

Representation of Palestine and Kashmir Conflict in English Literature: A Study of Selected Works

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Abstract—This comparative study delves into the nuanced realm of resistance literature originating from the conflicted territories of Kashmir and Palestine. It seeks to examine and juxtapose the literary expressions emerging from these regions, shedding light on their shared themes and narratives that articulate resistance against political oppression, occupation, and socio-cultural turmoil. Through an interdisciplinary approach, this paper shall analyse select works across a spectrum of fiction and memoirs from Kashmiri and Palestinian writers writing in English. It shall explore the multifaceted dimensions of resistance like displacement, identity, trauma, resilience, and yearning for self-determination as depicted in the select works. Drawing insights from critical literary theories and postcolonial frameworks, especially the works of Goldie Osuri and Ather Zia (2020), it also endeavours to highlight cultural, historical, and socio-political contexts that shape the narratives of resistance in the literature from both regions. It aims to discern commonalities and divergences in how these literary pieces confront power structures, articulate resistance, and affirm the enduring human spirit amidst adversity. The relevance of the study lies in its desire to contribute to a deeper understanding of how literature serves as a potent vehicle for resistance, advocacy, and solidarity in regions marred by protracted conflicts. It underscores the significance of these literary voices in amplifying the struggles and aspirations of communities grappling with enduring political strife and asserting their agency in the face of oppression.

Index Terms—conflict, Kashmir, memoirs, Palestine, representation

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is, arguably, the linchpin of all narrative literature be it interpersonal conflict or intrapersonal conflict. All forms of narrative evolve through situating characters caught in a conflict and how they strive to arrive at a resolution for the same. However, in certain cases as in the case of literature from Palestine and Kashmir, this conflict ceases to be a metaphor and captures the living realities of people living under siege, occupation, and colonisation be it imperialist or settler in nature. The regions of Kashmir and Palestine share a common experience of ongoing colonization by their respective colonizer states, India, and Israel. These states have a shared vision for a nation founded on the supremacist ideologies of Hindutva and Zionism, respectively. Noam Chomsky commenting on the hand-in-glove relationship between India and Israel notes, “Today’s Israel and Modi’s India are natural partners, sharing values of racist ethnocracy and illegal annexation, and, for Israel, offering a market for military and other advanced technology” (Essa, 2022, p. 4). Despite minor differences in the methods of governance and oppression, literature from both regions shows unmistakable overlaps in the portrayal of themes such as trauma, occupation, resistance, repression, and how oppression seeps into the minutiae of everyday life. These similarities are not limited to the experience of the occupation only and can be traced from the very historical origins of the problem. As Samreen Mushtaq and Mudasar Amin argue,

The colonisation of Kashmir, like Palestine, is not just the influx of a settler population that would derive multiple economic and political benefits at the cost of the natives. It is to be the “crown” of a Hindutva project that wants to make itself the only legitimate sovereign of a people that refuses its control over them. (Mushtaq & Amin, 2020, p. 36)

India and Israel maintain “their military control over Kashmir and Palestine, respectively, resulting in two of the most protracted and deadliest conflicts with noticeable parallels. The United Nations (UN) Resolutions 194 and 242 address the Palestine-Israeli dispute (Ali & Kitchlew, 2019, p. 120), advocating for the right to self-determination for Palestinians. In the context of the Kashmir dispute, UN Resolutions from August 13, 1948, and January 5, 1949, also advocate for the right to self-determination for Kashmiris. However, to date, these resolutions have not been implemented, and the conflicts in both territories continue. The conflict of Palestine and Kashmir emerged from the ashes of British colonialism. Whereas Palestinians were uprooted by the *Nakba*, hundreds of thousands of people from Jammu and Kashmir were displaced in the weeks and months following Partition because of a large-scale massacre against the Muslim population

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in the region of Jammu. Over the years, both the Kashmiri and Palestinian right to national self-determination have been subsequently reduced into a rubric of religious conflict: Hindu versus Muslim in Kashmir and Jew versus Muslim in Palestine. Both Palestine and Kashmir have been severely sold out by their leaders. Under the 1975 Indira-Sheikh Accord, Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdullah, who had spent more than a decade in prison, forfeited the demand for self-determination in exchange for being the chief minister of the state. Almost 20 years later, the Oslo Accord would accomplish much of the same for the Palestinians. Kashmiris were moved by the first intifada in the late 1980s to foment their mass uprising against Indian rule.

