

**FEATURE: WOMEN'S RESISTANCE IN KASHMIR Memory
as Resistance: Oral Histories from Kashmir**

IQBAL, Sehar and MAGILL, Severyna

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Memory as Resistance: Oral Histories
from Kashmir
by Sehar Iqbal and Severyna Magill¹

The valley of Kashmir, within Indian administered Kashmir, has experienced intractable civil conflict since 1989.¹ The nature of the conflict has shifted from armed engagements between militants and Indian paramilitary forces to confrontational street protests, with stone-throwing and retaliatory violence by paramilitary forces becoming almost systemic. Images splashed across national and international media show young men with covered faces braving tear-gas shells or pellet injuries as they run towards groups of paramilitary forces with stones in hand. The space of street protests is thus visibly branded as male. But the images obscure a little-known fact: for much of Kashmir's history, women and girls have been active in street protests, as planners, facilitators, and participants.

Previous literature on women in protest in Kashmir has focused on the creation of the Women's Self Defence Corps (WSDC) during the 1947 war and how women from this movement took a lead in encouraging higher education for girls in Kashmir valley.² More recent work like Seema Kazi's *Between Democracy and Nation* (2009) focuses on the role of Kashmiri women in street protests starting in the 1990s – centred largely on their agency in supporting armed militants and organizing protests against human rights abuses by security forces.³ The scarcity of scholarly work on the subject could lead even a serious reader to the conclusion that women in Kashmir were in deep hibernation for most of the twentieth century and only had brief dalliances with protest and politics when they woke up.

This conclusion is erroneous. As the testimonies of thirty women and girls we interviewed suggest, before and after 1947 there have been multiple examples of Kashmiri women mobilizing to demonstrate against acts of injustice, or in support of a political position. In both rural and urban areas women who were part of the anti-monarchical protest movement in the 1940s remained active participants in ground-level politics and continued to raise social issues in their communities.

Internationally, in 'the meta-narratives of histories', Rita Manchanda writes, 'women are visible as the overwhelming victims of war', consistently seen as 'outsiders to the battle front'.⁴ Women's participation, and the varied roles they perform in conflict situations, have been marginalized. Nuanced representations of female agency and dissent within the unrest are largely missing. When Kashmiri women are depicted, it is as victims: as widows, half-widows, and victims of rape.⁵ The images are inherently gendered; women are portrayed as passive mourners wailing over the loss of their sons or husbands, or the 'honour' of other women, their victimhood established by their perceived lack of agency. Over time this has obscured other narratives, and its myopic focus has pushed women's multi-layered complex experiences into pigeon-holed roles shaped by social expectations, stripping women of their agency. The roles women have performed 'beyond victimhood',⁶ as motivators, facilitators, and actors in Kashmir's conflict, remain obscured.

This paper contextualizes women-led protest in the Kashmir valley, recording its evolution from the 1940s until the present time, using oral history. It explores the lived experiences of Kashmiri women protestors from the ages of fifteen to ninety-two to gain an understanding of their individual and collective motivations for participating in protests. This retrieval of oral history serves to foreground

¹ University of Oxford iqbal.sehar@gmail.com, Sheffield Hallam University (UK) s.j.magill@gmail.com

Kashmiri women's voices and experiences and challenges the bias of dominant academic and media narratives that focus on victimhood.

Because of the continuous political upheaval in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded history on women's activism from the twentieth century is scant. Where archival records did exist, fires, floods and a constant shifting of government offices have left little for researchers. This makes the recording of oral history from the primary actors in Kashmir necessary. Oral history helps record the lived experience of a narrator, situated deep within their contextual realities. For this reason, it is an important tool for compassionate historiography. As Carrie Hamilton observes, 'Because interviews contain not only a narrator's words but also changes in the pace and tone of her voice, facial expressions, gestures, non-verbal sounds such as laughter and crying, as well as silences, oral history offers a potentially wider range of emotional evidence than most written sources'.⁷ For us, oral history captures the emotional intensity of Kashmiri women's activism that is lost in other archives. This is why we have used it in our research.

We agree with Laura Sjoberg that because of the omission of gender, 'many current theoretical approaches to war have inadvertently conceptualized what counts as a war, who actors are in war, and the gendered values reflected in the making and fighting of wars'.⁸ We apply her feminist theory of war to the conflict that exists in Kashmir. This feminist gendered lens prioritizes an examination of 'how wars are lived, felt, and sensed as emotional and physical' experiences by the women and girls who live them. At the same time, however, we acknowledge the limitations of human memory and realize that oral history cannot simply be used to fill gaps in recorded history.

To explore women's experiences of activism, we conducted semi-structured interviews with women in Maisuma and Qamarwari, both neighbourhoods in Srinagar, and from seven different villages in Pulwama. Maisuma is a working-class neighbourhood where women's protest reportedly first began, and which is locally considered an epicentre of political protests. The mean age of the interview participants in Maisuma was sixty, and they had been either active in, or eyewitnesses to, the street protests that began in the 1940s and continued into the 1980s. Qamarwari is a bustling neighbourhood in Srinagar, mainly Sunni Muslim but with some Shia residents. It has not historically been associated with continual political protests, but women-led protests demanding better services from the state government have occurred. Hence it makes a useful counterfoil to Maisuma for the purposes of this study. In Qamarwari, the mean age of the interview respondents was forty-four. Pulwama is a predominantly agricultural district in south Kashmir which has become a wellspring of protest in recent years and is known to have a high proportion of young women participating in the protests. In Pulwama, the mean age of the interview respondents was nineteen.

Thirty girls and women between fourteen and ninety-two were interviewed by the authors over a period of six months from June to December 2018. Conducting interviews in these three distinct areas enabled us to collect data and examine whether the aims, methods and results of women-led protests in Kashmir have changed geographically or temporally. The respondents included school and college students, housewives, and agriculturists who have been organizers and participants in women's protests, or who have observed protests from their localities. The semi-structured interviews enabled us to collect first-hand accounts of women's experiences and memories, and the emotional impact of conflict, which we have attempted to foreground so as to better understand the participants' motivations.

The interviewees shared their experiences with us openly. This was partly because we had taken care to be introduced to them by important figures from their neighbourhood and partly because we built up a good mutual understanding during the interviews. We and the participants had a strong shared identity as women protestors besides shared experiences of occupying public spaces and

demanding accountability from public authorities. Sehar has led student protests in Srinagar's Women's College in the early 2000s as well as in her village (against the rape of a minor). Severyna is part northern Irish and has organized protests in India and the UK against human-rights violations and the rolling back of reproductive freedoms for women.

