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## What about *Insāniyat*? Morality and Ethics in the *Pahars* of Kashmir

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# What about *Insāniyat*? Morality and Ethics in the *Pahars* of Kashmir

Omer Aijazi

What about *insāniyat* (humanity)? Or put differently, how are morality and ethics compelled and shaped in the *pahars* (mountainscapes) of Kashmir? *insāniyat* is an emotion and ethics that expresses interdependencies between people. *Insāniyat* is moral and ethical proclivity. It is not enforced by an external authority but inheres in human encounters. I explore the question of *insāniyat* with the help of Qari Safir, a village Imam in the *pahars* of Neelum valley of Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Devoted to the circulation of an Islamic-informed integrity of life, I read Qari Safir's aspirations for himself and his community as extensions of wider struggles for Kashmir. I juxtapose his strivings to regain and nurture *insāniyat* with the multiple forms of violence which shape his life. Qari Safir helps us appreciate moral and ethical striving as a political project, and his work towards an imagined, utopic destination (where *insāniyat* is commonplace) as emblematic of Kashmiri futurities which are insistences for

something *more*—both within and outside the realm of possibility and articulation. *insāniyat*, as a lens, helps illuminate moral and ethical striving in a way that does not lend itself only in relation to state-based violence or directional responses to it. This, in turn, has the potential to open conversations on decolonial, rather than only postcolonial, notions of sovereignty.

Through the use of narrative, parallel storylines, photographs, and recipes, the paper brings into purview the diffuse nature of violence in Kashmir's *pahars* and its saturation of life therein. It attempts to think about Kashmir and its people on their own terms. In doing so, it pays attention to the ethical, ontological, and epistemological aspects of thinking and writing. In its attentiveness to ethnographic emergence, the paper contributes to the creation of diverse epistemic and discursive spaces where Kashmir (and Kashmiris) are not diminished by available language.

**Keywords:** Kashmir; violence; decoloniality; epistemic disobedience; political theory; Muslim lifeworlds; ethnography

## Introduction

“Between what is said and not meant  
And what is meant and not said  
Most of love is lost”

- Gibran Khalid

In our very first meeting, Qari Safir<sup>1</sup> declared: “*Kashmir main insāniyat khatam hogayee hai* (Kashmir has lost its humanity)<sup>2</sup>.” What is the *insāniyat* (Urdu, Ud; humanity) that he speaks of? Surely, this is not the same ‘humanity’ that is invoked by human rights discourses<sup>3</sup>?

Qari Safir is a village Imam<sup>4</sup> in the *pahars* (Ud; mountain-scapes)<sup>5</sup> of Neelum valley, Kashmir. We met during my research in the region between 2014 and 2016. Neelum is part of Pakistan *wala* (Ud; donates possessiveness) Kashmir, the portion of Kashmir currently under Islamabad’s administration. The Line of Control (LoC), the de-facto border that divides Kashmir into India and Pakistan, cuts through Neelum, and in this way, encodes everyday life into the materiality of no-go zones, army barracks, and security checkpoints<sup>6</sup>. From 1990-2003, during the peak of the Kashmir insurgency, Neelum was at the heart of the cross-border conflict between India and Pakistan until a shaky ceasefire was eventually reached. Just two years after the ceasefire, a massive earthquake devastated the region (in 2005), followed by unprecedented monsoon flooding (in 2010). In one way or another, residents of Neelum, like the rest of Kashmir, have lived and continue to live in a recurring state of emergency, always under the scrutiny and manipulation of the nation-state, its military and security apparatus, and to some degree humanitarian and development organizations (see Aijazi 2018; Ali 2013, 2019; deBergh Robinson 2013; Snedden 2012).

So, then, what about *insāniyat*? Or, put differently: how are morality and ethics compelled and shaped in the *pahars* of Kashmir? I explore this question with the help of Qari Safir to illuminate the diffuse nature of violence in the *pahars* and its saturation of life therein. A more subtle ambition of this paper is to encourage transparency in the scholarship on Kashmir by laying bare the contours of my entanglements with Qari Safir. These entanglements also hint at the burdens of truly reciprocating relationships. As moral philosopher Emmanuel Levinas reminds us, we are never really capable of meeting the ethical demands that others place upon us (Levinas 1985, 2003).

Qari Safir runs a modest *masjid* (Ud; mosque) where he leads the men of his village in daily congregation prayers and teaches children how to recite the Quran. Devoted to the circulation of an Islamic-informed morality and

integrity of life, I read Qari Safir’s aspirations for himself and his community as extensions of wider struggles for Kashmir. I juxtapose his strivings to regain and nurture *insāniyat* with the multiple forms of violence that shape his life. This includes the permutation of forces that culminated in the withdrawal from his lifelong dream of becoming an *alim* (Ud; religious scholar) to take on the role of the village Imam in a context of intense anxiety and suspicion, and to care for his ailing father. Qari Safir helps us appreciate moral and ethical striving as a political project, and his work towards an imagined, utopic destination (where *insāniyat* is commonplace) is emblematic of Kashmiri futurities. This may be an orientation of the future which, despite the lack of precise definitions, are insinuations for something *more*—both within and outside the realm of possibility and articulation.

A growing body of scholarship on Kashmir has sought to center state-based violence and bring into purview the rampant violations routinely inflicted on Kashmiri bodies to reignite conversations on the region’s sovereignty, along with calls for greater rights and freedoms (e.g., Ali 2019; Bhan 2013; deBergh Robinson 2013; Duschinski et al. 2018; Kak 2013; Malik 2019; Zia 2019b). This urgent body of work has paved the way for further pressing questions, including an examination of the very analytical frames used to center Kashmir and Kashmiris. However, efforts to center state-based violence can inadvertently risk reducing Kashmir to a perpetual dialectic between subjugation and subjugator, where only the vocabularies of resistance, resilience, and agency are permissible<sup>7</sup>. For example, in her work with Kashmiri refugees displaced across the LoC into Pakistan-administered Kashmir, deBergh Robinson (2013) comes to understand Kashmiri political subjectivity as a struggle to establish the security of Muslim bodies against political violence, torture, and rape. I, on the other hand, do not wish to foreclose my examination of Qari Safir’s strivings for *insāniyat* with the same robustness and certainty deBergh Robinson suggests for her interlocutors. My ambitions are different; I seek to suggest *insāniyat* as a lens to illuminate moral and ethical striving in the *pahars* in a way that does not lend itself only in relation to state-based violence or directional responses to it. Rather, I am interested in revealing those *other* investments in life, which also poignantly convey efforts at establishing a moral presence in place. As Nixon (2018) reminds us: “not all stories need to be resistant or resurgent to be true” (47).

