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Translating Loss – Reading Translation as Resistance

Huzaiifa Pandit

The act of translation is not a linear and static process but a circulatory and dynamic process that permits an enriching negotiation of meaning. One of the ways in which a text can be translated is by trusting that its meaning can be employed outside the local contexts in which it was produced, and employed to comment on contexts far removed from it in time and space. This trusting then allows for the translated texts to intervene in the negotiations between poly-systems, as marginal poly-systems seek a more pronounced space in the literary and cultural networks in a particular space. This negotiation would constitute the restitution of meaning which is the key to a successful translation. By an analysis of translations, and a close reading of the translated poems, this paper proposes to illustrate this strategy as involved in the production of resistance poetry in Kashmir. Resistance poetry can be conceived of as a poetry produced to oppose and archive subjectivity produced under conditions of

subjugation and occupation – militarily and politically. In such a scenario, translation can serve as an invaluable tool to illustrate the subjectivities produced under conflict. Through an explanation of the mechanisms of translations of two poems, Nasir Kazmi's ghazal (a poem in Urdu written in rhyming couplets): *Kuch tau ehssaas-e-ziyaan tha pehlay* (کچھ تو احساس زیاں تھا پہلے) and Saaqi Faruqi's *nazm* (a poem in Urdu which is written on a single subject and employs both rhymed, blank and free verse) *Khali boray main Zakhmi Billa* (خالی بورے میں زخمی بلا). I propose to demonstrate that the latent possibilities and potentialities in the source text can be adequately employed to enrich the Kashmiri English literary poly-system.

Keywords: translation, resistance, Urdu poetry, trauma, Kashmir, protest

We found the country of language
How great was the desolation before!
-Nasir Kazmi

Introduction

The act of translation has been envisioned in various ways throughout history. The continuity of the necessity of translation as the only means to overcome linguistic barriers has meant that the processes of translation have been perpetually debated. The term translation itself has been the subject of much debate and does not lend easily to one fixed meaning. Translation could “refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation otherwise known as translating)” (Munday 2001: 4-5). However, the common definition of translation involves the translator “changing an original written text (Source Text) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (Target Text or TT) in a different verbal language (The Target Language)” (ibid: 5).

In the realm of literature, this debate over meanings and processes has been particularly vigorous as translation here deals with transmission of the metaphoric and symbolic meanings. The debate has ranged between a close reproduction of the original in the translated language to retain the impression of foreignness to an attitude of creative infidelity with the host text i.e. from translation to transcreation. Naturally, this has led to a shift in the way the translated texts are viewed. While earlier, the translated text was privileged over the translation, transcreation demands a certain autonomy of the translated text. This shift calls into question the notions of equivalence and function. Lawrence Venuti, the translation theorist points out that there is no complete agreement on the exact contours of the term ‘equivalence’. It has been associated variously with ‘accuracy,’ ‘adequacy,’ ‘correctness,’ ‘correspondence,’ ‘fidelity,’ or ‘identity’. In all its variable associations, the term refers to the manner in which the translation connects to the foreign text. He refers to function as the latent potential in the translated text to produce diverse effects ranging from communicating information to producing a response comparable to the one produced in its own culture by the foreign text (Venuti 2000: 4).

The debate surrounding translation especially the question of equivalence, and transference of potential acquires a richer and more complex nuance in case of non-western traditions like the Indian translation tradition. The same complexity is a feature of the larger South-Asian literary

tradition to which Kashmiri poetic tradition belongs. Even as Kashmir has a rich poetic tradition, its translational tradition is underdeveloped. It is hard to pinpoint the exact reasons for this. While some blame must necessarily be accrued by the systematic and strategic disempowerment of its cultural and political institutions, Kashmiri was introduced as a compulsory subject at primary school level only in 2008 owing to a long history of colonization, it also follows from the self-contained nature of the literary culture which has largely resisted external influences till recently. Although a few translations like Maxim Gorky’s *Mother* by A. M. Lone, Prem Chand’s *Godan* by Roshan, Tagore’s *Chokher Bali* by Professor P.N. Pushp, and M.K. Gandhi’s “*My Experiments with Truth*” by Radio Kashmir have been undertaken, (Bhat 2016: 8), no critical writing or commentary on the ethics, methodology and practices of translation exists, at least not in the public domain. Even a work most recent as Neerja Matoo’s *The Mystic and the Lyric - Four Women Poets from Kashmir* (2019), based on the translation of the selected works of the woman poets Lal Ded, Habba Khatoon, Rupa Bhavani, and Arnimal, is silent on the issue of the modes and practice of translation. In an earlier interview, however, when asked specifically about her practice, she asserted the translator must have a feel for both languages, so as to make translation an effortless exercise (Matoo 2018). Besides, she proposes absolute fidelity to the text: “I don’t take liberties with the text. Some people have a different theory that you have to be creative while translating but I think you have to be very humble and all you can do is try to be faithful to what the writer is trying to say” (Matoo 2018). Rehman Rahi, the Kashmiri poet and academician of renown, makes a fleeting allusion to the translational process in an interview, asserting the impossibility of equivalence, and therefore highlighting the agency of translator:

If you look for the meaning of a word in dictionary, you will have the definition there but without the emotional meaning and without its cultural background. In the dictionary you will find equivalents, but emotionally and culturally words are different. For example, in Kashmiri when someone sees a young girl and says, “*yeha che katej heish bolaan* Now try translating this Kashmiri expression into English. Will you say ‘she speaks like a swallow!’ Or will you say in Urdu — “*yae ababeel ke tarah boltee hai*”! So it completely distorts the meaning and it even becomes derogatory” (Rahi 2014).

In absence of any exhaustive paradigm of translation in Kashmir, the translator must rely, therefore, on other paradigms to locate his practice. A cue can be taken from

the post-colonial translational paradigm, which examines translation as a site of contestation—where questions of historicity, and articulations of power are articulated and performed. In her seminal book, *Siting Translation*, Tejaswani Niranjana points out that translation provides a context “of contesting and contested stories attempting to account for, to recount, the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races and languages” (Niranjana 1992: 1). She offers a model of translation that refutes the conceptual economy of colonial reality assumed to be unmediated, transparent, and unproblematic, while translation is imagined as a semantic vehicle for conveying such representations. Her model involves employing English—the language bequeathed by colonialism to contest such unmediated representations and make visible the writer from the (former) colony to both the west and the readership within the country. This making visible allows post-colonial translation to emerge as a radical practice, which helps to create the desired political statement that lived experiences in marginalized spaces like Kashmir demand. The application of post-colonial paradigms creates its own ironic contradiction, where the postcolonial nation is itself a colonizing empire, “motivated by territorial nationalism within which occupation, as an ongoing war on the frontiers of the state, which plays the role of a kind of nationalistic glue that artificially binds the nation together” (Junaid 2013: 166). While it seeks to establish historic continuities, it also establishes the operations of neo-imperialism which prevents formation of knowledge frameworks that illustrate lived subjectivities in colonized spaces more accurately. While narratives of subjectivity referencing Kashmir have been stereotypically reduced to human right violations, with no reference to lived experiences or actual political aspirations, the projection of the routine and flagrant violation of fundamental human rights of the occupied people is unavoidable, however.

Nayar proposes that narratives of human rights need to exceed politico-judicial apparatuses, and need to be “cast in the *language* of international/transnational standards and norms” to circulate “within a *register* of claims and in the *narrative form* of autobiography, personal stories and memoirs” (Nayar 2011: 25). He calls “for the translation of global norms of human rights into a local context, even as local stories of violations must be translated to fit into a global narrative of campaigns, protests and legalistic measures” to create an “affective cosmopolitanism” which emphasizes on forging “*emotional* connections across the world” to create “awareness of and a possible ethical response to suffering and violation in any part of the world (ibid). Quoting Cronin approvingly who proposes

translation as “a way not only of thinking but of being and acting in the world” on a “few cosmopolitan ideals: a concern for freedom, openness to and tolerance of others, and a respect for difference”, Nayar views translation as a vehicle of “micro-cosmopolitanism” that diversifies and complicates smaller political units (ibid).

