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Metaphors in the Political Narratives of Kashmiri Youth

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the role of metaphor in political discourses in Kashmir. Through a micro-study of one year—2016, which saw the eruption of a mass uprising—of what may be described as resistance literature, I demonstrate that the ‘paradise lost’ and ‘wound’ metaphors permeate Kashmiri political discourse. While the ‘paradise lost’ metaphor broadly entails a consensual interpretation, the ‘wound’ metaphor expresses Kashmiri political subjectivity in a distinctly emotional way, as this metaphor is embedded in affective cultural practices. The paper seeks to deepen the understanding of Kashmiri political narratives by examining to what effect metaphorical language operates within them, and how it allows Kashmiri youth a creative space for dissent in terms of evocatively expressing political grievances, countering statist narratives and affirming a sense of political community.

KEYWORDS
Kashmiri youth; metaphors; political narratives; resistance literature; the 2016 uprising

Introduction
Since 2008, three episodes of Intifada-style street uprisings have occurred in Indian-controlled Kashmir—in 2008, 2010 and 2016. These effectively marked a shift from a three-decades-long guerrilla insurgency, which erupted in the late 1980s, to an ‘unarmed insurrection’ encompassing different modes of protest and dissent like stone-throwing, cyber activism, resistance art and resistance narratives. However, despite this noticeable transition, much media and policy focus remains confined to protest events. Very little academic research has attempted to investigate how the new generation of Kashmiris frame the Kashmir conflict and related events in their written narratives as a means of exploring new modes of thinking and writing on and from the Kashmiri resistance movement.

In the words of Roland Bleiker, language is ‘part of a larger discursive struggle over meaning and interpretation, an integral element of politics’. People’s values and world-views (and essences) are encoded in language, which is why Martin Heidegger says: ‘Language is the house of Being’. When analysing linguistic frames that people
utilise to make sense of their political situation, it is important to examine the emo-
tional components that make frames resonate with other people. As Goodwin, Jasper
and Polletta argue: ‘It is difficult to study frames, after all, without noticing people’s
feelings about specific beliefs and understandings, or collective identities without
appreciating the sentiments attached to them’. Melucci too sees emotions as integral
to the process of collective identity formation. Metaphor, in particular, is one lin-
guistic component which can reveal the affective feature of political narratives because
‘emotions are metaphorically conceptualised and structured’. Rooted in socially-
embedded knowledge and practices, metaphors easily appeal to people, and in their
specific usage, they may reflect on a culture or society and ‘express specific values,
collective identities, shared knowledge, and common vocabularies’. Metaphorical
mappings make comprehension of vague, indeterminate or poorly-understood con-
ceptual domains easier because ‘the source domains are intuitively understood and
have holistic structure, so that if one part is accepted other parts follow’.

This paper seeks to analyse the role of metaphor in political discourses in
Kashmir, particularly in the resistance literature, through a micro-study of one year—
2016 (see below). By resistance literature I mean the political narratives that emanate
from those Kashmiris who question or contest Kashmir’s accession to India in 1947
and who demand the right to self-determination. Engagement with metaphors serves
to outline how Kashmiri political narratives draw upon a specific, but forceful, aspect
of language to construct a frame of reference through which to understand political
events and express dissent, and how through specific political imagery a certain con-
ceptualisation of the Kashmir conflict is expressed or reaffirmed and how that ties to
the resistance. The paper seeks to deepen understandings of Kashmiri political narra-
tives by examining to what effect metaphorical language operates within them and,
by looking at the interplay between dissident and pro-state narratives which operate
from a shared discursive field, what specific metaphorical entailments occur in terms
of different ‘framings’ of the conflict. Two metaphors feature prominently in
Kashmiri political discourse: ‘paradise lost’ and ‘wound’. Kashmiri dissidents utilise
these metaphors to evoke pathos (emotion) to create solidarity, express political griev-
ances, counter official accounts and affirm a separate national identity. Metaphorical
language thus acts as a site of resistance to forge a political identity as well as to sub-
vert hegemonic representations of the conflict. Moreover, metaphorical language is
also a way to navigate around control of the press and restrictions on free speech.

The first section provides the political and structural context in which Kashmiri
resistance literature is produced. Following a brief introduction to the 2016 uprising,
the next section discusses theories of metaphor, focusing on Max Black, Paul Ricoeur,
and Lakoff and Johnson. It also outlines the theoretical frame for metaphor analysis, drawing on the conceptual model of Jonathan Charteris-Black. The third section identifies and analyses the metaphorical language used in Kashmiri political discourse, arguing that two metaphors—‘paradise lost’ and ‘wound’—run through many Kashmiri political narratives. It then explores how these metaphors are employed by Kashmiri dissidents to articulate political injustices, refute statist narratives and affirm a collective identity.

In terms of data, the paper looks at articles, artworks, song lyrics and cartoons published both within and outside Kashmir. Since the data comes from a small sample of an educated, mostly middle-class population, the essay does not claim to reflect a general view. The second limitation is that it mostly relies on English-language narratives. Kashmiri and Urdu are more popular languages in the region, but English is not any less important among Kashmiris. In fact, since the early 2000s, English has been taught from elementary classes onwards in most schools in Kashmir, creating a large pool of young people who understand the language. According to a 2012 study, ‘nearly 60% of Kashmiri youth read both local English and Urdu dailies’. With a circulation of around 50,000 copies, the English-language daily, Greater Kashmir, dominates the market; the Urdu-language daily Aftab trails behind at 35,000 copies. Moreover, the selection of mainly English narratives was also due to the paucity of opinion pieces and essays in Urdu and Kashmiri publications which were identifiable as having been written by young people.

