

Article

Burhan Wani and the Masculinities of the Indian State

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Abstract Burhan Wani, the pin-up boy of Kashmiri separatism was shot dead by Indian Special Forces in July 2016. Wani, a commander for Kashmir-based militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen, was popular on social media for his advocacy against Indian rule in Kashmir and his calls suggesting violent insurrection against the Indian state. As a Kashmiri Muslim, Wani was doubly marginalised by the dominant Hinduised space of the imagined Indian nation; his reactive masculinity directly challenged the Hindu bravado he encountered in the state-sanctioned hyper-masculinity exemplified by the Indian Armed Forces. The article is inspired by the theoretical contributions of Jasbir Puar and Sudhir Kakar, who argue that the heteronormativity of society is produced through the homosexual and that the Hindu is constituted through the Muslim Other. Furthermore, utilizing Dibyesh Anand's critical conceptualization of Indian nationalism as 'porno nationalism', the article argues that the way the Muslim is constituted is by fetishisation of the Muslim body as 'hypersexed', 'abnormal' and often criminal. Wani's masculinity and his public representation constitute a nexus between the technological advancement that enables growing linkages between elements of the global jihad, the emergence of a transnational jihadi culture and him as a role model for young men, whose class and religious identity is superseded by the irredentist claims of the freedom fighter. Refocusing our attention from the superstructures of global masculine posturing to localized, individual experiences of violence, this article aims to reposition Wani, and Muslims, as integral to the masculinities of the Indian State.

Keywords Kashmir, India, masculinity, Hindu nationalism, violence, separatism

How do we understand masculinity relative to a nation, specifically the Indian nation state? What can be said of the masculinities created under the duress of civil war-like conditions, as in Kashmir, and how does the violence of resistance shape masculinity? Collier & Hoeffler claim that 'the most likely people to participate in militancy are men between the ages of 15-24' (Collier and Hoeffler 2004, 563). Why is this? Regarding young men and their involvement, worldwide, in armed struggle, Cock has argued for a direct link between masculinity and militarism, suggesting that war provides a 'social space for the cultivation and validation of masculinity' (Cock in Honwana 2011, 53). Historically, male bodies have dominated global warfare. These have often been boys and young men. Regimes in The Congo, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Sudan are notable for their use of boy soldiers, but contemporary instances, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), demonstrate a continued preference for young men who are caught up in political violence. Carrigan et al. emphasise 'the importance of violence (...) as a constitutive practice that helps to make all kinds of masculinity' (Carrigan et al. 1985, 589). They also recognise that violence often comes from the state, and insofar as the historical construction of masculinity and femininity 'is also struggle for the control and direction of state power' (Carrigan et al. 1985, 556-57).



This article is inspired by the theoretical contributions of Jasbir Puar and Sudhir Kakar, who suggest that the heteronormativity of society is produced through the homosexual and that the Hindu is constituted through the Muslim Other. Further utilising Dibyesh Anand's theory of 'porno nationalism', the article suggests that the Muslim in India is constituted by the near fetishisation of the Muslim body as 'hypersexed' and 'abnormal' (Anand 2008, 165). Anand's critical engagement with nationalism in the Indian context points to a 'pornographic imagining of Muslim men and women that does not disrupt the asexual-but-virile self-understanding of Hindu nationalism since stereotyping allows for this displacement of desire and disgust onto the Muslim Other' (Anand 2008, 165). In the context of Kashmiri separatism, we see Burhan Wani the subject of institutional and media vilification, as the ultimate terrorist Other. This is what, in the North American context, Puar has called the 'monster terrorist fag' (Puar 2007, 78).