Such translation calls in effect for creation of narrative communities, which will harness the power of translation to transcend limitations of the language, but also bring an audience to a textual event that especially accommodates contestations of communal identity and action. In spaces constituted from violence, and suppression like Kashmir, translation then emerges as a handy tool to create narrative communities, within the world at large in general and India in particular, by converting them to recognize concrete experience of a disenfranchised people. In the spirit of Ramanujan, the Indian translator, theorist, and poet, the translation aims to translate the foreign reader into a native reader i.e. a disinterested reader into one anxious and concerned about Kashmir. Translation is enacted with a specific activist zeal to transform narratives realizing that ground level realities are determined by narratives e.g. the narrative of nationalism, revivalism, and Hindu majoritarianism determine the lived realities of residents of Kashmir. By extension this framing demands that counter and alternate narratives be drawn to allow the colonized to produce more accurate representations of their condition, than presented by the colonizer.

This paper draws on an application of this model to explain translations by me of selected Urdu poems (labeled Ud), enacted specifically to catalogue the lived experience in Kashmir—one of the most militarized regions of the world. I derive my legitimacy and capacity from being a Kashmiri Muslim, of the nineties generation, born and raised in Kashmir. So I am a close witness to state sanctioned disempowerment, having experienced variously and vicariously the effect and affect of military colonialism, including censorship, silencing, violence, confinement, punishment, injury (both to self and others), death, and near death experiences. My translation seeks to draw on the usage of poetry to recover and expropriate our silenced histories in order to invoke from our collective memory a local history that is erased under meta-narratives of terror, jihad, insurgency, and national security. As Michel Foucault noted, collective memory is an important arena of struggle between the authorities and aggrieved groups. “[I]f one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism. And one also controls their experience, their knowledge. It is vital to have possession of this memory, to control it, to administer it, tell it what it must contain” (Baker 1985:

134). The translation, therefore, aims to produce a species of resistance poetry, which is deliberately partisan and seeks to employ the orality of verse to mobilize a collective response to subjugation and occupation. It represents an effort by the subjugated people to speak for itself and resist the effort of other groups, mainly the state and its ideological apparatuses, to represent and appropriate their representations. Elias Khouri, the Lebanese novelist and critic draws attention towards the function of such poetry:

Language is the very framework of steadfastness (*sumud*).... Language is the repository of the collective memory. It is the basic national value which must be preserved. The role of poetry is therefore a major one, not only because it is more powerful than other forms of writing as a means of political mobilization, but because it sustains, within the popular memory, national continuity” (Harlow 1987: 34).

The question remains, however, on the choice of Urdu texts. It might be argued that texts written in Kashmiri would offer a more privileged and unmediated access to Kashmiri subjectivity, which this paper seeks to present. Moreover, as the official language of a people who speak Kashmiri—a different language, Urdu might be viewed as an instrument of silencing the marginalized, and preventing expression. However, such a dismissal does no justice to the complex position of Urdu in Kashmir, and its widespread acceptance in the valley.

Even as Urdu is not the first tongue of either of the three regions of the erstwhile state, it emerged as a compromise on an official language. However, it found acceptance only in Kashmir. Dogri and Bodhi (or Balti) are the languages of communication, and culture in Jammu and Ladakh respectively. Why is Urdu largely accepted in Kashmir then? M.A. Bhat, a Kashmiri Urdu scholar opines that Urdu:

occupies the central space in print and broadcast media; education, religious and political discourses, the legislature and the judiciary, and can even boast of an indigenous literary tradition. Attitudes to Urdu across the community reflect accommodation and acceptance. In the context of the separatist movement, Urdu has acquired another dimension: it is perceived as the symbol of the subcontinental Pan-Islamic identity (Bhat 2011: 156).

The earliest support for Urdu in the public domain came from the reformist-minded Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah who founded *Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam* (Ud, Society for Victory of Islam), precursor to *Jamat-e-Islami* the popular

religious-social organization. The society was the first to take up the cause of education of Kashmiri Muslims, which provided the early impetus for the evolution of a political consciousness in Kashmir. He set up the first press in Kashmir, the Muslim Printing Press, which launched two weeklies, *al-Islam* and *Rahnuma* to broadcast the views of the *Deobandis* and to combat what were seen as the un-Islamic practices of the Kashmiri Muslims (Sikand 2002: 713). Besides, Sheikh Abdullah—arguably the tallest leader of Kashmiri Nationalist movement, and a beneficiary of the rising political consciousness, employed Urdu for cementing anti-colonial consciousness. His moniker—*Sher-e-Kashmir* (Ud, Lion of Kashmir) was itself an Urdu title. Similarly, the Urdu daily *Hamdard* edited by Prem Nath Bazaz, a close confidant of Sheikh Abdullah, emerged “as the strongest voice of dissent in Kashmir” (Zutshi 2003: 283). Even as most Islamic literature in Kashmir is written in Kashmiri, the literature produced by *Jamat-e-Islami* bears special mention, especially *Tafheem-ul-Quran*, an influential commentary of the Quran, and other voluminous literature like *Musalman Aur Maujuda Siyasi Kashmasksh* (Ud, Muslims and The Present Political Turmoil) all written in Urdu by Maulana Sayyed ‘Ala Maududi. The *Jamat’s* contribution to the political and social consciousness of Kashmir has been immense, and exceeds the tacit support to the militant organization—Hizbul Mujahideen in 1990s. Indeed, its network of Falah-e-Islam schools and libraries rival that of the missionary schools in zeal and contribution. A hybrid of Urdu—Hindustani (a mixture of Urdu and Hindi) also emerges as the transactional language between the ubiquitous Hindi speaking security forces, usually from India, and the local population. Articulations of dissent or compliance must necessarily be transacted in this hybrid, and so Urdu presents a valid vehicle for expression and exploration of Kashmiri subjectivities.

Urdu, emerges then paradoxically as both a language of state, as well as of resistance and routine. Indeed, in the context of the abrogation of removal of Article 370, preservation and dissemination of Urdu becomes more crucial as a language of resistance. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 which erased the last remnants of symbolic autonomy of Kashmir, seeks to replace Urdu with Hindi as the official language. The Indian Express reported that “Section 47 of the J&K Reorganisation Act empowers the new Legislative Assembly of the Union Territory of J&K to ‘adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir or Hindi as the official language or languages to be used for all or any of the official purposes.’” (Jaleel 2019) The imposition of Hindi derives from the desire of ‘hinduisation’ [sic] of ‘Muslim Kashmir’ since Urdu is invariably associated

with a ‘muslimness’ [sic] dating from colonial days. Haque quotes the sociolinguist Rizwan Ahmad who recalls that Hindu nationalists driven by a desire to rejuvenate Hindu identity submitted two memoranda against Urdu as the court language as early as 1868 and 1897 (Haque 2019). Under the present right-wing dispensation, which has publicly and forcefully allied itself with the realization of the ‘*Hindu Rashtra*’ – (Ud, The Hindu Nation), the selection of Urdu texts is not only as a gesture of solidarity with Indian Muslims, but also an attestation of a shared identity—highlighting our common marginality, a reclamation of threatened minority identities. For the purpose of this discussion, therefore, I will translate two Urdu poems—Nasir Kazmi’s ghazal, *Some inkling of loss would register before* (کچھ تو احساس زیاں تھا پہلے); and Saaqi Faruqi’s *An injured tomat in an empty sack* (خالی بورے میں زخمی بلا).