Focusing on Kashmiri political narratives, this paper aims to maintain a critical distance from the two dominant perspectives of the Kashmir conflict. The interstate perspective privileges the nation-state and delves into the historical, geopolitical and legal complexities of the India–Pakistan contestation over the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It also marginalises indigenous voices and experiences. The institutional perspective examines the internal dynamics of the conflict in terms of the centre–state relationship and the post-colonial institution-building processes. This latter perspective tends to fall back on what John Cockell calls ‘the precast statist parameters of enquiry’, whereby extra-systemic Kashmiri institutions and democratic processes are not deemed legitimate in their own right, and articulation of a pro-independence stance is regarded as a reaction to the closure of institutional avenues by the state and not as an expression of an autonomous political agency. Problematising these two hegemonic perspectives, a critical scholarship on Kashmir has emerged in the past decade which seeks to foreground the indigenous peoples’ experiences of the Kashmir conflict and their political subjectivities, and to challenge the entrenched epistemologies of Kashmir in terms of reconsidering the categories of ‘territory’, ‘identity’ and ‘resistance’ as a consequence of power differentials structured by

8. While the ‘prison’ metaphor also features in narratives, due to space constraints, only two metaphors, ‘paradise lost’ and ‘wound’, are discussed here.
governmentality, occupation and institutionalised denial of justice; this paper seeks to make a contribution to this new scholarship.

**The context of the resistance literature**

For Kashmiri dissidents, political opportunities are tightly constrained; thus they must negotiate a space for resistance against the state which controls, sometimes violently, many aspects of the Kashmiri public sphere. Especially since 1990, the political administration of Kashmir, for all practical purposes, has been a militarised occupation, characterised by ‘an ensemble of spatial strategies and violent practices that the occupier state employs to dominate physical space in a region where its rule lacks, or has lost, popular legitimacy, and thus faces an imminent challenge of being popularly supplanted.’ But the post-2008 political narratives by Kashmiri dissidents are born as much out of this militarised configuration as they are a response to what Paul Staniland calls the ‘paradox of normalcy’: the state aspires to maintain the status quo, but at the same time employs a rhetoric of liberal democracy to win over Kashmiris. However, when Kashmiris attempt to articulate their political will through political processes of democracy, the status quo is threatened and their actions collide with the state’s aspirations. Therefore, the incompatibility of these two aspirations fosters a paradox ‘that encourages unrest and instability even in the absence of substantial militant violence’.

It is these twin aspects of the Kashmir conflict that Kashmiri resistance literature addresses, stressing how the military occupation has brutalised the people, created a crisis of human rights violations, and falsified the claims and rhetoric of democratic rule. As well, especially since 2008, resistance literature has been interrogating academic and media discourses on the Kashmir conflict, problematising the dominant frames and trying to provide a counter to the hegemonic statist accounts propagated by the mainstream Indian media. For example, post-2008, commentary on the Kashmir situation seems to have deliberately steered away from deeper political conflict to focus on its symptoms by publicising ‘stone pelting’ by ‘unruly mobs’ that were claimed to have connections with Pakistan; by repeating terms like ‘youth unemployment’ and ‘bad governance’ used by Union and state government officials; by suggesting ‘drugs and broken families’ are the cause of the street protests; and by

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stressing the use of non-lethal methods to control protests.\textsuperscript{16} Overall, the Indian media labelled protesters as ‘mobs’, ‘rioters’, ‘Pakistan-funded stone-pelters’, ‘troublemakers’, ‘drug-addicts’, ‘terrorists’ or ‘terrorist-sympathisers’ in order to delegitimise the youth-led uprisings in Kashmir. In response to such negative framing, Kashmiris, especially the youth, started writing counter-narratives to establish a more grounded picture of the Kashmir situation, sometimes incorporating personal accounts, and often comparing Kashmir with Palestine and using the term ‘Intifada’ to describe the Kashmir uprisings.\textsuperscript{17} A few Kashmiris created online forums to present their viewpoint, broadcasting information and publishing critical pieces on different aspects of the Kashmir conflict. Gradually, the assemblage of disparate online forums emerged as an alternative media.

**The 2016 uprising**

A useful case study of Kashmiri resistance narratives is from 2016 when massive anti-India protests erupted. On 8 July, a 22-year-old popular rebel commander, Burhan Muzaffar Wani, was killed by the Indian army in Kokernag, a southern Kashmir hamlet. His death sparked mass street protests, including stone-throwing, which were suppressed by government troops using disproportionate force; over ninety people were killed and thousands were injured. Unprecedentedly, several protestors were blinded by pellet guns.\textsuperscript{18} Compared to 2010, 2016 witnessed mass participation from vast swathes of rural Kashmir, where over 70 percent of Kashmiris reside. Hence, some commentators called the 2016 protests a ‘revolt’.\textsuperscript{19} In response to the uprising, many Kashmiris wrote their own accounts, reiterating the main themes and concerns such as human rights violations, militarisation, media bias, resolution of the conflict and so on. This paper examines some of those accounts.

**Concepts of metaphor**

Following Aristotle, metaphor was originally considered as a stylistic ornament, an illustrative analogy, or deviance of sense, and metaphorical meaning was secondary to and dependent on the primary literal language, involving transference of a word to a new sense through comparison of (or analogy drawn between) two unrelated things. According to Berggren, since the eighteenth century, these old notions of metaphor


\textsuperscript{17} Apparently, the term ‘Kashmir Intifada’ was first used in April 1990 in a Pakistan-based journal, *Pakistan Horizon*, but Indian analysts also used the term ‘intifada’ to describe the 2010 uprising in Kashmir. For example, journalist Ben Arnoldy wrote in his 2010 report: ‘Indian analysts are starting to refer to the street violence gripping Kashmir as the ‘Kashmir intifada’, a nod to the earlier uprisings of Palestinian stone-throwing youth against Israeli forces’. See Ben Arnoldy, ‘Kashmir Intifada? New View of India, Pakistan Territory Dispute’, *The Christian Science Monitor* (13 July 2010) [https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2010/0713/Kashmir-intifada-New-view-of-India-Pakistan-territory-dispute], accessed 15 Feb. 2018.


were contested, with philosophers like Vico, Croce and Collingwood arguing that ‘metaphor historically or logically precedes the solidified meanings of conceptual language, and further performs a uniquely revelatory function’. Later, Nietzsche postulated a sociological conception of metaphor, arguing that it was fundamental to the formation of all concepts, and ‘to be truthful’ was to ‘use the customary metaphors’.