Essa Azad contends that after 9/11, the resistance against foreign occupation in the context of global anti-Muslim racism was labelled as "Islamic terrorism." Both Palestine and Kashmir are subjected to the ethno-nationalist ideologies of Zionism and Hindutva, which aim to eliminate them. As colonial projects, India and Israel have exercised similar modalities of control to wield the power of their dominions: extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, maiming, torture, economic dependencies, surveillance, home demolitions (or spaciocide), restrictions on mobility, checkpoints, a network of informers, as well as the creation of a collaborator class—the Palestinian Authority in Palestine, as well as pro-India “unionist” parties in Kashmir like the National Conference and the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Both countries also instrumentalize the law to protect their armed forces. Whereas the Indian government uses the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFPSA), to provide cover for the abuses of their soldiers, an entire cultural and legal apparatus in Israel protects Israeli soldiers from facing accountability for “unjustified use of lethal force” (Essa, 2022, p. 130).

In this study, we will compare the representation of two significant disputes in narratives written in English within a specific socio-political context. We will examine how narratives on Kashmir and Palestine have been portrayed by writers who write in English from these two regions. Despite being in different areas, the youth in both territories share similar experiences of oppression, resulting in similar atrocities and crackdowns by occupying forces. This has led to the emergence of generations of young freedom fighters engaged in a political struggle besides the unintended violence, death and destruction. Through a comparative analysis of these disputes by writers from the regions writing in English, we aim to gain insight. The study will delve into the works of writers who have experienced the conflicts themselves. Works such as Jabra Ibrahim’s *World Without Maps* (1982), Elias Khoury’s *Little Mountains* (1977), and Sarah Khalifeh’s *We Are No Longer Your Slave Girls* (1974) will be studied alongside the works of Kashmiri writers like Mirza Waheed’s *The Collaborator* (2011) and *Book of Gold Leaves* (2014) and Siddharth Gigoo’s *Garden of Solitude* (2011). We will deeply analyze the convergences and divergences in the literature of Kashmir and Palestine within the historical context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Resistance literature challenges dominant narratives and perspectives perpetuated by those in power. It offers alternative viewpoints and counter-narratives that question and deconstruct mainstream ideologies, providing a more comprehensive understanding of societal issues. Having roots as early as classical Greek tragedies, Literature of dissent also known as Resistance Literature took a more concrete shape with the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-Colonial Struggle through the works of James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, and Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Salman Rushdie and others. In the Palestinian context, it was Ghassan Kanafani who articulated the inseparable role of literature and political activism. He writes,

My political position springs from my being a novelist. Insofar as I am concerned, politics and the novel are an indivisible case and I can categorically state that I became politically committed because I was a novelist, not the opposite. I started writing the story of my Palestinian life before I formed a clear political position or joined any organization. I do not find any duality between my commitment and the writing of novels because I feel something very important would be missing if I were not politically involved and I would feel greatly diminished if I had not been a novelist at the same time. (Coffin, 1996, p. 98)

Essa (2022) elaborates that the People of the valley have long identified with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. In the back alleys of the capital Srinagar, cries of "Free Palestine" are spray-painted on steel shutters next to walls with "Free Kashmir" and "Go India Go" slogans. Kashmiri youth have been killed by the Indian army in protests for Palestine, while artists and religious leaders have been detained for expressing their solidarity with Palestine. India seeks to tame Kashmiri sentiments for Palestine, knowing that it both expresses solidarity with a global Muslim issue as well as a recognition of parallels between the two struggles. When police and army harassed non-violent protests, Kashmiri boys and girls resorted to stone pelting, like the *Children of the Stones* as Palestinian youth were referred to during the first *intifada* (Essa, 2022, p. 150).

In their seminal works, Goldie Osuri and Ather Zia (2020) both provide critical analyses of the archives of colonial solidarity in Kashmir and Palestine, shedding light on the complexities and implications of these archives within the broader context of colonialism and resistance. Their perspectives offer nuanced insights into how historical narratives are constructed and how solidarity movements are documented and remembered. Osuri and Zia (2020) highlight the challenges and limitations of archival representations of solidarity movements in Kashmir. She critiques the dominance of official narratives that often overlook or undermine the struggles and voices of the marginalized. She addresses power dynamics within archives, emphasizing how certain narratives are privileged while others, particularly those of the oppressed or colonized, are silenced, or marginalized. This selective framing perpetuates hegemonic narratives. Osuri and

Zia (2020) call for a reimagining of resistance narratives by challenging the traditional archive and seeking alternative forms of memory-making that centre on the experiences and perspectives of the subaltern.