Each interview was written in English and administered in Kashmiri. The responses were translated by Sehar, a native Kashmiri speaker, and transcribed into English as the interviews took place. Every interview took at least an hour because of the semi-structured approach that was adopted to give control of the interview process to the respondents. Throughout this paper the participants are referred to by pseudonyms and their age is approximated in order to minimize the risk of reprisals, given the nature of the military violence that persists in Kashmir valley. Interviews commenced only after individual respondents had given written consent for the interview to take place and for it to be used in an academic study.

'WE CALLED HER RAJE MOEJ': RESISTANCE AND THE WORKING-CLASS WOMEN OF KASHMIR

Historically, the subjugation of the Kashmiri people to the Dogra Dynasty, which ruled Jammu and Kashmir as a princely state with the backing of British India from 1846 to 1947, is well recorded.⁹ Dogra rule rendered many

Kashmiris – particularly Muslims – landless and without rights. Taxation was backbreaking and rural households were heavily in debt. Men and women were forced to work on the land of often absent landlords without compensation or benefits. Famines and cyclical epidemics were common.¹⁰ In Srinagar city the shawl weavers were heavily taxed and forced by the State to continue production despite mounting debts. On 22 July 1931 in Srinagar Dogra soldiers fired on shawl weavers protesting against Dogra injustice, resulting in twenty-two casualties. This day, marked as Martyrs' Day in Jammu and Kashmir, was the precursor to a series of protests across the Kashmir valley, wherein men and women protested alongside one another. This was reportedly the first time women had a public role in expressing dissent in the public sphere.¹¹

Maisuma, one of the first places in Kashmir where women organized protests against Princely rule, was the first site of our research. After a preliminary visit, seven key informants who had either seen or participated in protests since the 1940s were identified and interviewed, in the house of one of them where they had gathered. Of the interviewees two were born in the 1920s and recalled the events of the 1940s. Fata (aged ninety-two), born in 1926, according to *Mohalla* (neighbourhood) records, was the oldest. She and Salma (ninety) were a mine of information on the earliest anti-monarchical women protestors of Maisuma. According to them, the earliest public action organized by women in Maisuma was led by three women – Raja Begum, nicknamed Raaje Kaachzer (the blonde one) due to her fair hair, and her friends Saja and Khatoon.

In a small upstairs room with colourful blankets as floor coverings, Fata recalled how as a girl she had heard that three Maisuma women, Raja, Saja, and Khatoon encountered two Dogra cavalrymen.

The three young women were childhood friends and went everywhere together. They had gone to fetch water from the spring when two Dogra cavalry men told them to let their horses drink first. The women protested and were verbally abused by the soldiers. After the soldiers left, the women filled their pots and walked home. They were disturbed and angry at the sexual nature of the remarks. The next day they waited by the spring till one of the soldiers arrived. They ambushed him, somehow managing to un-horse him and beat him with lathis (long wooden poles) they had carried from home. They left the soldier senseless at the spring and returned home.¹²

Fata's account is echoed by Salma who describes how this public act of defiance led to a spate of violent retributions by the Dogra state.

How would the soldiers stay silent after that? They came into Maisuma on foot and on horses, beating anyone they came across. They would ask the men to give the names of the three women who had beaten their comrade but no one did. Solidarity with each other is very strong here! When Raja, Saja and Khatoon found out that their neighbours were being beaten, they decided to act against the *zulum* [injustice]. They would gather women and girls of all ages from the neighbourhood to form large crowds and block particular streets [so soldiers wouldn't get into the neighbourhood]. When soldiers started beating the protestors, Raja and Saja designated younger women to stay at home to go to upper storeys of their houses and throw boiling water on them [soldiers].¹³

What the three young women sparked was not just a culture of female public protest but also a place in the collective memory of the women of Maisuma. The younger women in the room also recall their grandmothers and mothers telling them this tale and it is clear that it has been remembered through generations of women as a symbol of Maisuma women's resistance to public humiliation. When asked what happened to the three friends after the end of monarchical rule, Raja's niece, Guddi (forty-five) said that only Raja married within Maisuma and remained a protest leader. Saja married and moved to another neighbourhood in Srinagar. She was no longer able to participate in local protests. Khatoon was unmarried but died of tuberculosis in the 1950s.

Though the efficacy of the protests and results of the retaliatory violence by women cannot be gauged retrospectively, these first-hand accounts establish that the women of Maisuma took to public action primarily because of real and perceived threats to their bodily integrity and personal safety. It is also amply clear that these women's protests were planned and regular, with a defined leadership and mass appeal. Thus began a cycle of oppression by the state, and counter-protest and resistance, that earned Maisuma its reputation as a wellspring of protest in Kashmir. Today in Maisuma public protest by women is not only seen as legitimate by its residents, but is also crucial to how the working-class neighbourhood defines itself against the more affluent neighbourhoods that surround it. As Guddi declares, 'We are fighters, we have never tolerated oppression like the Khojje *mohallas* [affluent traders' localities] nearby'.¹⁴

Taj Begum (aged sixty-three) and Sakina Begum (sixty-two), born in the late 1950s, witnessed their mothers, aunts and neighbours protesting actively in and around their neighbourhood. They would go along sometimes and sometimes stay at home. But they remembered the respect accorded to Raja Begum, the mother of women's protests in Maisuma, up to her death in the early 1990s. Taj explained 'We kids called her *Raje moej* (mother) and she was given the higher seat at every social gathering'.¹⁵ (In Kashmiri culture the seat furthest away from the door, at the highest point of a room, is reserved for the eldest or most respected person.)

The stories of Maisuma's women echo academic studies of anti-monarchical protests by Kashmiri women in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁶ Shazia Malik's *Women's Development amid Conflicts in Kashmir*, based on archived police reports, describes how in 1931 'processions of women and children had become a common sight', with protests taking place in Maisuma bazaar and in the towns of Anantnag, Baramulla, Shopian and Sopore. In these protests women used violence and violence was used against them. Malik tells the story of Begum Bohru, a widow from Baramulla (north Kashmir) who flung a kangri (pot full of hot coals) which she was carrying in the face of a police Sub-Inspector. 'The kangri's hot coals "permanently disfigured" the policeman

and Begum Bohru was shot dead at the scene'.) Another activist, 'Zoon Gujri, a milkman's daughter, plagued the military and police through her vituperative utterance[s] and pugnacious pranks'. She was repeatedly arrested, released, and re-arrested. During protests state agents ordered the protestors to disperse and when they refused, men as well as women, some carrying babies or with small children, were hit with batons, assaulted, fired upon and killed. 'Bodies were dumped into the Jhelum river and reports about women's modesty having been outraged rose.'¹⁷ Women who protested alongside men faced the same violent reprisals. Malik's research evokes women's experience and shows Kashmiri women in the 1930s at the forefront of resistance and dissent against oppression and subjugation by the state.

