highlighting Israel's state terrorism, but also shows readers how impossible it is to encourage people to listen to Palestinians' reality, including in the education sector where "Palestinian librarians 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 Palestinian and Israeli is a theme of thought Said continues in the second essay in the book, "Bases for Coexistence", which first took form 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 writers 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, Shuhadeh 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 three 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 box, 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 Burning... 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 express 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 by various Kashmiri poets including Ayesha 'Mastoor', Ghalam Hassan 'Takseen', Bej Nath 'Betaab', Ghalam Nabi Nazir Shabir 'Azar', Shahzadah Rahiq, Bashir Dada, Naji 'Munawar', Bakhshah Ajab, Arefah Maushaq, Ayesha 'Mastoor', Maqbool Sajjad, Moti Lal 'Saqi', Mohiuddin 'Mussarat', Ghalam Nabi 'Shheen', Jawahir Lal 'Saroor', Pyare 'Hatash', Ghalam Nabi 'Khayal', Shahzada Rafiq, Rashid 'Kanispun', Fayaz Tilgami, Bashir 'Zaire', Ghalam Hassan 'Ghamgeist' 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, but a Child) can be read as a disjointed erasure effected by the disciplines that tend to "side-line the affective dimensions of individual subjectivity" in the form of a dialogue between a couple, perhaps heard, 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 'Sa Chu Shar' (He is but a Child) can be read as a disjoined 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..."
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”. 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 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 Kashmiri as a cultural and political entity are enmeshed.

The book closes with a brief meditation on a moving political poem by Aga 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.