Inspired by the post-structuralist works of Rosi Braidotti (2003, 2011) and her insistence on “figurations” that are multilayered, hybrid, itinerant, and nomadic, I pay

attention to Kashmir's weeds (Tsing 2017) and wildflowers (Ulmer 2018) to further capture the textures and tonalities of life therein. This is my attempt to continue to enrich the repertoire of the literature on Kashmir to open "new possibilities, challenges, and relations" (Lilja 2016: 678), outside or alongside what is allowed to exist. Therefore, in this paper, I am less concerned with the technologies of rule and occupation in Kashmir, but more so with an aesthetics of life under violence<sup>8</sup>. By this, I do not only mean an affective archive but the *overall* conditions of life both "what we are able to see and hear and what we are unable to see and hear" (Kompridis 2014: XVIII) to illuminate the very arrangements and regimes of sense-making which when challenged or disrupted can help us see the social, cultural, or political as some other (Rancière 2010). This is not to de-center necessary conversations on state-violence, but rather to illuminate the violence in Kashmir and life therein through *other* kinds of figurations which further articulate Kashmir in its multitude and multiplicity (see Aijazi 2018). This is not merely a question of voice, as Kashmiris have been speaking for a *very* long time<sup>9</sup>. But perhaps as Kaul and Zia (2018) remind us, it is a matter of whether *we are ready to listen?*

This paper is an attempt to think about Kashmir and its people on their own terms, not simply as a *masla* (Ud; problem) requiring a *hal* (Ud; solution) but Kashmir as an "ongoing refusal of standards imposed from elsewhere"<sup>10</sup>. As Ashcraft (2000: 3) aptly points out: "the words we have are not always the words we need" (also see Bhatia 2005; Hansen 2001). In this way, I hope to contribute to the creation of diverse epistemic and discursive spaces where Kashmir and Kashmiris are not diminished by available language or the poverty of our imaginations<sup>11</sup>. This, I believe, is crucial for unsettling ideas of Kashmir as some fixed entity only realizable in the form of a nation-state, but one that speaks to the genius of its own history. Veena Das sums this eloquently:

To suggest these possibilities is not to negate the nation-state but to enrich it with other repositories of ideas that might be available to craft a future that can speak to the particular genius of its own history. This is one way in which I understand how the relation between law and life goes beyond the notion of bareness of life its appropriateness by the state (2012: xix).

This paper is an opportunity to think about Kashmir through its *pahars*. It is an invitation into the life of Qari Safir, the paper's protagonist—but only on *his* terms. In its attentiveness to narrative tension and ethnographic

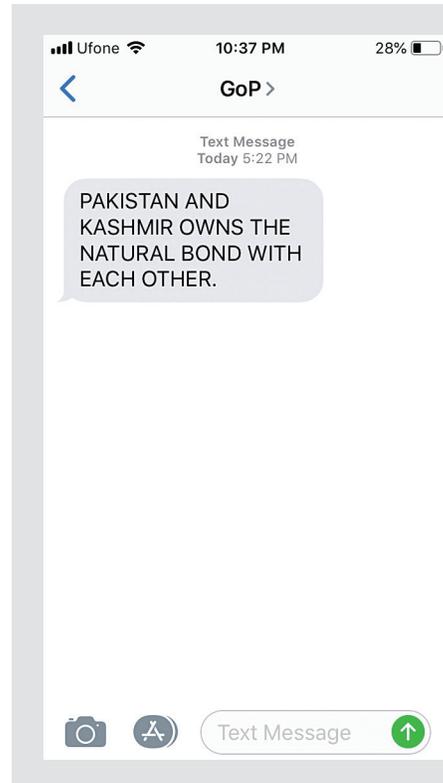


Figure 1. Text messages sent out by the Government of Pakistan (GoP) to mobile phone subscribers on 'Kashmir Solidarity Day,' a national holiday in Pakistan

emergence (Maurer 2005), the paper takes some inspiration from literary ethnography, ethnographic fiction, and creative non-fiction works on Kashmir (e.g., Peer 2010; Zakaria 2018; Zia and Bhat 2019), the wider Himalayan region (e.g., Childs 2004; Dhompa 2011), South Asia (e.g., Deraniyagala 2013; Pandian and Mariappan 2014), and beyond (e.g., Ghodsee 2011; Hartman 2019; Simpson 2017a, 2017b; Ulysse 2017). To refuse narrative and theoretical foreclosure, in lieu of a conclusion, I offer a coda that weaves together the paper's various emergent offerings. In this sense, the article lacks coordinates and solutions. It gestures towards other possibilities and horizons in attempts to populate and repopulate discursive, imaginative, and analytical frames on Kashmir<sup>12</sup>.

### A wish and a dream

In his paper in *Asian Affairs*, Alexander Evans, a researcher at the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office at the time, writes about 'two valleys' in Kashmir: "one known perhaps too well, one not understood enough" (2005: 35). Evans, in prime Orientalist fashion, describes and contrasts the valley of Kashmir with Neelum in terms of their economy, demography, and socio-cultural particularities to remind the reader that Kashmir should not be reduced to the Kashmir valley alone, and that the term 'Kashmiri' does not connote a singular identity. Sedgwick calls this the myth of exposure. She writes: "As though to make

something visible as a problem were, if not a mere hop, skip, and jump away from getting it solved, at least self-evidently a step in that direction” (2003: 139).

Currently, the portion of Kashmir under Pakistan’s rule remains divided into the two administrative divisions of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan. Neelum, where this paper is set, is presently situated in AJK. However, this is not the map I wish to draw, nor do I desire to locate Neelum only in line with its colonial inheritance and placement. An implicit aim of this paper is to posit Kashmir as a conglomeration of movement, intensity, attachment, as expanse, and an *ilaqa* (Ud; grounded territory)—a Kashmir of multitudes, not simply the Kashmir of AJK (see Aijazi 2018, where I take up this ambition full-force). My investments in fluidity, the unfixity and freeing of both region and subject, contrast and hold in productive tension the works of other scholars on AJK. This includes Hayat’s (2020) work on autonomous democratic governance structures, Schild’s (2015) exploration of the shifting nature of the ‘internal border’ between AJK and Pakistan, and deBergh Robinson’s (2013) examination of what it means to lead a politically qualified life summarized earlier. Put differently, I want to intentionally locate Neelum and, by extension, Kashmir outside of their contemporary placement (both geographically and epistemologically), just like the *pahars* that at whim boldly violate the markings of nation-states. I also find useful Bouzas’ attempts to consider Kashmir “as much the result of a historical process as it is of a permanent denial of the opportunity to become a different political space” (2019: 31). In some ways, this paper responds to Sökefeld’s (2015) earlier call on Kashmir to “take a look at the margins, and also from the margins” (251), with the caveat that by dwelling in the *pahars* I seek to upset the binary of center/margin altogether.