Ather Zia on the other hand, examines the documentation of resistance movements in Palestine within the colonial context. She discusses how colonial powers, through their archives, often attempt to delegitimize or erase Palestinian resistance, portraying it as terrorism or unrest. She highlights the displacement of Palestinian narratives within colonial archives, emphasizing the importance of reclaiming and centring the voices of the subaltern, especially women and marginalized communities and advocates for the decolonization of archives, emphasizing the need to challenge the hegemonic representations present in these archives (Zia, 2019). She emphasizes the importance of indigenous knowledge and oral histories as crucial components of the archival process. This paper argues that literature can provide an alternative narrative space where the existential reality of colonial occupation can be archived, and the subjective experiences of the subalterns can be memorialized. The analysis of these narratives from conflicts is therefore also an act of challenging hegemonies and hierarchies associated with archiving and narrativizing historiography.

III. ANALYSIS

A. *Kashmiri and Palestinian Intifada: Representations Through Mainstream Media*

Since the 1947 with the emergence of India and Pakistan as significant powers in the geopolitical spheres and the subsequent invasion of the formerly princely state by the two neighbours, the Kashmir conflict is mostly and mainly approached through varying perspectives and with contradicting facts. The two countries, India and Pakistan continue to fight over it and provide different state narratives to legitimize their rule over its territory. The Indian state narrative recognizes Kashmir as an integral part and Kashmiri's struggle for freedom is deemed a threat to the integrity of sovereign India. The mainstream media narratives such as *The Hindu*, *Times of India*, and *India Today*, along with Bollywood films made about Kashmir frame partition as the beginning of Muslim terrorism in India and the consequent Kashmiri local insurgency in 1989 as the offshoot of global *Jihad*. Pakistan's intervention is seen as a proxy war sponsoring different militant outfits. While Pakistan sees Kashmir as a disputed territory and advocates for the right to self-determination. Pakistan represents Kashmir as the eternal part of the national imagination and argues that Kashmir is a Muslim-majority area and should not be ruled by Hindus. Both print and electronic media highlight Kashmir's struggle as an indigenous movement and the means to obtain it are deemed legitimate.

After 1990, there was a significant transformation in the Kashmir narrative in which the Pandit exodus/migration played an important role. These stories and narratives became the focal point for both fictional and non-fictional works. They provide contesting narratives about the Kashmiri dilemma. For example, Anand Kaul in his book, *The Kashmiri Pandit* subscribes to the view that biographies of Pandits reflect the idea of forceful conversion at the hands of Muslim and Sikh rulers. He does not see Kashmir history as the gradual process of assimilation and religious tolerance but provides the contesting narrative of Pandit persecution and mass migration. There are also several fictional texts by Kashmiri Pandits narrating accounts of suffering during the period of insurgency. Novels like *Our Moon Has Blood Clots*, *The Garden of Solitude*, *Under the Shadow of Militancy* etc., are some of the finest examples. Historians like Prithvi Nath Bamzai, Ratan Lal Hangloo, and Ishaq Khan among others, explicitly carry the message of religious tolerance throughout Kashmir's history without stigmatizing any cultural or religious sect. For instance, a historian like Mridu Rai alludes to the tradition of a peaceful co-existence manifested in the willingness of Muslims to protect Pandits. She also looks upon the local insurgency as the protest of the powerless in the valley. Similarly, novelists like Basharat Peer, Mirza Waheed, and Nitasha Kaul also try to reconstruct past events with their positions and perspectives. They provide parallel narratives by highlighting the unrecorded testimonies of people living across centuries. They challenge the dominant narrative of Kashmir being an integral part of India and foreground the violence perpetrated by different state apparatuses. They also provide a parallel narrative to the Pandit exodus in the valley by revealing the role of the state in creating such an atmosphere. Furthermore, Intellectuals living on both sides of India and Pakistan like Arundhati Roy and Sonia Kamal create micro-narratives by humanizing the predicament of Kashmir and their narratives come in clash with the official narratives propounded by both India and Pakistan. The partition of India and Pakistan gave rise to the fiction that acutely highlights ideas like an identity crisis, displacement, marginalization, religious rivalry, and so on. The contemporary fiction of Kashmir is also shaped by such events and discourses.

