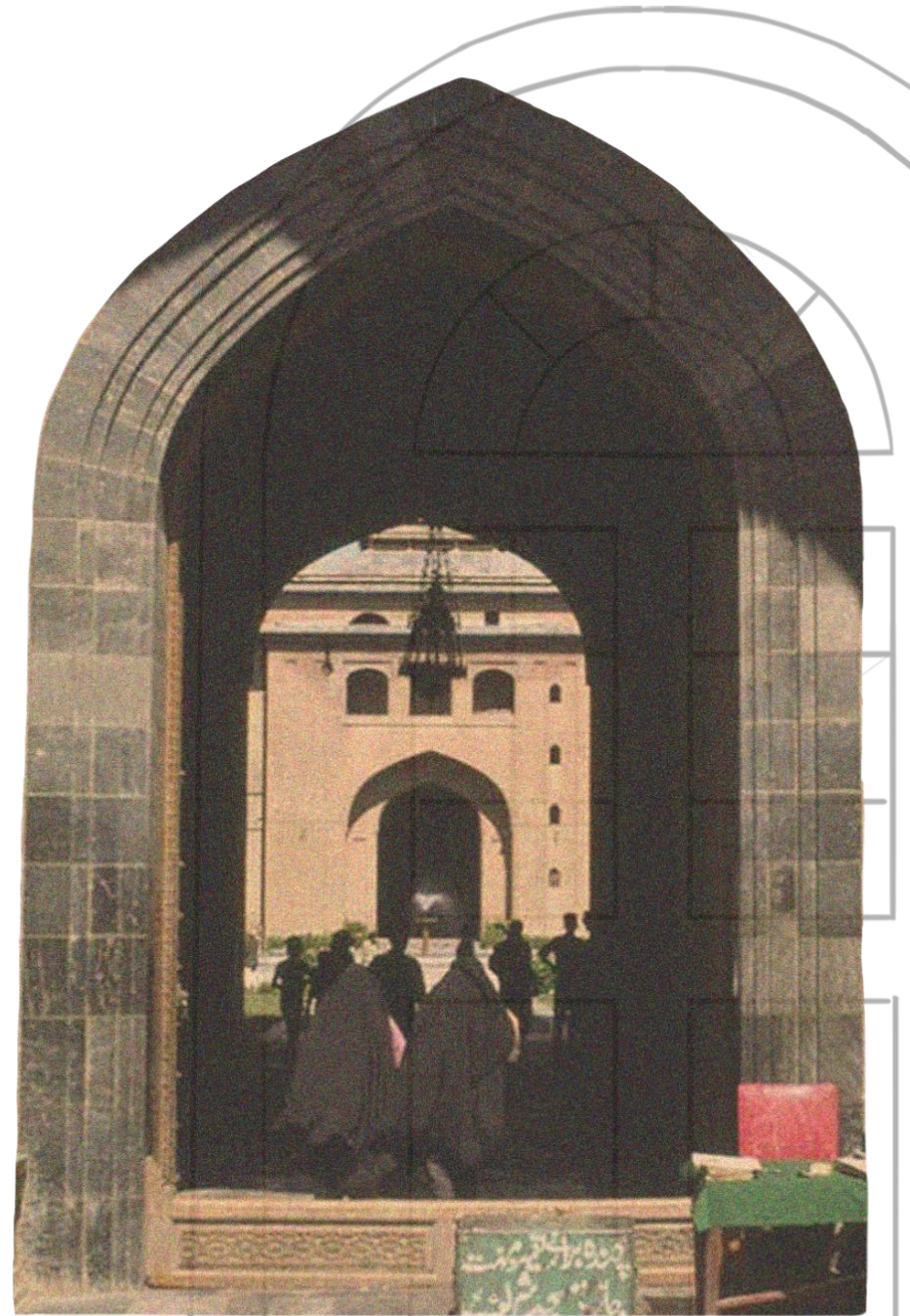


ہوں بھی اور نہیں بھی

Sabeen Fatima



INTRODUCTION

Wama gunfight



Zero infiltration this year: Army

'8 attempts foiled, 17 militants killed'

for Kashmir

...for Kashmir... 12... R. Shyok

Youth held for rifle-snatching: Police



J&K flags: reveals plans of more strikes

Muzaffarabad 9... Enter of... Guru Hanging'