I. Lending silence a tongue: on translating Nasir Kazmi

In an interview with Radio Pakistan, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, arguably the most popular Urdu poet of twentieth century after Mohamad Iqbal, asserted there is no question of a new ghazal, as it can never escape the confines of its hereditary tropes, diction, and symbolism (Faiz 1974). The ghazal of Nasir Kazmi, who was a contemporary of Faiz, itself is sufficient to refute this claim and prove the existence of *jadeed* (Ud, modern) ghazal. While no poetry can be read, divorced from the time and space of its production, the collective memory of his era is one of its most distinguishing feature. Besides, it is also the only poetic memoir of its kind that refuses to be bundled along the meta narratives of its age. It provides an immensely local, routine topography of grief, loss and nostalgia that continues to determine the lived experience of the subcontinent till date. As a proponent of the *choti behr* (Ud, small metrical line), Kazmi’s verse performs a unique staccato violence that testifies to the trauma of the Partition of India, and loss of homelands. His genius lies in turning his back on the feudal idiom of the ghazal and transforming ordinary geographies like *darya* (Ud, river), *basti* (Ud, city), *kamra* (Ud, room), *makaan* (Ud, house), and routine objects like *kapday* (Ud, clothes) and *diyay* (Ud, lamps) into signposts of memory. While the progressive poets like Faiz saw Partition as a betrayal of a historical promise, Kazmi who came into prominence mostly after Partition, concerns himself with recording the routine violence of displacement by transforming the frenzied lover of the earlier ghazal who seeks solitude, to an alienated individual haunted by his separation from a collective.

The frequent motifs of a wearisome journey, hot sun, and caravans—minor images in earlier ghazal—re-enact the

emotive displacement wrought by migration, and so resist against the immanence and irreplaceability that death imparts. Kazmi, therefore, is the quintessential post-colonial poet, and ideally suited for ‘activist translation,’ since his poetry is informed by the same routine of recovery and commemoration that marks post (neo)-colonial contexts like Kashmir. Moreover, Kazmi’s poetry also is adequate for conveying subjectivities, as he revolts against the elevated diction of ghazal in favor of a conversational idiom. Thus the ghazal in question employs words like words like “*pyaaray*” – an endearment used in conversational Urdu loosely translatable as my dear, log (people) against a more formal *khalq*, yet, he does not completely abandon the tradition as elevated diction like *chashm* (Ud, eyes), *kunj-e-amaan* (Ud, a nook of peace), or *fugaa.n* (Ud, lament). Such a reversal provides a particularly relevant blueprint for poetry from Kashmir, which must search for motifs and metaphors to reflect everyday trauma, rather than the inherited old motifs of mysticism and socialism. While the progressives transformed the *mehboob* (Ud, beloved) into a desired revolution, Kazmi alters it to symbolize the tormented memory of an idyllic past, or alternately the elusive dream of collective actualization that haunts the present. The ghazal, therefore, alludes not to a celebratory lamentation but a weary silence in the face of incessant grief and tragedy:

*ham ne bakhshi hai khamoshi ko zuban
dard majbur-e-fugaa.n tha pehlay*

We lent stillborn silence a tongue
Grief had to beg of lament before.

The traditional ghazal is an evocative lament of a spurned lover who revels in his eternal longing, where grief spurs the lover to address the reader. Silence is unimaginable, as the lover must present his case lest the rival outclass him. Ghalib provides a perfect illustration of this anxiety to speak:

*Kuch tau kahiye ki log kehtay hain
Aaj Ghalib ghazal sara na hua*

Say something, people have begun to say:
Ghalib couldn’t compose a ghazal today

Even as Kazmi cannot be credited entirely for incorporating the (neo-/post-) colonial experience in the ghazal, he contributes significantly to translating the traumatic historical realities into verse. This silencing resonates well with the *maqtaa*, the concluding couplet (Ud), where ‘sorrow’ is addressed as ‘*khaana-barbaad*’ (Ud, vagrant/literally: one whose house was destroyed). The heart has been so benumbed by this silence, that it takes a fresh

wave of grief to be reminded of its existence. In the traditional ghazal, grieving heart is sought to be placated, cue Ghalib:

*Dil-e-nadaan tujhay hua kya hai
Aakhir is dard ki dawa kya hai*

Naïve heart, what ails you?
What can cure this grief for you?

Kazmi draws on the tradition of celebratory self-flagellation in the ghazal towards not pathos, but establishing that the grief serves as a powerful emotion, a reminder that collective identity is shaped by a history of suffering, silence, and death. Each wave of sorrow builds upon a previous edifice of grief, shocking a benumbed heart into emotion. While the traditional ghazal also relies on grief to generate emotion, its intent is to employ that grief to illustrate an existential crisis in the self, rather than to explore the rituals of commemoration. This reversal is important for appropriation of the ghazal to contemporary Kashmir, as ‘commemoration’ (Ud.) of grief is at the heart of *Tehreek*—the movement for *azaadi*—independence of Kashmir (Ud). As Mohamad Junaid points out

In national liberation struggles such as the *tehreek*, commemoration and symbolization of martyrdom (and grief arising therein) take place within the dialectic of occupation and resistance... to contest the domineering narratives of Indian state’s nationalism, and make the history heterogeneous (Junaid 2018: 270).

Kazmi’s ghazal provides an adequate blueprint to make visible the long history of Kashmiri struggle which pre-dates the ‘independence’ of India, and so must evolve a poetic that is illustrative of this long struggle. During the Dogra rule, the oppressed Muslim population acquired some significant economic and political concessions like access to colleges, government employment, and importantly the most effective and sweeping land reforms in the history of post-colonial India, by literally paying with their blood, e.g. the Zaldagar massacre (1865), Central Jail Massacre (1931) and Jammu Massacre (1947). Post-independence dissent was contained through electoral fraud, intimidation, jailing of activists, and systematic dilution of special provisions allocated to Kashmir, as Kashmir was largely fetishized as a naïve ‘heaven’ through film and popular culture. With the onset of 1990s, dissent exploded as armed and bloody militancy, which was brutally crushed. After 1996, an inertia crept in till the sleeping dogs were roused again in the cycle of 2008-2010 through a civilian uprising. After 2016 a massive resurgence of

militancy has occurred, but nothing exceptional has been achieved on ground, even as a new low was reached with the abrogation of Article 370, and conversion of the state into a Union Territory on August 5, 2019 through an act of Indian parliament. It continues to be an ever-increasing catalogue of death, loss, and injury. After every cycle an exhaustion seeps into Kashmir, where protests are either localized, or simply taper into a hurried though deceptive ‘normalcy,’ which is jolted by a fresh tragedy. The poem adequately conveys this cyclic nature by contrasting the resigned ‘present’ to a prosperous ‘past’, thereby fully evoking the dysfunction.