Much like Kashmir, Palestine is also a focal point of historical, political, and fictional narratives, thereby exploring the historical and geopolitical roots of the conflict. Both nonlocals and Palestinians have significantly drawn attention to the various aspects of the conflict, which also underscores how on certain parts, it is significantly different from Kashmir. Professor Norman Finkelstein (1996), an American political scientist in his *The Rise and Fall of Palestine: A Personal Account of the Intifada Years* and through his personal experiences of the first Intifada compares Israeli occupation with the tragedies of the holocaust. In contrast to him Azam Tamimi (2009), a British Palestinian in his book *Hamas Unwritten Chapters* chronicles the rise and influence of the Hamas organization and how their ground activities and popular appeal influenced the overall dynamics of Israeli- Palestine conflict. Tamimi tries to give vivid and grounded narratives of the conflict. Following the same rationale of chronicling the witness narratives of the people, fictional writers are at pains to write about it. The first *Al-Nakba* (Catastrophe) sets the tone for such a fictional representation. Mahmoud Darwish is one of the famous representational poets of Palestine and through his poetry and performance, he explored how ordinary people encountered violence in their day-to-day lives. His poetic symbols are drawn from the Palestinian historical past,

culture, and long-lived Islamic civilization. Hala Alyan (2017), a Palestinian American in *Salt Houses* follows the precarious life of displaced Palestinian families, while Atef Abu Seif's 2016 memoir *The Drone Eats with Me: A Gaza Diary* gives the personal and humane account of besiege and control in Palestine and experiences about Operation Protective Edge. Following these poets, the memoirist Khulud Khamis in her novel *Haifa Fragments* follows the struggle of belonging in her main Palestinian characters.

The lack of concurrence on Kashmir and Palestine implies heterogeneity- a phenomenon with differing parts such that it often becomes difficult to focus on the underlying cause for any final solution. This has become the trademark of fiction on Kashmir and Palestine because it does not provide any homogeneity of narratives about the conditions of people and their aspirations for freedom. These texts do not produce singular narratives, rather their testimonies of lived experience show that Kashmir and Palestinian identity is not rigid but allows multiple trajectories including that of co-existence. As in the words of Amartya Sen, "The singular affiliation towards ethnic subjectivity disregards intricacies of plural groups and multiple loyalties [which] are obliterated by seeing each person as firmly embedded in exactly one affiliation...The incitement to ignore all affiliation and loyalties other than those emanating from one restrictive identity can be deeply delusive and also contribute to social tension and violence" (Sen, 2005, p. 231). There are significant similarities and differences in the trajectories of both these conflicts, which will be thematically highlighted in the select comparative study of fictional narratives.

B. Narrative Representations of Kashmir

(a). Fiction as Documentation of Trauma: Novels of Mirza Waheed

Mirza Waheed's overall narrative and engagement with Kashmir and its conflict can best be described as the politics of dissent. Romila Thapar (2021) in her book *Voices of Dissent: An Essay* argues that "Dissent is in its essence, the disagreement that a person or persons may have with others or more publicly, with some of the institutions that govern their patterns of life" (p. 3). Apart from this simple definition she also emphasizes that "dissent in our time must be audible, distinct, opposed to injustice and supportive of democratic rights" (Thapar, 2021, p. 150). This helps to explore the fictional trajectory of Mirza Waheed. In his first debut, *The Collaborator* (2011), Waheed poignantly chronicles his dissent against the institutions of injustice and through his characters echoes the dissent and trauma of the Kashmiri community. Significantly, Waheed sets his novel in the infamous line of control which is a sort of settlement and area marked between India and Pakistan. It echoes the Israeli and Palestinian marked settlements in Gaza, Khan Younis, and others, separating the Israeli settlers and Palestinian people. The Line of Control in *The Collaborator* is also a contentious and bloodied space where ordinary Kashmiris are caught between two aggressive ideological forces. The narrator of the novel is an unnamed character whose first-person narration tells us that he ends up working with the Indian army where his job is to count dead militants across the line of control. The novel presents the history of the past, present and future of different families in Kashmir. Through the family of the narrator, it is evident that his family has decided to stay during the early years of the resistance – the resistance which started in early 1990 and it can be argued it is like the first *Nakba* of Palestine of late 1940s. His friends and other families have fled to Pakistan for armed training. In this first part, Waheed adopts a humanistic approach towards the early phase of resistance, as Mo Yan in her Noble Prize speech says, "As a member of society, A novelist is entitled to his stance and viewpoint: but when he is writing he must take a humanistic stance and write accordingly. Only then can literature not just originate in events, but transcend them, not just show concern for politics but greater than politics" (Mo Yan, 2012). Waheed humanizes not only the people who fled to Pakistan as they were taken by the shock of the statist violence but also empathizes with the predicament of the narrator who ends up working with Captain Kadian. The narrative of the book reiterates that away from the Indian and Pakistani Political positions, the conflict is the tragedy of unheard stories. Waheed takes upon this hiatus of providing the witness and everyday narratives of the people paralleling the dominant state narratives. In the second part of the novel, Waheed grippingly chronicles how repressive state apparatuses employed indiscriminate violence on the common people. These repressive apparatuses echo the Israeli apparatuses evident in the work of Mahmoud, Dervish, Ghassan Kanafani, and others. Kamila Shamsie in her review of the novel touches upon the central feature of the book which can also be applied to some Palestinian fictive discourses.