Large numbers of working-class and labouring women joined with their male peers in opposing Dogra exploitation and calling for the release of imprisoned political leaders. This may indicate gender equality with men within their class oppression. Prem Nath Bazaz's *Daughters of the Vitasta* takes a broad historical view of the lives of Kashmiri women from ancient times until the 1950s.¹⁸ Recognizing that working-class women enjoyed more freedom of movement and economic agency than women of the feudal elite, Bazaz observes that 'peasant women work[ed] side by side with men and as strenuously, transplanting paddy stalks under the harsh rays of the summer sun', and that 'Kashmiri women . . . found an important place in domestic services and small professions and trade. . . in spinning and weaving. . . as washers, cleaners, milk-sellers, vegetable purveyors, wicker-basket makers and flower vendors'.¹⁹

The socio-economic importance of working-class women in Kashmiri society gave them public agency that in turn enabled them to take part in dissent-based activities free from the controlling influences of stricter gendered norms such as *purdah*, that women from the feudal classes experienced.²⁰ Bashir Dabla, Kashmir's leading sociologist, confirms that 'women in the valley in general participated in that movement against feudal rule of the Maharaja dynasty in large numbers and their men put no restriction on them', and working-class women 'generally did not practice *Purdah*'.²¹ Recognition of class differences between women in Kashmiri society supports the claim that working-class women generally had greater freedom to participate in dissent-based activities within public space than the majority of upper-class women.

'THE CLOSEST WE COULD GET TO HITTING THE STATE': DEFIANCE, ARREST, AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

By the 1940s the National Conference, a political party headed by Sheikh Abdullah, had become the face of the anti-monarchical movement in Kashmir valley. The long-suffering Kashmiri peasants and shawl weavers supported the ideas of Naya Kashmir – a radical manifesto by the National Conference that promised land to the tiller and food for all. Women in both rural and urban areas of Kashmir and from varied class backgrounds became active participants in ground-level politics and continued highlighting social issues in their communities. In 1946, women marched and attended mass meetings against Dogra rule 'in defiance of prohibitory orders'.²² Their support for the anti-monarchical movement was rooted in their hopes for a new future free from exploitation and feudal oppression. Their defiance of government orders and presence within public space made them vulnerable to violent consequences. Malik notes that Fatima, a protest leader in Anantnag district of south Kashmir was shot dead by Dogra forces while leading a procession against the regime's repressive policies. Zooni Gujri, a milkmaid from the Gujjar community (a heterogeneous tribal group mostly engaged in animal husbandry), 'was put behind bars as many as nine times' and on several occasions was 'attacked by the armed police'.²³ Gujri lost her only son, aged twelve, to gunfire from the military police. As these incidents show, frustration against oppression, as well as personal anger and bereavement, motivated women's dissent.

Women-led campaigns diversified in the 1940s, incorporating more women from middle and upper-class backgrounds. When Sheikh Abdullah was arrested and imprisoned, his wife Begum Akbar Jahan became a figurehead of the new Kashmiri movement against oppression from Delhi. Begum Akbar Jahan 'led anti-government demonstrations and kept the morals of the freedom fighters alive'.²⁴ Begum Zainab abandoned purdah, 'arranged relief for victims of Dogra aggression' and gave speeches motivating and mobilizing National Conference party workers,²⁵ while women in the National Conference established a food committee to counter the rising cost of goods and to alleviate poverty for those most in need.²⁶ The formation of the Women's Self Defence Corps, a voluntary militia consisting primarily of women and girls from Kashmir, became a public symbol of emancipation and female agency in the region.²⁷ As Kashmir moved from Dogra rule to recognition as a state within India, state-building efforts were prioritized and girls' education was campaigned for, together with women's rights to vote, stand for elections, and to receive legal recognition of their socio-economic equality with men. Women's voices, roles, and responses to multifarious issues were now firmly present within the public sphere.

In Maisuma, direct protests continued. Zeba (aged seventy-five), was active in women's protests in Maisuma from the late 1950s to the 1980s. She told how women's protests evolved from opposing the monarchy to supporting Sheikh Abdullah, particularly as the Plebiscite Front (a political party founded by Abdullah loyalists) mobilized people across Kashmir after his arrest. Sheikh Abdullah had been appointed by the Indian Prime Minister, Nehru, to lead the emergency administration after the tribal invasion from Pakistan in 1947. His party, the National Conference, won the first general elections in Kashmir in 1952, but because of differences with Nehru he was dismissed from his position and arrested in August, 1953. The Plebiscite Front (1955 to 1975) rejected the Union government's meddling in the democratic process of Jammu and Kashmir and drummed up support for a popular plebiscite to decide whether the state would join Pakistan or India. Its campaign found ground-level resonance and led to a large public boycott of the electoral process for the State Assembly, though the sixties and mid seventies. Massive street protests against New Delhi became the norm during this period, reaching a crescendo during Sheikh Abdullah's incarceration from 1953 to 1958.

Zeba described how the women of Maisuma would come out into the streets to demand Abdullah's release and to publicly attack the undemocratically installed 'puppet regime' of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad:

It was a very troubling time. Whatever information reached us was through rumours. Whenever we heard rumours that Sheikh sahab's health had deteriorated, we feared they [the Indian government] would kill him in exile. That's when our protests would become violent. Me and my group of six women used to make kerosene bombs and throw them at the police. It was the police who had arrested him [Abdullah] you see. For us they were the closest we could get to hitting the state.

When asked how they made the bombs, Zeba recalled,

We didn't have electricity those days and there were kerosene lamps in every house. We used to store used glass bottles and kerosene from hurricane lamps to secretly make bombs in our homes. For fuses we used lengths of *doore* (cotton cords used to hold up men's pyjamas.) During the week we would cut off small lengths from the *doores* from the men's pyjamas before washing the clothes. At the end of each week we would have enough fuses for seven to ten bombs.

On Sheikh Abdullah's final release and consequent return to power in 1975, 28 women's marches became public expressions of jubilation and welcome for the exiled leader. The next public outpouring on a similar scale happened at the time of his death in 1982. Zeba recalls the atmosphere of grief and confusion on that day. As women from her neighbourhood tried to move towards Abdullah's residence in Gupkar to pay their last respects, they were prevented from doing so by the police who pushed some of them aside. She recalls the tidal wave of anger unleashed on the police by the women protestors in Maisuma:

We pushed them [the police] back and in the altercation two of them had their shirts torn. We were shrieking and wailing, there was a cloud of noise everywhere. The kerosene bombs came back in our hands, and we fought pitched battles with policemen all day. After that, the local police would say 'the women of Maisuma are relentless; they didn't even spare our clothes!'