Providing new insights, Max Black posited that metaphoric meaning is realised at the sentence level, a view that favours the ‘interaction theory’ of metaphor. His argument is that a new meaning is created when a complex of words, comprising both literal and metaphorical, interact. Even when the (figurative) word is the focus, it needs a ‘frame’ of other literal words in the sentence. However, any attempt at a literal translation of a metaphor would mean the loss of its ‘cognitive content’. For Black, other than the semantic rules which govern a word’s literal use, the meaning of a word also relies on other rules which are understood and adhered to by the speakers of a language, and these other rules determine the ‘system of associated commonplaces’. Paul Ricoeur agrees with this ‘interaction view’ of metaphor, as he also believes that metaphor is more than a substitution for another literal word whose meaning can be retrieved by translation or paraphrasing. However, Ricoeur differs from Black in that he sees as problematic Black’s ‘specially constructed systems of implications’ which support metaphors in terms of gaining new (and expanding their possible) meanings because, as Ricoeur says, ‘indeed we enlarge the notion of meaning by including the “secondary meanings” as connotations within the scope of the full meaning; but we keep linking the creative process of metaphor-forming to a non-creative aspect of language’. Therefore, Ricoeur views metaphor as something which is dynamic, opens new vistas, and is perpetually new and becoming. For him, the salient feature of metaphor is linked to ‘the function of poetry as a creative imitation of reality (mimesis)’. Metaphor’s power lies in its intricate association with imagination, not ‘as the faculty of deriving "images" from sensory experiences’, but as a faculty whose power is conveyed by ‘emerging meanings in our language’ and which allows new linguistic creations that ‘build our self-understanding’.

However, Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty contend that metaphors are nothing more than what they mean in their literal interpretation, and that they have no cognitive content. They argue against viewing metaphor as containing some sort of essential epistemological and ontological truth and, as Willson-Quayle says, they seek to ‘eliminate the mystique that metaphor holds for [the] thinker’.

Within cognitive linguistics, Lakoff and Johnson maintain that metaphor is central to human understanding and imagination because it provides an accessible cognitive framework to make sense of abstract aspects of human life and experience: ‘Our

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24. Ibid., p. 110.
ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.26 Drawing on this conceptual model, Lakoff later showed in his book, Moral Politics, how conservatives in America won over electorates by using persuasive metaphorical language, especially the metaphor of ‘family’.27

**Metaphorical framing in political discourse**

Since Murray Edelman’s 1971 *Politics as Symbolic Action*, many theorists have written about metaphorical framing in political discourse.28 This paper, however, draws on Jonathan Charteris-Black’s conceptual model which modifies the Aristotelian notion of rhetoric by incorporating elements of ideology and myth. These latter elements characterise the value systems of contemporary societies and form an essential component of present-day political communications.29 Although Charteris-Black’s model is used to evaluate the leadership styles of politicians, with slight modification, it is a useful framework to study Kashmiri political narratives.

The Aristotelian conception of rhetoric has three dimensions: *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*. The first, *ethos*, relates to ethics. This aspect works in terms of representing the discursive intervener or messenger as ethically or morally right in her evaluation or presentation of an issue, actor or phenomenon, and can be a basis on which policies, political adversaries, opponents or the ‘Other’ can be evaluated. *Logos* refers to logical or reasoned argument and forms ‘a central component of persuasion in political communication’.30 The *logos* aspect of metaphor is effective in terms of communicating a partisan political argument or roadmap because metaphors furnish cognitively accessible ways of political communication. However, metaphors are not necessarily received or interpreted in the same way by the intended audiences, as inherent bias may make them resonate only with certain groups of people whose own politics or discursive position is reaffirmed through them.31 *Pathos* relates to emotions. It creates shared meaning and interpretation, evoked through metaphorical language (including humour) rather than explicitly stated. Where societies face a national crisis, military occupation, colonial subjugation or outside threat, the *pathos* dimension of metaphor can provide a crucial morale-boosting effect, inspiring people or cadres for collective action. Personification can characterise a certain situation or adversary (or ‘Other’) in positive or negative terms, thus providing ‘a potentially emotive and cognitively accessible framework for the evaluation of abstract political ideologies because it relies on pre-existent, culturally rooted stereotypes to communicate emotionally potent evaluations’.32

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30. Ibid., p. 108.
32. Ibid., p. 104.
Locating metaphors in Kashmiri political discourses

The data for this study was gathered from public sources on the internet; in some cases, there were also printed versions. The sources analysed included a diverse range of media and news-oriented blogs from both inside and outside Kashmir. Within Kashmir, this included the most prominent newspapers with varying perspectives, including Greater Kashmir, Rising Kashmir, Kashmir Reader and Kashmir Times. From outside Kashmir, I analysed portals and websites including Indian Express, Scroll, Wire, Dawn, Counter Currents, Kindle Magazine, Quint, DailyO, Two Circles, Raiot, Express Tribune Pakistan, Youth Ki Awaz, Café Dissensus, Helpost, Feminism India, Alt Media and Hoot. NVivo software was used for the data analysis. Besides selected artworks, song lyrics and cartoons, a sample of eighty articles was ultimately selected from newspapers and magazines. Since the study focuses on narratives of young Kashmiris, the authors of the selected articles were emailed for confirmation of their biographical details. In some cases, these were already appended to the articles as short bios or placed within the articles. Most articles (64) were from the post-8 July period, while the rest (sixteen) were from the pre-uprising period of 2016. All the authors were aged between eighteen and thirty. Though concepts about youth vary across regions and organisations, this paper uses Andy Furlong’s definition of youth as ‘a socially constructed category, a period of semi-dependence, falling between childhood and adulthood’. The upper ceiling of thirty years may be arbitrary, but it makes sense in modern societies where the period of education has extended and most young people enter the job market or marry in later years.

