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Earth(ing) Kashmir: Geo-Tropicality as a Means of Thinking beyond Stratified Geopolitics

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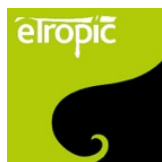


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Abstract

This article places the spotlight on remarkably differential nuances of Kashmir's geo-tropicality only to subject them to a decolonial ethics. It seeks to disengage from colonial representational grammar that approaches these nuances as alienatingly exotic and spectacular. It furthermore, argues that mutually disjunctive co-becomings of these nuances not only provide Kashmir's geo-tropicality with a kind of a-humanist orientation, but also makes this tropicality an immanent zone of natural ethical violence. We go on to argue that it is only a kind of 'smooth politics' based on decolonial a-humanist ethics of *earthing* that can end the conflict arising out of governmental attempts at overcoding the chaosophical immanentism of Kashmir's geo-tropicality.

Keywords: Earth(ing), Ontic (Trans)historicality, Stratified Geopolitics, Kashmir, Rhizomatics, Geo-Tropicality



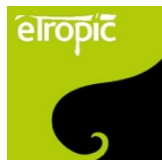
Introduction: A Geo-Tropical Landscape

Kashmir's tropicality radically subverts the popular notion of tropical landscapes. The landscape presents [a] wide range of changes in land form due to...geomorphic environment related to cold climate, humid climate and dry climate...and their landforms association with Glacial, Fluvial, and Aeolian actions.... (Bhat, 2017, p. 11)

The above description from the *Geomorphological Field Guide* to Kashmir-Himalaya notes the different climates for the various geological landforms and altitudes. Jammu has a humid subtropical climate and falls within the reach of the Indian monsoon, the Kashmir Valley has a moderate climate, and other areas demonstrate a semi-Tibetan climate which is almost rainless. Temperatures range from the Punjab summer to the intense cold of the snow-covered mountains. These hot, humid, and dry climatic states that constitute Kashmir's tropicality, rather than suggesting an inclusive single state, constitute an exclusive divergent series. And by the virtue of being disjunctively related to each other these states endlessly trace bifurcating paths which give rise to violent discords that turn Kashmir's geo-tropicality into a chaotic universe. While one may experience the tropicality of the rest of India as a combinatorial interplay of multiple climatic states with one standing as the breeding ground of the other, in the case of Kashmir, tropicality unfolds as singular eruptions of multiple climatic conditions. These are conditions that meet one another according to their immanent¹ desire rather than standing as 'inter-generative states'. Furthermore, with Kashmir's tropicality marking the absence of what we experience in other parts of India as 'slow transitional spells' where one gets to witness an interplay of multiple climatic conditions, with one acting as the breeding ground of the other, the cosmology of climatic expansion in Kashmir stands riddled with unique explosion of multiple climatic states. As a result, when these multiple climatic states meet each other they excite differential levels of eco-ethical violence. This also stands as a process by which geo-tropicality of Kashmir forms a kind of immanent rhizosphere.² Though writers such Ananya Jahanara Kabir indicate that with their positioning of Kashmir as a territory of desire authoritarian politics seeks to distort

¹ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari understand 'plane of immanence' as opposed to that of 'plane of transcendence', thereby suggesting something that stands within: "The BwO is the field of immanence of desire, the plane of consistency specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency. . ." (1987, p. 154)

²In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari list six important characteristics of a rhizome: "principles of connection and heterogeneity", "principle of multiplicity", "principle of asignifying rupture", "principle of cartography and decalcomania" (1987, pp. 7-12).



the violence it precipitates in Kashmir, Kashmir indeed stands as a territorial expanse of desire. This happens to be an expanse that exhibits aberrant patterns of chaosophical³ immanentism reflected in the workings of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'a desiring machine' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987)⁴. This is an immanentism that even the empirico-realistic and socio-scientific descriptions of Kashmir valley indicate:

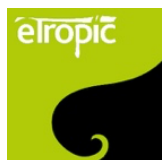
. . . we may consider the valley to be an orographically circumscribed entity comprised of smaller ecological zones. Though the valley has long been culturally and ecologically enmeshed with adjacent regions, the enclosing topography allows for well-defined spatial constraints for testing hypotheses relating to human-environment interactions. We may consider Kashmir as a fertile and temperate niche, attractive for various forms of settlement, cultivation and resource exploitation. Whilst these naturally occurring conditions may have been a factor in initial settlement of the valley, anthropogenically induced environmental "stresses" were likely major drivers of social change. (Spate, 2019, p.135)

Even the socio empirical analysis of Kashmir's geology by writers such as Mona Bhan and Nishita Trishal indirectly hint at such self-driven immanentism of Kashmir's geotropicality by approaching it as an assemblage of fluid landscapes and sovereign nature (Bhan & Trishal, 2017).⁵ This is an assemblage that shows why Kashmir's geotropicality resists its historicization and geopoliticization by state powers. Further to this point, if the geomorphological description of climatic landscapes in the opening quote by Bhat provides us with a penetrating insight into what makes contemporary ideological codification of Kashmir's tropicality a borderline impossibility, Ken Macdonald in his essay "Kashmir" provides an ironic supplementation to this geological insight. He argues that Kashmir persists within virtual patterns of European popular imagination as 'a spectacular distant land': "Kashmir had entered the European popular imagination as a spectacular distant land through tales relayed to merchants and travelers in the larger

³ In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to 'chaosophy' in the following terms: "A concept is therefore a chaotic state par excellence; it refers back to a chaos rendered consistent, become Thought, mental chaosmos" (1994, p. 208).

⁴ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari comprehend 'desiring-machine' as something that stands connected to BwO: "The BwO is desire; it is that which one desires and by which one desires. And not only because it is the plane of consistency or the field of immanence of desire" (1987, p. 165).