One of the most remarkable features of this novel is how much of it is concentrated around a single person, in isolation. It is only in his memories that the narrator has friends and a close-knit family he can rely on, and even within his memories, those relationships start to fall away as the state of war throws up divisions and absences and speechlessness – so that when we encounter him in the present, his closest intimacies seem to be with the corpses in the field. They are the only Kashmiris of his age left in the vicinity. (Shamsie, 2011, para. 8)

While *The Collaborator* was Waheed's first attempt to narrate the experiences of a common Kashmiri this tale was immediate, sensational, voluntaristic, and lacked polished symbols and images. However, it was clear that Waheed is uncomfortable bracketing his narrative into any ideological position. His second novel, *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014) is artistically more powerful and its language stands more fused with cultural and artistic symbols and motifs. It follows layered thematic patterns and explores different prototypical stories. Waheed in this Novel tries to showcase the cultural harmony between two major communities of Muslims and Pandits exhibited through landscape motifs and lifestyle. In her ethnographic study of Jammu, Mohita Bhatia writes about the intersection of Pandits and Muslims,

My fieldwork reflects on the common cultural, social, festive, political, and sacred spaces that various groups among Hindus and Muslims share within a regional setting. Delineating communities such as Hindus and Muslims, thus, mask the various commonalities and many existing collective affiliations that are not based on religion. (Bhatia, 2020, p. 112)

In a similar vein Waheed also tries to capture these common threads by contextualizing the life of the Mir Clan in Downtown Srinagar with that of Pandits. The text showcases such affinity through common living and material artefacts. The public space is intermixed with the presence of both cultures.

Amid G. M. Master Tailors & Drapers ... Hridaynath Bhat Chemists & Druggists, owned and run by Pandit Hridaynath of the white turban fame – he has dispensed viscous cough syrups and Septran for the entire Mir clan for half a century ... and Wani General Store & *Kiryana* Merchants. (Waheed, 2014, p. 27)

These material motifs focus on generation-long syncretic living between Pandits and Muslims. Building this harmonious background, Waheed skillfully shows the rapture in this shared belonging by the violence perpetrated by state and non-state actors. Aditi Saraf (2022) in her paper “*Trade, Boundaries, And Self Determination*,” contends that “In Kashmir, the built environment as well as everyday exchange activities in the marketplace directly register the imprint of political violence and resistance. Material traces of marches ... the shifting terrains of “normalcy” and losses caused by curfews and shutdowns” (p. 131). The novel captures this fragmentation and violence by chronicling the trauma faced by the main characters Faiz and Roohi. The narrator echoes these traumatic experiences when he writes about the river Jhelum, “this river made the city, and the city has tried to unmake it over the centuries ... Of late, it has also started carrying the dead” (Waheed, 2014, p. 19). The occupation of the place is symbolized in the text when MP school is occupied by security forces. It brought a halt to the daily routine of their life and affected the relationship between Pandits and Muslims. Death and destruction now become the central thematic occupation of the novel. The incident of *Fateh Kadal* bears testimony to it. When a Minibus is attacked by the Indian army in front of Faiz: “He does not remember the children ... their clothes or their bodies ... what happened to the driver ... All he remembers is Faate. Fatima, his godmother ... was losing her breath when she looked at him” (Waheed, 2014, p. 77). Thus, through such micro-narratives, Waheed questions the statist and popular narratives on Kashmir and challenges statist discourses.

Waheed through these fractured narratives, exemplifies that freedom is not a master discourse for the common people and holds different meanings depending upon their positionality and context. Freedom for love-torn Roohi and Faiz means being able to meet amid curfews and Shutdowns. Freedom for Students like Farhat is to be able to go to school where security forces are not intruding into their personal lives. Freedom for both Pandits and Muslims is to be able to visit shrines and temples and invoke their gods for mercy. The narrator puts it thus: “The defence of the shrine is not a matter of discourse for them, it is who they are. It is said that they remember their soul histories so well that not even mass murder will turn them into people they are not ... [some] want to impose their shallow tales on this hour of freedom ... but these are people who do not know what love can do” (Waheed, 2014, p. 56).