Owing to their multilingual competency, Kashmiris make use of numerous metaphorical expressions derived from Kashmiri, Urdu and English. Spoken by over five million people, Kashmiri has a rich repository of metaphorical expressions which the pro-resistance dissidents also utilise in their narratives. However, since many educated Kashmiris are more competent in writing in English than in Kashmiri, they prefer to publish their political narratives in English, though some also write in Urdu. Responding to new political developments and events, they regularly innovate new political metaphors. But whereas some of these new metaphorical expressions can easily be widely understood, some are directed at a niche audience and therefore are comprehensible only to those who have adequate background knowledge. Certain political metaphors remained in currency over a generation or two, but, over time, lost their earlier force or relevance. For example, after Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, a prominent Kashmiri leader and the patron of the National Conference party, signed the 1975 Accord with the Government of India, a new metaphorical sing-song slogan was coined in Kashmiri that criticised him and his party for what was seen by many as his ‘surrender’ of the right to self-determination: Rai shumari barikh doab-bas/Aalav Babus mubarak (‘The plebiscite is buried/congratulations to the

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33. For example, UNESCO takes youth age group as 15–24 years, Nigeria as 18–35, Brazil as 15–29; India as 15–24; and some African countries as the years between puberty and marriage.
Potato Feeder). *Abul* (potato) *Babb* (elderly person, also used to refer to a Sufi saint) was a moniker given to Abdullah for asking people, during the food-grain crisis in the early 1950s, to grow and eat potatoes for self-reliance. Rendering this popular metaphorical slogan in visual format, Kashmiri cartoonist Bashir Ahmad Bashir (aka BAB) drew a cartoon for the Urdu-language daily *Srinagar Times* showing an excited Abdullah advancing towards the chief minister’s chair while leaving behind the grave of the Plebiscite Front, the pro-independence organisation the sheikh had supported for nearly twenty years (Figure 1). In the speech bubble, the grave is shown quoting an ironic line from a 1951 Bollywood song, ‘*Meri kahani bhoolne wale, tera jahan aabaad rahe*’ (‘O! you who forgot my story, may your world prosper’). Combining the metaphorical device (the grave) and irony (specific song lyrics), BAB created a satirical cartoon that resonated widely in the political climate of the time of its publication. However, the current youth generation of Kashmiris hardly use or relate to the metaphorical name for Abdullah, though one metaphorically-rich slogan of the Plebiscite Front period (1955–75) has maintained its political utility and continues to be used during pro-independence protests in Kashmir: ‘*Jis Kashmir ko khoon se sencha, woh Kashmir hamara hai*’ (‘Kashmir that we irrigated with our blood, that Kashmir belongs to us’).

Like metaphorical slogans, metaphorical naming (or antonomasia) is also a common feature of Kashmiri political discourse, though such linguistic innovations often serve to subtly undermine or tarnish the public image of pro-India politicians in Kashmir. For example, Mufti Syed, a former chief minister, is derisively called ‘Whisky’ because he used to consume alcohol, a habit deeply unacceptable to Kashmir’s Muslim society. Likewise, another pro-India politician, Farooq Abdullah, was given the sobriquets ‘*Dhaand*’ (bullock) and ‘*Disco*’ due to his flamboyant character and public antics. The Kashmiri word ‘*Ikhaanen*’, which originated in the state-backed militia group Ikhwan that terrorised people in the 1990s, is a powerful metaphorical term that some people use for a person who collaborates with the state. Although a diverse set of metaphors

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36. The song, penned by lyricist Shakeel Badayuni, was taken from the film *Deedar*. Until the late 1980s, Kashmir had many cinemas which popularised Bollywood films and songs in Kashmiri culture.
permeate Kashmiri political discourse, for analytical purposes, conceptually-associated metaphors were categorised under the two broader themes of ‘paradise lost’ and ‘wound’.

**The ‘paradise lost’ metaphor**

_Agar firdaus bar roo-e zameen ast,_  
_Hameen ast-o hameen ast-o hameen ast._

If there is a Paradise on earth,  
It is this, it is this, it is this.

In popular historical accounts, descriptions of Kashmir are often burnished with the Persian couplet above, which describes Kashmir’s heavenly attributes.\(^{37}\) By the time Europeans started arriving in the nineteenth century, Kashmir had become known as the ‘Happy Valley’, a fabled exotic land which bewitched colonialists and travellers to whom Kashmir presented itself as the ‘Venice’ or ‘Switzerland’ of the East. In these orientalised European tourist imaginaries, the aesthetics of the landscape were spiritually elevating for the foreign traveller, but the customs, habits and attire of the people were primitive; in certain accounts, Kashmir and Kashmiris were perceived as incongruent. As Rafiq Ahmad notes, ‘A sense of Paradise lost and bestowed on the wrong people became prevalent in European discourse about Kashmir’.\(^{38}\)

After 1947, the trope of ‘Happy Valley’ was further reified through popular culture, especially by Bollywood films that portrayed Kashmir as an idyllic place of travel and romance where traditionally hospitable (and implicitly apolitical) people lived a simple Arcadian life. Cultural productions such as films, postcards, photographs and writings eventually reconstructed Kashmir from a disputed territory into a ‘territory of desire’; in this process, Bollywood worked as a ‘major mechanism for mobilizing desire for Kashmir’.\(^{39}\) In a way, the European orientalist imagining of Kashmir continued in the post-colonial space in which the Indian ‘colonial’ desire for Kashmir was preserved by employing the same methodology: tourism imaginaries and the power of discourse. However, whereas in the colonial imaginaries, Kashmir as a paradise was lost because it was a heavenly place bestowed upon the wrong people (Kashmiris), for Hindu nationalists, Kashmir, where Hindu religion had once thrived, had been lost to Islam. The prominent Indian leader, Vallabhbhai Patel, described Kashmir as ‘a Hindu State situated in Muslim surroundings’,\(^ {40}\) a view endorsed by the largest Hindu nationalist organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. In 1947, its mouthpiece _Organiser_ described Kashmir as a ‘fortunate land’ where ‘at every step … lie our worship and a sacred place’.\(^ {41}\)

\(^{37}\) The couplet may have originated from the thirteenth-century Sufi poet Amir Khusrow, who lived during the Delhi Sultanate, while others attribute it to the Mughal emperor Jahangir.