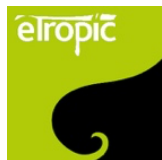
⁵ Mona Bhan and Nishita Trishal note: "Integral to Kashmir's phantasmagoric representation as "paradise on earth" – a Mughal epithet widely used to reaffirm Kashmir's sublime and transcendent beauty – the Dal Lake quickly became the symbol of an emergent environmentalism in the region, one that shaped how nature came to be imagined as a site of governance, restoration, and nostalgia" (2017, p. 68)



Indian cities...” (2003, p. 670). However, his mimetic representation of a colonial imaginary that situates Kashmir as an intangible spectacularity, reveals that it was the failure of the colonizer to subject Kashmir’s geo-tropicality to tangible ecological exploitation that stood as the genesis of such imageries. Ironically the representational reordering of Kashmir’s geo-tropicality as part of the post-colonial political agenda, with the intent of effecting a decolonial rupture with colonial exoticization, turned out to be no less problematic. This is because – as many analyses have argued – post-colonial state politics effected a kind of deterritorialization⁶ from colonial exoticization of Kashmir only to reterritorialize⁷ it around its mimicry of colonial modernity. It will perhaps not be an exaggeration to say that the representationality of Kashmir’s geo-tropicality, thus, reflects a kind of dialectical interplay between colonial exoticization and postcolonial political re-territorialization around its mimicry of linear progressivist colonial logic. Rafiq Ahamad provides a creative reiteration of this dialectical interplay in his “Orientalist imaginaries of travels in Kashmir: Western representations of the place and people” as he claims that “imaginaries of Kashmir from the colonial past to the ‘neo-colonial’ present have remained essentially frozen in time even as Kashmir has actually moved from a romanticized space of the colonial past to a ‘strange confined space’ of the ‘neo-colonial’ present” (2011, pp. 167-168). On the other hand, Ather Zia, in her claim that “inattention to the unceasing contestations around the bifurcation of Kashmir, its layered history, and the emergence of complex subjectivities, has become a symptom of the shortsighted political analysis of the region” (2014, p. 301) provides an expression of apolitical postcolonial thinking. This is a thinking which, unlike the historicist postcolonial state politics, indicates the problematics of biopolitical codification of Kashmir’s geo-tropicality. There are also multiple forms of revivalist postcolonial thinking that revolve around Ali Behdad’s *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the age of colonial dissolution*. Behdad necessitates the reclamation of the real of Kashmir’s geo-tropicality as being integral to a postcolonial project with his claim that “postcolonial practices are exercises in remembering; they bring into consciousness the repressed time of the Other...” (1994, p. 7). Even though such postcolonial thinkers approach the real they seek to reclaim as a kind of willy-nilly arboreal Freudian kernel lying beneath centuries of socio-political and historical imbrications; this, nevertheless, happens to be the imaginary real that the postcolonial state politics seeks to contain, according to Bruce Hoffman and Haley Duschinski “...by calling in the army and implementing around-the-clock curfews

⁶ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari opine that movements of deterritorialization are characterized by “abstract line” or “line of flight” (1987, p. 9), which actually enable one multiplicity to connect to others.

⁷ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari posit reterritorialization in contrast with deterritorialization: “Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities...” (1987, p. 10).

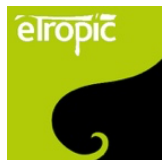


that seriously curtails possibilities of normalcy...” (2014, p. 505). Thus, if, on the one hand, forms of postcolonial thinking aim at reclaiming the real of Kashmir’s tropical ontopology the postcolonial state politics works towards structurally entrapping it in its teleology of governance. The workings of postcolonial politics thus results in either suppressing the real of Kashmir’s tropical ontology, or de-familiarizing it as an unmitigable horror, a kind of horror that the colonial agent Mistah Kurtz encounters in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (2010 [1902]). So, neither the abstract colonial cartography of exoticization culminating in exercises of colonial negational othering of Kashmir’s geo-tropicality and its autochthony, nor postcolonial thought’s silence regarding postcolonial state political appropriation of colonial modernity, has brought about any productive transformation in the existing relation between Kashmir’s geo-tropics and the majoritarian perception of it.

In fact, what we need now is a kind of parallax decolonial thinking. The commitment decolonial thinking shows towards creating futural lines of decolonial human existence—precariously overlapping with ethical flights of post or non-humanism, but actively disengaging with forms of abolitionist ‘a-humanism’⁸ put forward by thinkers like MacCormack—makes it an effective war machine against the statist partisan intervention into the geo-territorial ecology of Kashmir. Since the futural lines of alter humanist decolonial existence that decolonial thinking seeks to create partakes of a non- and post-humanist project of reconstituting the human as a kind of eco-assemblage, it shelters the potentiality for being cautiously translated in the context of geo-tropical Kashmir. This translation could work towards initiating a form of alter humanist smooth politics⁹ in sync with a nuanced ecology of Kashmir. This is a politics that would not engage in a mimicry of colonial modernity, nor would it work towards recovering the real of Kashmir’s geo-tropicality as if it were a pristine sacral whole. Rather, it will be a form of therapeutic politics that will correspond to immanent patterns of geo-tropical Kashmir and work towards initiating a process of *earthing* Kashmir. If we take into account Thomas Nail’s *Theory of Earth* (2021), earthing in the context of geo-tropical Kashmir could mean reclaiming Kashmir as a “material process continuous with the expansion of the universe that produced, and continues to produce, the earth” (2021, p. 19) rather than treating it as a stratified geological organism ready to be exploited by geopolitical cartographization. If it becomes almost prescriptive to view

⁸ In *The Ahuman Manifesto*, MacCormack argues: “Unlike other revolutions which usually seek to liberate the ‘we’ as specific collective groups, the contemporary world is dividing humans into two, an overwhelming and growing anthropocene, and what I term the ahuman” (2020, pp. 1-2)

⁹In “Smooth Politics” Malcolm Bull argues: “within the framework provided by Deleuze and Guattari, the smoothness of the world is more than a metaphor for it necessarily transforms every migrant into a nomad. . .” (2004, p. 224).