Initially, this article contextualises the current conflict in Kashmir within the longer legacy of resistance in the region. Secondly, the gendered politics of bodies will be discussed, noting how gender relations are considerably affected and altered by the entrenched misogyny in both state and non-state actors. Then, while discussing how the various physical means of resistance, notably stone throwing and armed struggle, contribute to aspirations of hegemonic masculine identity in Kashmir, this article will draw comparisons with the Palestinian intifada making special reference to youth masculinities, especially those created under the duress of near civil war-like conditions. Following this, the article discusses Burhan Wani's appearance and actions, which are at once specific, like all articulations of masculinity, to his location and temporality, but also link him to global jihadist endeavours as they do to resistance movements elsewhere. Here, an analysis of Wani's public presentation is presented, and the relationship between his masculinity and his popularity highlighted. Finally, this article will engage with the Indian media's proposition that Wani represents a 'new age' militant and what his position as an educated, middle-class, Indian born separatist means.

Understanding Kashmir

Kashmir has a complex history. While International Relations theorists argue that the intractability of the Kashmir conflict is due to issues as varied as 'state repression, elite manipulation' (Ollapally 2008), sovereignty (Bose 2009), truncated power asymmetry between India and Pakistan (Paul 2006), and political mobilization and institutional decay (Ganguly 1996), it will be argued here that, in addition to the abovementioned, the intractability of this conflict might also be attributed to a reactive, collective masculinity constructed in response to what Anand describes as Hindu nationalism's (being read here as the modern Indian State's) 'political move to create, awaken, and strengthen a masculinist-nationalist body which is always vulnerable to the exposure of the self as non-masculine' (Anand 2008, 180).

Although Dar and Khaja have claimed that the militancy currently seen in the Kashmir Valley is a 'byproduct of British legacy in Jammu and Kashmir since 1947', the history of resistance in the region goes back further (Dar & Khaja 2014, 104). For instance, Hassan charts the Kashmiri movement for resistance against the repressive measures of the Afghan and Sikh rule and later the Hindu Dogra kingdom during the colonial

period, especially when the region was under the administration of Maharaja Hari Singh (Hassan 2011). The current conflict is broadly understood by the Indian and Pakistani establishments to be a territorial dispute as a result of British colonial disengagement. This is complicated from the outset by the political demands for Kashmiri independence and the many interpretations of azaadi (freedom) as articulated by Kashmiris. This is what Ashutosh Varshney has described as competing visions of nationalism: Kashmiri, secular and Islamic. Hassan has demonstrated that the movement for self-determination, particularly in the post-1988 period, has passed through many phases, at times being guided by the Islamic nationalism of Jama'at-i-Islami Jammu Kashmir (JIJK) and at others by the more secular ideologies traditionally espoused by the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Of interest to the present discussion is the way in which limited political authority has left a vacuum for a variety of protest movements to flourish and has created a space for militancy and extra-state actors to place demands on the Indian State, which seeks to politically and economically disenfranchise Kashmiris.

Constraints on political leadership in the region include widespread corruption and the misallocation of state funds despite enormous patronage from the central Government. This regularly places Kashmir among the most corrupt states in India. Further, the efforts of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), a multi-party coalition dedicated to Kashmiri separatism, has been undermined by hardliners, such as Conference spokesman Syed Geelani, who has advocated the use of violence through armed insurgency, discrediting the more moderate views of the coalition and the chances of moving forward with a multilateral political solution to the conflict. Finally, the Chief Ministership of the state passed from the popular Mufi Mohammed Sayeed to his daughter, Mehbooba, after his death in 2016. Her Peoples Democratic Party's unlikely coalition with the ruling Right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has discredited the party amongst loyal followers. This is underscored by Pakistan's periodic attempts since independence to wrest the state from India by force, through explicit moves of war, state sponsored terrorism and by proxy wars.

Decades of election malfeasance on the part of successive Indian governments and earlier, by the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (JKNC), have discredited the peace process in the region, leading the APHC to appeal to Kashmiris to boycott the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections and the parliamentary by-elections, witnessed earlier in 2017. The Kashmiri people's reluctance to participate in electoral processes under the framework of the Indian constitution have at times lead to violence on polling days and the undermining of democratic political processes. Participation in elections is seen by some as renewed interest in mainstream politics and acquiescence to Indian authority, though many see high voter turnout not as an endorsement of Indian rule by the Kashmiri population, but as demand for daily issues such as food and electricity.

