

highlight Israel's state terrorism, he shows readers how impossible it is to encourage people to listen to Palestinians' reality, including in the education sector where "Palestinian libraries and universities have ceased normal functioning for months now ... I have yet to see one academic organization either in Israel or in the West make a declaration about this profound abrogation of the Palestinian right to knowledge, to learning, to attend school." (pp 39-40)

The case Said builds for the kind of academic, intellectual and cultural support needed by Palestinians is bolstered by his assertion that there are not two equal sides in this scenario, something one easily forgets when perusing mainstream Indian media. "[T]here is only one side with an army and a country", and "no cycle of violence" he reminds us (p 40). But the fear of being labeled anti-Semitic in the West keeps many writers reigned in, silenced from speaking about Israel's countless war crimes.

The inequality between Palestinians and Israelis is a train of thought Said continues in the second essay in the book, "Bases for Coexistence", which he first published in 1997. In this piece, however, he comes at this perspective through the lens of the Nazi holocaust and the impression it leaves by presenting the false notion that this was the most unique and egregious crime in history — something that many Indian youth seem to believe as Nazi holocaust literature and World War II history fixates on this point often ignoring equally horrendous war crimes committed by Churchill in India (read: Bengal's man-made famine).

Exploring this history and the way it preoccupies people's imagination — largely because of the extensive cultural production to preserve and maintain it — enables Said to model a behaviour that must be reciprocated: acknowledge the tragedy that Jews suffered at the hands of Europeans, while also acknowledging that this doesn't necessitate the expulsion, imprisonment, and annihilation of Palestinians. Said lays out a blueprint for coexistence between Jews and Palestinians, which in some respects mirrors the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that Archbishop Desmond Tutu set up in post-apartheid South Africa. While it certainly is still premature to consider either coexistence or such a tribunal, Said does give readers some hope and a trajectory to follow for those who would like to see a one-state solution.

If we heed Said, Shehadeh and Prashad's remarks, we can follow the path of BDS and acknowledge the past with words and actions. Given the increasing ties between India and Israel, it would behove us to listen to these words of wisdom. A great start would be purchasing this book (its proceeds go to the Palestine Solidarity Committee in India), reading its contents and altering Indian discourse that follows the logic of colonialism. This act of not passively reading Said's words, and instead also committing to acting on them will maintain the spirit in which they were intended and ensure that they don't only fall on the ears of those who are already aware and involved. ■

Bringing together essays, poetry and photographs from contemporary Kashmir, *Of Gardens and Graves* is a novel collection. The book marshals rich experiential, academic, literary, poetic and visual resources and deploys them in a manner that simultaneously appeals to multiple faculties.

While the introductory essay responds to the immediacy of the fresh wave of mass protests and state repression that unfolded in Kashmir between 2008 and 2010, a phenomenon to which the author was a first-hand witness, the essays that follow straddle over multiple disciplinary domains ranging from History and Literary Studies to International Relations in the colonial and post-colonial contexts, to make sense of the present. Though the essays may have been undertaken as independent reflective exercises, in the form of a book, they come together seamlessly as a comprehensive ethical and logical argument against the status quo, and in favour of political freedom and self-determination in Kashmir.

The second essay "My Paradise Is Burnin..." Past and Present in the Challenge", begins with the bloody present and traces its roots to colonial history and its afterlife in the post-colonial methods of governance and the Partition legacy and its bearing on Kashmir. It returns to the present through an engagement with the recent explosion of the new modes of being creatively political. Such creativity in the form of films, novels, poetry and other forms of art that expresses discontent and enact the psychic, the cultural and the political dislocations suffered by the people, "insist[s] on the importance of everyday experiences in any analysis of history or politics" (p 106). At the end of the essay, MC Kash's anthem for the Intifada of 2010 is reproduced in full. This sets the tone for a more intense engagement with the poetic mode of expression undertaken in the next essay.

At the heart of the volume is a selection of 28 contemporary poems

Hands blossoming into fists

Of Gardens and Graves: Essays on Kashmir, Poems in Translation

By Suvir Kaul

Photographs by Javed Dar

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by various Kashmiri poets including Arjan Dev 'Majboor', Ghulam Hassan 'Taskeen', Brij Nath 'Betaab', Ghulam Nabi Nazir Shabir 'Azar', Shahzadah Rafiq, Bashir Dada, Naji 'Munawar', Rukhsana Jabeen, Arshad Mushtaq, Ayesha 'Mastoor', Maqbool Sajid, Moti Lal 'Saqi', Mohiuddin 'Massarat', Ghulam Nabi 'Shaheen', Jawahir Lal 'Saroor', Pyare 'Hatash', Ghulam Nabi 'Khayal', Shahzadah Rafiq, Rashid 'Kanispuri', Fayaz Tilgami, Bashir 'Zair', Ghulam Hassan 'Ghamgeen' and Kashi Nath 'Bhagwan'. The poems are transliterated and translated mostly from the Kashmiri and a couple from the Urdu. Thematically, the poems draw heavily on the trauma and suffering, nostalgia and loss, and the wider political subjectivity that accrues from the festering conflict. In terms of style, though most of the poems stick to the traditional forms like *ghazal* or *nazm*, that strictly operate within the confines of rhyme and metre, some are radical in their experimentation with the form as well. For example Naji Munawar's 'Telitu' Az' (Then and Now), unfolds