(b). *Fiction as Alternative Memorialization: A Study of Sidharth Gigoo*

The fictional representation of Kashmir is caught between alternate remembering of the past, present, and future. The history of Kashmir is imagined contrastively and combatively by Pandits and Muslims. While Muslims predominantly question statist violence and impunity of human rights, Pandit's fictive discourse is predominantly marked by their exile in 1990s Kashmir. They engage the narratives of Muslim Jihad and their complacency in Pandit's exile from the valley. Pandit fictional writers and Poets bring in the themes of displacement, exile, camp life, and homelessness. They also checkmate Kashmiri Muslim narratives by highlighting their alternate memories of displacement, murder, rape, and looting of their property by fellow Kashmiris. This intense hostility of other communities echoes the complex dynamics of Israel and Palestine where each one accuses the other of terror and violence.

Pandit fictional narratives like T.N Dhar's *Under the Shadow of Militancy* (2002), Rahul Pandita's *Our Moon has Blood Clots* (2017), and arguably its most representative figure Siddharth Gigoo's *Garden of Solitude* (2010) to name a few, showcase the violence faced by Pandits. Siddhartha Gigoo is one of the prolific Kashmiri Pandit writers, besides the *Garden of Solitude* he has also penned down Pandit stories of exile in *The Lion of Kashmir* (2020) and *A Fistful of Earth and Other Stories* (2015). In *Garden of Solitude*, through the protagonist Sridhar, Gigoo explicitly chronicled the memories of Pandit's migration and the hardship they faced in a state of exile. The text like Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves* tries to capture the shared sense of belonging between Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir. The text captures how Sridhar's father Lasa is living a normal life and tending his kitchen garden. He is shown decorating his home and “A water heater was installed for heating the water during the winter” (Gigoo, 2010, pp. 22-24). Sridhar was studying mathematics under the guidance of Professor Wakhlu, this shows how Pandits had a culturally rich lifestyle. Both the communities were living a culturally syncretic life but the rise of militancy in Kashmir disrupted this social fabric. Sridhar once recalls the incident when a stranger came to Wakhlu's home, one of the children said, “Billa Puj is a goon of this area. He owns a butcher's shop at *Gaw Kadal*. Don't you know that his brother Majid is a militant and works for the Kashmir Liberation Front? Hilal says that he is back from the training camp in Azad Kashmir, and now roams with a *Chakir* and *Rof* under his *pheran*” (Gigoo, 2010, p. 31).

By bringing the narratives around militancy, the text charts a different trajectory from Mirza Waheed because Militancy is shown tearing apart the social and cultural fabric of Pandit life in Kashmir. Sridhar while living in exile becomes a

conscious chronicler of Pandit stories and memories who bear the brunt of armed resistance in Kashmir. In the novel, Gigoo sums up the whole project:

The Kashmiri Pandit story did not exist anywhere. The migrants and their stories did not appear in most news items related to Kashmir. There were no statistics, no pictures of the dead and the dilapidated Pandit houses, no accounts of brutalities on Pandits in Kashmir, and no record of disease in the migrant camps. There were no stories of people's past. There were no memories of ancestors. There was no remembrance of a generation which had lived in Kashmir. Sridar aspired to capture the recollections of people who still remembered their stories and ancestors. (Gigoo, 2010, p. 196)

The Garden of Solitude discusses the impact of labelling Kashmiri Pandits as "Kafirs" and obstacles to Kashmir's freedom during the 1990s. The narrator contrasts the experiences of Pandits, mentioning that Pandit women stopped wearing *tilaks* to conceal their identity, and men grew beards. They avoided speaking to each other in public. They abandoned their traditional greeting 'Namaskar' (Gigoo, 2010, p. 59). It reveals that Muslim and Pandit fictional representations intersect at many thematic concerns but also diverge on the parallel remembrance of their historical past, thus, echoing the combative history and fiction making in the literature from Palestine.

C. Fictional Representation of Palestine: Reading Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's World Without Maps, Elias Khoury's Little Mountains, and Sarah Khalifeh's We Are No Longer Your Slave Girls!

It can be argued that the novel tradition in Palestine since 1948 is remembered as the first catastrophe in constant dialogue with the political developments in Palestine. The poetic and fictional representation in Palestine dates to the late 1940's whereas Kashmir's fictional representation has seen a surge since the 1990s. Palestinian novelists had to deal with entirely different historical events from that of Kashmir. Before the defeat of 1967, Palestinian writers were dealing with the subject of colonialism and attempts at settler colonialism. After the defeat of Arabs and the failure of different accords and peace processes, the literature of Palestine begins to bring in narratives of liberation, threats of ethnic cleansing, and loss of statehood. The voice of writers became very local and many fictional writers have found themselves in precarious situations. In contrast to this, Kashmiri writers right from the inception had to make sense of Indian state apparatuses but at the same time deal with armed resistance in the name of Islam. Kashmir's fictional terrain also finds itself divided into alternate thinking by Pandits and Muslims and dealing with the intense hostility between the two communities. Palestinian fictional writers like Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Ghassan Kanafani, Emile Habibi Sahar, Khalifeh, and others, dealt with these facets of the Palestinian struggle followed by some non-Palestinians like Jean Genet and Elias Khoury.