The trope of Kashmir as the heavenly entity ‘paradise’ is quite prevalent in the narratives sampled here, but it is redefined in a new political context. Attached to it now is a sense of loss, and nostalgia of a different kind. The continuing violence and political conflict have rendered the famed ‘paradise on earth’ as a virtual ‘hell’ and hence it is now regarded as ‘paradise lost’, a metaphorical expression which has two main political interpretations: one, that Kashmir has lost its sovereignty to outside power/s, and second, that Kashmir has lost its peace, security and famed grandeur due to continuous conflict. For example, the poem ‘Colours’ by a young student, published during the 2016 uprising in the Srinagar-based daily, Kashmir Reader, seems to capture this latter interpretation. In the opening stanza, the author talks about ‘my garden of peace and love’ and ‘the romantic aroma of flowers’, but immediately follows with:

What a curse descended on it?
A night besieged my Paradise,
Avalanche down the ruinous stars,
Wrecked the blooming bulbs,
Razored the lofty, green trees,
Crushed the high-spirited mountains.42

Here the metaphor ‘paradise lost’ operates within a frame which acts to lend it a certain political meaning. Unlike the other interpretation (loss in terms of loss of sovereignty to an outside power which clearly reflects a pro-independence discursive position), this metaphorical usage seems to avoid an explicit ideological assertion; its rhetoric is analogous to the common Kashmiri (metaphorical) refrain which is often used with respect to the Kashmir conflict: ‘Kasheer gai yirvin naav’ (‘things in Kashmir have gone awry’). The broad interpretative sweep of the ‘paradise lost’ metaphor seems to absorb and coalesce different narratives on the Kashmir conflict and yet crystallises the basic view that Kashmir is caught in a tumultuous political crisis which urgently needs resolution. This is one metaphor where competing discourses seem to meet, but as soon as attribution of blame begins for Kashmir’s plight, ‘paradise lost’ again becomes a site of discursive contestation, with pro-resistance dissidents laying blame on the state and its functionaries, and pro-state adherents chalking it up to the nexus between Kashmiri separatists and Pakistan.

In a more ideologically-oriented interpretation, one which aligns with the Kashmiri resistance discourse, ‘paradise lost’ would denote loss of sovereignty to outside power (in the present case, to India). Such specific usage comes under the purview of an ‘oppositional speech act’ which carries a subversive intent.43 As illustration, take this sentence in an op-ed piece published by a young PhD student in the daily, Greater Kashmir, in October 2016:

Let us take a cursory look at the nature of the present uprising and the lessons learnt from it only to move forward from saving this Paradis from a descent into hell.44

When read in the context of the article, a pro-resistance interpretation of the metaphor is clearly discernible. Although overall the article has a detached tone, the choice of certain terminology to frame the Kashmir conflict implies a pro-resistance discursive stance. In the subsequent paragraph, the author writes: 'The slogan of Azadi (freedom) symbolizes not just popular resentment and protest against the denial of democracy in Kashmir, but also 'Freedom' from Indian rule over Kashmiri land'.

For Zinken, intertextual metaphors derive from ‘semiotic experience’, be that stereotypes or cultural productions or scholastic learning, and these metaphors ‘are motivated by the speaker’s adaptation to a certain cultural structure or substructure, which provides specific imaginative resources’. Originating from the existing literature (John Milton’s epic 1667 poem, Paradise Lost) and certain cultural productions in which Kashmir was portrayed as a paradisal entity, ‘paradise lost’ certainly qualifies as an intertextual metaphor; it is also evident in the way it has been used in other texts, including as title or headline in numerous media articles. A simple Google search with the keywords ‘Kashmir paradise lost’ will produce many articles and media items related to the Kashmir conflict, as, for example, a 1996 photography book, Kashmir: Paradise Lost; a 2005 Spectator review of Salman Rushdie’s Shalimar the Clown, ‘Paradise Lost in Kashmir’; and a 2008 Outlook article ‘Reclaiming the Paradise Lost’.

Pertinently, the Outlook article was written by a former Muslim Indian federal minister in response to the 2008 agitations which were triggered by controversy over a grant of forest land to a Hindu shrine board. The controversy assumed sectarian colours, pitting the Kashmir and Jammu regions against each other. In Kashmir, the agitation soon turned into an azadi (independence) movement, mobilising some of the largest political marches which the government immediately suppressed by killing over forty protesters and injuring hundreds of others. The article, therefore, dealt with an intertwined situation: sectarian tensions between the two regions and the political conflict in Kashmir. It gave a metaphorical interpretation in which paradise was sought to be reclaimed in its former ‘glorious’ form: as an abode of peaceful co-existence and harmony between different communities, characterised by ‘centuries old Kashmiri values’ which, according to the author, had witnessed ‘a temporary setback’ due to ‘the last two decades of violence and terrorism’. While implicitly acknowledging the basic view that Kashmir was witnessing a conflict, the article framed it in a subtle pro-statist narrative. Although the ‘state narrative’ is not an undifferentiated monolith, certain prominent state officials often render invisible the indigenous Muslim population and view Kashmir solely as a piece of territory which is projected as an ‘integral part of India’. While acknowledging native Kashmiris—‘It was not just because of physical beauty, but also because of the peaceful Kashmiri way of life that Kashmir gained the reputation of being Paradise on earth’—it attempts to appropriate Kashmiri identity and political will by claiming on their behalf that ‘there is every

reason to believe that the ever-living influence of the rishis shall again assert itself to reclaim the Paradise that Kashmir has lost.  

In 2016, when the intifada-style uprising broke out and stringent curfews and strikes crippled civilian life, the metaphor ‘paradise lost’ again gained currency in political discourse when it received new political meaning and resonance in the immediacy of the uprising. However, from the perspective of many Indians, who agree with the maximalist state position on Kashmir, the ‘paradise lost’ metaphor signifies the idea of loss of control over the ‘object of desire’, whereas for most Kashmiris, the metaphor embodies the idea of an occupied homeland or a horrible strife-torn situation. This mainstream India view of ‘paradise lost’ is articulated in the famous song ‘Khuda Se’ from the 2006 Indian film Keerthi Chakra. The film has a marked pro-statist slant where the Kashmiri independence movement is negatively depicted. It is this view which infuses a certain political meaning into the metaphor in the song.

Khuda se mannat hai meri, lauta de Jannat wo meri  
Wo aman, wo chaman ka nazaara, O khudaya lauta de Kashmir dobara.

I pray to God, return that Paradise of mine, that scene of peace and gardens  
O God, return Kashmir once again.