She laughed as the memories came flooding back, perhaps demonstrating the empowerment women felt when acting in solidarity with one another together, their strong emotions, and united opposition against state security. 'I am now seen by most young women here as a pious old woman who prays five times a day. But my past has been much more colourful. Thank you for making me relive it!', she says, as she hugs the interviewer.²⁹

Salma corroborates Zeba's story:

Most of us (women leaders) in my youth were firm supporters of the National Conference because their fight was against the rich and for the poor like us. I was a cardholder of the party till 1985. But after Sheikh sahib died the party lost its way. His son was more comfortable partying with rich people than meeting with the poor. That's when I and many other women from the neighbourhood became unhappy with the National Conference. Some joined the Awami National Conference headed by G.M. Shah, Sheikh sahib's son-in-law. Many stopped supporting any political party.³⁰

As we settle down to salted tea and *kulchas* (crisp Kashmiri bread), the younger women in the room start to speak up. Prominent among them is Guddi, niece of Raja Begum, the founder protestor from Maisuma. She says, 'My great-aunt was a strong woman. Nothing quelled the protestor in her – not marriage, not children, not even old age. She remained a leader and a protestor till her death in 1990'. Guddi, Rehana and Dilshad (aged forty-five, forty and forty-nine respectively) all remembered accompanying their mothers and aunts on protests led by Raja. Some of these protests were organized to protest the arrest or abduction of men from the community by the police and to demand their release. Women's experiences in resisting and fighting against the illegal detentions of their male family members forms a significant part of living memory in Maisuma from the 1980s onwards.

During our interviews Guddi recalled how from the mid 1980s Raja Begum, by now a party worker of the Awami National Conference party headed by Abdullah's son-in-law Ghulam Mohammad Shah, often mobilized women to protest against the arrests of men from their neighbourhood, and also became a target of arrest herself:

Once, when she was leading a protest against the arrest of a local man from Maisuma, she was arrested by the police and taken away in a police jeep. I held on to the jeep with all my childish rage and kept shouting at the police to let her go. I held on all the way to the Police station but was scolded and sent home by the police. My great aunt had been arrested even

though she hadn't done anything wrong. I thought they would never release her but the women who protested with her didn't rest till they got her released. One hundred women from the *mohalla* [local neighbourhood] marched to the police station to demand her release and would not leave till the Chief Minister, Gul Shah himself, came to the police station and ordered Raja's release. That day I realized Raja is a great woman, I wanted to be just like her when I grew up!

This story demonstrates women's power and leadership locally to mobilize protest and dissent against the security apparatus of the state as well as the state's recognition of their influence and interest in it to secure support.

True to her childhood wish, Guddi is now the leader and organizer of protests in Maisuma. She organizes not just protests involving cis women but also men and Javeda, the lone transgender woman in the neighbourhood. She is proud of the diversity of the participants in protests organized by her.

Javeda is also our sister and has come out to protest every time we do. The women from the five Kashmiri Pandit³¹ families that still live in the *mohalla* also come out to protest with us. We are all united!

With the rigging of the 1987 election to the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly by the Indian government in collaboration with the National Conference (now headed by Sheikh Abdullah's less popular son Farooq), a new phase of civil opposition to state authority emerged in Kashmir.

Politically alienated young men from Kashmir would cross into Pakistan administered Kashmir for weapons training. They would come back and attack state officials and National Conference party workers, both seen as denying free political choice for Kashmiris. This was the beginning of an organized, regular resistance movement. The Indian State reacted by bringing the state under central rule in 1990 and pouring an unprecedented number of Indian armed forces into the state. Jammu and Kashmir became the most heavily militarized region in the world. In the cyclical violence that followed between the militants and the Indian armed forces, the damage to civilian lives and properties was immense.

Amnesty International has reported that over 43,000 people were killed in Kashmir between 1990 and 2011,³² while local civil society organizations suggest 70,000 lives were lost between 1989 and 2011, with an additional 8,000 enforced disappearances.³³ Local journalists, politicians, and academics have claimed the number of deaths is as high as 100,000.³⁴ Guddi explains:

Though women from the *mohalla* continued to protest throughout the eighties about local issues, particularly the lack of water and electricity, in the 1990s we protested against police brutality, particularly when we heard about massacres like Gawakadal where paramilitary forces opened fire on unarmed protestors. We knew these excesses had the blessings of the [then] Governor Jagmohan. Once, when he came on a visit to our neighbourhood, we women surrounded his cavalcade, shouted slogans against him and even broke the windows of his escort vehicle. He never returned to Maisuma again.³⁵

Guddi's statements demonstrate how women's activism was often centered around social work and community led issues and that women collectively became more violent in response to the State-sanctioned violence (just as they had in the 1940s).

‘TODAY I PROTEST SO WE CAN LIVE IN PEACE AND DIGNITY’: COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE AND WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

The 1987 election, a turning point in Kashmiri protest for men and women, ‘ushered in the largest surge of armed violence because it was rigged and because it followed a history of resentment at recurrent electoral fraud.’³⁶ In the years that followed, militancy, fatal shootings, and women’s participation in the conflict all increased.

By the winter of 1989 an organized, armed insurgency had broken out against the Indian government in Kashmir valley. The majority of the militants were men disenchanted and void of any faith in the Indian government’s commitment to Kashmir. They had crossed into Pakistan following the 1987 rigged election to receive training and came back with a motive to achieve separatist rule either via allegiance with Pakistan or as an independent state. In the early 1990s ‘a euphoria and common ideology united men and women alike for a cause that seemed just and worth fighting for – the creation of an independent Kashmir’.³⁷ Women continued to protest against the ever-increasing number of men who were being detained and disappearing, marched against the army and fed, sheltered, nursed, and motivated militants, whom they saw as their ‘own’ while the army was seen as the ‘other’.³⁸ Some women crossed into Pakistan to receive training too,³⁹ whilst others facilitated combat by smuggling weapons, providing information on the army’s movements to the militants and helping militants to hide in raids.

Dilshad’s testimony highlights the evolution of women’s roles during the militancy:

From 1989 to 1991, a few men from the neighbourhood were arrested on suspicion of helping militants. This was a first for us, we had never known what militancy was before. These men were innocent vegetable vendors. We came out on the streets to protest their arrests but to no avail. A few of the older women leaders associated with the National Conference approached their party leaders for the men’s release, but they couldn’t do anything. We became disillusioned with them and started supporting the militants for real. After all, we had already been accused of it.⁴⁰

For some women in Maisuma, personal relationships to the men who were killed or fighting deepened their loyalties to the militants. Some men from the neighbourhood joined militant ranks from the mid 1990s. Many of them like Rahat Begum’s nephew were killed. This made the women from their families more personally inimical to the police and paramilitary forces and sympathetic to the militants.