Bonilla (2017) suggests that it is worth exploring what a decolonial, rather than postcolonial, notion of sovereignty might mean (335). Drawing from Gauri Viswanathan’s (2014) work, Salaita (2019) asserts that “decolonization isn’t simply a matter of expunging an occupying power, but of subverting the regimes of order it imposes on the world”. My attempts to think of Kashmir by way of its *pahars*, as expanse, both territorially and theoretically, is part and parcel of the epistemic disobedience (Mignolo 2009), which I attempt to nurture in this paper. Therefore, with the help of Qari Safir, I also make contributions to Kashmir Studies by way of this detour. My contributions are interlinked; spatial matters are indeed bodily matters as feminist geographers have repeatedly reminded us (e.g., McKittrick 2006; Smith, Swanson and Gökarıksel 2016; Smith 2012).

## Disobedient methodologies

To enable emergent and embedded modes of writing, I take risks in the way we listen, think, speak, and write about Kashmir. These risks are enabled via several auxiliary transgressions that encompass both form and content. This includes the copious use of narrative as well as parallel quotations, recipes, and photographs<sup>13</sup> that interrupt the organizing arguments of the text, and through fragments of ‘inconvenient data’ that provide a fuller sense of the wider relationships and entanglements that counter the linearity of story and tug at its seams. This is done to encourage the reader to make up their own conclusions beyond what is being presented, and also to illuminate the problematics of a singular narrative on Kashmir. Second, the paper centers the Kashmir of the *pahars*, the *pahari* people who speak the Pahari language, and the *pahari* (Ud; mountainous) aesthetic of life. The *pahars* are where profound rurality meets extreme topography, where borders make the least sense.

In life after Partition, divisions and distinctions superseded Muslim versus Hindu. Only Kashmiri speaking women (referring to those from the Kashmir valley) were allowed to wear *kalay abayas* (Ud; black gowns). Once, out of defiance, a Ud; mountainous woman wore a black gown. This caused an uproar in the community, so much so that a *Jirga* (Ud; a community court presided by elders) had to be called to settle the *fasad* (Ud; disruption).

- Nasima (who heard this from her grandmother)

## *Insāniyat*

*Insāniyat* can be loosely translated as humanity, though neither the English word nor the associated concept of humanism fully captures its depth or grittiness. *Insāniyat*, as widely invoked in the Indian subcontinent, combines “several ethical notions: equality, compassion, and urbanity” (Werbner 2018: 280). It is the “widened-out tie of humanity” (Banerjee and Copeman 2018: 332), an abstract relationship that exceeds *khun ke rishtay* (Ud; blood relations). Based on her work on victim-perpetrator narratives arising from the 1971 war between Pakistan and Bangladesh, Yasmin Saikia describes *insāniyat* as interconnectedness and transcendence where the difference between self and Other are suspended to “deauthorize the collectives of nation, religion, and ethnicity” (2011: 476). *Insāniyat* exceeds the purview of the nation-state, and is simultaneously a state of being, an emotion, and an ethical position (Saika 2016: 74). It is “an emotion and an ethics that expresses the interdependent relationship

between people” (ibid). Saika clarifies that “*insāniyat* is not a learned ethic nor enforced as a normative principle by an external authority, nor a legal responsibility. Instead it inheres in human encounters” (ibid). Based on his work on the Iranian Revolution, Shariati contends that *insāniyat* is also not a stationary event but “a perpetual process of becoming and an everlasting evolution towards infinity” (1998: 188). It is “continuous struggle and an aspiration” and must be protected at an individual and collective level (Saika 2016: 75). In this sense, *insāniyat* is also epistemic rootedness. It speaks of the aesthetics of life; life’s careful calibration.

*Insāniyat* can be situated more purposefully within Muslim traditions. It is the encapsulation of the responsibility and appreciation of others within the rights of the Divine (ibid). In this way, *insāniyat* stands importantly distinct from Western humanism, which emerged in opposition to the Church and equated human agency with secularism and rationality (ibid: 74). In more Sufi-esque terms, it is internal love that transcends the self, enabling the recognition of the shared human condition and the Divine. In the words of Obeidullah Sindhi, a twentieth-century revolutionary political thinker of South Asia, *insāniyat* becomes manifest as a “site of friendship between self and other” (Sindhi 2014 as cited in Saika 2016: 74). Baba Farid, a 12th-century Sufi philosopher from the Punjab region, famously reminded his disciples that an individual’s *insāniyat* is far more interesting than their religion.

The following sections introduce the reader to the *pahars*, to Qari Safir, and to the unsatisfying contours of our relationship, before offering a mediation on the question of *insāniyat*.

## The weather

Qari Safir’s comments on the widespread loss of humanity in Kashmir puzzled me. I wanted an elaboration:

OA: What do you mean Kashmir has lost its *insāniyat*?

QS: Over the years in Neelum, I have seen a decline in people’s friendships. It seems we are less and less worried about each other. Allah knows more why this is happening. Our people have seen and experienced so much, to the point that we no longer feel for each other.

Is this decline in social cohesion and accommodation, somehow linked to the precarity of life in the *pahars*? Qari Safir seemed to think so. He is referring to the many layers

of disruption and dislocation that permeate life in Neelum, such as environmental decline and disasters, cross-border violence, and other structural forces that condition everyday life. Qari Safir’s comments can be interpreted as allusions to the very nature of violence that permeates Neelum. This is a violence that cannot be simplified or reduced to something physical alone, such as bodily harm caused by cross-border shelling, but an injury whose particles constitute the very weather around us<sup>14</sup>. As one interlocutor noted: “The air may be fresh in Neelum, but it is also very heavy”.

Qari Safir’s reference to a loss of humanity is an elucidation of the ‘diffuse’ nature of violence in Neelum and elsewhere in Kashmir. Michael Gilsean eloquently captures this in his work on violence and narrative in northern Lebanon:

The rhetoric that life was a tissue of calculated performance, aesthetic elaboration of form, artifice, and downright lies behind which one had to look for true interests and aims of others was common to all. *In this sense a violence that was not physical coercion but was of a more diffuse kind and integral to accounts of human relations was common to all* (1996: 64, emphasis added).