This is the context in which we find the 21-year-old Burhan Wani, the poster boy of Kashmiri militarism (DNA 2016). A recruiter for the Pakistan-based separatist group Hizbul Mujahideen, he was shot dead by the Indian security forces on July 8th, 2016. Wani's death triggered the most significant civil unrest in Indian occupied Kashmir since

2010. While his prominent social media presence was highlighted, little has been written about the way his masculinity was disseminated and how this might be read. As a Kashmiri Muslim, doubly marginalised by the dominant Hinduised space of the imagined Indian nation, Wani's masculinity directly challenged the Hindu bravado exemplified by Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and his metonymic '56-inch chest' (in Hindi, the onomatopoeic *chhappan ki chhati*). The Indian media, at pains to correlate Modi's muscularity with strong, stable leadership, have seized upon this aspect of his anatomy, an extension of which might be read as the masculinity embodied by the virile, young jawans (soldiers) as arms of the state, omnipresent in Kashmir. Wani's masculinity and his public representation constitute a figure of desire for other young men, whose class and religious identities are, at times, superseded by the irredentist claims of the freedom fighter type. Moreover, militancy facilitates a reactive masculinity in response to the state-sanctioned, hyper-masculine, Modi-type encountered by Wani through its materialization in the Indian Armed Forces. Refocusing our attention from the superstructures of global masculine posturing to local, individual experiences of violence may help us reposition Wani, and Muslims, as integral to the masculinities of the Indian State.

Gender and the Politics of Bodies

As Seema Kazi has argued, the conflict in Kashmir is heavily gendered and affects individual bodies as well as communities and nations. A gender analysis, she says, 'illustrates that state and inter-state military processes are embedded in the social and cultural realities of the population at large' (Kazi 2010, 135). It 'underscores the paradox of the state's claims to "security" that, in fact, have little meaning when the struggle for bodily integrity is a daily challenge' (Kazi 2010, 175). Reading gender for women, however, as Kazi does, can at times erase the kinds of violence men experience – often enacted by the State. This is not to say that the picture of bodily warfare is entirely male. Kazi observes that while men are often 'disproportionate victims of direct violence', women's experience as the physical beneficiaries of neo-colonialism in Kashmir finds them raped and assaulted by Armed Forces and militants alike (Kazi 2010, 136). Khan, too, insists that 'the militarisation of the state has led to violence not only on the macro level for women at the hands of Indian security forces and Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) but also on a localized societal level where violence against women is increasing' (Khan 2015, 349). While the use of women's bodies as vehicles of resistance in the conflict in Kashmir is well documented (Butalia 2002, Chenoy 2007, N.A. Khan 2010, Manchanda 2003, Shekhawat 2006), the focus of this essay is the way male bodies are deployed, how acts of violence during war may be interpreted as intrinsically masculine and how men attain or perform manhood in relation to the exigencies of life under Indian occupation.

Mrinalini Sinha has argued that 'the discourse of de-masculinisation that accompanies colonialism is reactively countered by the assertion of control over the domestic or personal realm' (Sinha 1995, 140). While women may be involved with militancy, they are prevented from traditional domains of warfare such as the front line. In the Congo, while boys are conscripted into warfare, girls may function as property in the transaction of marriage or sex, a pattern we see repeated in the recruitment of child soldiers to ISIL and the selling of Iraqi women into sexual slavery. Honwana notes that while girls were

also abducted to participate in the civil war in Mozambique and Angola, only boys were subjected to military training and authorised to kill. Kashmiri males involved with militancy, therefore, mediate their masculinity through traditional social structures (gender, class, age) as well as through structures of war in which men exercise domination and women are forced into submission or relegated to non-combative and domestic roles. Patriarchal norms of society, as outlined by Kazi, are thus re-entrenched in the theatre of war.