The first line, therefore, speaks of a Kashmiri habituated to inertia wrought by overwhelming loss, and therefore reducing the extra-ordinary to a normative routine. The second line of the first couplet, “*dil ka ye haal kahan tha pehlay*” (Ud), is intriguingly ambiguous. It produces two different meanings, depending on the word foregrounded by the translator; both evoke the Kashmiri subjectivity effectively. If ‘*haal*’ (Ud, condition) is stressed, it captures the startling nature of the experience: an unceasing and unmitigated three decades of trauma, death, maiming, and impoverishment. However, if *pehlay* (Ud, before) is stressed, it speaks of the immediacy of experience, rather than the nature of experience. After August 2019, Kashmir is a strange hybrid monster of ambition and dejection, joy and anger, initiative and resignation, action and inaction. An unprecedented number of Kashmiris have shone in fields as diverse as music, arts, science, and civil services. Yet, many youth, dejected and angry at the continuing turmoil, have joined the militancy and perished in the quest for both retribution and freedom. Restaurants and academies are mushrooming everywhere, and attract significant crowds, yet tourism, handicrafts, and allied businesses are in deep distress, especially in the silence engendered by loss of internet. The entire military grid is mobilized to ensure success of ‘Operation All-Out’—an ambitious plan to annihilate every forum and strategy of Kashmiri resistance, yet the other government machinery is in deep slumber. All deadlines for developmental projects, and restoration of environment are perpetually missed, corruption, and unemployment levels are at a record breaking high, and an overwhelming inertia prevails.

The question posed, therefore, is either: a) did the heart experience ‘such’ a condition before? b) ‘when’ in previous experience did the heart experience such a condition before? In my translation, my focus was on the former question, and so the adjective ‘dour’ was chosen to indicate a dullness and stagnancy, which is not only particularly

suggestive of the curfewed days—now a permanent feature of life, but also the inertia that has gripped every aspect of Kashmir. The oxymoronic binaries have existed before and are merely indicative of the passage of time. The dourness, fatalism, recklessness, and claustrophobia that envelops Kashmir now has rarely ever been witnessed in its history.

The rest of the sentence: ‘wasn’t the sobriquet of heart before’ must be understood in terms of the operative word ‘sobriquet.’ In the imagination of a typical Indian, shaped in no less measure by Hindi cinema and electronic media, Kashmir is visualized as ‘*Jannat*’—an idyllic heaven of earth blessed with pristine natural beauty, populated by misguided simpletons who have been brainwashed into supporting armed mercenaries sponsored by Pakistan. Hence, the wildly popular soap opera of 1990s *Bulbul Bagh* that portrayed evil mercenaries seeking to destroy the idyll of *Bulbul Bagh*, *Mission Kashmir*, which portrayed a naïve young Kashmiri falling prey to the guiles of a terror mastermind, or the earlier *Jab Jab phool Khilay*—which again depicts Kashmir as an idyllic heaven inhabited by innocent but large-hearted people.

The adjective ‘dour’ counters this fetishization of an exotic heaven, and draws attention to the monotony of the place. Similarly, *kharaaba*, literally a ruin (Ud), is translated as a ‘stoic ruin’ to foreground the resigned acceptance of ‘domicide.’ Domicide refers to the “the deliberate destruction of home that causes suffering to its inhabitants” (Porteous and Smith 2001: IX). The destruction of houses by the armed forces to ensure a hassle-free and quick termination of a gunfight has become a commonplace event in Kashmir. The razing down of houses by use of mortar shells and gunpowder has been normalized to such an extent that it hardly provokes any reaction or resistance.

At another level, ‘dour’ also refers to the innumerable households whose family members were killed in the violence, tortured, or subjected to custodial disappearance. Year after year, justice is denied and the families eke out a dull existence, perpetually grieving over their loss, unable to move on, and stuck in the morass of grief. The case of Mushtaq Ahmed of Dangarpura, Baramulla, a father who finds comfort in the school bag of his slain child, is a case in example. Ahmed faced an ordeal after his innocent son was shot dead by a Central Reserve Police Force trooper. It took six months for the first information report to be filed. The case went to the district court, where he appeared for at least thirty-four times in quest of justice, only to find that no one from police or Central Reserve Police Force turning up for hearings even once. Fed up with the judicial system, he gave up the case (Naik 2018). At yet another

level, it speaks of the abandoned Pandit houses orphaned and ruined as their occupants fled in terror of their lives. These dull looking houses that dot the landscape are an ugly relic of the horrors of 1990s and the loss of a lived history. This stanza is particularly evocative of the Pandit migration:

*ab wo dariya na basti na wo log
kya khabar kaun kahan tha pehlay*

Neither that river, nor that street or those people
Who recalls who lived where before?

Their unmitigated trauma, nostalgia, and hurt remains unaddressed as the world moves on. The new generations have moved on, while the elder generations remain steadfast in their bitterness and perception of the valley. The line *ab to manzil bhi hai khud garm-e-safar* (Ud) is again ambiguous. It can be read as that sweat from the journey is now the destination, or that the destination is sweating from the journey. If it is the former, then it signifies the futility in the sense employed by Fakir:

*Taa-Umr Dhundta raha manzil main ishq ki
Anjaam Ye ke gard e safar le ke aagaya*

All life I sought the destination of love
with the only gain of the dust of the journey.

In the traditional ghazal, the lover’s wandering is never fulfilled since estrangement is the primary and necessary poetic condition. In this sense, the lover is doomed to futility referred to by the dust of the roadside. If the latter meaning were accepted, and destination personified, then it signifies that the destination itself has set out to find its destination, since the old world order no longer exists. The metaphor of journey reenacts the traumatic journey in the unforgiving sun that displaced millions had to make in order to reach their destination, their new homes. This then is a more evocative illustration of the loss of the moral compass, and the elusive emotive fulfillment, which was promised by the nation states on the eve of Partition. Both India and Pakistan offered a sanctuary which promised that the old modes of disempowerment, neglect and discrimination would end, and a life of harmony and joy would ensue. In retrospect, pre-Partition lives were more enriching than post-Partition lives as governments and subjects both continued to grapple with shifting goals from independence and empowerment to just be allowed to eke out an existence. I, therefore, prefer this alternative since it corresponds well with the shifting goals of the state in Kashmir from the promise of plebiscite in 1947 and conditional accession, to a façade of autonomy via an ever-weakening Article 370, and its subsequent abolition.

The downward spiral has been as traumatic, as it has been long in happening spread over almost a century. Therefore, I personify ‘destination’ that sweats as it goes ‘out on a sweltering journey’ to retain the suggestion of journey in the original, and emphasize a continuity and perpetuity. It is the road where democracy has traded consensus for armed occupation. Mainstream polity has also vacillated from complete autonomy (National Conference) to Healing Touch (People’s Democratic Party), and now restoration of statehood. But each proposal has met with a hostile and unreceptive audience, and proven futile. The journey of these proposals from the legislative assembly of Kashmir to the lanes of power in Delhi has proved to be a hazardous one, as each of them has died an ignominious death. I translated the second line *har qadam sang-e-nishan tha pehlay* (Ud) without any change: ‘each step used to be a milestone before,’ to evoke the fanfare and hopes aroused by these proposals when passed. This usage flows well into the next couplet, again translated with little change:

*safar-e-shauq k farsang na pooch,
waqt beqaid-e-makan tha pehlay*

Ask not of the long miles Desire walked
Time wasn’t imprisoned in a house before

While the original mentions *safar-e-shauq*—journey of desire, and *farsang* a distance of more than three miles (Ud)—I use it in the sense of long journey indicated by the ghazal. The image of a house is a recurring motif in this ghazal. The image of walking and imprisonment is particularly apt for Kashmir. It refers both to the hazardous journey undertaken by thousands to receive armed training in Pakistan Administered Kashmir, and their subsequent years of imprisonment in jails, if they survived the treacherous terrain and the patrolling forces. But more accurately, it can refer to the calls for four marches taken out by Kashmiris in 2010 in response to the blockade of highway to Kashmir in Jammu by Hindu right groups. Four *chalo* (Ud, for a call to march in protest to a particular destination) marches were organized by the Joint Resistance Leadership (referring to Syed Ali Shah Geelani—Chairman, Hurriyet; Mirwaiz Maulvi Faruq—Chairman, Hurriyet Conference; and Yaseen Malik, Chairman Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front JKLF).¹ They were *Muzaffarabad Chalo* (Ud, March to Muzaffarabad), *Pampore Chalo* (Ud, March to Pampore), *Eidgah Chalo* (Ud, March to Eidgah) and *Tourist Reception Center Chalo* (Ud, March to lawns of Tourist Reception Center, Srinagar). All met with overwhelming response as thousands marched from every nook and corner of Kashmir. A fifth and final

call for *Lal Chowk Chalo* – a march to the city center with a clock tower (Ud), was given. The clock tower has a special symbolism since Nehru in the company of Sheikh Abdullah promised the gathered crowds that the future of Kashmir will be decided according to the aspirations of its people. Sheikh Abdullah famously declared: “*Man tu shudam, tu man shudi, man tan shudam tu jaan shudi, ta kas na goyed bad azeen, man degram tu degri* (Ud, I became you and you became I; I am the body and you are the soul so none can say we are separate)” (Khan 2014). The government responded with a strict curfew, barricading the entire area with barbed wire and sheets of tin. The abiding image of the curfew remains the clock tower barricaded by sheets of tin on all sides, to prevent any flag hoisting by protestors. The image of imprisoned time is an iconic image in the Kashmiri narrative.

Ye sada deta hai, which literally means ‘calls out this (message)’ (Ud) in *har kharaba ye sada deta hai* is translated (Ud) as ‘laments loud’ as a binary to ‘stoic’ and foreground the contrast. The loud laments of the ruins allow multiple interpretations: makeshift interrogation centers or military camps established in abandoned Pandit houses. Agha Shahid Ali famously called them ‘villas of peace’ in his poem *Pastoral*, where the soldiers return the keys to the city to the Kashmiri (Ali 2009: 196). It could also mean a loud testimony, whose failure to yield any decisive remedy leads to the pervasion of silence later in the poem.

In the line *hum nay bakshi hai khamoshi ko zubaan, khamoshi* was translated as still born silence rather (Ud) than silence to emphasize the censorship of Kashmiri narratives. The electronic media’s pandering to the nationalistic narrative, silences the Kashmiri subject and confines the subject to a passivized object forever located as the ‘other.’ The othering has effectively silenced any representative efforts of Kashmir, and thus freedom of expression is a non-starter in the valley. The suspension of internet, the arrests of journalists, unofficial and official bans on newspapers like Greater Kashmir and Kashmir Reader, and the incarceration of 5,161 people since 05 August 2019 (Asian News International 2019), not to recall the thousands still languishing in jails, both Kashmiri and Indian, many without charge or trial, sufficiently justifies ‘still born democracy’. So the Kashmiri subject mediates his expression through forms like graffiti, stone pelting, or poetry to escape the censoring gaze. Poetry also represents one such attempt to mediate the materiality of oppression in a medium that can subvert the ideological state apparatus of the oppressive state, and thus wrest some agency back. Translation is one such medium of testifying to this oppression and wresting agency back.

<p>Kuchh to ehsās-e-ziyāñ thā pahle</p> <p><i>kuchh to ehsās-e-ziyāñ thā pahle dil kā ye haal kahāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>ab to jhoñke se laraz uThtā huuñ nashsha-e-khvāb-e-girāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>ab to manzil bhī hai khud garm-e-safar har qadam sañg-e-nishāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>safar-e-shauq ke farsañg na pūchh vaqt be-qaid makāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>ye alag baat ki gham raas hai ab us meñ andesha-e-jāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>yuuñ na ghabrā.e hue phirte the dil ajab kunj-e-amāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>ab bhī tū paas nahīñ hai lekin is qadar duur kahāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>Dere Daale haiñ bagūloñ ne jahāñ us taraf chashma ravāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>ab vo dariyā na vo bastī na vo log kyā khabar kaun kahāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>har kharāba ye sadā detā hai maiñ bhī ābād makāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>kyā se kyā ho ga.ī duniyā pyāre tū vahīñ par hai jahāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>ham ne ābād kiyā mulk-e-sukhan kaisā sunsāñ samāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>ham ne baqshī hai khamoshī ko zabāñ dard majbūr-e-fujhāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>ham ne raushan kiyā māmūra-e-g̃ham varna har samt dhuāñ thā pahle</i></p> <p><i>g̃ham ne phir dil ko jagāyā ‘nāsir’ khāna-barbād kahāñ thā pahle</i></p>	<p>Inkling of loss would register before</p> <p>Some inkling of loss would register before Dour wasn't the sobriquet for heart before.</p> <p>Even a passing gust frightens me now I was the inebriated daze of dream makers before</p> <p>Destination too sweats, out on a sweltering journey Each step used to be a milestone before.</p> <p>Ask not of the long miles Desire walked Time wasn't imprisoned in a house before.</p> <p>Another matter that sorrow suits now It used to be a fatal ailment before.</p> <p>I'd not roam so harried, so haggard Heart housed a rare serenity before.</p> <p>You aren't beside me now too Yet, the distances weren't such before.</p> <p>The moors where Blossom now camps Were only fit for a fleeting glance before.</p> <p>Neither that river, nor the city or its people Who recollects who lived where before?</p> <p>Each stoic ruin laments loud: I was a house of hustle and life before.</p> <p>How the world has altered, Love! You still keep your addresses from before.</p> <p>We found the country of language How great was the desolation before.</p> <p>We lent stillborn silence a tongue Grief had to beg of lament before.</p> <p>We lit the city of grief Else, a haze glazed the city before.</p> <p>Again, Sorrow stirs the heart 'Nasir' Where was the wretch dozing before?</p> <p>(For Kashmir, August 5)</p>
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Table 1. *Kuchh to ehsās-e-ziyāñ thā pahle* (original and translation)

(Kazmi n.d.)

II. Allegories of retribution - on translating Saaqi Faruqi

Mohamad Shamshad Nabi Faruqi known better by his pen name 'Saaqi Faruqi,' was a poet of multiple displacements. However, unlike Kazmi most of them were of his own volition, even as the first one was a result of Partition. Born in Gorakhpur during the tumultuous 1930s, he was eleven when Partition occurred. His family atypically chose to

move to East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, rather than West Pakistan, but soon decided to move back to Karachi. But tired of the lack of opportunity, and the claustrophobic despair of the era, he decided to shift to London in 1958 where he lived most of his life. Noted for his temper and booming voice, he died a lonely death in an old age home. His wife, herself ill, could not keep up with his complex

emotional and health needs. His poetry, therefore, speaks of these multiple migrations, multiplicities, and fractures. It presents an orchestration of voices that speak of a violence incurred in search of an identity, an intriguing skepticism and apprehension of realities. It presents, therefore, a natural contrast to the single-minded and linear declamations of loss and violence that a lot of poetry from Kashmir tends to lapse into, and provides a blueprint to underscore the identitarian violence, which is the natural consequence of occupation. His terrifying allegory *An injured tomcat in an empty sack* presents another challenge to the translator. Unlike Kazmi's ghazal, it is an *azaad nazm*—an Urdu poem in free verse that does not permit individual lines the autonomy of the ghazal. Rather the *nazm* is a sustained exposition on a single theme. Faruqi is one of the modern poets of Urdu who preferred to break away completely from the ghazal tradition rather than negotiate a compromise with it in the tradition of Faiz or Iqbal. Saaqi's forte is the fable, like Ted Hughes he invests the animal with a terrifying sensitivity and emerges with unique insights into human fragility. The poem is a monologue by an injured tomcat addressed to Jan Mohamad Khan—who has probably injured it, scooped it in a sack and is on his way to drown the cat in a pond.