However, Qari Safir also considered the loss in Kashmir’s *insāniyat* as a result of internal decline catalyzed by a lack of commitment to Islam and its tenants, a spiritual crisis which allowed such wear and tear to occur in the first place:

We always held deep-seated compassion for each other. How else can you survive in these *pahars*? But over the years, a lot of people have been forced into the cities and into Pakistan. Something happened there, either there was too much food or just too much betrayal. People have come back changed. I feel something has shifted within them. This, to me, is a *rohani masla* (Ud; spiritual crisis). There is *something* internal to us, which prevents us from being kind to one another. In my opinion, the only things that can enhance love between people are *namaz* (Ud; prayers) and the Quran.

He regularly raises these matters in his weekly *khutbahs* (Ud; sermons). He admitted that most likely, he does not fully understand the reasoning behind people’s changed disposition (“Only Allah truly knows”) and that his readings might be flawed. Despite his doubts, Qari Safir has taken on the burden of bringing people together: “I hope that through my practice and teachings, people reconnect

with each other, that there is more love between us. This is my life's mission." In the following section, I elaborate on Qari Safir's mission of bringing people together—resuscitating *insāniyat*—as an extension of wider struggles for Kashmir's forms and futures.

### Mission Kashmir

Qari Safir had always wanted to become an *alim*: "It was my dream, ever since I was very young." He was perhaps influenced by life in Kashmir's *pahars* and their particular placement within Pakistan, or inspired by his cousins who had also embarked on a journey to become religious scholars, or both. Most people who I met in Neelum noted that life in the *pahars* seldom goes as planned, this also proved true for Qari Safir:

After I completed Grade Five, I moved to Muzaffarabad (currently considered to be the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir) to complete my *hifz* (Ud; memorization of the Quran), that took several years to complete. Then I started my *tajwid* (Ud; Quran recitation) course. But soon enough things started to change at home. I had younger siblings to support. I am the eldest, and my father was too old to support the family singlehandedly. So, I started giving Quran recitation lessons to children in the city to establish a source of income, albeit a very modest one. I would save this money and send it back home. But despite my efforts, things continued to get worse. My heart just broke. You know sometimes, life just breaks your heart.

Additionally, Qari Safir wanted me to understand that Neelum was not just home, but a place of permanent anchoring and rootedness: "*Meray dadda, pur-dadda, shuroon sai yehin pur hain* (My grandfather and great-grandfather, everyone, we have all been living in the same village in Neelum since the beginning)". Neelum held the unconditional power to pull him back at any time:

As I was studying in Muzaffarabad, the Imam in our village decided that he can no longer continue leading our *masjid*. The people from my village felt that they urgently required another person from the village to take up the vacant spot before an 'outsider' comes in.

The villagers strongly felt that the Imam should be someone from their community, someone they knew and trusted. This should be understood in relation to the current climate in Kashmir (Kashmir's weather), where

suspicion is rife due to the heavy presence of Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies. Shortly after, a delegation from his village visited the madrassa where Qari Safir was studying and requested his teachers to persuade him to return home. Under pressure, Qari Safir felt compelled to return to Neelum. He sighed: "It was always my desire to contribute to my community. I figured I was needed back at home by both my family and my village, what better way to give back then that?"

Qari Safir has been the Imam for several years now. His duties include leading daily prayers and managing the *masjid*. He is a public figure in his village and surrounding communities: "Most people here know me, and I try to maintain good relationships with everyone." He also teaches *Islamiyat* (Ud; Islamic Studies) and *tajwid* in two primary schools, which he considers to be an extension of his role as the Imam. He clarified: "I teach in both places *fi sabil-ullah* (Arabic, Ab; in the name of Allah) and receive no salary". In the afternoon, he additionally teaches Quranic recitation to children in the *masjid*: "Initially I charged parents a nominal fee, but it soon became clear that they could not afford to pay me. So, I stopped asking".

The responsibilities of an Imam are numerous. They span a wide range of duties such as leading funeral prayers, officiating marriage, being present when a new life is brought into the world, and contributing to the moral and ethical development of the community. Qari Safir added: "The position of the Imam comes with great responsibility, but no salary". To make ends meet, Qari Safir has opened a small fruit and vegetable stall: "I took a loan to stock the stall and often times I just bring the produce home to eat. I am so busy in the *masjid* that the stall remains closed for several days in a row. I am yet to make any profit".

Given the material difficulties of sustaining himself and his family, I asked if Qari Safir regretted his decision to move back home. He shook his head:

You know I have made significant contributions to this *illaqa*. Some 150-200 children have studied under me; some of them have even memorized a third of the Quran. I am very content with my contributions. I have dedicated my life to the *masjid*. Most people will not understand the work and sacrifice that goes into running the *masjid*. I have had to bear starvation, leave paid employment, take on debt, but I am glad that Neelum's children have an opportunity to study the Quran, that people here can freely go to the *masjid*, and even more importantly,



Figure 2. During the summer, Qari Safir opens his home to Pakistani tourists to supplement his income: "We have painted our house in pastel colors to attract tourists. They would not want to stay in an ordinary home, would they?"

I myself remain connected to the Quran in the process.

Most children will finish primary school and their studies of the Quran at the same time. After this, there is no education available for them. The boys might walk to the middle school, which is a fair distance away, and for girls, there are no options. For this reason, I want to make further provisions in the *masjid* to enable these children to continue their study of the Quran, so that they have *some* way of continuing their education.

The *masjid* occupies an important space within Neelum. Under the leadership of Qari Safir, it enables the circulation of various forms of socialities and aspirations for self and community, such as that of Islamic morality and knowledge of the Quran. These functions, along with many others, have been well-elaborated in the literature on mosques and madrassas (e.g., Aijazi and Angeles 2014; Angeles and Aijazi 2019). However, what I find more interesting is the *masjid's* added gravitas in a place like Neelum, where multivalent constraints on the flow and arrangements of life render Qari Safir's contributions as the Imam worthy of articulation and added attention. I consider Qari Safir's ongoing contributions to be indeed 'significant' as he himself says and as enmeshed and encoded within other kinds of struggles in Neelum,

which are similarly aimed at the guaranteeing of life, such as that of community-led development work or grassroots political mobilization. This is particularly important to center in our understandings of the diverse struggles for Kashmir, given that the potentiality of Islamic institutions and sensibilities remains suspect within most notions of social justice. For example, Qari Safir shared:

You know several NGOs from Pakistan and abroad have come to help develop this region, particularly after the earthquake and floods. But strangely, no one ever prioritized the *masjid*. It has been my dream that there should be an *azeeem-o-shan* (Ud; grand/majestic) *masjid* in our area. I thought maybe this would be possible after the earthquake. I thought now the NGOs will surely help, but they did not.