The Narratives of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and Sahar Khalifeh:

An Iraqi-Palestinian, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra is one of the notable writers of Palestine. Right from childhood Jabra was part of a traumatic history, born to an orthodox Christian family he survived the Seyfo Genocide. Jabra is also known as the forerunner of the Huruffiya movement which attempted to blend Islamic traditional art with contemporary art forms. He shared a deep sense of the historical past and a subtle consciousness of contemporary challenges. He is a prolific writer, writing novels like *Hunters in a Narrow Street*, *The Search for Walid Masood*, and most notably *World Without Maps* co-written with Abdul Rahman Munif. Unlike modern Kashmiri novelists, some Palestinian writers were very conscious of the power and importance of the Arabic language. Following the post-colonial emancipatory preoccupation with regional languages as a tool of resistance. He writes, "After 1948, however, I decided that if the Arabic language was not the vehicle of our revolutionary thinking and expression, we would be defeating our purpose: change had to begin with the word and the image, however intractable the Arabic word and image might seem" (Ibrahim, 1952). This shows enormous consciousness of the power of language Jabra was committed to carrying forward with this tool of resistance. Jabra is starkly different from Mirza Waheed and Siddharth Gigoo because neither of these writers shares such consciousness about the Kashmiri language as such. Before 1990 there were writers like Amin Kamil and Akhter Mohiuddin who were using the Kashmiri language as part of their resistance but for Palestinian writers, it is the foremost agenda. In *World Without Maps*, the basic thematic structure is revolving around a single event. The death of a narrator's lover is shrouded in a mystery and the cause of death is caught in multiple assumptions. Either murdered or killed by her jealous husband, all these perspectives set the journey of doubt, investigation, and scrutiny of history.

This theme of exploration and anxiety symbolically refers to the contemporary Arab condition and personal inquiry of a possible murder epitomizes the collective struggle of the people. Alam mirrors every other Arab character. Throwing light on this, Abu-Manneh in his book *The Palestinian Novel: From 1948 to the Present* observes:

Throughout this journey of anxiety, self-doubt, and self-questioning, stories are narrated and disbelieved, histories investigated and discarded, and theories put forward and withdrawn. 'Alam presents a dizzying array of causes and scenarios without ever giving up on the fact that truth and objective knowledge can eventually be had. An account of a possible murder thus becomes about the way the contemporary Arab world is constituted. Private acts and public conditions are deeply intertwined in a world that, as the title suggests, is ultimately one without maps, without firm objective grounding, and real social or political anchors. (Manneh, 2016, p. 150)

Jabra is subtle in his characterization and thematic preoccupations. *World Without Maps* is unlike Modern Kashmir novelists who are quite often direct in their political positionings and their narratives share a thin line with factual details. Mirza Waheed (2014) and Gigoo (2010) are at times revealing facts of Kashmir's history and their characters share a powerful resemblance with real characters in history. However, Jabra in this novel as is evident in his other novel, reveals individual experiences, valorises, and expands on them, and makes the personal public. His novel also shares some

autobiographical connotations and hence blurs the genre gaps. *World Without Maps* and its preoccupations are best underscored by what Jabra himself admits,

When I wrote my novels and used an aspect of my life in them, I did not imagine that I would write an autobiography, so I gave myself the freedom to weave those autobiographical threads into the rest of the novelistic fabric. When I came to write my autobiography and I finished, I found that some of the events that I could have added to *The First Well*, I had already spoken about elsewhere ... In some cases, I spoke better about them in my novels than I did in my autobiography.... That reason is what made me refrain from mentioning certain details; and I will not hide from you that if I had continued writing the autobiography, I would have restored very many things that I mentioned in my novels and that happened after I passed the stage of childhood ... And if I retold those events, it would be as if I had rewritten entire chapters from my novels... I know that this is an extraordinary admission because I usually say that my novels are separate from me ... And they are, but here you have cast me into my own "well". (Jabra, 2000, pp. 289-90)