In effect, the film’s rendition of the metaphor reiterates the trope which framed the pre-1989 period as ‘peaceful’, and hence the line ‘return Kashmir once again’ is a plea for a return to the pre-1989 era, which the statist narratives project as a period in which, by and large, Kashmiris were content with the status quo and it was only due to Pakistan’s ‘proxy war’ that Kashmir was plunged into unrest. However, this metaphorical interpretation of ‘paradise lost’ in the song differs from the dominant interpretation of it in the narratives sampled. Whereas from the perspective of the film, paradise is lost due to one set of actors (namely the separatist militants and the Pakistan state), the authors of Kashmiri narratives see the Indian state and the continuing ‘irresolution’ of the Kashmir conflict as the main factors responsible.

Imagine a Paradise owned by bloodthirsty and vicious owners who look forward only to their own developments through the bloodshed of the Paradise residents. There is a hell in Paradise from the last 70 years. And now it has started (again) on 8 July after the killing of Commander Burhan Wani.

Unsure when they would be hit by a bullet or a pellet to rip the life from their bodies; the place once called ‘Paradise on Earth’ is now a ‘Paradise Lost’!

A cursory reading of the above excerpts suggests that the metaphor is conceptualised within the consensual interpretation, i.e. the basic acknowledgement of Kashmir as a political conflict and in need of a political solution. When read in the context of the articles from which these excerpts have been extracted, a radical departure from
the consensual interpretation becomes clear. In the first excerpt, the trajectory of the conflict is traced back to the ‘last 70 years’, and the actors to whom the blame is imputed are ‘bloodthirsty and vicious owners’, while ‘the Paradise residents’ who have been subjected to ‘bloodshed’ are the victims. Seen within Charles Tilly’s framework of ‘reason-giving’, this narrative infuses a pro-resistance political meaning to the metaphor by utilising it in a certain manner, whereby the agents, causes and effects are outlined, which give us a mental roadmap to locate the oppressor and the oppressed in the story, or to see who can be blamed for having caused the loss of paradise. The second excerpt reads the same, as the article from which it is taken clearly assigns blame to the state for the loss of paradise and lauds Kashmiris for fighting for their rights and freedom: ‘It is an undeniable fact that Kashmir is a disputed territory whose people have to fight for their rights and stand for their freedom against Indian (sic) and this freedom has always been suppressed by the presence of army in Kashmir’. In almost all other cases, where the ‘paradise lost’ metaphor has been deployed, a similar type of framing is discernible in which state oppression, human rights violations, denial of justice and the right to self-determination are viewed as the primary factors for the continuing political instability and bloodshed in Kashmir, although a few narratives also assign fault to a corrupt local elite.

**The ‘paradise lost’ metaphor in visual formats**

Responding to the 2016 uprising, a 28-year-old Kashmiri artist, Mir Suhail, reworked a poster from a 1964 Bollywood film *Kashmir ki Kali* (*Bud of Kashmir*) to convey a political message. In his poster, a beautiful actress who plays the role of a Kashmiri flower vendor in the film is shown injured with a bloodied bandage over her eyes, while her lover watches her with a nonchalant expression. The actress’ bandaged, pockmarked face is juxtaposed against an idyllic scene of the Kashmir Valley, creating a sharp contrast (and incongruity) between her and the landscape (Figure 2). Six months before the production of this poster, another Kashmiri artist, Suhail Naqshbandi, also visualised the ‘paradise lost’ metaphor in three digital paintings in which he juxtaposed a large pit (or mass grave) filled with many skeletons against three picturesque tourist destinations in Kashmir, Tulip Garden, Gulmarg and Dal Lake. The mass graves lie in a beautiful landscape, suggesting a cover-up of the violent reality behind the façade of beauty and the joviality of tourism (Figure 3). This interpretation is indicated textually because the skeletons (symbolising Kashmiris killed in the conflict) are saying in a crimson speech bubble: ‘There is more to “paradise” than meets the eye’. The term paradise is in inverted commas, emphasising the poignant irony of the word in the context of violent conflict. In another remarkable image by Mir Suhail, a Kashmiri man is shown lying on a hospital bed with only

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52. For Charles Tilly, ‘reason giving’, i.e. assigning credit or blame, are fundamental social acts which we carry out in our everyday life with respect to virtually all spheres (war, peace, economics, politics, etc.). As Tilly says, ‘the great bulk of stories we hear and tell in everyday life convey their agents, causes, and effects in radically simplified ways: someone did something to someone else, and that caused some outcome’ (p. 390). See Ernesto Castaneda and Cathy Lisa Schneider (eds), A Charles Tilly Reader (New York: Routledge, 2017).

his bruised and lacerated back visible (Figure 4). The bed is juxtaposed against a lush green meadow, pine trees and a snow-clad mountain, and accompanying the image is text placed at the top right which brings out the irony of the situation and heightens the pathos of its metaphorical language: ‘Incredible Kashmir. “If there is a heaven on earth, it’s here, it’s here”’. The phrase ‘Incredible Kashmir’ is a play on the original phrase ‘Incredible India’, a flagship tourism campaign of the Indian government, and the couplet echoes the famous Persian verse which has historically aided tourism imaginaries on Kashmir. References to tourism are a subtle critique of the state’s attempt to project tourist arrivals as a measure of a return to normalcy in Kashmir. For example, in one Naqshi Bandi cartoon (Figure 5), a bearded man (representing the Hurriyat) is shown dispiritedly welcoming a foreign backpacker with the words, ‘Welcome to Paradise Kashmir!’. But in the background lie serried rows of grave-stones and burning houses and vehicles. Beside the graveyard is a small child holding a white cane whose eyes are covered by sunglasses. She represents those young people who were blinded by pellets guns in the 2016 violence. Here is ‘Paradise Kashmir’ seen from the perspective of a Kashmiri artist; it is a paradoxical paradise in which violence and death are the reality for its inhabitants rather than the picture postcard images promoted to tourists. Thus, through forceful depictions, the meaning of the metaphor ‘paradise lost’ is inverted, redefined and infused with pathos in order to
foreground the reality seen and experienced by Kashmiris and, through this redefinition, to generate empathy and solidarity.