I consider Qari Safir's mission of bringing people together and resuscitating *insāniyat*, via devotion to Islam as accentuated by the diffuse nature of violence in Neelum, to be synonymous with struggles for life in Kashmir. In the rest of the paper, I elaborate on these ideas further and attempt to illustrate the nature of ongoing violence in Neelum, its capillaries, and saturation of life, but also life's granularity and delicateness.

There used to be an *alim* in Neelum. He was short of height and had a very bossy wife. Instead of leading prayers in the *masjid* or teaching people the Quran, he would often be away completing his wife's chores. He would turn his students away or decline an invitation to lead a funeral, to instead collect firewood or herd cattle. When he died, people started to note that his grave never remained intact. They would notice a stream of ants emerging from his grave with little pieces of his flesh. This was his punishment for keeping his knowledge from the public (*logon ko ilm sai mehroom rakhnay ki saza*).

- Nusrat (who heard this from her grandmother)

### Phulyan aur Moat

I now turn to the domestic and the familial. This is necessary to gain a sense of the permeability and porosity of everyday relations and aspirations for them, as well as the magnitude of the efforts needed for their reciprocation. These strivings illuminate the workings of rule and occupation beyond their overt legal and political tonalities. Life's inconveniences and daily grit are the sites where violence and its refusals are the most prominent, prompting a much more considered look within and outside existing analytical schemas: *at Kashmir's weeds and wildflowers*.

Qari Safir's father suffered a stroke last year. Having lost most of his abilities, at the time, he required round the clock assistance:

One side of his body is completely paralyzed. We even have to feed him with our own hands. We have taken him to many doctors, but none of the medicines seem to work. We have spent nearly one-and-a-half to two lakh rupees over the year on his treatment; we even took him to a hospital in Karachi (Pakistan). In addition to the doctor's prescriptions, we have tried a *hakim* (Ud; naturopath) as well as *dhaga taweez* (Ud; spiritual amulets), but nothing seems to work.

When he was still healthy, he loved to eat *phulyan* (Ud; green beans) and *moat* (Ud; dried beans). He would grow them himself and enjoy the fruits of his hard labor. It is satisfying to grow your own food. But ever since his stroke, he is unable to do so.

Qari Safir felt that the bean was the *pahar's* singular most important achievement and truly captured the deliciousness of Neelum: "*In ka taste bohot payara hota hai* (their taste is simply divine)". Plus, they are also practical in the sense that the beans can be eaten fresh (*phulyan*) or allowed to mature (*moat*).



Figure 3. While collecting some *phulyan*, Qari Safir added: "*Aik tariff desi murgh, aur dusri taraf moat ya phulyan, wah wah!* (On one side *desi chicken*<sup>15</sup> and on the other some beans, how wonderful!)"



Figure 4. *Phulyan*, ready to be eaten. Qari Safir added: “*Allah ki shaan hai* (it is Allah’s wonder), that the same bean can be eaten fresh or dried, and the two forms look and taste completely different!”

### *Phulyan*:

#### Ingredients

*Ghee* (Ud; clarified butter)

*Lal mirch* (Ud; red chili powder)

*Haldi* (Ud; turmeric)

*Adrak* (Ud; ginger)

*Lassan* (Ud; garlic)

*Namak* (Ud; salt)

*Payyaz* (Ud; onions)

*Phulyan*

*Tumatar* (Ud; tomatoes)

*Hari mirch* (Ud; fresh green chili)

#### Method

Chop the green beans into bite sized pieces and wash them thoroughly. Spread the beans on a large tray and allow to dry. In the meantime, heat the *ghee* in a *pateela* (Ud; steel pot) and add the onions. Fry the onions till they turn brown. Add some water to soften the onions, followed by chopped garlic and ginger. Once the mixture is fragrant, add the red chili powder, turmeric, and salt. Add splashes of water as needed, to prevent the onion mixture from sticking to the bottom of the pot. Add the chopped

tomatoes and green chili and keep on stirring the mixture. Once the tomatoes are softened and begin to break down, add the green beans. Stir and allow to cook for another 15 minutes. Once the beans have browned a little bit, add a glass of water. Let cook, as soon as the gravy comes to a boil and you can see oil separating, the *phulyan* are ready.

### *Moat*:

#### Ingredients

*Payyaz* (Ud; onions)

*Tumatar* (Ud; tomatoes)

*Ghee* (Ud; clarified butter)

*Zeera* (Ud; cumin powder)

*Pudeena* (Ud; dried mint)

*Moat*

#### Method

First boil the *moat* till they are soft. Drain and mash them using your hands or the back of a glass, till a paste is formed. Fry the onions in *ghee* and add the tomatoes. Cook till the mixture has browned and is fragrant. Add the cumin and mint, and stir. Add the bean paste and stir. Add water and cook until beans are mixed well with the onion mixture and



Figure 5. *Moat* in a deep-red gravy. These are accompanied by *roti* and a salad. Safia, Qari Safir's wife, explained: "We normally eat this with boiled rice. But since you are here, we made *roti*. I know the city people like *roti*."

oil begins to separate. At this point you will be left with a deep red gravy, the *moat* are ready.

To honor and remember his father's good health, we decided to prepare *phulyan* and *moat*. We began by scouring his land for *phulyan*, which we collected in a large steel container to take back to the kitchen. He already had another container full of *moat* harvested from last year.

It was somewhat odd for two men to be cooking. Perhaps this was outside of the norms of hospitality, for I was a guest in Neelum. Not before long, Qari Safir's wife and mother stepped in, and the loci of control shifted with them, reducing us to mere observers. I jotted down the recipes with their permission.

The invitation to cook and eat was a simple way to reminisce and remember the good health of Qari Safir's father, as well as an opportunity for me to be a guest in his home outside of the demands of my research (see Aijazi 2021). It was an invitation to engage with the materiality of life in the *pahars* and confront (and taste) the insistence for Kashmir's own forms and formations. The struggle for Kashmir was well and alive in the kitchen. Qari Safir clarified that Neelum's *phulyan* and *moat* are distinct from what is available for purchase in the bazaars: "If we buy *moat* from the bazaar, they taste nothing like what we grow here. The bazaars are mostly stocked from Pakistan. They take

forever to cook and taste *pheeka* (Ud; flavorless)- just like Pakistan." He also pointed out that *moat* cooked elsewhere is not mashed the way it is in the *pahars*. As we were speaking, Qari Safir's mother interrupted me, visibly annoyed:

Why are you asking Qari (Ud; a title of respect) all these questions? You should talk to me. After all, I am the one who has to manage the house and make sure everyone has something to eat. What does Qari *sahib* know? *I run the kitchen*.