in the form of a dialogue between a couple, perhaps overheard, about their past and present relationship to light, and whether it should be kept on or switched off. The dialogue that proceeds without any reference to the speakers is open to interpretation. Ayesha Mastoor's 'Su Chu Shur' (He is but a Child) can be read as a disjointed lament of someone whose child has recently been killed in a protest and is shifting between coherence and incoherence. Putting poetry in context, the essay titled "The Witness of Poetry" engages with the nature and function of poetic expression under emotionally and politically strained circumstances. Through a close reading of two *ghazals*, it reveals the psychic, archival and political work that poetry can do in contrast to the non-literary modes of expression. It illustrates how poetry and literature in general, can provide access to a "more 'materialist' account of political life" as against the erasures effected by the disciplines that tend to "side-line the affective dimensions of individual subjectivity



Devotees at the Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, February 2012



A protestor throws stones at paramilitary soldiers and police, Srinagar, January 2009

or collective consciousness” (p 142). More specifically, the essay examines the paradox of how trauma—that is often seen to manifest itself as inability to speak or in the brokenness of language — can get articulated through the discipline and formal rigour of a *ghazal*. It scrutinises the work that such a form does and demonstrates how it constitutes not only an articulation of trauma, but its reworking through language.

The juxtaposition and the parallel reading of poems written by Pandit and Muslim poets is a conscious move to see the shared language and poetry as the “affective glue that binds” them together even as they bear witness to “the destruction of the community” (p 150). The author consciously positions himself against the recent industry of writing that pitches the suffering of one community against the other, so as to run the claims of the other down and instead opens up the possibility of empathetic understanding and rapprochement through the poetic mode. Against the grain of such industry, Kaul does not perceive the suffering of the two communities – of one in the form of exile and its concomitant loss and hurt, and of the other, through militarised repression, systematic humiliation and denial of political agency – as opposed to each other, but as corollaries of the same phenomenon. The extraordinary sensitivity and scrupulousness with which he is able to navigate between the two sets of subjectivity, and not undermine either, despite being personally implicated as a Kashmiri Pandit, who also identifies as an Indian, is remarkable.

The last essay, titled “Indian Empire and the Case of Kashmir” traces the genealogy of India’s current foreign policy and that of many other post-colonial states, to the inheritance bequeathed to them by the British Empire. As is made obvious, in many respects the post-colonial arrangements of power in the subcontinent did not mark a radical shift from the colonial condition, both in its internal and external aspect. What particularly remained unchanged are the imperial ambitions and persisting nostalgia and longing for “the return of the raj”, more recently sought to be realised through Indo-US partnership for “international peacekeeping” (pp 191-192). One of the forms in which this continuity

the will and aspirations of the people who live there; the second, in the form of pursuit of expansionism to control territories and markets beyond such inherited land mass. The people on the margins of the state are offered a choice between acquiescing to the cultural and political ingress of the post-colonial power and thus win its favours, or get violently crushed through military means, making their condition worse than it was in the heyday of colonialism proper when some forms of political dissent were tolerated. Towards the end, the essay reminds us of the original promise of decolonisation as the “on-going process, open-ended in its possibilities and constantly aware of the need to develop and respect modes of self-determination”. (p 216)

While the poems provide an insight

militarisation that sustains Indian presence in Kashmir and its destructive impact on everyday life. Though the quality and subject matter of the images speak for themselves, there seems to be a conscious emphasis on the documentary, and avoidance of the artistic in the visual mode. The frames also resist the routinised fetishisation of Kashmir as an exotic landscape and instead present the simultaneity of horror and mundaneness of the everyday life under occupation.

The flow and linguistic ease of the text masks the remarkable range of interdisciplinary scholarship that the essays draw upon, without resorting to jargon. The extraordinary achievement of this book is its ability to glide through the dynamics of a whole range of phenomenon – from the personal and the subjective to the global and macro political – in which the people of Kashmir and Kashmir as a cultural and political entity are enmeshed.

The volume is perhaps the first scholarly attempt to present poetry as an archive of political feeling in Kashmir. The translations, understandably not always precise, are able to approximate the flavour of the originals. Although it takes some time and effort to get used to the transliteration, those familiar with the Kashmiri language will find it useful. An accompaniment of the originals in Nastalik and Devanagri, would have enhanced the archival value and usefulness of the volume.

The book closes with a brief meditation on a moving political poem by Agha Shahid Ali, personally addressed to Kaul both “as a friend and a Pandit” (p 229). The poem ironically titled ‘A Pastoral’, invokes the stark desolation of a place that has traditionally been admired for its timeless beauty. It ends on an invitation and promise of a deferred return and meeting in Srinagar, “our hands blossoming into fists till the soldiers return the keys and disappear”. This book, seemingly a response to Shahid’s invitation, measures up to the task. ■

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festers is the fanatic desire to retain territorial integrity of the land mass inherited from the British and feudal arrangements, with total disregard for

into the nuanced affective contours of the present in Kashmir, the hard journalistic photographs by Javed Dar, bring home the immediacy of



Mustard fields in Anantnag, April 2013