India tears influx of Taliban

As militant strikes 'increase' installs more CCTV in Srinagar



Curfew in J&K to avert protests

Docs, paramedics threatened by cops

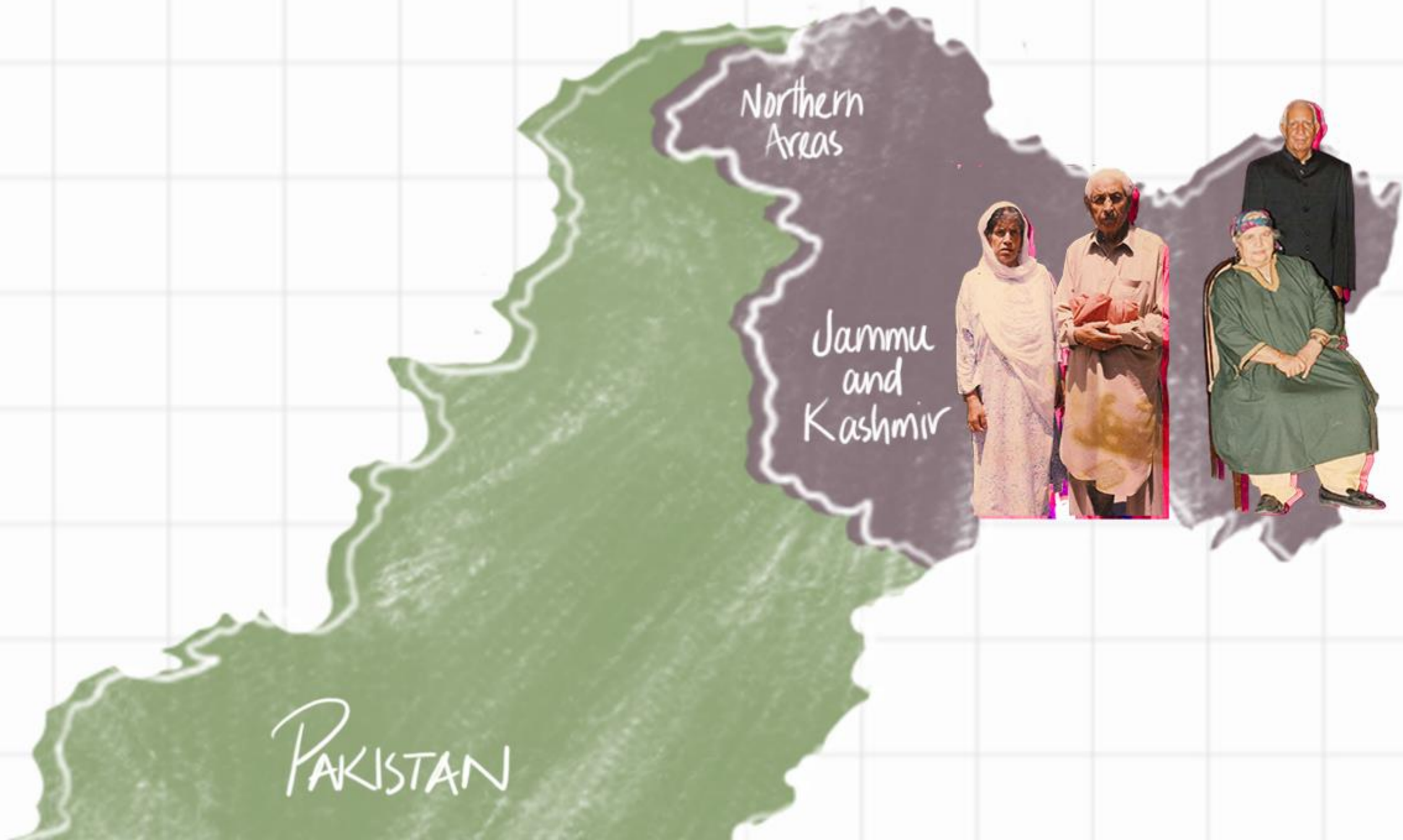
...I love Kashmir... nain... I love Kashmir

