

Research Article

Social Media's Impact on Kashmir's Liberation MovementSajjad Ali ^a

Abstract: The youth-driven liberation struggle in Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) goes beyond the armed insurrection. The non-violent technique uses social media to expose and denounce Indian armed forces brutality and human rights violations, including systematic torture, rape, extrajudicial killings, and prisoner mistreatment. The victims' stories have been widely shared on social media. The next phase of the liberation movement began in 2016 after the Indian military forces killed Burhan Muzaffar Wani. Wani, a young leader and freedom fighter, used social media to mobilize the youth of Kashmir for the cause. Modern communication platforms like social media ensure the Kashmiri people's story about their struggle for liberation from Indian occupation and worldwide persecution is spread. The IHK liberation movement is examined using social movement framing analysis in this research. It seeks to understand how activists reinvent the movement through international protests. The activists are reiterating the global relevance of modern human rights mobilizations.

Keywords: Social Media, India, Kashmir, Freedom Movement

Introduction

There was a British colonial rule over Kashmir in the 1930s, which is when the Kashmir Liberation Movement got its start (Prakash, 2001). After the Subcontinent was split up in 1947, Kashmir, which was mostly made up of Muslims, was forced to become part of India, even though the people who lived there didn't want to be there. Burhan Wani, a member of the terrorist group Hizbul Mujahideen, became well-known among young people and used social media to speak out against the illegal control of Kashmir (Haider, 2016). He used the very popular social networking site Facebook to share his visual proof, which included photos and recorded video messages, of the violent actions taken by the Indian military and local police in Kashmir. Multiple people around the world were able to see what was happening in Kashmir because of the social media posts he shared. Indian troops killed Burhan Wani, which made a lot of young people in Kashmir protest. Things got worse after pictures of his dead body became popular on social media. The incident prompted the Indian security forces to implement a curfew and halt communication channels such as the internet and telephone service. The assassination of Burhan Wani had a significant influence on the ongoing struggle for independence in Kashmir. Additionally, the utilization of advanced platforms such as social media has further bolstered the movement for freedom in Kashmir, which is recognized as the most heavily militarized region globally, with an approximate deployment of 700,000 troops. The Kashmiri people's fight for freedom originated during the period when the Indian Subcontinent was engaged in a political effort to gain independence from the British Empire. Due to the Hindu king governing the province of Kashmir, a division between the Muslim majority and the Hindu Maharaja became unavoidable. In the late 1930s, there were multiple occurrences that prompted government intervention in the religious matters of the populace (McLeod, 2005). The Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League were the two prominent political parties in the Indian Subcontinent. While they had distinct areas of influence, the majority of Muslims backed the All-India Muslim League due to strong religious, cultural, historical, and geographical connections. The Boundary Commission, led by Cyril Jean Radcliffe, intentionally partitioned the district of Gurdaspur in Punjab between Pakistan and India in order to strategically connect India to the Kashmir valley.

The people of Kashmir started protests against the harsh and autocratic rule of Maharaja at the same time. After British India was split up, Pakistan and India, which had just become independent, got into a

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fight over the area of Kashmir in 1948. The agreement split Kashmir into two parts, which are now in Pakistan and India. In 1948, when there was a war going on, the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir made a controversial deal with the Indian government to join India (Akthar, 2010). A decision passed by the UN Security Council (UNSC) recognizing the people of Kashmir's "right of self-determination" ended the war. But India then broke its promise to respect the Kashmiris' legal rights, which was backed up by the UNSC. During his trip to Srinagar, M. K. C. Gandhi, the leader of the Indian National Congress, said that the people of Kashmir have the most power in Jammu and Kashmir. It was common for former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to talk about his support for Kashmiris' "right to self-determination" in his letters, speeches, and telegrams. He also said again that he was committed to solving the Kashmir problem in a way that respected the wishes of the people of Kashmir. India gave Kashmir its own character at first through Article 370 of its Constitution. Several parts of this article have been changed over time, though, and in 2019, Article 370 was thrown out in an effort to silence the Kashmiri people. Pakistan and India had a lot of trouble with each other, which led to two big wars in 1965 and 1971 and other smaller fights. In 1974, Indira Gandhi, the prime minister of India, and Sheikh Abdullah, the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, agreed that Kashmir would become a part of India.