The trigger for the translation was an ominous warning sounded by the then Indian Army Chief—General Bipin Rawat. Warning the protestors who gathered around encounter sites to distract the armed forces, and tried to sneak out the trapped militants, the general made no bones of the fact that such protests would be treated as treason, and suitably punished (by death): “Those who obstruct our operations during encounters and are not supportive will be treated as over ground workers of terrorists.... and go helter-skelter for them” (Press Trust of India 2017). The general was only stating the obvious, as he was carrying forward the bloody legacy of his predecessors.

One such predecessor was Major Avtar Singh of 35th *Rashtriya Rifles*—a paramilitary force, who achieved lasting infamy for the heinous murder of the Kashmiri human rights lawyer and ideologue Jaleel Andrabi in 1996. Having been severely tortured in the aftermath of protests against the hanging of Maqbool Bhat, the founder of the JKLF, Jaleel Andrabi was concerned about the rights and condition of others like him. He filed a case before the High Court securing a landmark judgement in his favor: relatives of detainees could meet them every fortnight. In 1995, Andrabi challenged the Governor's powers of lodging Kashmiri detainees in jails outside the territorial jurisdiction of the state High Court. Jaleel Andrabi quoted this order in a session of the United Nations Sub-Commission

on Human Rights at Geneva in 1995. The same year, he was also invited by the US-based Kashmir American Council (Zahir-ud-Din 2017). It was imperative, therefore, for the state to eliminate him. The task was handed to Major Avtar Singh, and a few other militants turned government gun men called *ikhwanis* in local parlance (Ud). They were identified as Sikander Ganai, Muhammad Ramzan, Mushtaq Ahmad Hajam, Muhammad Assad Lone, and Muhammad Afzal Malik (Wani 2012). The task was executed with swift precision. Amnesty International reported that:

On the evening of 8 March 1996, Jalil Andrabi was reportedly taken from his car by personnel of the 35 Rashtriya Rifles unit stationed at Badgam as he was driving home with his family. The group of paramilitaries was headed by a Sikh major and accompanied by renegades acting as “spotters”, identifying passers-by. On 27 March, the decomposed body of Jalil Andrabi was found in (a burlap bag) floating in the Jhelum river. His hands were tied up and his face was mutilated. The autopsy report said that Andrabi had probably been killed some 14 days earlier. He had apparently died of gunshot injuries to his head on which there were also injuries inflicted by a blunt weapon (Amnesty International 1997: 2-3).

The translation, therefore, reimagines the interaction between the injured tomcat and Jan Mohamad Khan as a symbolic interaction between the injured Jaleel and Major Avtar Singh before the murder was executed. The poem begins with the tomcat suggesting ‘*safar asaan nahee.*’ (Ud) I added the adverb ‘certainly’ before the journey to emphasize the absence of ‘ease.’ The sentence changes from a simple statement to an imperative to highlight the difficulty of exercising a choice, for each choice has its attendant consequences. The protestor at the encounter site chooses to protest knowing full well, that forces will fire bullets and pellets. Death or blindness will necessarily follow. Andrabi too would have known like Khurram Parvez that the journey from an advocate to a defender of human rights was fraught with danger. Major Avtar and his companions realized, belatedly, that his journey from Kashmir to the US was not easy—the guilt of having committed murder, followed. The journeys were certainly not easy. The metaphor of journey takes on broader symbolic nuances to suggest patterns of behavior and experiences rather than mere locomotion.

The next two lines translate literally into ‘In this empty paddy sack/life is entwined.’ The Urdu poem by its calmness and staccato lines creates an atmosphere of doom and

death. The richness of ‘*ulajhna*’ helps it. *Ulajhna* is used in multiple senses in Urdu including: confrontation, to be trapped, overwhelmed, to pause, to get into a scrape, and the opposite of remedy. All these phenomena are relevant to the scenario here. Jaleel Andrabi confronted the state machinery, overwhelmed by human suffering, and thus landed into trouble as he was trapped to his death. The translator is therefore faced with the difficult task of conveying this excess of meaning. I attempt to retain the calmness by inverting the structure first: ‘My breath is emptied/in the frayed knots of this empty paddy sack.’ The inversion helps: a) to avoid the impression of a ‘mimicry’ of Urdu as English does not permit such inversion in ordinary parlance; and b) to maintain the impression of an ordinary conversation. Again I interpret ‘life is entwined’ to ‘my breath is emptied’, to foreground the word ‘empty.’ It occurs in both the first line as an adverb and in the second it occurs as an adjective. Besides as the last word of the first line, it mirrors the physical act of emptying—the past tense indicating the completion of the task. This echo was intended to create an effect of gradual yet severe vertigo of death, as the cat chokes to his death in the sack and water. The original also just mentions an empty sack, but I use frayed knots indicating multiple knots which in turn indicates Khan’s anxiety to ensure that the cat does not escape, just as Major Avtar ensured that Jaleel Andrabi had no chance of surviving the night. Their frayed nature is a direct result of the tension produced in the sack, as the cat thrashes about trying to breathe. The uneven length of two lines—the first being almost the half of the second—mirrors the original, and represents the uneven breathing, as the gasping cat seeks the elusive lease of life.

The next four lines are translated entirely in keeping with the original with the exception of the last line: *aur badan main raat phailti jaati hai*,... (Ud). literally ‘and night keeps spreading in my body.’ I translate it as ‘The tentacles of night run riot in my body.’ The ferocity of the expanding night in the original is concealed cleverly in the *fael*—the verb *phailti jaati*. Rather than use the simple *phailti*, as in *badan main raat phailti hai* (Ud, and night spreads in my body), the verse uses the compound verb *phailti jaati* in addition to beginning it with *aur*: and, while ending it with ‘.....’ an ellipsis, signifying continuation. To capture this chaotic movement, I use the verb ‘run riot’ and ‘tentacles’ to suggest the monstrosity of the night, as darkness begins to prevail before the eyes of the cat (the man being murdered). The original also merely uses coins of moon, but I qualify moon with the adjective ‘soiled’. While the lines have an ironic appropriateness in the case of Jaleel Andrabi whose eyes were both gouged out, the soiled moon was intended to suggest the eyes of the cat matted

with blood oozing from injury. Similarly, the postmortem of Jaleel Andrabi suggested that “there were wounds to the head, and facial bones were broken, skin all over the head body was loose and peeling, gunshot wounds to the head that resulted in his death” (Faysal 2017).

The line ‘*angaaray dehkaye kaun*’—(Ud) literally ‘who will stoke the embers?’—has been slightly modified, replacing ‘stoke’ with ‘parade.’ The substitution is intended to highlight the visual element in the phenomenon of stoking embers. The use of parade, however, has a specific connotation in the collective memory. During the 1990s all the Kashmiri males of a specific area would be gathered by the armed forces, usually Border Security Force, at a specific place, and paraded before a ‘cat’—the euphemism for an informer, sitting in a car. Often the cat would be an innocent young man, forced by torture to concede and identify any random person to save his skin. If the cat rang the horn, the man would immediately be whisked away to be tortured in custody.

More importantly, parading, also calls to mind the weaver Farooq Ahmed Dar—a weaver, who was picked up on April 9, 2017 after casting his vote in the *Lok Sabha* elections by Major Gogoi of 53 *Rashtriya Rifles* at Gampora, Budgam. He was tied to the front of a jeep and paraded through many villages. His parading served as a clear reminder of the total supremacy of the forces, and their utter disregard for the rights of Kashmiris. Interestingly, the state rejected the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission for compensation to the victim, stating the injury was not inflicted by the state, but by an extra-state agency. The victim had to return empty-handed, as the coffers of justice proved to be empty. The word, therefore, permits an enriching of contexts that gel well with the allegorical nature of the poem.