Kashmir's geo-territorial tropicality as constituted by and constitutive of an interplay of eruptional material processes it is because only such processes stand as a reservoir of a potential that could eclipse, resist and nullify attempts by the state machinery to contain and manipulate them. It is because of the repetitive chaotic or volcanic layers of eruption of tropical states that the geo-territoriality of Kashmir shelters an immanent violence resistant to external macropolitical codings. And it is due to dialectical interplay between the singular monadological¹⁰ nature of such climatic states and the eventual nomadological¹¹ rhizomatic expanse they yield, that the historicity which unfolds within the fissured geo-territory of Kashmir happens to be a problematic one. This is a history marked by violent rifts, fractures and discontinuities. It is once again the socio-scientific description of Kashmir's geology that indicates how it stands constituted by the violence it nurtures within its pleats and folds:

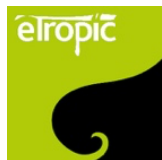
Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most politically challenged regions in NW Himalaya, and perhaps also one of the most unfortunate portions of the planet Earth where political and natural disasters have greatly devastated the progressive development of the region. The geological past of this region suggests that it was formed when [the] Indian tectonic plate collided with the Eurasian plate, and this also developed some intermontane basins, which house most of the population of the region. As the tectonics is still actively shaping the topography, geology, geomorphology, and climate of the region, the occurrence of earthquakes and floods in the area is potentially unavoidable. (Shah et al., 2018, p. 1)

This is perhaps the reason why the indigenous identity struggle in Kashmir which the local Kashmiris call *Azadi* also fails to take off. In this sense, the geo-tropical territory of Kashmir reflects the indispensability of earthing, which entails a kind of smooth politics dedicated to aligning lives and livelihood to the immanentism of Kashmir's geo-tropicality. However, this demands a form of schizoanalysis¹² of contemporary geopolitics and the identity struggle in the context of Kashmir, while noting that neither is in sync with contemporary epistemological developments. Though in his *Beyond*

¹⁰ Monadology refers to the orders and patterns of the world.

¹¹ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari opine: "History is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the topic is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of a history" (1987, p. 23).

¹² In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue: "Schizoanalysis sets out to undo the expressive Oedipal unconscious, always artificial, repressive and repressed, mediated by the family, in order to attain the immediate productive unconscious" (1983, p. 98).



Domination Arjun Appadurai argues that one needs to view “geographical areas not as preordained physical realities, but as contingent results of human actors, movements, and projects, and that land and water may exist prior to human history, but regions and civilizations are products of human action” (Appadurai, 2021), the expanse of geopolitical and historical development in the context of Kashmir bears the reflection of immanent chaos and violence of its geo-territorial tropicality. If the history and geopolitical development stand riddled with multiple discontinuities, abrupt cuts and precarious flows devastating the governmental schemes and agendas, it is primarily because the geo-tropical territory of Kashmir manifests a non-human orientation. This happens to be an orientation refuting colonialist endeavours based on subject-centred human agency. As Sohal argues: “the capacity of nonhuman nature to disrupt the protracted chronicles of human history proved to be intellectually useful. This was true even if, in the Kashmiri case, such disruption worked only to momentarily transcend (rather than significantly depart from) history and, therefore, activate nature’s potential to succinctly convey distinction” (Sohal, 2021, p. 21). The point is that India’s attempt to geopoliticize the territory of Kashmir by using multiple shades of what Mbembe calls necropolitics¹³ and borderization has not created new diplomatic openings or spaces. Rather it has only exposed Kashmir’s geology as an accretion of endless fault lines:

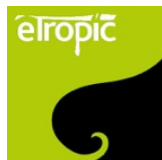
Kashmir is a region with tremendous geo-strategic consequences. It flanks China in the east and north-east and Afghanistan in the north-west. Of course, Pakistan is in its west. It is contiguous with the Tajik Republic, which formed part of the Soviet Union. Historically the region was of great security concern to the British Indian government. There are numerous passes in the Karakoram Mountains that link it to China. From Ladakh the region is linked to Tibet.... Kashmir, therefore, is a land of many fault lines. (DasGupta, 2012, p. 83)

History, Geopoliticization, and Kashmir

Article 370¹⁴ by the current right-wing government is a case in point. It is not so much wrong to view the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution as a coup by the

¹³ In *Necropolitics*, Mbembe holds: “The ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die. To kill or to let live thus constitutes sovereignty’s limits, its principal attributes. To be sovereign is to exert one’s control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power” (2019, p. 66).

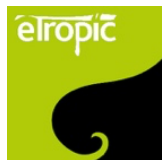
¹⁴ Article 370 gives special constitutional status to Kashmir by means of which it could enjoy autonomy and an ability to formulate laws for the betterment of the people dwelling in the valley. Abrogation of Article 370 actually is intended to homogenize nuanced geo-tropicality of Kashmir with the politico-cultural heterogeneities of the rest of India.