In 1987, elections took place in the region of Indian-held Kashmir, and the Indian authorities employed manipulative tactics to such a degree that it intensified the violent resistance led by the freedom fighters (BOSE, 2001). The leaders who were at the forefront of the uprising movement in IHK actively took part in the elections. The individuals mentioned were Syed Ali Geelani, the leader of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Syed Salahuddin, the head of the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), and Yaseen Malik, the leader of the Liberation Front. The Indian bureaucracy labelled multiple Muslim competitors as terrorists, leading to widespread manipulation of the elections. This, in turn, fuelled rallies and violent revolts by the Kashmiris, which persisted until the 1990s. The occurrence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks had an adverse impact on the liberation movement in IHK, prompting the freedom fighters to shift their focus towards pursuing a political resolution instead. However, in 2007-2008, a fresh round of protests emerged due to the controversy surrounding the "Amarnath Yatra". This disagreement developed because the Indian government wanted to transfer some eight hundred kanals of forest land to the shrine board. The latest wave of protests emerged following the violent killing of Burhan Muzaffar Wani, the district commander of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), a prominent indigenous resistance group, by the Indian security forces.

Research Question

- ▶ "What is the role and impact of social media in shaping and influencing the trajectory of the Kashmir Liberation Movement?"

Significance of the Research

The research article is of utmost importance in revealing the intricate relationship between social media and the Kashmiri independence movement. In the modern age of technology, where information can easily cross borders, this study examines how social media platforms are crucial in influencing stories, gathering support, and creating worldwide awareness about the intricate socio-political situation in Kashmir. The research explores the various ways in which social media affects activism and public opinion in the region. It enhances our understanding of modern forms of resistance and emphasizes the ability of digital platforms to amplify the voices of individuals engaged in liberation movements worldwide. Examining the role of social media in spreading information and promoting causes is especially important in the context of the Kashmir dispute. This is because it has significant consequences for the overall discussion about the region.

Constructing Personas

Before understanding how this study fits into the bigger picture of social movements, we need to know what role ethnic, national, and religious identity markers may play in explaining why people join the global Kashmiri freedom movement. In identity politics, political actors try to get people to support a cause by appealing to a group of identities, such as a person's race, religion, nationality, language, job, gender, sexual orientation,

or any other set of identities (Crenshaw, 1991). Researchers have looked at how social groups start and grow by looking at their organizing structures, political opportunities, and ways of framing issues. By the mid-1980s, McDonald talks about how identity became more important in studying social movements (Edelman, 2001). He says, "Identity became understood as a resource that could be mobilized...or a factor that reduced the costs of mobilization." There is a link between ideology, which is an idea, and identity, which is something that can be seen and touched. It is also through identity that movements can "turn their members into political actors".

As studies on identity politics grew, people talked more about how collective identities can be used as a political tool. Politicizing identities means that they are made by society and can be changed as a result. It may be easier to understand how political ideas are spread, how voters interact with campaigns, how certain identities become important and may lead to backing a certain political cause or candidate, etc., if you look at ideological processes. But there is a way of thinking in the literature that seems almost impossible to avoid: it rests a lot on stereotypical images of an "other." In conflict resolution, a "characterization frame" is a way to make other people seem less trustworthy, "cast doubt on their motivations, or exploit their sensitivity". The calling of a group "terrorists" is an example of this. That word is very hurtful and controversial, and it refers to a group that probably doesn't see itself that way. As long as there isn't a clear place for dialogue, the use of categorical frames in the news, in academia, and on social media can make conflicts worse by giving opponents more room to talk. Frames can be very useful for planning how to escalate, de-escalate, and handle a disagreement in general. In the same way, this could be done on purpose by political capitalists, or it could be the result of years of media framing, state and non-state rhetoric and propaganda, or even references to it in pop culture.

A lot of research has been done on Kashmir news, but none of them has looked at what Kashmiri freedom activists think about what happened, how they see it, and how they choose to voice their complaints (Mahmud, 2005). These studies have also looked at the other people involved, their goals, and who they are. There is no doubt that the current Kashmir freedom struggle is international. It's not a new idea to look at separatist movements as social movements. In fact, global student and youth-led movements of today make this especially clear. The young people who gather abroad are like the young people who scream statements, wave signs, and throw stones on the streets of their home countries. But how does one balance the identity-based claims that come with a movement for one's own country with the need to get people from different backgrounds to work together? How do they personally understand the movement as Kashmiri activists? How do they "sell" the movement to a larger audience on social media to try to make their mistakes at home into a real call to action across borders?