Endowing exceptional powers to the Centre in Kashmir as well as in the North East of India is the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). The Act, applied to Kashmir in 1990, permits army officers to arrest without warrant, search any vehicle, shoot to kill and receive immunity from prosecution. Acting with impunity under the terms of the Act, 'the Indian Armed Forces have used severe forms of intimidation—torture, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, kidnapping and rape—to curb resistance,' (Batool and Rather 2016) without fear of reprisal, in both of these militarized zones. National and international human rights agencies have documented rapes committed by members of the Indian Armed Forces. Systematic violence against Kashmiri women by state authorities experienced during insurgency was particularly egregious during the atrocities committed at Kunan and Poshpura where men from the 68th Brigade of the Fourth Rajputana Rifles raped women and girls as young as eight during an army crackdown in the twin villages in 1991. The effect, not only on women but also on men from the community – rape being used as a weapon for emasculating men and further stigmatizing women - has the damaging effect of breaking communities irreparably and disrupting gender relations. The lack of official retribution for sexual violence in Kashmir is part of an attitude, endemic in the Indian military, that is 'part of a larger theme of masculinity that rules the army paradigm, and which is used to justify the actions of the soldiers' (Batool and Rather, *The Caravan* 2016). 'The image of a young, male soldier, a jawan, serving the nation in a hostile land far away from home, strikes at the heart of the Indian population, insulating soldiers from any blame' (Batool and Rather, *The Caravan* 2016). Further, perpetuating the idea of Kashmir as a 'disturbed' region is advantageous to the Indian state, which seeks to continue its heavily militarized presence in the region and justify excessive defence spending. Protests in response to this and the 'disappeared' sons and husbands of Kashmir have formed the bedrock of anti-India civil movements, placing gender relations and instances of sexual and bodily assault at the forefront of the Kashmiri resolve for self-determination.

Weapons of War

Images of Wani before his death often depict a genial environment where militants seem untroubled by intense homosociality. Stringently heterosexual in their performance, this camaraderie is religiously inflected through iconographies such as flags, Islamic symbols and placement of *The Quran*, marking the space as a distinctly Muslim environment. These scenes suggest a fraternity or band of brothers that invokes the sub-continental notion of *bhaichaara*, or brotherhood, simultaneously linking their jihadist endeavours with the global Islamic *Ummah* or Muslim community. Some authors, however, de-emphasise the role of religious ideology in the fusion of militant group solidarity and the will to die for that group. Whitehouse and McQuinn's (*Pacific Standard* 2016) research on the 2011 Libyan Civil War suggests that one of the most powerful causes of extreme

pro-group action was the 'sharing of self-defining experiences', namely the 'intense fear and pain of warfare' (Whitehouse and McQuinn 2016). By placing more emphasis on the revolutionary's end goals, rather than seeing militarism as a job, Whitehouse and McQuinn view the submission of the individual to the group and the enjoined transformative experiences as an 'inescapable expression of the bonds of kinship' (Whitehouse and McQuinn 2016). This has parallels to Western forces serving as 'cannon fodder' in World War One and highlights the potential for violent self-sacrifice in 'every human being', rather than being merely motivated by extreme religious beliefs, although these are acknowledged to have an amplifying effect (Whitehouse and McQuinn 2016). This line of reasoning is appropriate for Kashmir where self-determination has historically been articulated along both secular and religious lines.