Indian government, a coup aiming to forcibly synthesize the indigenous differentiability of Kashmir with the equally diverse differentiability of India, and in the process work towards engineering a larger differential whole – however, the question remains whether the government desires to bring about the production of a new and larger differentiability by effecting such a coup? It is important here to note that what the government seeks to do is to subsume what it considers to be the resistant geo-tropical alterity of Kashmir's diversity into what it considers to be the unified sensibility of India. The irony is that while local Kashmiris have constructed an equally stratospheric unified sensibility of their own, called Kashmiriyat,¹⁵ and in the face of being agonized by India's persistent militaristic intervention have gradually rigidified it into a monolithic monstrosity aimed at curbing what the Indian government views as a Pakistan-aided freedom struggle in Kashmir; the right-wing political party has continued to construct what it views as the unified majoritarian sensibility of India. For the right-wing this happens to be a sensibility imbued not in the inherent univocity of *Hinduism*, but in the narrow provincial *Hindutva* ideology it constructs to cater to what it views as the populist majoritarian sentiment of India. So, with the abrogation of Article 370 it is not a synthesis or better alliance between the geo-tropical differentiability of Kashmir and the unique diversity of the rest of India that the government desires to actualize, but a subsumption within Hindutva ideology that it has constructed for the Indian majority. With the right-wing government of India forcefully committed to actualizing its rhetoric of Hindutva there is an accompanying aggressive *saffronization*¹⁶ of Kashmir's geo-territoriality. Paradoxically, it is the deafening silence of curfews imposed by the current government in order to curtail the events of rising violence in Kashmir that captures the interaction between chaosophic patterns of Kashmir's geology and the current right-wing ideological party's attempt to saffronize this geology by making it a home of Hindu temple reconstruction. In the case of Kashmir, these codings exist in the form of repetitive political cartographization of the vibrant chaosophical matter that constitutes Kashmir's geo-tropical immanence and the partisan biopolitical restructuring of Kashmir's autochthony by India's ruling political blocs as per their ideological commitments. In fact, it is due to the continual intermeshing of a multiplicity of geopolitical developments—which the irresolvable dialectics between ruling political ideologies of India and the geo-tropical autochthony of Kashmir express—that we get to encounter in the form of

¹⁵ See "The Term 'Kashmiriyat': Kashmiri Nationalism of the 1970s" by Toru Tak.

¹⁶In "Terrorizing Muslims: Communal Violence and Emergence of Hindutva in India", Jayanth Deshmukh argues: "This form of militant Hinduism—termed 'saffron terror'—rapidly attracted orthodox Hindus to engage in a hyper-nationalistic pride second to none" (2021, p. 317).



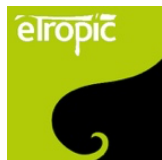
Kashmir's geo-history an imperceptible force-field.¹⁷ The forms of interpellational geopolitical borderization of Kashmir's geo-tropicality and equally menacing forms of militant activism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic conflict and populist nationalism we encounter within the conti-temporal folds of this geo-tropicality stand as constituents of this force-field. If by the chaosophical play of its material constituents Kashmir's geo-tropicality lays the ground for an equally chaosophic geopolitical developmental spectrum, it is the combinatorial interplay of these developments that deepen the immanent chaosophy, or the non-humanity, of Kashmir's geo-tropicality. It is, in particular, the anxiety-riddled militaristic interventions that spearhead regular governmental attempts at such geopoliticization, that makes this force-field an affectual territory of neurosis and paranoia. Saiba Verma in her *Affective Governance, Disaster and the Unfinished Colonial Project* maps the schizophrenic condition of militaristic intervention as she observes that:

While the Indian military is deeply involved in occupying “space, bodies and resources” in Kashmir, it is also interested in “dominating discourses, emotions, and subjectivities” that reveal Kashmiris’ dependency.... Militarized care is a mode of “affective governance” (Shoshan 2014) in two senses: first, it seeks to regulate and transform Kashmiri aspirations for self-determination into acquiescence to Indian rule; and second, because as a political project, Indian militarized care is itself saturated with affective demands, anxieties, and paranoia that are not always conscious or explicit. (2021, p. 54)

Shanaz Bashir (2014) registers the impact of this affective governance on the geo-territorial tropicality of Kashmir in *The Half Mother: A Novel*. Bashir makes this form of governance stand in as a state war machine¹⁸ that draws the sphere of militaristic intervention and the immanent chaotic organization of Kashmir's geo-territoriality into a relationality of antagonism:

¹⁷ In *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique*, Martin Jay refers to Walter Benjamin while explaining ‘force-field’: “Every historical state of affairs presented dialectically polarizes and becomes a force field (Kraftfeld) in which the conflict between fore- and after-history plays itself out. It becomes that field as it is penetrated by actuality” (Benjamin quoted in Jay, 1993, p. 1).

¹⁸In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue: “The problem is that the exteriority of the war machine in relation to the State apparatus is everywhere apparent but remains difficult to conceptualize. It is not enough to affirm that the war machine is external to the apparatus. It is necessary to reach the point of conceiving the war machine as itself a pure form of exteriority, whereas the State apparatus constitutes the form of interiority we habitually take as a model, or according to which we are in the habit of thinking” (1987, p. 354).



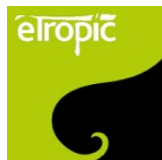
There's a smell of something burning in the air. I climb a swampy strip of land and startle some roosting ducks.... From up here, I can now see thick grey mushrooms of smoke swirling up; the whole village has been burnt down to smoke out a single militant. Around thirty houses have been destroyed, consumed by the fire. Was it a reprimand for sympathizing with dissenters? Or was it a 'psy-op'- psychological operation? (2014, p.166)