Traditional Media and the Kashmir Freedom Movement's Perspective

People in Kashmir are working together through the Kashmir Freedom Movement to get rid of India's illegal rule (Abbas, 2019). The Indian military is actively trying to stop the movement, which means that news about the deaths and violations of human rights is being kept from the public. This is happening in India's big print and electronic media outlets as well. In spite of this, the people of Kashmir have always kept the freedom fight going. They have also used other ways to get their message out, like giving talks at rallies, handing out pamphlets, writing on walls, and printing and distributing local newspapers. Recently, people fighting for Kashmiri freedom have been using social media to talk to each other. The leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) said that the Indian government committed widespread voting fraud during the 1987 elections in IHK (Misra, 2005). In India, however, the major media took a biased view and spoke for the Indian establishment, spreading propaganda from only one side.

In the same way, the views of the Indian government have been shown in the news by the country's most important newspapers. It is said that the internet and print media in IHK serve a "vigorously government-led" and "severely negative" agenda. The media's coverage of the Kashmiri liberation movement was biased towards a certain racial group and depended too much on information from the government. The Indian mainstream media is biased, sensational, and hostile, and it doesn't do a good job of covering the people of Kashmir's fight for freedom and the hardships they are going through. Delhi has rules and laws

that the local media in IHK must follow. These rules and laws also control the accreditation process and put limits on the cash and advertising earnings that are necessary for any newspaper to stay in business. This is a good way for the Indian government to control the media in Jammu and Kashmir, which is a part of India that it administers. In India, freedom of the press is always limited, and all news stories have to follow strict rules for control. As of right now, the spokesperson for the Fifteenth Corps in Srinagar is not letting the public know about any military participation or analysis of the Indian forces.

There is close monitoring of the private media in IHK. When people criticize the government in any way, they face serious consequences. Many other journalists have been killed, including freelance reporter Ghulam Mohammad Lone, who was killed by unknown armed people in August 1994, according to a report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, 2020). In April 1996, Ghulam Rasool Sheikh, editor of the newspaper *Rehnuma-e-Kashmir*, was killed in a similar way (CPJ, 1996). Even though there aren't many foreign news outlets in IHK, some still work in places other than the Kashmir Valley. World news organizations like BBC and Voice of America (VOA) can't get into unstable areas easily, which makes it harder for them to report on the horrible crimes committed by the Indian security forces. They usually get their information from reliable news sources or press statements from the rebel groups. The electronic and print media in Pakistan can't get directly to Indian-controlled Kashmir (IHK), and they don't have a reporter there. A statistical analysis of Indian news shows that 78% of the stories are about the Indian military. Because the mainstream media didn't cover the Kashmir freedom fight, social media became more popular as a way to talk to people.

The Transnational Mobilisation of Kashmiri Freedom Movement

In 2008, land that had been given to the Amarnath Yatra shrine board was taken away (Navlakha, 2008). This caused a lot of protests, marches, and strikes in Kashmir. The Kashmir Valley was even worse off because of the curfews and blockades that stopped necessary goods from being brought into the Valley. The Indian security forces used awful force to stop the protests. Protesters yelled words in support of Pakistan and called for Azadi or freedom. They also took over Srinagar's main square to raise the Pakistani flag. In order to reach people across borders or around the world, symbols must be able to connect with more than one group. This does seem like a short way to think about the human rights frame that many international groups support. It's important to re-frame group goals in a way that makes them more relatable to a bigger audience if you want a movement to go beyond the domestic level and become relevant across borders. It's easier for more people to relate to or connect with the target group when these interpretive tools are more accessible to everyone. As of late, research on other modern movements has shown that rebel or freedom movements are changing into global social movements. Twitter is also used in one example to look at how people in Ireland and the UK support the Palestine Solidarity Movement (Abu-Ayyash, 2015). In the past few years, the Palestinian movement for self-determination has gotten a lot more attention. This shows that the movement is appealing to people who are not Palestinian, Arab, or Muslim. A close study of some of the most important activist Twitter accounts shows that the Palestinian movement is most often talked about in terms of human rights. It can be shown by looking at the kinds of stories that are shared and the comments that are made on them. In this case, the human rights frame would be the possibility of getting people to take action or at least show support for the Palestinian cause in public.

This study might not be perfect, but it's a great place to start learning about why people do slacktivism. But as is often the case and discussed in literature about social movements, being against human rights abuses is not enough to get people to act. In terms of social movements, the prognosis is that the Palestinian people are in pain, and the cure is that Palestine should be free and independent. It looks like people are taking action because they care about people who are being abused of their human rights and want to make things right. But this is a very small part of a much bigger body of research. A lot of other people who study social movements agree that the call to action is an ongoing push and pull between individual and group identities, which are both important and malleable. It is hard to make broad assumptions or classifications of SMOs because of this. However, the large body of research on the topic does give hope for finding certain trends, like a better understanding of the frames used by social movement

