering extinguish rage and grief for those whose lives were unnecessarily lost or taken. Even in the songs and speeches of mothers whose sons were martyred, mothers claimed that their sons died peacefully and well.

For instance, at the funeral procession of a militant, mothers got together to sing songs of pride and glory for their martyred sons. One of the songs was:

> *Ae Shaheedon Ae Shaheedon*
> *Ae A-Salaam*
> *Aaj Teri Maut pe*
> *Ro Rahee hai Zameen Ro raha hai Aasmaan*
> (Salutations! O martyr!
> Today on your death,
> The earth weeps, the sky weeps)[24]

The motherhood narrative is very closely linked to the political conflict as the songs that mothers sing during these funeral processions and other gatherings are important instruments to mobilise more women to sacrifice their sons for the movement and keep the *azadi* sentiments alive. The funeral processions are important sites to witness the contribution of women to the *azadi* movement. The extent of the socialisation of the motherhood narrative for freedom is clearly visible in rallies held by the Muslim Khwateem Markaz (MKM), where its workers usually go to strengthen the morale of the widows and mothers of those killed by security forces. Invariably, however, the gathered women would start singing songs of freedom and *azadi* instead of mourning. At one such rally in Sopore, the women sang this song:

Hum kya Chahte? Azadi	What do we want? Freedom

Gelani vaali, Azadi,	The freedom as defined by Geelani
Shabeer Vaali, Azadi,	The freedom as defined by Shabeer
Yasin vaali, Azadi,	The freedom as defined by Yasin
Kyu na milegi Azadi?	Why can we not achieve freedom?
Aage Dekho Azadi	Look in front there is freedom
Peeche Dekho Azadi	Look behind there is freedom
Baiye Dekho Azadi	Look in the left, there is freedom
Daiye Dekho Azadi	Look in the right, there is freedom
Aayi Aayi Azadi[25]	Freedom is about to come

Similarly, women have actively participated in the recent funerals of militants in 2015. A number of militants participating in the new militancy movement that is predominant in areas like Tral in Pulwama were killed by Indian security forces. Women gathered in huge numbers to participate in funeral processions of the deceased militants and sang songs of pride and freedom. When asked why, some of these women replied saying:

> We want to show to the Indian government that we are united in the cause of *azadi*. Today it is him and tomorrow it could be my son. But we will not stop the fight for azadi no matter how many sacrifices we have to make.

It is clear that the masculine political apparatus that is in charge of mobilising people to war fears mothers; more specifically, they fear the potential for resistance based upon maternal love. In response, the male political and separatist leaders and other war mobilisers try to reframe definitions of good versus bad mothers, and play off the maternal imagery meant to arouse sympathy for the cause of the militants and to compel protective mothers to deliver their sons to the cause of *azadi*. The mobilisation of grieving mothers, both symbolically and literally, has been an effective method through which the hegemonic masculinity is able to deliver pro-war messages. The maternal symbolism is thus used to facilitate war and can also be seen as a justification that the war was fought along cultural frontlines by shoring up traditional maternal imagery (Byard de Volo 1998: 251–52).

However, it is important to note that in the past, mothers had withdrawn their support from the *azadi* movement when they stopped sending their sons to fight. This was during the phase of militancy when the militants took to petty crimes and started exploiting people for their personal gains. They realised that nothing was being achieved by the militant movement and more sons were getting killed. This led to a weakening of the movement and militant groups sought to impose restrictions and diktats in order to maintain their hegemony. For instance, Waheeda recalled that:

> Things changed after some years of the militancy movement. Mothers became reluctant to send their sons to war as the *tehriq* had lost sight of its goal and it became a movement led by the power hungry. I had sacrificed one son when the movement had just begun, and I have no regrets, but I did not let my other sons join the movement. The people in the movement were doing all sorts of things—looting, putting restrictions on women and troubling local people. It was not the same anymore.[26]

Here, it is important to see that mothers' withdrawal of support to the *azadi* movement when they realised that the movement was not living up to the 'greater good', for which they had sacrificed their sons in the first place, suggests that women have just as often used the moral claims to motherhood to launch campaigns to support war as they have to support peace. While the experience of mothering can promote an accommodation to war, and an acceptance of premature and violent death, women can also devote the thinking and practices of motherhood to peace-keeping. For example, while women used the moral claims of motherhood to promote militant masculinity and the *azadi* movement, they also used the same to withdraw their support in favour of movements such as that of Parveena Ahangar, where the mothers use the same 'good mother' and 'maternal symbolism' discourse to fight against the enforced disappearance of their sons and other human rights violations. Hence, moral claims of motherhood may be drafted by the patriarchal structures to promote war efforts, but in the case of Kashmir, they have been used by mothers for both militaristic and anti-militaristic ends.