However, the contradiction remains, that even the cartography of violent resistance that the discontented Kashmiris lay down to thwart the centrist governmental schemes directed at assimilating the loosely bordered autonomy of Kashmir into India, betray an equally skewed orientation. Directed less towards allying the governmental forces with the chaosophical inner layering of Kashmir's geo-tropicality or constructing a terrasophical post-identarian space for the local Kashmiris; resistance is directed more towards working out a politically textured autonomical Kashmiri identity subtracted from the chaosophy of Kashmir's territoriality. Yet it is this resistance that rhizomatically expands around and across geo-tropical Kashmir only to transmogrify into a large-scale freedom movement, a movement the local Kashmiri's today call *Azadi*.¹⁹ This is a movement that owes its ambiguous and ambivalent expansion to Pakistan's militaristic interventions. However, this interplay between local insurgents, Pakistan and the Indian government's constant attempts to subdue this movement with military intervention, ends up grafting on to the internal chaosophical layering of Kashmir's geo-tropicality multiple external layerings of political violence and interests. Again, Bashir expresses this:

I find the valley enrobed in paradoxes, look at the bunkers, meant to disappear one day, now rebuilt in concrete and redbrick for permanence adorned with potted geraniums and wire mesh windows. Look at Papa 2, once dreaded torture centre, now a guesthouse for foreign tourists.... Everything has changed, except the fate of victims of oppression. Governments have replaced each other. The young have substituted the old. A battalion has taken over from the other. (Bashir, 2014, p. 177)

As the insurgency in the valley intensified, the government resigned, paving the way for governor's rule. Tears, blood, death and war

¹⁹ In "Independence, Autonomy and Freedom in Kashmir?", Balraj Puri reflects: "The concept of "Azadi" in Kashmir has been misunderstood by those who are fighting for independence, misused by those who are swearing by autonomy and has not been implemented in its substantial meaning in Kashmir" (2008, p. 20).



followed, as did curfews, crackdowns, raids, encounters, killings, bunkers, an exodus of people, burning markets, schools and buildings. (Bashir, 2014, p. 32)

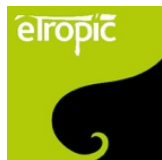
Against this background, the current attempt by the ruling right-wing party of India to carry out religio-centric ideological reconfiguration of the layers of geopolitical cartographization of Kashmir stands as a disjunctive phenomenon. As P.K. Dutta accurately notes in “From Kashi to Kashmir: How PM Modi has focused on temple renovation”: “Some reports cited the government figures to put the number of temples in the Kashmir Valley at 952, of which only 212 were open and operational. The Modi government is undertaking temple renovation as a measure to build confidence among the displaced Kashmiri Hindus so that they could return to their homeland” (2021, para 22).

Geo-historical Ambivalences: Ontic (Trans)historicality of Kashmir

The chaosophical inner layering of Kashmir’s geo-tropicality acts as the genesis of the aberrantly patterned geo-historical shifts and transformations that one encounters in the form Kashmir’s history. These are shifts and transformations that stress the ontic-trans-historicality of Kashmir or render Kashmir’s history as lines of de-territorialized flights. When it comes to the tropically layered geology of Kashmir, we are reminded of Deleuze and Guattari’s ground-breaking work, *What is Philosophy?* where they observe: “Geography is not confined to providing historical form with a substance and variable places” (1994, p. 96). It is indeed the heterogeneous monstrosity and spherology of Kashmir’s geology and geo-tropicality that perennially resists institutional historicization; so much so, that it is impossible for the government to wrest from Kashmir’s geology a history favouring their policies and agendas.

Owing to the vast variety of edapho-climatic and physiographic heterogeneity, the region [Kashmir] harbours diverse habitats, including lakes, springs, swamps, marshes, rivers, cultivated fields, orchards, subalpine and alpine meadows, montane slopes and terraces, permanent glaciers, etc., which support equally diverse floristic elements (Khuroo et al., 2007, p. 271).

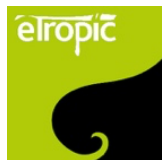
Kashmir bears what John Protevi in “Geo-history and Hydro-Bio-Politics” calls an “intensive geography” that follows “lines of becoming” (2009, p. 92). In other words, the



history that blooms within the complex folds of Kashmir's intensive geology does not go on to reflect an arborescent structure or express itself by vertical or horizontal lines of flight vulnerable to ideological partisan and bio political manipulation. Rather, the flow it betrays happens to be lateral, transversal, transgressive and perverse – reluctant to take any tangible shape except that of incessant becomings. No doubt, it is the monstrous versatility of Kashmir's intensive geology that makes it transgress the chronic bio-political patterning. Yet, simultaneously, it is this series of anthropocentric violence that arises out of and continually allies with Kashmir's intensive geo(logical)patterning in flouting the formation of a singular, exclusive, and linear history, which causes intensive geo-traumas. It is this history of violence²⁰ which further alters the topographical features of Kashmir. This is a violence that started at the time of Indian Independence with *Hari Singh*, the last Hindu ruler, signing the "Instrument of Accession" that made the nuanced geo-tropicality of Kashmir an integral part of India. It is claimed that the religio-ethnic violence that stratifies Kashmir betrays its genesis in the conflicting expressions of affinity that the Hindu minority and Muslim majority show in relation to Kashmir's geo-tropical alterity: Hindu Kashmiri people refer to the royal lineage of the Dogra dynasty; Muslim Kashmiri people allude to Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah's pact with Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and their originary concomitance with the territoriality and tropicality of Kashmir.

These conflicts, combined with Kashmir's intensive geological features, have turned Kashmir into what Heidegger calls a *Stimmung*, an indiscernible 'force-field'. Since the time of its surfacing Kashmir's intensive geology has stood as a stage exhibiting the immanent process of de and re-territorialization or a process of constant chaosophical reconstruction, so much so, that an attempt to link up with Kashmir's geology will only be an attempt towards foregrounding what Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* call cuts, folds, pleats, aberrations, eruptions, strata and flow. On the other hand, anthropocentric religious and political violence has over-coded the geological with wounds, scars, bruises and cuts. And the interplay between the two has worked towards perversely displacing both into a series of irresolvable Gordian knots. Though the religious tensions in Kashmir may be seen as yielding a dialectical field, it is the perpetual complex interplay between the immanent chaosophical shifting of Kashmir's intensive geology and the antagonistic dialectical pull of interest-driven violence that continually stresses the ontic (trans)historicality of Kashmir.