organizers. There is always some subjective part to the reasons why organizers get together. Out-group activists usually have something in common: they feel oppressed or subjugated. In-group activists, on the other hand, share a shared ethnic or regional identity, like being Kashmiri or from another South Asian country. For still others, it's their desire to help underprivileged communities or people who have been tortured or violated their human rights, or it could be a general or academic interest in these groups. The use of pellet guns by the Indian military has made things worse for the people of Kashmir. This story became popular on social media, but human rights advocates say that these violations happen because "India" is illegally "occupying" Kashmir. From this point of view, it's simple to see a weak link between protests against what people see as "colonialism" or "imperialism." It should be mentioned, though, that the "Kashmiri" is not the same thing as the "Indian." In this way, the Kashmiri is occupied, and India is the occupying force. This could be seen as an ethnic movement, but the Kashmir identity has grown out of shared suffering, such as torture, human rights violations, and rape being used as a weapon of war (Cockell, 2000). It is not a very controversial idea for a movement to be against using torture, human rights abuses, and rape as weapons of war. Like a unifying theme, it can be supported by everyone, especially other campaigners. People are openly disappointed with the way politics work in and around Kashmir. Disillusionment has happened before in history. Election fraud and the firing of state lawmakers have been well-documented events. Activist groups in and outside of Kashmir are becoming more interested in fighting the system from the ground up. Names play a part in winning over people from around the world and in getting more people to join. It may be most important to note how traditional identity markers like nationalism and faith have given way to social value markers like women's rights and human rights, which have led to more general calls for changes to the law and democracy.

Impact of Social Media on the Kashmir Freedom Movement

The Indian government wouldn't let people in Kashmir use the internet until 2014 (Diwakar, 2020). It was not like many other places in the world. In 2014, people could only get to some social networking sites through the main internet. Kashmir got 3G and 4G cell networks in 2015. When social media first began to bring people from different backgrounds together. So that they could connect with each other, people in Kashmir who didn't think they were being heard in the news using social media. A lot of bad things were said about the Indian military's violence and crimes, as well as India's illegal takeover of Kashmir. The 1987 state assembly elections were rigged by Indian military forces stationed in Kashmir, who carefully watched what information came into and left the area. Radio Kashmir was the most useful tool for keeping track of information. It was not fair that the Muslim United Front (MUF) winners got the wrong election results, which were then shown on Radio Kashmir (Ahmed, 2000). The MUF candidates and the people who backed them were also arrested. Two years after the fake elections were held against the MUF, the political fight among the local people turned into an armed uprising. People in Kashmir no longer trust the Indian government or the Indian media to tell the truth. IHK, which is owned by the government, played a bad role in the years that followed, leaving a gap and not letting Kashmiris speak out. For many years, the people of Kashmir didn't have many print or online ways to speak out against the abuse. The rise of social media in Kashmir filled this gap. The people of Kashmir could finally breathe easy after hearing this. As more people got 3G and 4G phones, social media stepped in to meet a need by giving people a place to send and receive information. This was a big step forward in the fight against Indian injustice. The fight in Kashmir got a lot of attention in India thanks to social media, which made India think that Pakistan wasn't funding the freedom struggle. Because most social media users are young adults, it has changed everything. You can use a story that Khalid wrote in 2016 after it rained in Kashmir to see how much the Indian army changed the news about Kashmir. The study shows that the Indian media always backs an IHK view that only talks about the Indian military and makes fun of the movement for Kashmiri's freedom. For Kashmiris, this means that they need social services more and more. In 2016, there were 22 times when there was no internet at all to stop the flow of resistance in Kashmir. India had more times when the internet didn't work than Syria, Turkey, or Iraq. The fighting in Kashmir has changed a lot because of social media, which has made more people aware of what's going on there. For the Kashmiris, social media has become very important since the old media didn't work.

It was very scary for Amnesty International in 2016 when the internet was shut down in IHK. People on social media shared pictures and videos of the killings by IHK security forces. These showed the opposite of what the Indian media said, which was that the pictures were twisted and details were changed. People in Kashmir can quickly get their message across thanks to social media because it's easy to change. Cyberspace "imaging and framing" is a cheap, quick, and simple way for people in Kashmir to get freedom. People from remote areas around the world could also see the content thanks to social media. This was possible because traditional media didn't reach those areas or was banned on purpose. Also, content had to follow strict "regulatory compliance" rules when it was shared on social media. Burhan Wani, who is 22 years old, shared pictures of himself with a Kalashnikov on Facebook. These pictures set off a strange trend in the fight against India. It helped Burhan Wani get a lot of social media fans and became a big deal among young people. A lot of smart, young Kashmiris liked him. Social media gave the fight for freedom of the native people a new boost. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) lets Indian troops kill people in Kashmir who are fighting for freedom (NOORANI, 2009). The Indian military also uses "sub-conventional operations" to try to stop the freedom fighters in IHK. People in the area who saw Burhan Wani's body covered in bullet holes posted pictures of it on Facebook, which added to the resistance movement. It was like a "magic bullet" for people in Kashmir on social media, and it changed how Indian media generally cover events.