BACKGROUND



dada
& dadi

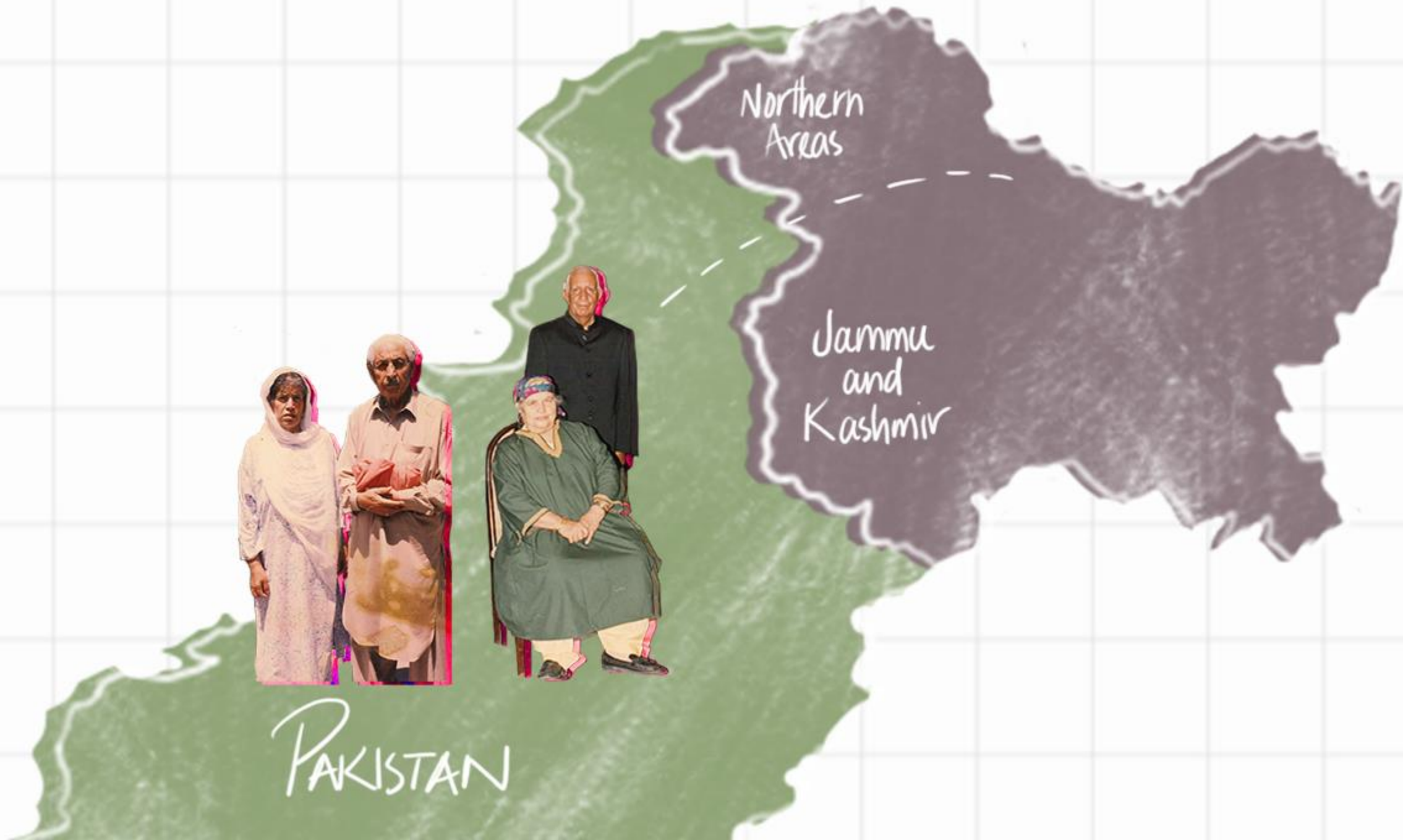
nana
& nani



Northern
Areas

Jammu
and
Kashmir

PAKISTAN

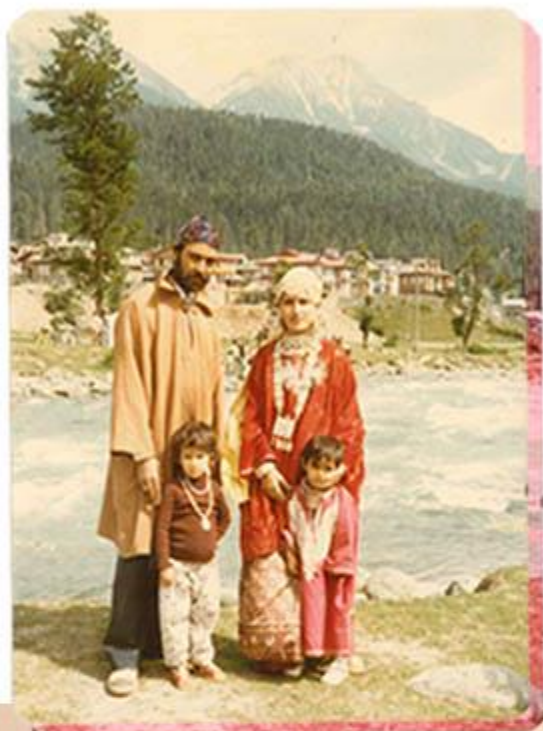


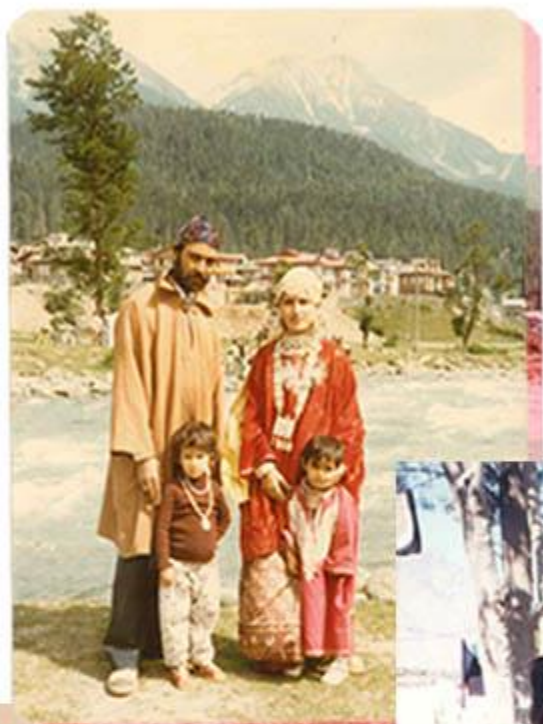