²⁰For an excellent overview see: "Theatrics of a 'Violent State' or 'State of Violence': Mapping Histories and Memories of Partition in Jammu and Kashmir" by Iffat Rashid (2020).

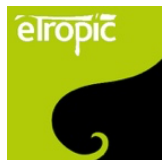


Āzādi and Kashmiriyat: Space, Politics and Identity

This knotted geo-history returns us to the term Azadi in order to question its meaning for the revolutionary local Kashmiris pitted against governmental stratagems that aim to subsume the geo-tropical alterity of Kashmir within an equally univocal geology of the rest of India. While Azadi, or freedom, in the real and effectively broader sense would mean acquisition of a terrasophical consciousness by working out an ecosophical binding with *a-human* possibilities that the intensive geo-tropicality of Kashmir throws up; for the local Kashmiri insurgents, Azadi stands tantamount to fashioning a politically textured autonomous identity. But does geo-tropicality and ontic (trans)historicality of Kashmir act as the ground for constructing such an identity? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to map the problematic conceptual expanse of Azadi. Firstly, Azadi, as K. Narayana Chandran approaches it in his article “The meaning of Freedom”, remains stretched out across Kashmir’s geo-tropical alterity as a problematic field. Chandran notes that “*Āzādi* for most Kashmiris is freedom *from* military or police terror. For other groups that plead support to the youth, *āzādi* is a plea for freedom *from* deliberate misrepresentation and misinformation campaigns run officially by the Jammu-Kashmir and Delhi governments” (2012, pp. 298-299). Undoubtedly the grammatology of “*āzādi*” is essentially used as a political weapon to vehemently critique the polarized governemental policies oriented towards restructuring the lives of Kashmiri locals. Yet one encounters in it lines of interesction of multiple dimensions of space, politics and identity. And this interesection makes the conceptual field of “*āzādi*” appear as a “singular plurality”.²¹ Amartya Sen maps the expanse of this singular plurality in his *Violence and Identity: The Illusion of Destiny*:

A person’s citizenship, residence, geographic origin, gender, class, politics, profession, employment, food habits, sports interests, taste in music, social commitments, etc., make us members of a variety of groups. Each of these collectivities, to all of which this person simultaneously belongs, gives her a particular identity. None of them can be taken to be the person’s only identity or singular membership category. (2006, p. xiii)

²¹The idea of ‘singular-plural’ is epistemized by Jean-Luc Nancy (2000) in *Being Singular-plural*. In a nutshell, ‘singular-plural’ is a referent to the “being-with” thereby suggesting that the essence of the ‘being’ of the singular is always in negotiation “with” other beings. In this context, the actual meaning of “azadi” lies in its “being-with”.



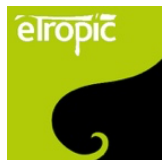
Sen's statement indicates a contradiction: while the local Kashmiri insurgents work towards producing for themselves a singular collective identity by spearheading the process of Azadi, Azadi stands as a pure multiple. Furthermore, while these nuanced understandings of Azadi could be juxtaposed with each other to form a war machine against the governmental policy of imposing a collective majoritarian identity on to the masses, such understandings ambivalently configure the geopolity of Kashmir into an imperceptible expanse.

Similarly and equally complex, even the term "kashmiriyat" stands riddled with a multiplicity of connotations. Sometimes, it is understood as a series of intertwined indigenous cultural traditions practised in the Valley for decades, referring to the fluid ontical and ontological essences of Kashmir, which get manifested through varied institutionalized practices. One may refer to Toru Tak's article "The Term Kashmiriyat: Kashmiri Nationalism of the 1970s", where Tak argues that "Kashmiriyat" is loaded with nuances pertaining to its indigenous secular identity: "...['Kashmiriyat'] signifies the socio-cultural Kashmiri identity, which is often considered indigenously secular" (Tak, 2013, p. 28). So, the ontic (trans)historicality arising out of an equally chaosophical geotropicality of Kashmir is neither steeped in conventional religious flavour, nor does it support fundamentalist polarization along the lines of religion, ethnicity and spatiality. At this point, one may be reminded of Ranjan Ghosh's intervention into the *multiplicity*²² of secularism in "Introduction: Making Sense of the Secular":

Making sense of the secular is about freeing secularism as much from taxonomical rigidity as from conceptual enslavement.... Secular is not an amorphous zone either. I am actually arguing against the stringent dialect between religion and the secular.... In fact, the religious is housed in the secular; the material dwells in the secular. Dissent lies in-built in the secular. (2013, pp. 1-4)

In the light of Ghosh's argument that *percept* and *concept* of the secular has to be post-dialectical, otherwise secularism turns out to be a set of restrictive activities, one needs to view "Kashmiriyat" as a *secular multiplicity*, the *being* of which *transversally* traverses heterogeneous religiosities and expansive world views caught in a dense becoming. In

²²In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari understand multiplicity in connection with 'smooth space': "Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities that occupy space without "counting" it and can "be explored only by legwork"' (1987, p. 371).