Sanjay Kak explains that stone throwing as a mode of protest gained particular traction after 2008, as a 'new generation of young men born and brought up during the brutal warfare between Kashmiri rebels and Indian troops, became the foot-soldiers of this new civilian army', though he traces the origins of stone-pelting back to the anti-feudal struggles of the 1930s (Kak 2017, 326). As in the Palestinian intifada, stone pelters are most often younger boys. Kak describes the more skilled stone throwers (*sang-baz*) in Kashmir as the 'front rank of the people's protests outside mosques' (Kak 2017, 326). The ritual of stone throwing seems to serve a fairly explicit role as a rite of passage in society for which 'premarital sexual exploits within the community are taboo and economic opportunities (and therefore possibilities) are extremely limited' (Hudson in Shiva 2014, 130). This, Hudson contends, 'will be sustained as long as the oppressor allows no other way for boys to become men and as long as the culture of resistance legitimises the sacrifices and violence' (Hudson in Shiva 2014, 131-32). Hudson has shown that clashes with the Israeli army play an important part in the construction of young Palestinian men's sense of gender roles. This resonates with the Kashmiri experience.

Wani and his fraternity are often dressed in military fatigues combined with plain T-shirts. They frequently tote Kalashnikovs and carry smart phones, but appear without the long beards associated with extremists and the trademark *kohl* (eyeliner) that has come to be associated with the Salafis (the ultra-conservative branch of Sunni Islam) of the region. Guns facilitate higher status within the hierarchy of Kashmiri masculinities when compared with stone pelters. The desire for prestige as represented by the graduation from stones to guns exemplifies the quintessentially masculinist post-colonial fascination for technology as modernism, established during the Nehruvian era, but also the designation of higher, more sophisticated forms of weaponry linked to the Cartesian division of mind over body evident in the distinction between the sophistication of weaponry and the primitiveness of stones with their rough, earthy connection. It should be noted that the introduction of backshots (sophisticated pellet-firing shotguns originally designed for killing birds) has inflamed the situation in Kashmir considerably owing to the thousands of civilians the army has blinded and maimed as a result of the lead bullets.

Contra to the picture of Wani is the aesthetic of militants in the country's North East, as described by Arundhati Roy. 'I have never seen anyone like them before, the boys wear



Fig. 1. Burhan Wani (centre) surrounded by fellow separatists. 'Top Hizbul Militant Burhan Wani Killed in Anantnag Encounter'. Accessed June 12. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jammu-kashmir/community/top-hizbul-militant-burhan-wani-killed-in-anantnag-encounter/262999.html>

jewellery, headgear, some in frayed olive-green fatigues' (Roy 2011, 6). This suggests we cannot assume the picture of militant masculinity to take one form regionally, nor in the Valley itself.

Gander observes that indulging in traditionally masculine pursuits and forging intimate bonds with male friends is seen as important, particularly for younger men (Gander in *The Independent* 2017). Militancy facilitates the desired homosocial bonding not afforded in an otherwise heavily policed public sphere. In photos and videos, the boys are clustered around Wani at all times. Following on from Freud, Kakar notes that 'ties of a group come into existence through their emotional bond with the leader. Love as the vital cohesive force of a group' (Kakar 1996, 148). Whitworth, in her work on North American army conscripts, observes that 'many recruits report that the emotional bond with fellow soldiers and the military itself is stronger than any relationship they had previously experienced (...) Most have come to see themselves as members of a new common family, a warrior brotherhood, which is very distinct from the larger world around them (...) military indoctrination promotes loyalty and conformity to a set of militarised and highly masculinised values and behavioural expectations' (Whitworth 2008, 115). The conspicuous absence of women in Wani's milieu repudiates notions of

the hypersexed Muslim, not through explicit actions of piety, but through the rigour and discipline of their militaristic organization and presentation, which combat the Indian army's own. One could argue, however, that such an environment could potentially promote the submission and sexual objectification of women, consistent with the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity as performed through heterosexual, homosocial relations.