#### "As I lay dying"<sup>6</sup>

The next morning when I arrived at Qari Safir's home, I could hear people talking hurriedly and loudly. When Qari Safir came to greet me, he was out of breath:

My father went missing last night. My younger brother just found him wandering in some distant place.

Ever since the *hadsa* (Ud; accident), his condition has worsened. It seems he has lost all his mental faculties. He has difficulties speaking or communicating and does not seem to be lucid. Last night, I woke up at two in the morning to find him gone. He has done this before too, he just abruptly wakes up at night and leaves.

Qari Safir's family was in a major vehicle accident several weeks ago on their way to a shrine, a popular destination for people who are seeking Divine intervention in matters which cannot be resolved otherwise:

Since my father was not responding to medicines given by the doctor, a few weeks ago, we decided to take him to a *durbar* (Ud; shrine). We thought maybe the *rohani* (Ud; spiritual) system would work if the medical system is not? One of my daughters cannot speak or listen. She is almost thirteen. We thought we would also take her to the *durbar*.

The road to the *durbar*, which crisscrosses the mountains between Kashmir and Northern Pakistan, is rather treacherous, and for this reason, some people opt to travel by foot, which can take up to two days. This was not possible for Qari Safir, given his situation. Incidentally, some other people from the village were also interested in going to the *durbar*. Therefore, they all decided to rent a vehicle and make the journey together:

On the way back from the *durbar*, we had an accident. Our vehicle went off the road into a ravine, and I lost all sense of time or perspective. When I regained consciousness, I saw bodies sprawled all around me. I recognized my neighbors and my family. As I lay dying, all I could think to do was to recite the *kalima: lā`ilāha`illā llāh muḥammadun rasūlu llāh* (Ab; there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His prophet). Unable to move and very confused, I just laid in the wreckage for what seemed like infinity, till some strangers pulled me out.

There were fifteen of us in the van. All seven members of my family were present, along with neighbors and friends. I had no idea how my family (or how anyone else) was doing; I was in and out of consciousness. We were shifted from one hospital to another until we reached the military hospital in Abbottabad (Pakistan). It was only there that I regained my senses and was able to inquire about my family. We were all severely injured and spent the next fifteen to twenty days in the hospital.

In the moments following the accident, as I lay dying, I witnessed two of my neighbors leave this world. Seconds ago, we were all in the same car, talking, breathing. My wife broke her arm, one of my daughter's was severely injured and received fifty-two stitches, I fractured my leg, and to this day walk with a limp. My daughter, who is disabled, we call her *malang* (Ud; someone who is not worldly

while living in the world), she did not even receive a single scratch! Everyone in that van was injured, except her. Allah took away some people and left others to continue on. He severely injured some, lightly injured others, and left a few completely unscratched, like my daughter.

Qari Safir elaborated that the accident further strengthened his understanding of this life, the world, and the nature of Allah. He confessed that he did not quite understand why Allah permitted the calamity, and therefore cannot be truly angry at Him, but he did feel betrayed by the *hakoomat* (Ud; the state): "I am saddened the most by the apathy of the *hakoomat*. At least they should come and assist the families of the deceased. It is a matter of *insāniyat*, after all".

I was struck by Qari Safir's words that the state should intervene and provide assistance after an automobile accident. I asked why he thought that the state should intervene? He responded:

Why not? We are the responsibility of the *hakoomat*. Even if someone trips or falls, the *hakoomat* must step in to see how that person is doing. Is that not the law? But after our accident, no one came from the *hakoomat*, not even to the *Quran khwani* (Ud; gathering held to pray, contemplate, and recite the Quran) of the deceased.

But the process is not always automatic. *File bana kai chalani parhti hai* (you have to make a 'file' and then put it into circulation). The file has to get to the right people: *uppar neechay bhagna parhta hai* (one has to run from one place to the other). I still have not launched a file for the accident.

Why? Because it costs a lot to get one's file to the Bait-ul-Maal<sup>17</sup>. It can take anywhere from 1 month to a couple of years, depending on if you have any *safarish* (Ud; someone to advocate for you within the system). At any time, the file can get stuck at one desk or the other, and then one has to go down and pay *rishwat* (Ud; bribe) to move it onto the next desk, where it may get stuck again. The problem is that this accident did not take place in Kashmir. It occurred on a road in (Northern) Pakistan. I tried talking to the DCO (District Coordination Officer, local government official), who said that if the incident happened in Neelum or even anywhere in Kashmir, he would be able to help. But since it happened in Pakistan, it is outside his jurisdiction, and he is unable to push my file.

You know our kitchens are still running because of some NGOs, the *hakoomat* rarely does anything for us. They do not possess any *insāniyat*. Even the water pipes that run through our villages were installed by NGOs.

Qari Safir elaborated on the responsibilities of the state and its continued apathy towards Kashmiris, particularly the Kashmiris of the *pahars*. By the *hakoomat*, he was referring essentially to the Pakistani state, which for him encapsulates the various strands of quasi-independent government offices in Kashmir, i.e., the State Government of AJK. His father's ailing health, their inability to benefit from the medical system, and absence of adequate protections after an emergency all speak of the violence that saturates life in the *pahars* and the magnitude of the effort it takes to make life amenable, nonetheless. His description of the work it takes to even launch an application for social assistance, and how that is complicated by matters of jurisdiction (whether the accident was in Kashmir or Pakistan), attest to the precariousness and loneliness of those in the *pahars*.

### Muslim brother

Before returning to the question of *insāniyat*, I take a detour to elaborate on the nature of my relationship with Qari Safir. This, I believe, has an important bearing on the offerings of this paper.

When I first informed my mother that I had completed my Ph.D., she shrugged: “*Tumharay seengh tu naheen niklay?* (So, what? You haven't grown a set of horns)”. In Neelum, my interlocutors also felt no different towards me. It did not seem to matter much what kind of research I wanted to do, what I had written, what I wanted to write, and the kind of self-importance I attributed to each of these. But, rather, what mattered was: Was I a *jasoos* (Ud; spy) for the Pakistani establishment, or even for India? Was I Muslim? If I was indeed Muslim, was I of a pious and practicing variety, and was that enough to allow my circulation amongst their homes and villages?

Recognizing that stories and narratives are “socially inflected and relational” (Anim-Addo and Gunaratnam 2012: 383), and therefore essentially unstable and evolving, how can one engage with Qari Safir to gain an appreciation of “what is experienced and lived but cannot be said/told” as well as “what is told but not necessarily lived” (ibid: 384)?