The parading of sparks and watering bloody flowers of struggle is a reference to the resistance by the victim cat (scratching by claws). The cat asks a rhetorical question: who will injure you and give you a pretext to exercise your tyranny, now that I will be drowned today? In the absence of the victim, who will the tormentor exercise his power over? The hubris of power demands recognition and servility. The cat is defanged and about to be drowned, and so Jan Mohamad Khan needs to find a substitute to feed his hubris. The answer to the cat’s question, therefore, is that the tyrant now has to turn his tyranny over himself. The cat recognizes that his journey is over as the solitude of death will liberate it. It suggests, therefore, ‘I will cuddle with the solitude of my coffin/and doze/I will be water, mere water.’ ‘Cuddle’ and ‘doze’ are suggestive of comfort

<p>Khali boray main zakhmi billa</p> <p><i>jān-mohamād-ḳhān</i> <i>safar āsān nahīñ</i> <i>dhaan ke is ḳhālī bore meñ</i> <i>jaan ulajhī hai</i> <i>paT-san kī mazbūt salāḳheñ dil meñ gaḌī haiñ</i> <i>aur āñkhoñ ke zard kaToroñ meñ</i> <i>chāñd ke sikke chhan-chhan girte haiñ</i> <i>aur badan meñ raat phailī jaatī hai...</i> <i>aaj tumhārī nañgī piiTh par</i> <i>aag jalā.e kaun</i> <i>añgāre dahkā.e kaun</i> <i>jidd-o-johd ke</i> <i>ḳhūnīñ phuul khilā.e kaun</i> <i>mere shola-gar panjoñ meñ jaan nahīñ</i> <i>aaj safar āsān nahīñ</i> <i>thoḌī der meñ ye pagDanḌī</i> <i>TuuT ke ik gande tālāb meñ gir jā.egī</i> <i>maiñ apne tābūt kī tanhā.ī se lipaT kar</i> <i>so jā.ūñgā</i> <i>paanī paanī ho jā.ūñgā</i> <i>aur tumheñ aage jāñā...</i> <i>ik... gahrī niind meñ chalte jaanā hai</i> <i>aur tumheñ is nazar na aane vaale bore...</i> <i>...apne ḳhālī bore kī pahchān nahīñ</i> <i>jān-mohamād-ḳhān</i> <i>safar āsān nahīñ</i></p>	<p>An injured tomcat in an empty sack</p> <p>Jan Mohamad khan The journey is certainly not easy My breath is emptied In the frayed knots of this empty paddy sack These strong bars of jute are chiselled in my heart The coins of soiled moon crowd- clink, clink in the pallid bowls of my eyes The tentacles of night run riot in my body. Who will stoke the fire today On your naked back? Who will parade the embers? And who will water the bleeding flowers Of struggle in cruel bloom? The life in my fiery claws has ebbed out The journey is quite tiring today In a few minutes This straitjacketed lane will snap and drown in a dirty pond I will cuddle with the solitude of my coffin And doze I will be water, mere water You have to sleepwalk in a deep sleep And you who can't see this sack Who doesn't recognise his sack Jan Mohamad khan The journey is not easy</p>
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Table 2. *Khali boray main zakhmi billa* (original and translation)
(Faruqi n.d.)

and domesticity; death does not appear intimidating then. The transition into ‘water, mere water’ is suggestive of a smooth transition that comforts with its ease.

The cat sounds an ominous warning, though. His journey is over, but Khan’s is not over yet. He has to “sleepwalk in a deep sleep,” while he “can’t see” nor “recognize his sack.” The tyrant simply fails to notice and realize the baggage of grief and guilt that, he has incurred. Sleepwalking suggests a loss of zest and vitality, and even sanity. The journey then can never be easy. Small wonder then, Major Avtar Singh trained his tyranny over his family (being arrested for domestic violence) and ultimately ended his sad life by shooting all his family dead, before turning the weapon on himself. His companions met their destiny much earlier. On 5 April 5, 1996, just about a week after Andrabi’s body had been found, seven more bodies were found at Pampora. Among the dead was Sikandar Ganie, the *Ikhwani*. When the police spoke to Sikandar’s Ganie’s widow, Hameeda, she told them that Sikandar and his associates had been summoned by another *Ikhwani*, Mohammed

Ashraf Khan alias Umer, to an Army camp in Rawalpura, headed by a man named Major Avtar Singh of the 35 *Rashtriya Rifles* (Bal 2011). The tomcat rightly predicts that Jan Mohamad Khan, the journey is certainly not easy.

III. The necessity of ‘transcreation’

A question may be raised on the efficacy of such a model of translation, rather than directly writing poetry of resistance in either English, or other languages used in Kashmir like Kashmiri, or Urdu. There are two broad interlinked approaches to this question—the poly-system approach, and the counter-censoring approach. The first approach is premised on the general state of resistance writing especially poetry in Kashmir, which is in its infancy and a tradition yet undeveloped. Diverse constraints have colluded to keep literature produced in Kashmir from fully engaging with the spectrums of violence, dispossession, but mostly importantly the routines of resistance—the everyday strategies and articulations of dissent, disobedience, and subversion. No doubt, significant steps have

been taken to remedy this: the relative success of English novel, and academic prose in English from Kashmir testifies to that. One can easily trace a lineage of well-received fiction from *Curfewed Night* (2009) by Basharat Peer. Mirza Waheed follows with two novels *The Collaborator* (2011) and *Book of Golden Leaves* (2014), *Half Mother* (2014) and *Scattered Souls* (2016) both by Shahnaz Bashir and *Night of the Broken Glass* (2018) by Firoz Rather. Innumerable other novels most published by vanity presses like *Prisoners of Paradise* (2018), and *Shadows Beyond the Ghost Town* (2014) also found readership if not much critical praise. Kashmiri Pandit authors living outside Kashmir too have tried to present their side of the narrative, and one can recall *A Garden of Solitude* (2011) and *Fistful of Earth and Other Stories* (2014) by Siddhartha Gigoo, as well as *Our Moon has Blood Clots* (2013) in this regard. On the non-fiction front several anthologies like *Of Occupation and Resistance* (ed. Fahad Shah, 2013), *A Long Dream of Home: The persecution, exile and exodus of Kashmiri Pandits* (ed. Gigoo and Sharma, 2015), *Resisting Occupation in Kashmir* (ed. Zia et al 2018) have been published, *Of Gardens and Graves* (Suvir Kaul, 2017), *A Desolation Called Peace: Voices from Kashmir* (Ed. Zia and Bhat 2019), *Kashmir Rage and Reason* (2019) have been published.

In contrast, poetry presents a dismal picture. The volume is far less, and less spectacular. Barring a few scattered attempts in recent memory like *Serpents under my Veil* (Asiya Zahoor 2019), *Green is the Colour of Memory* (Huzaifa Pandit 2018), *Zard panike Dher* (trans. A Pile of Autumn Leaves, Nighat Sahiba, 2017) and *Songs of Light* (Ayaz Rasool Nazki (2017), no book of poems from Kashmir received much public or critical attention, although poets writing in English, Urdu and Kashmiri have published independently and prolifically in local, national, and international journals. In English these include the likes of Mc Kash, Ather Zia, Uzma Falak, Inshah Malik, Shabir Mir, and Omair Bhat, while in Urdu Syed Zeeshan Jaipuri, and Mohsin Kashmiri come immediately to the mind. In Kashmiri poets like Rumuz-e-Bekhudai and Nighat Sahiba have published extensively. In contrast, the special issue on “Contemporary Kashmiri English Poetry” of *Sheeraza—the journal of the state owned Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Arts and Cultural Academy Art, Culture, and Languages*, published early this year, is littered with either unwieldy translations, or forgettable experiments in verse.