Militants, like Wani, may be seen as objects of desire. If we relocate the Osellas' argument for wider South Asia to the Kashmir context, we see the attraction in being subsumed by a wider male body, linking one to a larger cause 'by means of immersion in a more potent and larger male self' (Osella and Osella 2006, 164). The masculine self 'is at once connected to and embodied within a collectivity of men' (Osella and Osella 2006, 164). Militants are 'mimetically connected through emulation of their masculine styles' (Osella and Osella 2006, 7). As with young Palestinians, who occupy a similarly marginalized position, this corresponds to the inheritance of a 'cultural resistance to domination' that is indoctrinated into Kashmiris in the Valley and inscribed into and onto their bodies (Petee 1994, 31). Because boys are the ones who occupy the public spaces, they are the ones who get to partake in warfare. The will to fight and die is etched in the hegemonic masculinity of the Kashmiri imagination.

Othered by a state that seeks to exclude them politically, Wani's critique of the India he is begrudgingly a part of is wrought through his bodily posturing, which might be read as directly mirroring the heavily militarized Indian Armed Forces. The contestation of his citizenship is underpinned by an emasculation that denies him the status of a full citizen of the nation. He seeks to devalue the nominally secular ideals the Indian state stands for using violence to directly challenge its oppressive regime. Wani's masculinity both opposes and re-inscribes the militarized masculinity of the Indian Armed Forces that has affected Wani and his comrades on a deeply personal level. However, given the Kashmiri people's historic lack of support for the political Islam that Wani's party espouses, his popularity must be approached differently.

Being Burhan

It appears that Wani's interaction with the masculinity of the state began when he was 15 years old. In interviews before his death, Wani spoke openly of his reasons for joining the militancy. 'I have faced a lot of problems after 2010, especially in 2012. They [police] used to detain me whenever militants used to strike. One day, unknown men snatched rifles from the police; they detained me and my brother for four days' (Focusweb 2016). Independent Kashmiri and mainstream Indian media alike have highlighted the fraternal relations of separatists killed in conflict with the Indian State. In one report by The Caravan following Wani's death, one separatist claimed 'that his brother had been severely beaten and tortured by personnel of the paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force' (Donthi 2016). 'Tomorrow, I might join [the militancy]. Look at my brother. We are even ready to take a bullet now' (Donthi 2016). NDTV drew attention to Wani's co-separatist Ishaq Ahmad Parray's older brothers, who had been unable to find work. Another, Zakir Bhatt, is the youngest of five boys. Most significantly, the death of Wani's older brother, Khalid, by the Indian army, foreshadows the method of Wani's demise. Here, a narrative of emasculation is constructed. 'Wani's

path to militancy began in another one of Kashmir's bloody summers – back in 2010 when Indian security forces killed 120 protesters. Wani (...) is said to have joined a small group of homegrown militants after he and his brother were humiliated and abused by the Indian soldiers' (Waheed *The Guardian*, 2016).

The bodies of young Kashmiris are inscribed with violence before they become politicized. Kashmiri boys may see joining the militancy as an expected behaviour of a man in their region. Once boys are politicized, militancy is then seen as part of the wider cause for self-determination and so the narrative shifts to the political particularities of the struggle, infused with an Islamic sense of duty and the rejection of injustice. This is visible in Sumantra Bose's interview with JKLF leader, Yasin Malik, and others who feel that they 'owe it to their political forbears, their people, and their 'martyrs' not to (...) be marginalized and destroyed by state-led authoritarianism' (Bose 2009, 171). Wani's masculinity illuminates India's fascination with and fear of 'the angry young man', now recirculating as a privileged, media savvy, gun toting separatist unafraid of anonymity. His familiarity with social media enables the growing linkages between elements of the global jihad and the emergence of a transnational jihadi culture, challenging representations of the over-sexed Muslim and the cloaked Mullah as an instrument of terror. Wani could be an engineer, a cricket player or a doctor, like any archetypal Indian son. Breaking his silence on the on-going protests in Kashmir, Prime Minister Modi tweeted that 'it is sad that boys who should be holding laptops and cricket bats have been handed stones in their hands' (India.com 2016). Wani's persona evokes and mocks, simultaneously, the myth of the archetypal Indian son.