For others, empathy came first. Zeba tells how militants were fed by women in their homes as they came in the night demanding food: ‘They were just hungry boys, bewildered and homesick, some of them as young as fifteen. How can one turn away someone who turns up in that condition on your doorstep?’ The women of Maisuma had to pay a heavy price for their acts of empathy. Zeba recalls: ‘The police would storm into our houses and turn everything topsy-turvy looking for the militants. They threatened me, my daughter and my daughter-in-law with arrest and torture if we helped militants.’ But the women continued to feed and shelter militants and protested fiercely against police threats and violence. The memories of their relatives who had been part of the original protestor group in Maisuma sustained many like Dilshad. ‘I remembered the women of old, like my mother-in-law’s cousin, Sara, who boldly led hundreds of women in protest. She was arrested many times in the 1960s and 70s but she never gave up.’

Support for the militants waned somewhat in the late 1990s. The women said that this was due to the number of fatalities and concerns about the survival of their relatives and children. Zeba provided an example:

My son went missing in 1998. We searched everywhere but couldn't find any sign of him. After five days someone told me he was seen with a distant relative of ours who had become a militant. I went to the relative's house and demanded to know what he had done with my son. When he told me that he had advised my son to join militant ranks, I slapped and cursed him in front of his family. He had tried to lure my son through false promises, forgetting about who would take care of an old widow like me if my son went away. Four days later we found my son hiding under an old bridge two neighbourhoods away. We brought him back home and to this day I thank Allah he didn't make that choice.⁴¹

Reprisals by the police and paramilitary forces became more violent from the 1990s. Rehana tells of how the violence ripped families apart and turned women into serial protestors:

My husband was killed by a blow from a policeman's lathi in 1997. He was the sole breadwinner and our family descended into poverty. Indiscriminate arrests of male members of the family became a norm for us. But we women didn't give up protesting. Whenever they took our sons, brothers or husbands the women of Maisuma would gather in the streets. After all we couldn't sit at home and do nothing! They [the paramilitary forces] would chase after us and throw tear-gas shells in our gardens. Lately they throw stones at our houses and break our windows.⁴²

The women of Maisuma were resilient in the face of these attacks on their hearths and homes and continued to protest whilst making practical adjustments to their households: 'We don't have glass in our windows facing the street anymore. We use sheets of polythene. We also don't keep any valuables in the house anymore, just articles for daily use' (security forces break valuable household items during search operations).⁴³

For some women like Sakina (sixty-two), avenging harm done to them by the police was their motivation to protest. Hit by a policeman with a rifle butt on her leg as she returned from casting her vote at the local polling station in 2008, her anger spilled out visibly during the interview.

Before this I believed casting a vote could make a difference. But because of that incident I became a protestor – much later in life than many others in this neighbourhood. A year ago I was hit on my other leg by a tear-gas shell while protesting. I can't run fast anymore so I don't go into the street while the other women demonstrate. But I always watch from an upper-storey window and shout slogans and sometimes shower sweets on processions going by. That way I feel I'm right beside them.⁴⁴

As if picking up on Sakina's anger, Guddi also raises her voice. Her eyes open wide and she grips the cup in her hand tight as she recounts how the arrests of her two brothers turned her against the police.

The police kept them locked up for one year, no charges, no reason. I kept going to the police station with my sisters and pleading with the officers there, but they just wouldn't listen. After months of this, I decided I wasn't going to plead before anyone. I would join the street protests and be in front of everyone else. Initially, my husband opposed this idea so I would go without telling him. After some time, he realized the sentiment ran too deep

within me so he gave up trying to restrict me. Today I protest so we can live in peace and dignity.

Guddi's belief that by protesting she could reclaim her familial and personal dignity demonstrates the powerful emotional pull of expressing anger and frustration, even when confronting the unmatched power of the state. She explains how protests have brought public recognition to protesting women like her, beyond their neighbourhoods, but how their personal lives continue to be full of struggle:

My pictures have been on the front pages of newspapers. The police know that I lead the protests here and all the sisters join. They bring the female police here to prevent me from starting a protest. My protest has brought me recognition but my living conditions are still hard. I am struggling to get my daughter married. Some days when I get home from the protest there isn't any food to eat. I don't lead others just to fill my home, I do it to stop oppression.⁴⁵

'WHY DO THE PARAMILITARY FORCES ENTER OUR HOUSES? WHY DO THEY HARASS US?': A NEW DECADE, A NEW GENERATION OF PROTEST

After Burhan Wani, a popular and social-media savvy Kashmiri militant, was killed by Indian security forces in July 2016, an extended spell of street protests began. While these were mostly led by men,⁴⁶ 'unprecedented involvement of boys and eventually, girls' occurred that summer, and again in 2017.⁴⁷ Eighty-six percent of the women we interviewed in Maisuma and Pulwama said their involvement in protests had increased since the summer of 2016, which indicates that women were active too. Most said they had participated in five to fifteen protests over the past twelve months, while for 19% that number was twenty or more. These protests were marked by extreme levels of violence. Protestors pelted police with stones; paramilitary forces burnt government buildings and lynched a plain-clothed policeman. Police and paramilitary forces used tear-gas, water cannons, live ammunition and shotguns firing metal pellets (which brought international condemnation).⁴⁸ Thousands of Kashmiris were injured.

The exact number of injured and blinded is hard to determine and estimates vary, but hundreds suffered eye injuries and many, including children, were left permanently blinded. The Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), using data from ten of the twenty-two districts in Jammu and Kashmir, stated that 1,726 people were injured by metal pellets in 2016. In January 2018, according to the Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti, '6,221 people had been injured by pellet guns in Kashmir between 8 July 2016 and 27 February 2017; among the victims, 728 had eye injuries'.⁴⁹ Doctors working in government hospitals point out that the actual numbers could be much higher because young people with pellet injuries often do not seek medical treatment due to fear of arrest or police action.