His autobiographical notes resemble some Kashmiri Pandit writers like Rahul Pandita and Siddharth Gigoo as their autobiographical elements find ways in fictional garb, however, Jabra's characterization in *World Without Maps* is more complex than Kashmiri novelists. Apart from Pandit writers, woman writers like Sarah Khalifeh share substantial similarities with the ideological concerns of Mirza Waheed. Sarah Khalifeh, one of the famous Palestinian women writers, also won Naguib Mahfouz Medal for Literature. In her novel *We Are No Longer Your Slaves Girls!* she boldly takes upon the romanticisation and valorisation of liberation struggles and provides a corrective to it. It echoes Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves* where the epistolary communication between Roohi and Faiz provides the inward critique of freedom struggle and its complex oppressive system. Waheed (2014) critiques the sensationalization and corruptibility of the freedom struggle and subtly provides a feminist critique through the voice of Roohi. In her works, Khalifeh also weaves some important feminist threads and questions the muscular character of revolutionary causes at the cost of social demands. Much like Waheed's Roohi, Khalifeh's women characters not only fight and question Israeli occupation but also challenge internal patriarchal structures. Roohi provides a critique of armed resistance and their killing of fellow Kashmiri Pandits, while Khalifeh's women characters Samar, Nuzhat, and middle-aged midwife Sitt Zakia grapple with domestic and external Israeli oppression. However, in the fictional representation of Kashmir, there is not ample focus on the agency of women and the need for their liberation to attain freedom from the occupation but Khalifeh portrays women as potent weapons for the complete liberation of Palestinian society. Writers from Kashmir and Palestine through their fiction are at pains to capture the nuances of the distorted reality of their characters and this fragmentary narrative is followed by a Lebanese writer Elias Khoury in his novel *Little Mountains*.

Elias Khoury is a prominent Lebanese writer, playwright, and critic. In his novel *Little Mountains*, he experiments with the form and fragmentation of the subjects which is reminiscent of Kashmir and Palestinian distorted citizens found in Waheed, Gigoo, and Khalifeh. The common thread behind all these fictional representations is the ennui of capturing the nuances of the fragmented subjectivity through a fragmented language. This trait is best captured Edward Said. He says for Lebanon and Palestine, where

national identity is threatened with extinction (the latter) or with daily dissolution (the former) ... the novel is both a risky and a highly problematic form. Typically, its subjects are urgently political and its concerns are radically existential. Literature in stable societies is replicable by Palestine and Lebanese writers using parody and exaggeration, since on a minute-by-minute basis social life for Lebanese and Palestinian writers is an enterprise with highly unpredictable results. Above all, form is an adventure, narrative both uncertain and meandering, character less a stable collection of traits than a linguistic device, as self-conscious as it is provisional and ironic. (Said, 1988, para. 9)

This is evident in the narrative structure of *Little Mountain* which is about the different phases of the Lebanese civil war from 1975 to 1990, which is captured through the multiple perspectives of a joint force fighter, a distorted civil servant, and another part intellectual amorphous fighter. Like Waheed's *Collaborator* and Gigoo's *Garden of Solitude*, the thematic concerns are to capture the repercussions of civil war and fractured identities. Khoury also like Mirza Waheed imagines the material artifacts and cultural memories of old Beirut to bring home the point of subsequent catastrophe. The narrator recalls Beirut,

They call it Little Mountain. And we called it Little Mountain. We would carry pebbles, draw faces, and look for a puddle of water to wash off the sand, or fill with sand, then cry . . . We made up things we would say or would not say. They call it Little Mountain; we knew it was not a mountain and we called it Little Mountain. (Khoury, 2007, p. 1)

IV. CONCLUSION

The paper delved deep into the intricate connection between Kashmir and Palestine, as portrayed in modern fiction. It utilized a variety of non-fiction critical discourses to dissect the common themes prevalent in the fictional narratives of both regions, which are deeply influenced by enduring political and social conflicts. The paper emphasized the pivotal role of such imaginative discourses in comprehending the ongoing strife and providing a platform for ordinary people to share their experiences. These fictional narratives act as parallel accounts, diverging from the predominant narratives in

Kashmir and Palestine. However, the paper also addressed the disparities in these representations, considering the differing political and historical circumstances of each region.

The paper contended that the novel tradition in Palestine, starting from 1948, is intrinsically linked with the ongoing political landscape. Conversely, poetic, and fictional representation in Palestine can be traced back to the late 1940s, while Kashmir's emergence in fictional representation gained momentum in the 1990s. Palestinian writers have grappled with entirely different historical events compared to their counterparts in Kashmir. Before the defeat of 1967, Palestinian authors focused on colonialism and attempts at settler colonialism. In contrast, literature in Kashmir has always dealt with alternative memories of violence involving both Pandits and Muslims.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors extend their appreciation to Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University for funding this research work through the project number PSAU/2023/02/25554.

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