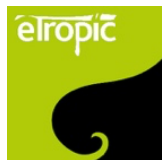


fact, even a Bergsonian²³ way of looking at Azadi and Kashmiriyat stresses Ghosh's view. A Bergsonian may indicate that it is the interplay of memory, history and time that plays a crucial role in the formulation of identity. For Bergson, one's becoming is triggered off by one's leap into this terrasophical pure being. And this being for Bergson lies in one's memory or past inscribed within geological lines of flights co-existent with one's perpetually unfolding present. In this sense, what one gathers as she meets her co-existent past stands as disclosive geological lessons. From a Bergsonian angle, then, what the past hands out in the form of memory in the context of Kashmir is the immanent chaosophical patterning of Kashmir's geo-tropical expanse. This is an expanse whose potentiality lies in marring humanist or subjective constructions. But as the majority of Kashmiris are caught up in the process of constructing a collective identity for themselves, they call on *Kashmiriyat* to live by and subsequently foreground it as a dialectical counterpoint to the majoritarian *Hindutva* ideology, and in this process they stand cut off from the immanent processes of life that Kashmir's geo-tropicality both contains and expresses. So, while both past and current forms of chaosophic immanent geo-tropicality opens up before Kashmiris a kind of interplay of many processes and forces, *Kashmiriyat* prefers to link up only with the narratives of oppression by the majoritarian institution in order to create and sustain their minority identity. Within the persistence and operational trajectory of the Azadi as a multiplicity and pure multiple, one gets to encounter the chaosophical patterning of Kashmir's geo-tropical expanse and it is the virtual presence of this geo-tropicality that haunts the narrow humanist identarian concerns of local Kashmiri insurgents and renders it futile.

Geo-philosophy and Gaia philosophy: Earth as a *Plane of Consistency*

It is territorial strata of epistemic geo-philosophy that stands in sync with immanent chaosophy of Kashmir's geo-tropicality. One needs to creatively map this geo-philosophy in order to be able to expose the futility of governmental geopolitical schemes and the identitarian struggle by local insurgents in the context of Kashmir. In *What is Philosophy?* Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari argue that geo-philosophical thinking is contingent upon a nuanced communication between territories and Earth. While the process of re-territorialization accounts for different kinds of social stratification—political, social, cultural and economic, among others—the process of deterritorialization reflects the de-stratifying movements towards Earth, or what Deleuze

²³While examining Bergsonian views in the context of memory, temporality and spatiality, Deleuze reflects: For experience always gives us a composite of space and duration..." (Deleuze, 1988, p. 37).



and Guattari view as the *Plane of Consistency*.²⁴ Within this geo-philosophical thinking Deleuze and Guattari indicate dense interconnectivity between territory and Earth, while Gary Shapiro in his “Nietzsche on Geo-philosophy and Geo-aesthetics” indicates the immanent micropolitics of earth and the life world. Furthermore, Reza Nagarestani states that geo-philosophical thinking needs to be in constant dialogue with the processes of geo-traumas. His unpublished manuscript positions anthropocentric exercises of territorial stratification and transformation of earth’s immanent vitalism into a kind of *planetary ark for the terrestrial life*²⁵ and the production site of geo-traumas (Nagarastani in Woodward, 2013). He claims that these anthropocentric exercises inflict geo-traumas not only by rudely interfering in earth’s micropolitical immanent grammar, but by positioning themselves as cut off from the earth. For him the irony of anthropocentric exercises lies in thinking that they are essentially engineering mechanisms situated outside earth’s grammar rather than as a potential random assemblage²⁶ of this grammar. One may even argue that the violent governmental politics and the identity politics that revolve around a quest for *Kashmiriyat* turns out to be chaosophic as they stand constituted by the geo-tropical intensities they wish to capture and turn into molarities.

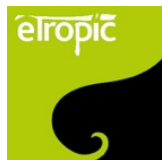
The Deleuzian scholar, Ben Woodward, strongly critiques anthropocentrism as an abstract external mechanism. For him, while anthropocentric exercises are directed towards un-grounding the earth or treating it as an exploitable commodity, Earth has limitropic²⁷ porosities which makes artificial anthropocentric ungrounding of it impossible. Rather, he proposes that a “realist theory of ungrounding...must engage with decay, with the intensive interaction between forces and bodies, without allowing either to abject or exterminate the other” (Woodard 2013, p. 18). For Woodward, the ungrounding of earth to which anthropocentric exercises strive is directed towards treating earth as an abstraction; but the real ungrounding entails removing the earth from its inscription within cycles of anthropocentric understanding—one that positions earth as an exploitable commodity— and repositioning it as a phenomenon made up of and precipitating dynamic interactions between entities.

²⁴In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari understand it as “a creative line of flight, a smooth space of displacement” (1987, pp. 422-423).

²⁵See Woodward’s *On an Ungrounded Earth* (2013).

²⁶In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explain: “An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections” (1987, p. 8).

²⁷In *On an Ungrounded Earth*, Woodward said: “we wish to subject the earth to pain—not as a somatized creature, but as a planet, the glob of baked matter that it is—in order to test its limitropic porosity and see how much ungrounding the earth can take before it ceases to be simultaneously an example of nature’s product and also its productivity” (2013, pp. 7-8).



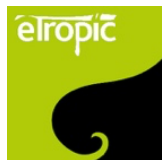
Gaia philosophy insists that it is the very rhizomicity of earth that finally works out as a machinic assemblage unrecognizable to anthropocentric hermeneutics or lenses. Machinic assemblage is a sort of ‘arrangement’ that vividly expresses what it is constituted by—the organic interactions between various existing systems. Lynn Margulis and James Lovelock insist that in order to understand earth as a combinatory system one must take into account laws of physics and chemistry, along with those of biology, as the complex functioning of different components of earth creates a ‘homeostatic’ system (Margulis & Lovelock, 1997). J. Scott Turner, in “Gaia, Extended Organisms, and Emergent Homeostasis”, contends that the process of “telesymbiosis” (2004, p. 68) is inscribed in the processuality of the Earth. What Turner calls ‘telesymbiosis’, Deleuze and Guattari call transversalism which represents mutually sustaining interplay and interaction between organisms vastly separated from one another in space and time. While Gaia philosophy promotes a notion of symbiotic development of the earth, such a development represents an exercise in ‘becoming-minor’,²⁸ to put it in Deleuzian terms. In short, the very nature of Earth does not stand foursquare with humanistic anthropocentric ways of rendering; rather, it represents a constant process of withdrawal from such renderings to yield what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘a plane of consistency’ constituted and existing by a sort of de-territorialized connectivity among various constituting parts of the earth.