This lack of poetry in comparison to prose can be traced to many factors. First, poetry from Kashmir was mainly composed in Kashmiri which unlike Hindi or Urdu has not had a single and uniform script. As Bhat points out, “The Sharada (also written as Sarada, or Sharda), the Devanagari, the Perso-Arabic (Nastaliq), and the Roman

are the scripts, have all been employed for the Kashmiri language from time to time, which illustrates the ‘script uncertainty’ of the language” (Bhat 2016: 9). Even as Nastaliq has dominated the scene since the fourteenth century, the question of a definitive script is still contested, and anyway most Kashmiri speakers, including me, struggle to read either of the three scripts.

Second, poetry in Kashmir has historically been dominated by mysticism as late as the first half of the twentieth century. Brilliant as this tradition has been, for a long-time poetry from Kashmir did not seriously seek to construct counter-narratives to contest hegemonic forms of history and memory patronized by the state. This is not to suggest that it has completely divorced itself from ground realities, or that the poetic tradition has been stagnant, rather it is to suggest that this evolution has not been truly illustrative of transformative and generative possibilities engendered by hybrid modes of dissent and resistance against the state. A cursory study of the ‘modern’ poetic tradition reveals that in the early twentieth century, Peerzada Ghulam Ahmed ‘Mehjoor’ created an idiom of ‘secular nationalism’ espousing religious harmony and a new political order. He was followed by socialist poets like Dina Nath Nadim who used poetry as a protest against class oppression in poems like *Prūtshun Chhum* (Ud, I will ask), Abdul Sattar Ranjoor, who sits rather uneasily between the old mysticism of the likes of *Wahab Khar*, and nationalism of Mehjoor, and in turn were followed by likes of Rehman Rahi, who shows a marked engagement with existentialism and surrealism, as well as ‘feminine’ poets like Naseem Shifai. Arguably Zareef Ahmed Zareef has come closest to the genre of ‘political’ poetry but his poetry is heavily coloured by a reductive nostalgia for a ‘golden past’, although it jars less owing to his witty satire. Younger poets like Rumuz-e-Bekhudai have been more engaged in asserting poetry as resistance but suffer either from limited production or inconsistency, and an even more limited audience. Even in Urdu, only two collections—Hamdam Kashmiri—*Dhoop Lahoo ki* (The Sunshine of Blood) and Ghulam Nabi Khyal—*Shabnum ka Aatesh Qada* (The Fire Temple of Dew) come to mind as ones that tried to engage with the all-pervasive disenfranchisement, even as the latter was assessed as “direct, less imaginative, didactic, clichéd” and laced with too explicit an “ideological content,” (Shah 2017: 8) while the latter is a product of 1960s literary culture, when the cultural academy was actively used to set and stage state narratives. It might not be an exaggeration, therefore, to say that contemporary poetry from Kashmir needs more diversity, and assert itself more to widen the poetic imagination of the reader, and find newer languages that resist ‘standard’ narratives.

The species of translation outlined by this paper intends to act as one such strategy of enrichment. It seeks to locate poetry from Kashmir within the broader Kashmiri literary poly-system. The poly-system theory was advanced by the Israeli translation theorist Itamar Even-Zohar (Even-Zohar 2000: 192).

He views poly-systems as conglomerates of literature, culture, and language etc., each constituent interlinked and dependent on the other. Such a model proposes that of literary and cultural artefacts, and so refutes the notion of a self-contained text. Itamar Even-Zohar proposes that translation must be studied as a system on its own, possessing a definite verbal as well as cultural network of relations as is posited in case of the original texts. He contends that translations must not be seen as complete 'facts' stripped of the concerns of center and margins, which occupies an important place in the discussions of original literatures. He contends:

Translated works do correlate in at least two ways: a) in the way their source texts are selected by the target literature, the principles of selection never being uncorrelatable with the home co-systems of the target literature (to put it in the most cautious way); and b) in the way they adopt specific norms, behaviors, and policies—in short, in their use of the literary repertoire—which results from their relations with the other home co-systems. These are not confined to the linguistic level only, but are manifest on any selection level as well. Thus, translated literature may possess a repertoire of its own, which to a certain extent could even be exclusive to it (Even-Zohar 2000: 192).

Further he argues that the position of translated literature can be central or peripheral, and it can function as:

innovatory ('primary') or conservatory ('secondary')" is determined by the nature of the poly-system under study. The position of translated literature is innovatory, and therefore central if the influx of foreign works introduces in the home literature new "features (both principles and elements)" including "a whole range of other features as well, such as a new (poetic) language, or compositional patterns and techniques (ibid: 192-193).

Even-Zohar further argues that this can occur if a poly-system is in its infancy and development stage, in comparison to a group of interrelated literatures. It is evident that the poetic poly-system in Kashmir is yet in need of progression and diversity. Far too much poetry

from Kashmir is prosaic or didactic, limiting itself to the hackneyed descriptions of wailing, blood, and misery. While loss may indeed be a consistent presence in Kashmir, it is equally true that the routines of reclaiming, resistance, and dissent exceed such simplistic mourning, and this excess demands representation in our poetic imagination. This is especially necessary as poetry provides a more privileged, and compelling way to analyze Kashmiri subjectivities. It permits a wide and dynamic range of possibilities that exceed the state narratives to determine the intelligibility of the Kashmiri subject in relation with the outside world specifically the territory of India, while foregrounding the formulations of risk and vulnerability imposed on it. These formulations of risk include the curbs on, and the risk of expressing, and articulating which are sought to be censored by the state, and so poetry offers possibilities of expression. As Kaul observes "the performative elements of a poem (from a conflict zone) emphasise [sic] the emotional and psychological intensities side-lined in the affectively neutral tones of news reportage, policy documents, or standard historiography" (Kaul 2016: 136). By virtue of the collective memory of a subjugated people, they will hardly face any difficulty in transposing the contexts to Kashmir, and those outside Kashmir are guided by the para-text added at the end of the translation to be nudged in the desired direction. Translations, therefore, provide an opportunity to demonstrate these performative elements to the reader, and guide one to read them as subversions of "the statist strategies of dehumanisation, victimisation and pathologisation [sic] of the resisters" (Falak 2018).

The victimization of *miya* poetry is a classic example of such strategies and provides an effective defense for the utility of such translation. Choudhary defines *miya* poetry as "a genre of poems written by Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam. The poems document the discrimination they have faced in the state. Written in the native dialect of the Bengali Muslims, *Miya* poetry is confrontational, laced with satire and talks about the discrimination meted out to them" (Choudhary 2019). In the India of today, where spaces of expression are under serious attack, such confrontational poetry is the recipe for trouble. Consequently, on July 11, Assam Police registered a first information report against 10 people, most of them Bengali Muslim poets and activists, on the basis of a complaint filed by one Pranabjit Doloi about a poem *I am Miya* written by Hafiz Ahmed that protested against the discrimination and dehumanization of Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, derogatorily called *Miyas*. The accused were booked under various sections of Indian Penal Code for criminal conspiracy and spreading social disharmony (ibid). There

is no reason to hope that confrontational poetry from Kashmir might not face the same situation. In fact, in the post 370 abrogation phase, the buffer of local political functionaries who could exercise some intervention at the local level like getting a detainee released from a police station is completely erased. It is all the more imperative that the litterateur adopt discretion, and approach poetry via a 'slant'. Translation provides an effective cover to the poet, as figurative language usually escapes the purview of law, which places a great reliance on exactness and clarity.

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Endnotes

1. Hurriyet Conference, Hurriyet (G) and JKLF (Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front) are political parties that advocate the independence of Kashmir from Indian military occupation.

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