The establishment-backed traditional Indian media worked hard to spread the usually false story that the young "freedom fighter" who was killed was a "wanted militant," and they tried to make the killing look like it was okay. But this time, the people of Kashmir weren't going to accept any story that came from the Indian government-run media. They instead picked the view of the people who fought for freedom. People in Kashmir looked up to Burhan Wani as a hero, and his ideas gained a lot of attention on social media. IHK's daily moves and "content management" not only didn't work after Burhan Wani was killed, but they also made people more determined to fight back against Indian oppression. This has also made it harder for the Indian government and the main news outlets to calm down. So that people couldn't use social media, the Indian government turned off cell phones and internet service. Indian cops have killed a lot of people since 1989. However, the protests that happened after Burhan Wani's death turned into a long period of resistance that killed many people and destroyed a lot of property. Wani called the Indian media "terrorists," but people in Kashmir didn't agree with him. They also made it clear that calling someone "terrorist" is no longer a reason to kill them. Using social media to talk about the freedom movement in IHK has made people all over the world aware of the problem in Kashmir. These people now back the people of Kashmir and are against India's plans to end the freedom fight. Fans of freedom in IHK use social media as a tool all the time, even when there is no official media around. Because of this, the BJP government once again used the tactic of putting down people. Modi's government also went after Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which made Jammu and Kashmir unique. This meant that cops could use too much force during the protests after Wani.

Referendum and The Right to Self-Determination

Proponents of Kashmiri self-determination frequently cite the right to self-determination as a human right in international forums like the United Nations, and this is a common thread in all of the instances. The word "plebiscite" is most often used in this context; it is central to academic works, activist writings about Kashmir, and the Plebiscite Front, an early non-violent effort to lobby for the implementation of the UN mandate for a plebiscite. Everyone in Kashmir is aware of the United Nations resolution requesting a plebiscite; the Kashmiris use this as proof of their right to self-determination and fiercely argue that India has violated their rights by refusing to hold the poll. It is also common to hear people talk about the militarization of Kashmir, which is commonly called an occupation, and the right to self-determination. People often express a desire for justice while also expressing pessimism about the chances of culprits being punished. The idea of international action in Kashmir seems to have widespread support among Kashmiris. To decide what happens to the people of Kashmir, the United Nations has ordered a plebiscite, also called a referendum. A major complaint is that the people have not been given the chance to pick. It is also brought up while talking about the Kashmir conflict in relation to other conflicts. Most individuals outside of South Asia probably don't know much about the United Nations' background.

Conclusion

This study looks at the main human rights issues of the Azadi movement in Indian Held Kashmir by looking at both traditional and social media material. A lot of the research on the Kashmir freedom fight is based on a narrow, homogenized view of race and other markers of identity. It is crucial to figure out how other movements and world trends affect the matter as a whole. The modern and active side of the Kashmiri freedom movement can be better shown through social movement methods. As you can see on their social media sites, groups have turned to social media as a new way to communicate in order to make more people around the world aware of Kashmir. Working together with other groups and languages shows that the Kashmiri liberation struggle is becoming more global. The Indian government's "media management" has been thrown off by social media, which has made the independence fight more important. According to Burhan Wani, who was killed by Indian security forces, social media has become a more powerful tool than the classic Kalashnikov. When it comes to the IHK, social media has gotten past the physical and mental barriers that Indian security officers and state-controlled media put up. The Indian military is fighting psychological warfare in IHK to keep their knowledge and spread the state story. When Indian security forces used too much force, a lot of people at IHK rose up against them. The mainstream Indian media failed to show Burhan Wani as a terrorist and explain why he should have been killed. Burhan Wani is now the freedom fighter for IHK. He was one of the first people to use social media to change the minds of many Kashmiris and people around the world. Traditional Indian media failed to show him as a "terrorist" after the violent killing by Indian security forces, and social media took over. Instead of risky weapons, social media works better, but it needs partnerships between traditional media outlets that know how to use social media. Because of this, social media is a very useful tool in the fight for IHK freedom. In this age of globalization, it could change the future of the struggle and have a big effect on how the Kashmir problem is solved.

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