Conclusion: Restructuring Kashmir as a *Plane of Consistency* or Earth

Engagement with environmental history, political geography and political ecology can bridge the divide between environmental conditions and state-level geopolitics.... (Davis et al., 2021, p. 17)

By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all.... We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales.... Climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of wars, acidifying oceans, and a host of other slowly

²⁸In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue: “whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian” (1987, p. 291).

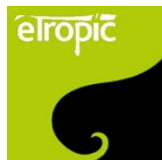


unfolding environmental catastrophes present formidable representational obstacles that can hinder our efforts to mobilize and act decisively. (Nixon, 2011, p. 2)

Here, one may ask: what do we end up achieving by connecting with these philosophical lines of flights while attempting to engage with issues such as the abrogation of Article 370? Firstly, we show the assemblage of humanistic anthropocentric exercises that constitute what the government calls grounded ways of addressing issues concerned with Kashmir. Secondly, these grounded ways have failed because they work by renewing or refurbishing dialectical opposites and binaries which attempt a restructuration or re-territorialization of Kashmir around certain anthropocentric ideological agendas. So, what we need now are not more anthropocentric heurisms, but mechanisms of ungrounding. This is an exercise that starts by primarily recognizing that it is the immanent chaosophical patterning of Kashmir's geo-tropicality, constitutive of its ontic trans-historicity, that negates the anthropocentric political stratagems directed towards territorializing it around agendas, interests, and ideological propensities. Here, it may be noted that Kashmir seeks to position itself not so much as a geo-cartographical territory desiring to be possessed by the apparatus of bio-political capture, but more as an intensive geological formulation reflecting the potentiality of the Earth. While anthropocentric machinations work towards taxonomical bordering and cartographizing of earth, the latter stands as what Deleuze and Guattari call a 'plane of consistency' making way for nomadological migrations and aberrant movements. One could take recourse to Woodard's insight here to argue that instead of viewing Kashmir along the partisan lines as a *static signifier* Kashmir ought to be viewed as a kind of processual unfolding along the lines of spatiality and temporality. With Kashmir resisting the geopolitical machinations by repeatedly unfolding itself as an expression of Earth's potentiality the critico-epistemic endeavour needs to be directed towards *Earthing*²⁹ Kashmir rather than territorializing it.

Following Gaian philosophical insights, one may argue that the rhizomatic progression of Kashmir has always been in conformity with the *sympoietic* advancement of the earth, hence earthing Kashmir stands equivalent to perceiving Kashmir in terms of its dynamic becoming. And such Earthing entails treating Kashmir as a de-territorialized space characterized by immanence. In *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life*, Deleuze argues that immanence includes everything in its fold thereby denying the existence of 'beyond' or 'outside' (Deleuze, 2001). In that sense Kashmir may be seen as a reservoir

²⁹ It refers to the process of getting adhered to the singular becomings of the Earth.

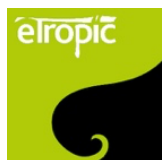


of potentiality relating to itself or as bearing an innate grammatology refusing to be decoded by those lying “outside”. One might say that to make sense of Kashmir’s geotropicality is tantamount to being integral to its *sympoietic* advancement.

However, the process of earth(ing) Kashmir also leads one to consider Kashmir as a body without organs. The notion of ‘a body without organs’ is worked out by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. They argue:

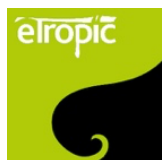
A BwO is made in such a way that it can be occupied, populated only by intensities. Only intensities pass and circulate.... The BwO causes intensities to pass; it produces and distributes them in a *spatium* that is itself intensive, lacking extension. (1987, p. 153)

Just like the BwO the ‘differential being’ of Kashmir is always caught up in the process of exceeding stratified geopolitical overcodings. However, the question remains: will it be possible to address the actual problems of Kashmir by means of viewing it as ‘a body without organs’? Moreover, can all this be translated into revolutionary political praxis that begins by treating Kashmir as a micropolitical plane rather than a bordered organism? We argue that by bearing an intensive geology Kashmir has dramatized earth’s immanent resistance to anthropocentric designs and policies to objectify it. In this sense, Kashmir needs to be seen as an expression of earth’s desire to remain permanently de-territorialized. It is this desire of the earth that we need to respect. Instead of mulling over whether the imposition of Article 370 or its abrogation will make a productive difference, we need to find ways of de-cartographizing and de-territorializing Kashmir so that it stands as what Earth always desires to be, a surface of inscription of immanent desire. What we need at this stage is neither political spin doctoring, nor democratic politics, but what Malcolm Bull calls ‘smooth politics’ (2004). This politics could work out a novel terrasophical and eco-political assemblage in keeping with the intensive geo-tropical unfolding of Kashmir that accounts for its ‘ontic trans-historicity’. We believe that by turning the epistemic potential of this politics into praxis one may be able to not merely reconfigure Kashmir’s geo-territoriality into a thoroughfare, but also turn each and every citizen of this world into a *passager* or a passerby with little or no concern for geopolitical boundaries.

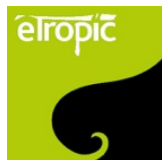


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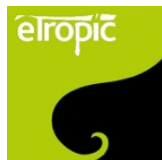


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