Northern
Areas

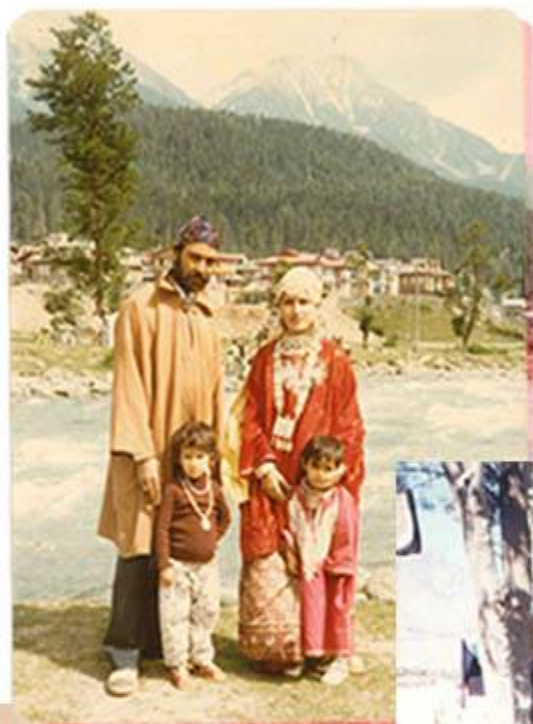
Jammu
and
Kashmir

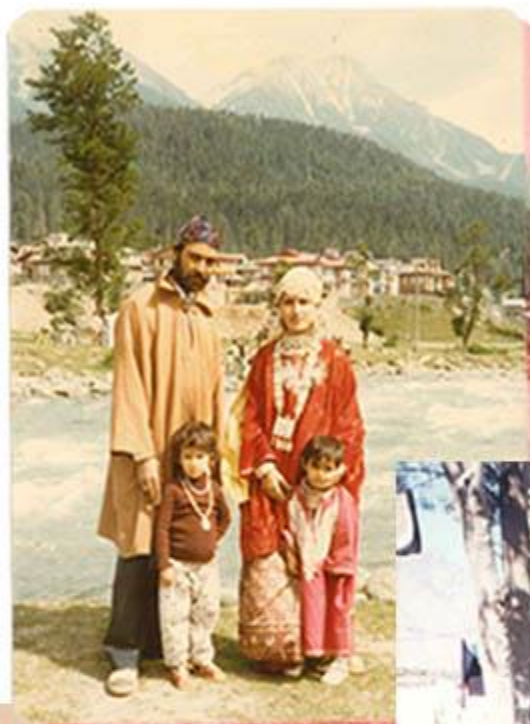
PAKISTAN

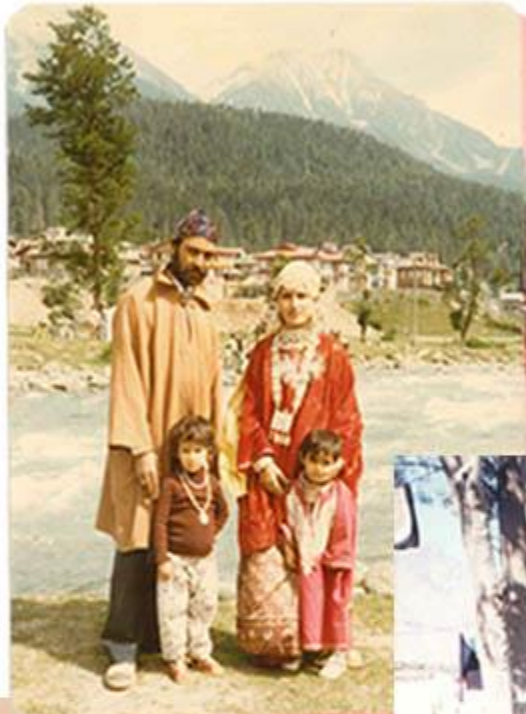


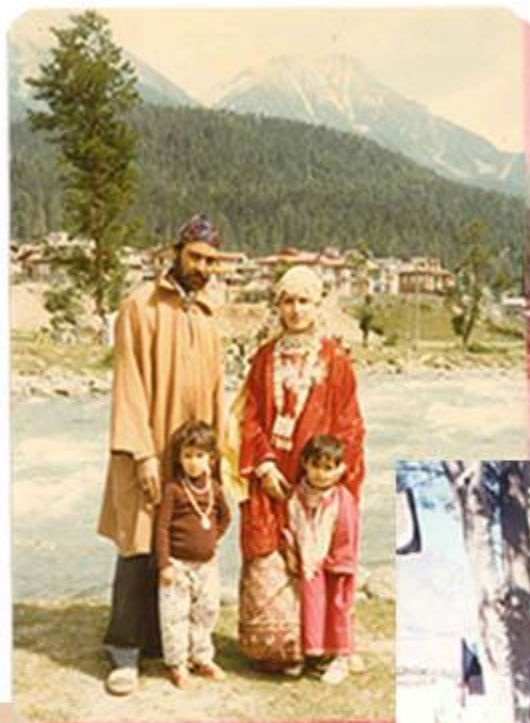
















ہوں بھی
اور نہیں بھی



IDEA



VISUALS

ہوں بھی
اور نہیں بھی

i am but i am not



*to my mama, baba and bhena who made
me believe that if I have them by my
side, I can achieve anything*



