

# Contesting Masculinities and Women's Agency in Kashmir

AMYA AGARWAL

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## C O N T E N T S

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

1. Gender, Agency, and Field Research Experiences in Conflict
2. Providing a Roadmap: Historical Background and Conceptual Parameters
3. Military Masculinities of the State Armed Forces in Kashmir
4. Militarized Manhood in the Kashmiri Resistance
5. Women's Agency Amid the Interplay of Masculinities
6. Toward a More Nuanced Gender Approach to Studying Conflicts

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Through an ethnographic study conducted between 2013 and 2016, this book explores the politics of competing and sometimes overlapping masculinities represented by the state armed forces and the non-state actors in the Kashmir valley. In addition, the book broadens the understanding of women's agency through its engagement with the construction, performance, and interplay of masculinities in the conflict.

Combining existing elements of both feminist research and critical scholarship on men and masculinities, the book highlights the significance of foregrounding the interplay of men's identities in conflicts to understand agency in a meaningful way. Through the focus on the simultaneous play of multiple masculinities, the book also questions the oversimplified and monolithic usage of masculinity being associated only with violence in conflicts.

The empirical data in the book includes interviews and narratives of multiple stakeholders belonging to diverse vantage points in the Kashmir conflict. Some of these include activists, widows, wives of the disappeared, ex-militants, surrendered militants, participants of the stone-pelting movement, mothers of sons killed in the conflict, women representatives of the village Halqa Panchayats, and army personnel. The book also draws from alternative material in the form of graffiti, folk songs, poetry on graves, and slogans. Through anecdotal reminiscence, the author reflects on the challenges of field research in Kashmir that served as an opportunity for self-contemplation.

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