I once overheard the caretaker of the guesthouse in Neelum where I stayed refer to me as a *matherchod* (Ud; motherfucker) for only showing up to pray *Jumma* (Ud; Friday prayers) - *woh bhee late* (Ud; that also late), despite repeatedly reminding me of the *jan-namaz* (Ud; prayer rug) in my room and pointing at the direction of the *qiblah* (Ud; direction of Mecca). He also felt that the cologne I wore to mask the smell of sweat (from plowing through the very difficult *pahari* trails) was suspect (“it must be



Figure 6. A flood protection wall installed by a group of NGOs after severe flooding in Neelum. One resident pointed out: “See the NGOs did something at least, but where was our *hakoomat*?” (photograph by Shabeer, Qari Safir's brother)

100% alcohol since it smells more potent than cobra air freshener”). It seemed that I was required to be a ‘perfect Muslim in Neelum to be somewhat trusted since the label of ‘Pakistani’ did not add much.

This prompted me to elaborate my bond with Qari Safir as a *Muselman bhai* (Ud; fellow Muslim/Muslim brother). In fact, my time with Qari Safir included breaks for *namaz* (Ud; prayers), the customary exchange of *salam* (Ud; Muslim greeting), and other outward signs of being Muslim, which perhaps did (or did not) unlock some added depth in our relationship. Over the course of our time together, I noticed myself shifting to more and more Islamic-informed vocabulary to signal a shared appreciation of the mysteries of Allah’s doings, *qisamt* (Ud; faith), and the temporariness of this *zindagi* (Ud; life).

Undoubtedly Islam contributes importantly to Kashmiri political, social, and cultural subjectivity (see, e.g., Kanjwal 2018; Komal 2019), but I remain unsure whether Islam alone offers sufficient grounds for a reasonable point of relatability. It was surprising to note that many of my interlocutors sincerely felt that Pakistanis indeed have an added moral obligation towards Kashmiris, given their Muslim majority status. At the same time, others thought that this was just an overly romanticized notion, a carefully planned strategy to conceal Pakistan’s own violations against Kashmir and to limit Kashmir’s futurities (also see Ali 2016).

Another reason why I felt the need to exaggerate my Muslim subject position was to publicly distance myself from many so-called progressive debates where progress is uncritically equated with secular modernity and positive development. I wanted Qari Safir to know that his devotion to Islam and how it influences his life was relevant and pertinent, and that as a listener and researcher I was willing to engage with him on his terms.

However, as I revisit my notes to write this article, I feel disingenuous for claiming that some kind of shared attachment to Islam made us closer, created solidarity, or made the research interaction more ‘genuine’ in ways that I have claimed elsewhere (see, e.g., Aijazi and Panjwani 2015: 33). This is not meant as a confession or a devaluation of religiosity, but rather as a reflection on how I found myself self-fashioning into a pious Muslim subject simply to increase my acceptability in Neelum and ultimately to ‘collect data’.

Seated in Qari Safir’s home with his friends, Ali could not contain himself:

I have a relative who is professor in Islamabad (Pakistan). He is a quiet person- just like you. I feel people who are over educated think too much. I say 10 things, he responds in one line, and that too after a very long time. One day he took me to the side and said ‘*Suno, siraf kaam ki baat kara karo mujh sai* (listen, only attempt serious conversations with me, nothing frivolous).’

## Coda

This paper is a mediation on *insāniyat*, not as an enforced normative principle or legal responsibility, but what is inhered in human encounters. It is about the granularity of life, such as a son’s devotion to his father and community. This is an essay on violence, both as seepage and deluge. It centers the ordinary labor that seeks improvements in life, whether this is through the *masjid* or a spiritual site<sup>18</sup>. It highlights strivings for a utopic destination where bodies are healed, communities are fully formed, and relationships are reciprocated. The article is about *insāniyat* that is embedded in the exchanges and preparation of food and story, and the awe of profound rurality and extreme topography. It is about the *insāniyat* of strangers and of being rescued from a fatal accident. This is an article on ethics and morality, where both are constituted in life’s minuscule fissures and within everyday exchanges. It puts forth the blurring of boundaries between ordinary life and politics. At the same time, the paper also highlights the absence of *insāniyat* as exemplified in the state, which is unable to care for the economically stressed, diseased, injured, or even the dead, and how this is normalized by occupation (see Handel et al., 2017).

*Insāniyat* is the fully embodied, deeply felt, and relational labor that goes into keeping a community intact. It is a desire for the well-being of others. *Insāniyat* is moral and ethical proclivity, an excess and impulsiveness as represented by a stranger running towards a wreckage to pull out scattered bodies. *Insāniyat* is devotion and loyalty, and un-conditional pull that orients one to what really matters. In this way, *insāniyat* not only resides in the gut but also within pause and thoughtfulness. *Insāniyat* can be understood as directionality, a steady pace, and pulsation towards unrealized (and perhaps unrealizable) destinations - utopic yet optimistic. It is this optimism in one’s efforts and in others, which helps me appreciate Qari Safir’s ethical and moral strivings as slow and steady efforts towards multiple forms and futures of Kashmir. One such representation is a futurity that does not require the state as the only adjudicator of life nor politics, or for the enactment of a people’s sovereignty (see Aikau 2015). An

examination of *insāniyat* as imaginative, ethical, and corporeal worldmaking, as suggested by Qari Safir, can perhaps help us transcend the temporal and ideological limits of what should or should not constitute Kashmir, as well as our efforts to capture this labor in some representational form or realizable scale.

If *insāniyat* truly exceeds the collectives of nation and religion, then on what grounds should I relate with Qari Safir, if not as Muslim? I continue to struggle with this as reflected by my exaggerated stance as a Muslim subject in Neelum. At the same time, mindful of liberal frames of humanity, which are at once universalist and exclusionary (Watenpaugh 2015), how then “might we think beyond the dominance of humanity’s moral and affective lexicon and yet still do ethically and politically responsible work?” (Ticktin 2017: 613; also see Aijazi 2019).

Richa Nagar (2002) reminds us that at the heart of our inability to write across difference are the choices we make about the theoretical framings we employ in our works. She argues that much more attention needs to be paid to the ethical, ontological, and epistemological aspects of fieldwork, particularly the tensions in attempting to align our theoretical ambitions with the concerns of communities whose struggles we want to bring to the forefront (Nagar and Ali 2003). Taking these suggestions seriously, I have attempted to center Qari Safir and his navigation of life in the *pahars* to expand and enrich existing geometries and geometries - syntax and semantics- on Kashmir. Knowing the impossibility of a perfect translation fully, I have nonetheless attempted an emergent text that refuses the comfort of closure or singularity of meaning. Put differently; in Nagar’s (2014, 2019) terms, I have attempted the “muddying of theories and genres” to (hopefully) make knowledge production on Kashmir by way of its people, humbler and more alive to the genius of their struggle.