During the particularly violent summers of 2016 and 2017, Pulwama in South Kashmir emerged as the new epicentre of street protests in Kashmir. This was partly because Burhan Wani hailed originally from Tral in Pulwama and partly because police and paramilitary forces stormed the Pulwama Degree College in April 2017 to quell student protests.⁵⁰ The indiscriminate use of pepper spray and tear-gas enraged students and led to a movement of mass street demonstrations by youth across the valley in support of their fellow-students. Female students in Pulwama protested for the first time and some sustained injuries.⁵¹

To understand the dynamics of the current protests by women in Kashmir we travelled to a village near Pulwama town, to talk to the original group of protesting young women. Since 2016 these young women have become leaders of a new generation of educated, articulate female protestors with a clear agenda. As in Maisuma, we met and interviewed women from different areas of Pulwama in one protestor's home, near the market town. Ten protestors consented to share their experiences and personal details with us. Their ages ranged from fourteen to thirty-five. Some, like Sameena (aged sixteen), were still in school. Sameena started protesting a year ago:

Boys from our village would protest during the day and in the evening paramilitary forces would enter our houses to look for them. If they found them they would take them away for questioning despite our pleas. If they didn't find them they would throw away our food and trash household items. In the morning the other boys would come out to protest against their friends being taken away and there would be stone-pelting. The government would close the schools in our area to prevent further violence. We lost so many months of school. Nobody seemed to care. My friends and I decided to do something. We organized a protest against the closure of schools and eighty-six girls from our school joined us. Though our parents supported our cause, they were worried about reprisals from the police/paramilitaries so we stopped for a while. Then on 15 April we heard that the police and army had entered the Degree College and harassed some girl students and teachers there. We ran to the college, gathering stones on the way. We saw that some girls were unconscious and were being shifted to the hospital by other students. Paramilitaries were inside the college campus raining down tear-gas and pepper-gas shells on staff and students. We started pelting them with stones and shouting for them to get out. We continued for about an hour till they left of their own accord. That was my first time being part of a violent protest.⁵²

Her fears about the power of the paramilitary forces were echoed by Jameela (aged twenty-two) who studies at the Pulwama Degree College:

After Burhan Wani's killing our area saw so much violence. The paramilitary entered our houses at night and broke household things like televisions and heaters. They would take away young boys who were protesting during the day. When women tried to stop them, they would get roughed up. I want to ask, why do the paramilitary forces enter our houses? Why do they harass us?⁵³

The night raids by the paramilitary prompted night protests in the villages near Pulwama. Women and girls whose houses were being trashed or whose children were being taken would come out and start shouting loudly. On hearing the commotion, other women from the neighbourhood would gather outside the house, raise a hue and cry and try to push soldiers away. Sometimes they pelted the soldiers with stones to deter them.

Shafiqa (aged sixty-five) was acknowledged as the main force behind the night protest movement by local women. She says,

My son had been taken away by security personnel in 1990 and I and my female relatives had protested every day near the local Army Camp till he was released. I know what it is to have your children taken away. The summer of 2016 was the bloodiest for us in recent memory, more than 120 people died all across Kashmir as the paramilitary cracked down on street protests. The killings drove the young boys in the village to even more fierce protests, they would even try to attack armoured vehicles used by the CRPF [Central Reserve Police Force] with heavy stones and bricks. At night the CRPF group would come to take away the

protest leaders. Imagine, some of these boys were just twelve years old! I told the women to come out and protest; to stop our children from being taken. We have to protect our children because no one else is going to.⁵⁴

Shafiq's decision to protest in 2016, twenty-six years after her son's disappearance in 1990, is representative of an often heard sentiment amongst the interview respondents: 'because our community is very small, every time there is a disappearance or killing, the dead are like my sons, my brothers'.⁵⁵

For Nazeera (thirty-five) from Gangoo, Aamira (eighteen) from TENGHARA, SNOWBER (twenty) from Pulwama town, Aqsa (nineteen) from Nilura and Saima (nineteen) from Mughalpora, uniformed men invading their homes and intimidating/ taking away male members of their family was the principal reason for their joining the night protests.⁵⁶ Says Saima,

In October last year, the police arrested my brother, a Class X [sixteen year- old child], saying he was a stone pelter. They had no evidence. We protested every day outside the police station till they let him go on the 2nd of November.

Other women, like eighteen-year-old Insha who was studying for the medical entrance examination, were moved to protest by a perceptible threat to their personal safety:

When braid-chopping started in our village in September 2017, everyone was scared. We heard that it was the security forces who were entering homes in disguise and cutting off women's hair. Everyone thought they could be next. In our culture, cutting off a woman's hair isn't just a violation of her personal space but a form of public humiliation. I was at home most days that winter preparing for my exams. When a widow in our neighbourhood had her hair cut off it all became very real for me. I decided to join the protests being organized by our village women and girls in support of the victims and against the perpetrators. Since then I have protested four times, despite resistance from my parents.⁵⁷

Three other interviewees aged sixteen to twenty-one narrated similar stories. When asked why they thought the security forces were behind the spate of women's hair being cut off mysteriously in their homes, they replied:

Who else would gain from such acts? They [soldiers] used this tactic to intimidate families to prevent them from taking part in public confrontations. We have heard that they would use some chemicals to make women unconscious and then cut off their hair to humiliate the family.⁵⁸

These views demonstrate the deep levels of suspicion and mistrust of the military which have permeated Kashmiri society over decades of violence. Braid-chopping began in Kashmir in September 2017. Videos of similar incidents in Rajasthan and Haryana, widely circulated on WhatsApp, heightened fears and insecurity. More than two hundred cases of women having their hair cut off by unknown men were reported.⁵⁹ The victims alleged that the men sprayed some chemical on their face, after which they fell unconscious. When they woke up their hair had been cut off. When the authorities dismissed these allegations as a result of 'mass-hysteria', the entire valley erupted in protest.

Maisuma saw two cases of braid-chopping, one against a young widow with two small children. When the women gathered outside her house to protest, the CRPF troopers retaliated mercilessly. According to Zeba, 'Women's processions were shelled heavily. Two women were injured by tear-

gas shells and the house of the victim was damaged severely as shells were launched at the windows.'

As the braid-chopping abated the regularity of the protests waned, but the women of Maisuma have continued to protest against the arrest or detention of men and boys from the neighbourhood. This demonstrates a parallel between the experiences of the women in Maisuma and the younger women in Pulwama, driven by the same family and community concerns to protest against violent incursions on their space, their homes and their bodies. The similarities in women's participation in protest and the generational ties between women, even from different localities, also became evident.

In Qamarwari 85% of all the interviewees said they had participated in protests. Of the women who reported having participated in protest, all bar one interviewee (the youngest at twenty-one), said they had protested prior to 2016. What sets Qamarwari apart from Maisuma and Pulwama was the women's motivation – of the women who had protested before 2016 all but one said that the price of rice and lack of electricity had spurred them to protest against the State government. One woman said that an arson attack on her local dargah (shrine) also drove her to protest in 2004.

What unites the women interviewed from Qamarwari and from Maisuma and Pulwama is the increase in their participation in protest from 2016 and their motives. Of the interviewees who had protested before 2016, all claimed that the harm inflicted upon men was a motivation for them to protest.

Heeba (sixty) recalled that her sister's husband was killed twenty-three years ago when he used to work as a labourer. 'To this day we don't know how he died and where they buried him.' Heeba also said that in 2008 violence again escalated and many men from Qamarwari were either killed or went missing. She remains concerned for the safety and welfare of the men in her community.