Following Wani's death, it was no surprise that during the Indian State's crackdown, the government deliberately cut the internet to the entire state, thus preventing the organisation of any rallies or demonstrations via social media channels. Ironically, it was later through calculated WhatsApp messages that the army disseminated a picture of Wani's bloodied head (emulating other high profile assassinations such as Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden), which was used to prove that he was dead. The Indian State was utilising the same technology that facilitated Wani's popularity in the first place. The link between the way technology is implicated in powering the corresponding, yet polar mythical statuses of Wani as regional martyr and Modi as the national 'strongman' is perhaps best encapsulated by a 'Modi versus Wani' game developed for Android phones after his death, which depicts Wani's ten-stage 'fight for freedom'. This was downloaded thousands of times in the Valley and popularized through file sharing Apps after his death. In the game, the user assumes Wani's character to take on figures resembling 'Modi to win points and advance. The goal of the game appears to be azaadi (freedom) as the user shoots, kicks and punches to eliminate the Modi-like characters to gain points'(Saha 2016).

The Masculinity of a New Age Militant

Both pleasure seeking and religiously disciplined, Wani was indeed a new breed of a militant. Kashmiri novelist Mirza Waheed has observed that unlike the first generation of Kashmir separatist fighters in the early 1990s, Wani did not cross over into Pakistan for training. 'He didn't use a nom de guerre, and he amassed a huge following on social media, where he issued brazen challenges to the Indian state' (Waheed 2016). The

Indian media, largely responsible for calling Wani 'new age', however, forget that, despite its pro-Pakistan stance, the Hizbul Mujahideen has a tradition of indigenous recruitment (Ollapally 2008, 125). This only changed in 1993 with the blowback from Afghanistan, which reinvigorated the militancy with a host of Pakistani freedom fighters dispossessed of their cause there.

Wani and his cohorts signal a return to a majority of Indian-born militants in the Valley for the first time in years. This is crucial to the Indian state's rhetoric of terror, which sees Wani's cohort described as 'Islamic fundamentalists' or 'terrorists' of the State. The separatist, in this form of discourse, is identified through a specific religious identity and his machismo is distinctly linked to terrorism. While Hindu masculinity - linked to duty and service to the nation stands legitimated - Muslim masculinity - linked to Islam and reterritorialized outside the limits of India - is seen as an ideology, not faith and stands delegitimised by the Indian State. Wider options of the secular or 'liberal', 'egalitarian' masculinities are now seldom open to young Kashmiris indoctrinated into Islamic values (Ouzgane 2006, 133). Although implicated as terrorists owing to their organisation's relationship with Pakistan, Wani actually employs a reformist position to challenge what he sees as the failure of secularism in India.

Wani's class background is important. His middle-class upbringing affords him a level of agency and education otherwise off-limits to young men from poorer backgrounds. Leading Hizbul separatists are often 'school toppers'. Bhatt, the son of a doctor and a civil engineering student, joined armed militancy when he was 18 after being singled out for police profiling after the 2010 mass protests in the Valley. Tral, where Wani and Bhatt are both from, records some of the highest literacy rates in the state. Wani's privilege as a member of the middle-classes (his father is a school headmaster) allows him and others like him to leave their families without the fear of the socio-economic repercussions poorer families might face in the absence of a male child.