**The metaphor ‘paradise lost’ in poetic narratives**

My Paradise is burning  
With troops left loose with ammo  
Who murder and rape  
Then hide behind a political shadow  
Like a casino  
Human life is thrown like a dice  
I’ll summarize atrocities  
Till the resurrection of Christ  
Can you hear the screams  
Now see the revolution  
Their bullets, our stones.54

One of the popular rap artists of Kashmir, Roushan Illahi (alias MC Kash), produced the song ‘I Protest’ in response to the 2010 uprising in which he also invoked the ‘paradise’ metaphor. As is evident from the lyrics above, once again using Tilly’s ‘reason-giving’ framework, the actor or entity responsible for ‘paradise lost’ is the state and its armed forces who are trigger-happy and whose crimes are covered up, and with whom Kashmiris have an antagonistic relationship. In many poetic narratives from 2016, this theme is often reiterated.

During the 2016 uprising, two overseas Kashmiri software engineers, Abdul Wajid and Ubaid Darwaish, set up an innovative online platform called ‘Last2Lines’ as ‘a medium to express and register a peaceful campaign/protest using two lines of poetry’. Each couplet was added by a new contributor with the last line in each couplet ending with ‘when last did I cry’. By the end of September 2016, over 250 individuals, mostly young, had contributed some 632 lines, making it one of the longest
(collectively composed) poems in Kashmir. For the young creators of the Last2Lines platform, their intention was ‘going to be a tribute to the [Kashmir] cause’. In this long poem, at least 25 contributors employ the ‘paradise’ metaphor; fifteen of them use the term ‘paradise’ and the rest use its synonym, ‘heaven’. Again, the dominant frame is the same: the state as oppressor and the people as oppressed. Barring a few cases in which the tone of defiance and resistance is apparent, most of the couplets seem to operate within the notion of the pathos dimension of metaphor. And, owing to the unprecedented event of the mass blinding of young protestors in 2016, many references are made to eyes and blindness.

The dwellers of this Paradise are prisoners to a vicious hell; did you wonder? How awful [it] is to have eyes and not be able to see: When last did I cry? (Female contributor).

The ‘wound’ metaphor

‘Wound’, a medical metaphor, can in certain usages foster a sympathetic (or positive) image of the aggrieved party. As the ‘wound/s’ are not only historical but also open, living and festering, this metaphor can also signify a testimony to long-standing oppression of the people on whom wounds are inflicted; a wounded body or entity also metaphorically embodies the idea of having been deceived, or a crack caused due to a broken trust or relationship. In Urdu and the Kashmiri languages, the word wound (zakhm) is a significant and quite recurrent metaphor which virtually every writer utilises to metaphorically express psychological pain or inner turmoil, or to articulate the idea of love-pain or unrequited love (dil ke zakhm: wounds of the heart). Revolutionary poets like Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Ahmad Faraz evoked the metaphor to depict the trials and tribulations of political struggle. In Latin, the word ‘plague’ also means wound and this word ‘has long been used metaphorically as the highest standard of collective calamity, evil, scourge’. For Christians, the ‘wound’ metaphor has a religious signification (the crucifixion of Christ), and among Muslims (especially Shias), the wounds of the Karbala martyrs form an integral part of religious discourse in which wounds signify moral uprightness, sacrifice and obedience to God.

In Kashmiri narratives, this metaphor seems to be deployed mainly in two ways: as a signifier of Kashmir as a tangible entity (‘Kashmiri is... a living wound’), or as ‘consequences’, either political, physical or psychological (‘bearing all our historical wounds, we march again’). By rendering a phenomenon from the abstract to the experientially tangible, this metaphor generates an effect of sympathy, a positive evaluation of the self as against the ‘Other’ who is the cause of the wound/s:

55. By 24 May 2017, as many as 369 individuals had contributed some 738 lines. Last2Lines [http://www.last2lines.com/, accessed 25 May 2017].
There is blood everywhere, tears, anger, and our society is deeply wounded, these scars may never heal and with such approach to the problem by our so called governing body these wounds are becoming deeper and deeper with each passing day (Female journalist).

Our wounds are similar and this similarity unites us. The wound becomes the site of a political expression. During the funeral of Burhan, held in absentia at Nowhatta last night, we were all wounded. The wound was open and raw and still fresh. The open wound of Kashmir cried out in unison ... 'Hum kya chahtey ... Azadi!' (What do we want ... Freedom!) (Male journalist).

In certain usages, the 'wound' and 'paradise lost' metaphors interact and complement each other, as in the title of the 1991 book *Kashmir: A Wounded Paradise*. In the following paragraph, similarly, having been destroyed by a 'totalitarian system', paradise is now 'a living wound'. In this metaphorical interpretation, a clearly negative evaluation of the state emerges since the state is assigned the blame for having caused the wound to paradise, and this wound needs medical/international attention; it is a plea for closure:

What would you call Kashmir, if not an absolute death of democracy and mockery of human rights at all levels across religious faiths, or perhaps it is a living wound—the by-product of the rage and blindness of [a] totalitarian system that has nearly destroyed what was once [the] synonym of Paradise in poetry and [the] literature of the world, and is rewriting itself with its own blood (Male journalist).

The same motif runs through many couplets in the Last2Lines poem where it appears that the 'wound' metaphor (along with the associated terms, bruise and scar) is being employed to evoke the pathos of the metaphorical language. For example, it is 'our soul' which is said to be 'bruised and wounded' and 'full of scars'. Unlike the example above in which Kashmir is personified as a living wound, here an abstract entity (the soul) is anthropomorphised. But this animate entity is also ascribed a collective identity by using the possessive pronoun 'our' which, in the context of the poem, is certainly a reference to Kashmiri collectivity. So, it is not merely the body of this collectivity that is wounded, but its very soul, a profound expression which evocatively expresses political grievance and at the same time affirms a separate national identity; and yet, it does all this by concealing its subversive content. The use of deictic expressions plays a key role here in terms not only of heightening collective self-awareness, but also of marking a relational boundary between the in-group (Kashmiris) and the out-group (the Indian state)

Bruised and wounded, our soul is full of scars.
Hearts wail, dry as desert an eye that cannot see. When last did I cry? (Male contributor)