V. Conclusion

The testimonies of the young men who were associated with the stone pelting incidents clearly show that their victimisation and harassment has contributed to a willingness to take up guns and join the new wave of militancy. The physical injuries caused by pellets and the mental trauma of being interrogated and detained on certain occasions has resulted in a crisis of masculinity, leading to a feeling of powerlessness among the young men of Kashmir. The outcome of this crisis has been the (desire to) resort to weapons and violent means in order to reassert their lost manhood.

The use of a masculinities lens helps throw light on the shift in the perception of masculinity during the different phases of militancy. Initially, the men who joined militancy were treated as heroes and saviours of the community. However, over a period of time, due to various factors such as the fragmentation of militant groups, inability to win freedom, innumerable lost lives, corruption of the militancy movement and strong counterinsurgency measures by the Indian state, there was a shift in the masculine ideals of a *mujahid* from the violent protector carrying a gun to a non-violent antagonist carrying a stone.

The significance of the role of women in shaping these masculine ideals in the past and present cannot be underestimated. Their role in the initial phase of the movement can be seen in their endeavour to motivate men to participate in the movement by singing folk songs, aspiring to marry a militant, decorating them, providing them with shelter and food, helping them transfer arms from one location to another. These women also withdrew support from the movement when they thought it had stopped serving the greater good and discouraged their sons and husbands to participate. An important aspect of the role of women is manifested in the motherhood discourse, which may have been imposed through patriarchy in order to strengthen the binaries of masculine and feminine, and public and private; however, mothers have used the maternal imagery and symbolism for achieving both militaristic and non-militaristic ends. Religion has also played a great role in defining the duties of a ‘good mother’ in Kashmir society. The interviews and narratives discussed earlier suggest that the mothers are supportive of the new wave of militancy and they share the common belief that their duty as good mothers is to sacrifice their sons for a greater good. The greater good, according to some of them, is not only *azadi* or freedom from the oppression inflicted by the state, but the larger objective of achieving reformation based on Islam in Kashmir. The masculine ideals of the new militant are once again associated with violence, bravery, protection and use of the gun. The endorsement of these ideals by the mothers has helped in validating the movement, granting social sanctity, and garnering popular support from the masses.

Notes

[1] Masood (2015). Also see, Uzma Falak, 'Kashmir's Wave of Quality Militancy', in New Internationalist blog. Available at http://newint. Org/blog/2015/08/11/Kashmir-armed-youth-challenge-india/ (accessed on 12 August 2015).
[2] Personal interview on 29 July 2015.
[3] Personal interview on 1 August 2015.
[4] Personal interview on 2 August 2015.
[5] Personal interview on 3 September 2014.
[6] Personal interview on 3 September 2014.
[7] For a detailed discussion on reduced militancy in Kashmir, see 'Violence, Trauma and Rehabilitation: A Report on India's Rehabilitation Policy for Kashmiri Militants', in accordance with a Research Conducted by Islamic University in Kashmir in collaboration with the University of Tokyo.
[8] Personal interview on 21 July 2014.
[9] Personal interview on 26 August 2014.
[10] Personal interview on 29 July 2015.
[11] Personal interview on 2 August 2015.
[12] Personal interview on 1 September 2014.
[13] Personal interview on 1 September 2014.
[14] Personal interview on 3 September 2014.
[15] Personal interview on 30 August 2014.
[16] Personal interview on 31 August 2014.
[17] Personal interview on 22 June 2013.
[18] Malathi De Alwis applies Bloch's concept of 'Moral Mother' in her analysis of queen Vihara Maha Devi from an extract of the Sinhala reader 'Kumarodaya'. For details see Malathi De Alwis (1998: 254–71).
[19] Cited in Seema Kazi (2009: 163).
[20] Cited in Swati Parashar (2012: 171).
[21] Personal interview on 2 August 2015.
[22] Personal interview on 3 August 2015.
[23] Personal interview on 3 August 2015.
[24] From the documentary film *Jashn-e-Azadi* by Sanjay Kak, 2007.
[25] The author attended this MKM rally in July 2015.
[26] Personal interview on 29 August 2014.

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