There was much unresolved tension between Qari Safir and me. He saw me as someone who benefitted from a strong financial and social support system that allowed me to complete several years of graduate school:

How can someone pursue an education without support from their family? My responsibilities have multiplied. I not only have to think about my parents, my wife, and our children, but the *muhalla* (Ud; neighborhood) has also placed certain responsibilities on me. How can I just pack up and leave for Muzaffarabad to complete the *alim* course?

I have no way of adequately responding to Qari Safir and am very cognizant that a wider frame of reference was also

being evoked that was not just about class or economic or social status, but the material ways each of us is differently grounded in the nation-state, which, in turn, supports or undermines our ambitions for life.

Qari Safir’s father died the day I was leaving Neelum. As people were getting ready to attend his *janazah* (Ud; funeral), I was packing my bags to rush to Islamabad to catch my flight back to Canada. I had decided to skip the *janazah*. Only accessible by foot, his home was a good two-and-a-half hours away from my guesthouse and required me to traverse some very difficult terrain. Visiting him and attending the *janazah* would have meant that I interrupt my travel plans. This was difficult to do, given that the phone lines were out for the day, and there was no way to call the airline. In short, staying back would have been inconvenient and expensive. As I rushed out of Neelum in my rented jeep, the driver overtook a minivan with Qari Safir in the passenger seat. Our eyes locked for a moment, and I nodded. He reciprocated my nod. But I also knew it was a nod of disappointment that I was leaving on the day of his father’s *janazah*. Looking back, I believe this was a lost opportunity to truly express my devotion to Qari Safir, having already become the caretaker of his stories. *I had gotten what I wanted, what was the motivation to stay?* I am sure Qari Safir, like most Kashmiris, has ample experience of this kind of betrayal: from the NGOs who come to survey but never return, to the politician who promises improved hospitals only to forget once they are elected, to the United Nations who remains committed to ‘solving’ the ‘Kashmir problem’, (see Zia and Duschinski 2018) to post-colonial theory which fails to recognize self-determination as an alternate possibility for freedom (Visweswaran 2012), and now to the researcher who listens attentively and emphatically to collect stories only to abandon his interlocutors on the most solemn day of their lives. These betrayals, big and small, speak of the daily lived and felt experiences of Kashmiris. Hence, this paper is also about missed opportunities and putting one’s convictions to the test. It is about false promises and insincere friendship. Perhaps it borders on theft. It is extractive and symbolic of my struggles with *insāniyat* in the wake of human tragedy undoing the very work I seek to advance in my writing. In these ways, the paper also demonstrates the difficulty of truly living up to the standards of human encounter and relationality.

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## Endnotes

1. In much of South Asia, 'Qari' is an honorific title for a religiously inclined person (Muslim) who is attached to the mosque and teaches others how to recite the Quran.

2. It is important to note that my conversations with Qari Safir mostly took place in Urdu. Urdu (the national language of Pakistan) is the language of power, but not of the *pahars*. To maintain this dissonance and remind the reader of the contours of my relationship with Qari Safir, I have opted to use Urdu translations. The language of the *pahars* is Pahari. This is spoken in most parts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Pakistan-administered) and the western parts of Jammu and Kashmir (India-administered). It is considered to be a transitional language between Hindko and Punjabi. All non-English words used in the text have been translated into Urdu with the exception of a handful of Arabic phrases commonly used in the region. These have been indicated accordingly. Qari Safir has given me permission to use his name and photograph.

3. Interestingly, in 2003, after a visit to Kashmir, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the former prime minister of India commented that the Kashmir dispute should be resolved through "*Insāniyat, Kashmiriyat aur jamhooriyat* (humanism, Kashmiriness, and democracy)." Brännlund (2018) notes that these terms have resurfaced in Indian discussions on Kashmir since 2016.

4. An Imam refers to the leader and keeper of a mosque.

5. I have used the term *pahars* to allude to Kashmir's mountainscapes and have also used its adjective form, *pahari* (Ud, mountainous) to describe its people.

6. deBergh Robinson (2013) reminds us that for most part of its existence, the LoC was permeable, fluid, and even irrelevant and did not possess the solid materiality it currently presents. It was only after the 1971 India-Pakistan war and the passage of the Simla Agreement in 1972, that it came to mimic the impermeability of a 'border.' Zia (2019a) adds that the LoC is really a site of potentiality, for a Kashmir yet to come.

7. Others have sought to redefine how we understand these concepts altogether. See, e.g., Malik 2019 on rethinking notions of agency to accommodate Kashmiri women's political action and inter-subjectivity. I am less in favor of reinvigorating existing terms and am more inclined towards creating new language altogether.

8. Also, relevant here is my previous work on the problematics of singularizing experience (see Aijazi 2016).

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9. See, e.g., the fiery writings of Maqbool Bhat '*Mein Kaun Hoon?* (Who am I)' and '*Srinagar Jail Say Farar Ki Kahani* (The story of escape from the Srinagar jail)'.

10. I take this language from Fred Moten's grapplings with the fugitivity of blackness (see Wallace 2018).

11. Or, as Donna Haraway says, work for "storying otherwise" for "ways of living for which there were no particular models" (Middleton 2019). "But what form should such stories take? What might they sound or feel like?" (Middleton 2019).

12. For discussions on multiplicity and plurality as necessary lenses for decoloniality see, e.g., Andreotti et al., 2018; Shahjahan, 2017; Stein et al, 2017; Stein 2018.

13. All photographs are taken by the author unless otherwise stated.

14. Christina Sharp (2017) writes (in reference to anti-blackness): "The weather necessitates changeability and improvisation; it is the atmospheric condition of time and place; it produces new ecologies".

15. *Desi* chicken refers to home reared chicken, in contrast to quick developing breeds that are raised for commercial purposes.

16. Also, the title of a novel by William Faulkner.

17. Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal is a semi-autonomous body, whose mission is to provide social services and protection to the vulnerable.

18. A news story from Indian-administered Kashmir describes how in the wake of intensification of violence, more people are visiting the region's many notable Sufi shrines (BBC 2018). While the intensifying violence only partially explains this trend, it does indicate the inability of the state to provide adequate protection, and people's mistrust in its arrangements.

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