The involvement of educated youth in militancy is not new in Kashmir. The resistance movement has historically found support among educated youth who are not clamoring for jobs but for substantive demands of freedom and the right to self-determination. Joining the armed struggle in the form of militancy has been left as the only way to satisfy the sense of duty towards the Kashmiri nation. 'From Che Guevara in South America to Al Khattab in Chechnya to the present day Al Zawahiri of Al Qaeda, young, educated militants', Dar and Khaja tell us, are 'not a rare breed' (Dar & Khaja 2014, 105). In Kashmir, 'the ordinary masses normally make up a good percentage of the people who actually fight. But the educated youth, particularly unemployed, serve as the guiding forces' (Dar & Khaja 2014, 105). These educated militants are not only committed to their cause but also have the advantage of giving any resistance movement credibility in their societies. Zaza writes about the recruitment of young, male university graduates to Syrian militancy outfit Jaish al-Islam, who have monopolised the local labour market with attractive salaries. In Douma, a city ravished by Syria's civil war and where humanitarian aid regularly fails to reach civilians, the lack of jobs for young Syrian men expected to provide for their families, forces them into militancy. Men of Pakistani origin involved with militancy in Kashmir are, Fair (2007, 2008) tells us, predominantly well educated. Modelled on Latin American guerrilla movements, the Red Brigade was a terrorist organization whose founders met at



Fig. 2. The police station in Kashmir. 'Get them by their balls hearts and minds will follow.' Image: Hassan, Khalid Wasim. 2011. Reproduced with permission.

university and, through armed struggle, attempted to destabilize Italy throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Wani, it should be noted, was not violent himself. He was a recruiter who incited violence in order to reach a political goal. 'In 2008 and 2010 agitations, there was no militancy,' Farooq Ahmad Bhat tells *The Caravan* (Donthi 2016). 'But when the 2010 agitation was quelled through force, then you had reactions in south Kashmir. The people's frustrations had led some to turn to violence' (Donthi 2016). Delinking Wani from the violence that his death inspired, Mukhtar Ahmad Shah tells us in the same publication that 'it is not about Burhan so much. Look at the ground situation. So much oppression. People pelt stones to be heard' (Donthi 2016). Lawyer Ashiq Hussain agreed that the Indian state's use of force was fuelling deep resentment among Kashmiris. 'Why do we take Pakistan's name? Because we hate India' (Donthi 2016). Wani's father, however, focused on the Islamic tenet of *ghairat* (honour) and the narrative of shame and humiliation. 'Someone's *ghairat* got challenged time and again, so he decided to answer back. Others decided to stay quiet. My son couldn't bear to see the atrocities and the humiliation, so he was forced to choose the path which he is on right now' (Mustafa FocusWeb, 2016). Over the next few years, he became 'Kashmir's most famous militant commander and acquired something of a cult following among young Kashmiris, who saw him as a symbol of resistance against Indian occupation' (Waheed, 2016).

Conclusion

By the time Wani was shot, it didn't matter that his goal of *azaadi* remained unfulfilled. As far as his supporters were concerned, Wani was every bit the man, the martyr and

the ‘father of hundreds of new Wanis’ that will replace him (Donthi 2016). ‘Burhan might have had 20 people with him, but now there will be thousands’ (Donthi 2016). Why do boys take to militancy? ‘Because it is there, the way out [of] the system’, suggests Mustafa (FocusWeb, 2016). There is a sense, when reading the media coverage on Kashmir, of desperation and disenfranchisement that Kashmiri men feel might be made right through violence against the State. Militancy offers a way out of hopelessness and shame in a climate where insurgency co-exists with State suppression and violence. Wani made militancy look like a viable option to the many disenfranchised young men who paradoxically demand attention from the State that deliberately seeks to politically and economically exclude them. Recruitment to militancy is thus inflected by class as well as gender. Well-educated young men dispossessed of worthwhile employment eek out an existence, and thereby formulate and consolidate their masculinity, elsewhere.

The denial of statehood and the links to nationalism provide a point of departure of the praxis of young Kashmiri men leading to a precarious masculinity. This truncated sense of manhood seeks validation in the form of violence in the face of state-led oppression. Even those rendered effeminate by the state version of hegemonic masculinity are demonstrably violent in ways just as familiar to those who structurally oppress them, both domestically and in the theatre of war. Given their access to the public sphere, the re-entrenching of hierarchical systems of warfare and the shrinking space for secular debate, the likelihood of men responding to these calls of violence is unsurprisingly high.

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