**The ‘wound’ metaphor in visual formats**

In visual formats, Kashmiri artists often depict Kashmir as a wounded place. In the image below (Figure 6), the metaphorical wound is visualised in the shape of a bloodied map of undivided Jammu and Kashmir on a human palm. From the cartographically-shaped wound, blood is dripping as ink, with the fingernail of the
third finger drawn as a pointed nib. This image was published in Greater Kashmir on 3 October 2016 with an article titled ‘Poetic Pain, Bleeding Landscape: Creative Responses to the 2016 Uprising’. Like BAB’s cartoon of 1975 discussed above, the creator of this image also drew on the Urdu literary milieu, an Urdu couplet by the poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Mataa-e-lauh-o-kalam chin gayee to kya gham hai} \\
\text{Ki khoon-e-dil mein dubo li ungliyaan maine}
\end{align*}
\]

Though they have stolen my paper and pen, I don’t grieve. I dip my fingers into my heart’s blood.\(^59\)

Linked to wound is another medical metaphor, ‘healing’; it can be regarded as an aspect of the ‘source domain’ word ‘wound’. At a conceptual level, ‘wound’ and ‘healing’ interact and assume a dialectical relationship: a wound needs healing. Drawing upon this understanding, one can appreciate the efficacy of the healing metaphor in the manifesto of the unionist People’s Democratic Party (PDP), which came to power in Jammu and Kashmir in 2002 on the slogan ‘Healing Touch’, which, while unclear as to what it meant in substantive terms, became a much talked-about phrase in the media throughout the mid 2000s. Nonetheless at the time, the slogan seems to have at least helped the PDP connect with a sizable voter population that was apparently experiencing war fatigue and despair due to the protracted conflict that had left devastating consequences in its wake.\(^60\) For some people, the idea of ‘healing touch’ suggested that people who had suffered during the conflict needed justice, ‘peace with dignity’ and respite from the heavy-handedness of the Indian forces. In the rhetoric of the state government, bringing about reconciliation and rebuilding the distressed civil society depended on healing the ‘moral and historical

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60. In August 2003, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the then chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, said: ‘When we had suggested the healing touch policy long ago, many parties including the BJP objected to it. But today, there is a national consensus and even the Prime Minister has advocated it during his Srinagar visit’. See ‘Healing Touch Policy Has No Alternative: Mufti’, The Daily Excelsior (30 Aug. 2003) [http://www.jammu-kashmir.com/archives/archives2003/kashmir20030830c.html, accessed 7 June 2017], emphasis added.
However, when the government’s rhetoric hit its practical limitations, the slogan was thrown back at the PDP. It was used by opposition groups, especially from the resistance, in satirical critiques of the PDP for failing to live up to its promises and for kowtowing to New Delhi. For example, in one cartoon, the PDP’s Mehbooba Mufti (the chief minister) is shown holding a cage in which a wounded Kashmiri lies, while she advises the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi: ‘Strike his wounds with some balm’ (Figure 7). This is clearly a sarcastic allusion to the PDP’s famous ‘Healing Touch’ slogan via the use of the associated term ‘balm’. In the context of state repression in 2016, this cartoon points to the irony of the slogan by positioning Mufti herself as the cause of the wound/s: she is shown wielding a medieval club.

Saiba Varma argues that, deriving from the ‘Healing Touch’ rhetoric, certain medical and humanitarian interventions (and discourses) in Kashmir can be read as part of the non-militarised aspect of the counter-insurgency. So when Kashmiri dissidents subvert the political meaning of the ‘Healing Touch’ slogan, they also, by extension, counter the state’s appropriation of the ‘wound’ metaphor, which the latter mobilises for its counter-insurgency discourse of ‘winning hearts and minds’.

Conclusion

Metaphorical language allows the pro-resistance Kashmiri dissidents a creative space for dissent in terms of evocatively expressing political grievances, countering statist narratives and affirming a sense of political community. This is often done by concealing the subversive content. Since metaphorical political language helps the dominated to disrupt power relations by subverting hegemonic representations, its usage

Figure 7. Suhail Naqshbandi cartoon, ‘Strike his wounds with some balm’, Greater Kashmir (7 Oct. 2016). Reproduced with kind permission of Suhail Naqshbandi.

in resistance narratives points to the dynamics of political agency. Focusing on 2016 narratives, this paper shows that the ‘paradise lost’ and ‘wound’ metaphors permeate Kashmiri political narratives. While the ‘paradise lost’ metaphor broadly appears to entail a consensual interpretation, the ‘wound’ metaphor expresses Kashmiri political subjectivity in a distinctly emotional way because this metaphor is embedded in affective cultural practices. Overall, the pathos aspect seems to pervade the metaphorical framing, which might be in response to the traumatically despairing circumstances of the conflict, or it could be deliberate insofar as it helps to garner sympathy and solidarity for the political cause. People are as much moved by material interests as by emotion, and by appealing to emotion through metaphorical language, Kashmiri narratives not only seek to forge a sense of separate national identity, but also infuse moral substance into the resistance discourse. For example, a wounded body represents a victim/oppression, so by underlining Kashmiri victimhood through this metaphor, the Kashmiri narrators seek to humanise and decriminalise their political expressions and actions. But to what extent such metaphorical framings help in envisioning a clear political future is a question which needs further probing.

We can appreciate the importance of metaphors for the Kashmiri self-determination movement in the context of Lindekilde’s argument that social structures and strains do not inevitably give rise to collective grievances and claims, ‘but come into existence partly through processes of interpretation, discursive practices, and active meaning making’.

So by locating patterns within Kashmiri political discourses, this paper has shown how metaphorical framings act as effective (and affective) vehicles of representation, and how they potentially shape what Karl Mannheim called ‘partisan integrative attitudes’ by fostering a sense of aggrieved/oppressed nationality. Through these discursive practices, a new generation of Kashmiris construct, consolidate and reinforce their national identity and endow the Kashmiri resistance movement with meaning. Although this study has focused on a limited sample, as Mannheim argues, within generation-units, it is often a small group which develops ‘a more or less adequate expression and interpretation of the experiences peculiar to that social location’, which finds resonance among the larger cohort.

The metaphorical framings explored in this paper provide an insight into the modes of thinking that underlie the recent youth-led uprisings in Kashmir and which, while the ‘paradox of normalcy’ remains unresolved, may lead to many more episodes of protest in the future.

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