Because our community is very small, when a man is killed or disappeared, I feel it is my own son or brother. When I protest I feel scared of getting injured because of my age but I need to protest for the freedom for my brothers and sons – to have peace and normal surroundings.⁶⁰

Heeba echoes Shafiq from Pulwama word for word. Each is referring to the same sentiment – of the *mohalla* (neighbourhood) or poor (village hamlet) being a small community and almost like an extended family. Heeba's experiences have also taught her that not participating in protest does not guarantee your safety. Several years ago her son was studying inside their home when a blast occurred nearby. Shrapnel injured her son's hand so badly that it had to be amputated. This has affected his ability to secure employment.

Several of the respondents used the imagery of blood to refer to the summer of 2016 when Burhan Wani was killed and the subsequent protests caused mass loss of life. At the mention of Burhan's name Shama (fifty-three) wept and declared 'Burhan was our son, his killing was the start of the bleeding time for us'.⁶¹ She sells fruit from a mobile cart and her husband is a day labourer. The curfews and the hartals (mass strikes and shut-downs) meant they weren't able to secure any work for several months, nor to access or pay for any medical treatment. The impact of this was significant: she herself has not been seeking treatment for her breast cancer, her husband had a brain haemorrhage which they could only get basic treatment for, while her son who requires daily medication was not able to access it.

Shameem and Amina had similar experiences and motivations: Shameem (thirty-six years old) told how her brother was shot by a pellet gun while protesting near their home. 'He had 360 pellets in his back. Although he's alive he will never be able to work. This injustice is why I protest.' Before 2016, Amina says, 'My blood felt hot from anger and frustration at the news of my "brothers" being harmed and killed but I didn't protest. But after 2016 it felt like they (security forces) could kill anyone with impunity. That is why I joined the protests.'⁶²

Sultan, aged fifty, also cited violence towards men in her neighbourhood as her motivation to protest. 'Our sons were being killed ruthlessly. We had to do something!' She says that the government's reaction to protests only tear-gas, bullets and restrictions on public gathering (curfew, etc) and this harms young people even more. 'Schools and colleges are shut and the education system is being affected. I am worried about the future of our younger generation.'⁶³

'THEY WERE SOME MOTHER'S SONS': KASHMIRI WOMEN FROM VICTIMHOOD TO ACTIVISM

When Sheikh Abdullah came to power in October 1947, street battles and stone pelting between the 'Shers' (lions), young working-class men who supported Sheikh Abdullah, and the 'Bakras' (goats) young working-class men who supported Maulvi Farooq, a prominent Kashmiri Muslim religious leader, became common.⁶⁴ Though the public space on the street was dominated by men, Kashmiri women performed a much needed role during the protests. As Parveena Ahanger, a senior Kashmiri activist of sixty-five, recalls:

When these groups clashed in our street and the stone throwing started, the police would use tear-gas to disperse them forcefully. As a child I saw from my window how my mother would carry water in a bucket from our house to the men on the street. They would wash their faces and stinging eyes and drink deeply. She never cared about politics and never asked the men which group they belonged to. She would say simply that they were some mother's sons.⁶⁵

Thus even when women were not demonstrating, they did enter the public space out of what they believed to be a moral responsibility to help fellow Kashmiris and alleviate their suffering. Today, Parveena runs the most visible non-government organization in Kashmir, the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP).⁶⁶ Her work has been recognized by the UN and she has won the prestigious Rafto Prize for her work on highlighting disappearances of Kashmir youth enforced by Indian paramilitary forces. Recounting her experiences, Parveena said,

Like other girls in my family I married young. I was only thirteen years old! As a married woman I was expected to be inside my marital home. I rarely stepped out. I knew protests were happening in my neighbourhood but was largely unaware of the political tensions within Kashmir and the motivations for the protests.⁶⁷

In 1989 when the militancy began Parveena gave food and shelter to both rebel fighters and soldiers.

Unlike my mother who gave water to men from opposing political groups out of sympathy to alleviate their suffering, I gave food and water to both rebel fighters and the army because I was scared. They both had guns; whatever they demanded I would give.

With the upsurge in insurgency from 1989, women found themselves in a much more coercive environment. Parveena recognizes this, making a distinction between the 'civilians' her mother aided, and giving food to 'armed people' which was 'coerced'.⁶⁸ In 1990 Parveena's son, Javaid, who

was studying in standard 10, went to his cousin's house after school but he never came home. For years, Parveena searched police stations, jails, and hospitals across Jammu and Kashmir from the city centre in Srinagar to remote rural areas and beyond, outside of the state from Jodhpur to Delhi. Her limited literacy was not a barrier in her determination to reach out to courts and to file cases trying to locate Javaid. When she visited the courts and prisons she met several other family members of disappeared people all trying to locate their relatives. When she realized she was not alone in her quest to find her son she began organizing small peaceful protests outside courts with other family members, hoping that if the crowd was big enough their grievances would be listened to. Her ability to travel to such sensitive locations across the State may be attributed to her gender – as women are so infrequently given recognition as combatants women as a group are often rendered invisible as threats to the peace.

Parveena used to read the local Urdu language newspapers and when she read a story of a disappeared person she would travel to meet their surviving family members, offer emotional support, and also invite them to attend fortnightly peaceful protests. Her passion for justice and hope to find her son transformed her physical mobility and engagement in the public sphere. From 1994 to 2006 every fortnight on the 15th and 30th of the month relatives of missing men would assemble, often with photos of their missing family members, and banners were unfurled with photographs of unknown bodies found in mass graves. These regular meetings provide some social solidarity for mourners unsure of whether and how to mourn for a relative whose status is never made known and whose body is never returned. They have come to symbolize the 'continuity of public resistance that is hard for authorities to control with violence. This kind of protest is still laying a foundation today for future mass uprisings in Kashmir'.⁶⁹ After almost thirty years the whereabouts and status of Javaid, as of many others, have not been disclosed.⁷⁰ Parveena's journey is an exceptional example of how the consequences of conflict affects women and how women's motivation to participate in protest may often be motivated not by political ideology but by personal experiences. Heartbreakingly Parveena's loss is representative of that felt by thousands of women's experiences with the disappearance of every person. The endless, untold psychological suffering and harm cannot be quantified.

Out of her personal suffering Parveena established the APDP to help other women and relatives in Kashmir try to locate their disappeared family members, thus demonstrating how victimhood can transform into activism.

Parveena's experiences are also unique; she has consciously chosen to reject the conflict by organizing and participating in peace protests within Kashmir and by raising awareness of the disappearances in Delhi and internationally. As time has passed APDP's work has also become more formalized whilst continuing to represent the experiences of the men and women who attend their meetings; in 2016 APDP submitted a shadow report to the United Nations' Human Rights Council which documented more than 1,000 cases of enforced disappearances.⁷¹ Despite Parveena's rejection of violence she has not escaped violence from the state:

In 2002 when we marched to the United Nations' Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan's Gupkar office to highlight the issue of enforced disappearances, the government filed an FIR [First Information Report: police complaint written into police register] against me and the others APDP members. I and twenty-nine other members were being put in jail just on the basis of an FIR filled with false charges.

Parveena also said that this FIR prevented her from participating in any other marches and was used by the State as a tool of intimidation to silence her.⁷²

Zamruda Habib, an educated, middle-class, Kashmiri woman, founded *Muslim Khawateen Markaz*,⁷³ a separatist organization representing women's voices in the early 1990s which also performs social work and human rights activism.⁷⁴ Her role and influence ultimately led to her imprisonment in Delhi's infamous Tihar jail for over five years. Upon her release she founded the Association of Families of Kashmiri Prisoners (AFKP) which provides moral support to the families of imprisoned Kashmiris and helps to document their cases.⁷⁵ We approached her for an interview but she was unwell at the time.

Parveena and Zamruda founded activist platforms and organized public resistance because of their own suffering at the hands of the State and their determination to highlight the injustices that they and women like them had suffered. They inspired a generation of young Kashmiri women to highlight social issues and build networks of women to address them.

ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

Women and girls from Maisuma, Pulwama and Qamarwari told their stories forcefully, eager to have them recorded. In Pulwama one of the younger girls pulled the pen away from the interviewer and began to write herself. We saw this as a profound need to be heard and an expression of agency.

Whether it was Guddi's acknowledgement of her great-aunt Raja's activism as the inspiration for her own, Dilshad's memories of Sara's defiance in the face of repeated arrest, or Parveena's recollections of her mother's humanitarian work, the women and girls were building a historical continuum for their activism through their stories. It became clear to us that for these remarkable women the memory of past activism in their families and communities had played an important part in fostering and shaping their own activism.

The narratives show that women's protests in monarchical times were similar in motivation and expression to those that started in the 1990s and continue today. Kashmiri women's actions and decisions to protest often stem from their own experiences of state violence or those that have directly affected a family member. Protests are organized; they have a leader or several leaders and a clear objective. Where violence is used against women by the state, they have used violence in retaliation. Since 2016, a disproportionate amount of violence is used by the state against women in urban and rural areas.

For these women the concept of family stretches beyond family, neighbourhood and even community. Their sympathies with each other's sufferings have a deciding influence on their decisions to protest the injustices other people (both men and women) suffer. The interviewees consistently referred to all other Kashmiri men and women as their own kin – as their 'sisters, sons and brothers'.

Irrespective of age or background, the women we interviewed said that their decision to protest was influenced by the hope that protests would exert pressure that would result in change. Women's largest reported motivation to protest was to protect or assert the rights of other women and children and to protest against the killings and disappearances that affect their male family or community members. It is evident that for these women, the individual choice to protest is not driven by the prospect of individual gain but by a collective response to a social injustice experienced in the community as a whole. Community loyalties and a collective mistrust of the state forces both run deep.

Their stories showed that in urban neighbourhoods and in villages, engagement in public protest has become acceptable for women – even young women – despite the real threat of sexual violence they face every day. Whether protests occur by day or at night, these women boldly occupy public spaces and lay down their agenda.

While protesting against state violence, nearly all the respondents reported feeling scared of being wounded during protest. Most said they feared violent reprisals by police and paramilitary forces the most. Interestingly, there seemed to be a reinforcing dynamic between the protests of the younger women and the older women. The young women's unflinching commitment to engaging in forms of protest despite risk of injury or death inspires the older women to continue protesting, even though their fears of injury are higher.

These stories highlight the continued female agency and leadership in street protests. They demonstrate that for almost ninety years women have been consistently active in Kashmiri dissent as protestors, activists and facilitators of the conflict, rallying support and bringing communities of women together.

Sehar Iqbal is an activist and researcher working at the intersection between research and grassroots development work in Jammu and Kashmir. She completed her PhD in Development Economics in 2018. Her first book, *A Strategic Myth: 'Underdevelopment' in Jammu and Kashmir* (2021) covers the progression of Human Development Indicators in Jammu and Kashmir. She is Executive Director of the Sajid Iqbal Foundation, the largest volunteer network for community-based development work in Jammu and Kashmir, which works primarily with women to provide shelter, access to sustainable livelihoods, higher education and disaster relief. Her campaign to abolish prohibitively high stamp-duty for properties registered in the name of women led the state government to enact this into law in 2018, a move hailed by UN women as 'a huge step towards women's empowerment'. Dr Iqbal is a founding Fellow of the India Pakistan Regional Young Leaders Initiative (IPRYLI) – a programme that encourages youth in the two countries to work together on public-service delivery projects. She is currently pursuing an EMBA at the Said Business School, University of Oxford. She lives in Budgam, Kashmir.

Severyna Magill is Lecturer in Human Rights Law at Sheffield Hallam University (UK). Her research focuses on feminism, emancipatory struggles, and equality law and their intersection with access to justice regarding reproductive rights, gender-based violence, and sexual harassment. Severyna lived in India for eight years, where she worked for a women's rights NGO in the rural north and was then Faculty Co-ordinator for the Human Rights Law and Theory programme at Jindal Global Law School. Severyna is half Northern-Irish and half Polish. In her childhood she learnt about sectarian violence and political power struggles in both countries. She has been especially interested in women's role in conflict situations ever since learning about the Community of Peace People, and the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

This article is based on interviews with thirty girls and women, aged from fourteen to ninety-two, conducted by the authors over six months from June to December 2018. The participants are given pseudonyms and their age is approximated in order to minimize the risk of reprisals. Recordings and transcripts are held by the authors.

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- 22 Malik, *Women’s Development*, p. 35.
- 23 Malik, *Women’s Development*, p. 35.
- 24 Malik, *Women’s Development*, p. 36.
- 25 Malik, *Women’s Development*, p. 36.
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- 27 Andrew Whitehead, ‘Kashmir’s Women’s Militia at the End of Empire’, *History Workshop Online*, 20 Oct. 2017, accessed 3 June 2019: <http://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/kashmirs-womens-militia-at-the-end-of-empire/>. See also Whitehead, “‘I shall paint my nails

with the blood of those that covet me”.

28 Abdullah was briefly released in 1964 and then rearrested and held till 1964. To prevent him from taking part in elections, he was again arrested in 1965 and held till 1968. His last spell under arrest lasted from 1971 to 1972, the duration of the Indo-Pak war.

29 Interview with Kashmiri female activist No. 112, Srinagar, 2017.

30 Interview with Kashmiri female activist No. 113, Srinagar, 2017.

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Swati Parashar, 'Gender, Jihad, and Jingoism', p. 299.

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