INTRODUCTION

Having a Kashmiri background, living in Pakistan has in my mind given birth to a conflict of belonging, with my constant inability to fully belong to one culture. My existence on Pakistani land made me curious about exploring existence on Kashmiri land through the lens of the culture and artifacts my grandparents brought with them when they migrated to Pakistan back in the 60s

Artifacts contain deeper meanings than their appearance shows, carrying associations, stories and narratives that are personal to the associated narrators. My curiosity of cultural exploration led me to collect these stories from multiple Kashmiri narrators, which I then reinterpreted in a visual form. I attempted to visually represent these stories to stay true to the essence of the artifacts, the story and the narrator themselves.



paper mache

پاپر ماسھی

I have grown up in a home that is slightly tainted with traces of Kashmir, that are not evident from afar but when you get closer you will be able to pick up on them; the smell of brewing Kashmiri chai on a cold winter evening, the pheran that my grandmother wears on Eid mornings and the tiny papier mâché boxes that have been brought as souvenirs from trips taken to and from Srinagar.

One of such Kashmiri objects is a photo frame, small enough to fit in my palms when I open them out together, of a simple teal color, the typical color that you will find in Kashmiri embroidery and artwork, with golden papier mâché work on its wide border. The frame was purchased by my sister on her trip to Kashmir almost twelve years ago and she put in it a picture of the us three sisters, smiling innocently at the frame. Whilst the picture reminds me of a time when I was younger, gullible and less worried about the happenings of the world, the frame is a constant reminder of my roots to a disputed and disturbed land; the land that I have not yet felt under my feet.

It gives me hope when I see the frame, which was crafted and painted by a Kashmiri artisan across the border in my home, during the current strained relations between India and Pakistan. It gives me hope because it is a proof of times when peace was prosperous and plentiful and that someday similar peace will prosper and the gates will be opened so that I will be able visit the land I call my fatherland. As Agha Shahid Ali put it:

*"We shall meet again, in Srinagar,
by the gates of the Villa of Peace,
our hands blossoming into fists
till the soldiers return the keys
and disappear"*

- Agha Shahid Ali, A Pastoral.

a technique of making various forms of objects with paper





jiggni/teeka

جگنی/ٹیکا

piece of jewellery worn on
the crown part of the head



My childhood is very intimately tied with the consumption of Bollywood. This colorful world of extravagancy had always felt too surreal, the people would be caricatures but fascinating, the music orchestrated to enhance the magic. Whenever the modest TV in our cold, Rawalakot home would tune to a Bollywood movie or song, I was obsessed, mimicking the steps and trying my best to catch the tune, but obsessed.

My faintest of memory recounts how I had a plastic toy mobile phone in my possession that played a few Bollywood tunes as you pressed its buttons. 1 2 5 9 and the raspiest 'Bumbro Bumbro' rang from inside the plastic. The song rang in my ear from day to night to day again as I tapped my feet to the beat of it. Then one day, Preity Zinta showed her dimpled face on our TV screen, sitting down, twisting her hands in a dance and smiling away, as Bumbro Bumbro's tune rang away in our lounge. I couldn't stop staring. It was all so beautiful as she looked delightful in her kameez shalwar dupatta and... wait. What was that on her head? A crown perhaps? A gold necklace maybe. But on her head? And why was it also dangling from her ears? It was so bizarre! I had never seen anything like it before and I couldn't form an opinion on it either. What was it?! This 'object' stuck like a dilemma in my mind.

I caught that object multiple times on TV, always worn on the foreheads of veiled, fair, smiling women as they sat and sang away, swaying to the melody of folk songs, a mountainous backdrop always accompanying them. Somewhere the word 'Kashmir' popped up, maybe that one particular mountain in the music videos was Kashmir. A day came when some girls of my class were asked to prepare a Kashmiri song for teacher's day and I was made to join. Apparently I 'looked' Kashmiri and was thus given a Kashmiri dress and veil to wear. Great! Now I would also get to wear that weird head necklace too, right? Umm not really. No one knew what that object was. No one bothered to buy it either. I still sang and danced in the incomplete outfit, disappointed that my folk fantasy didn't come true.

ka-she-da

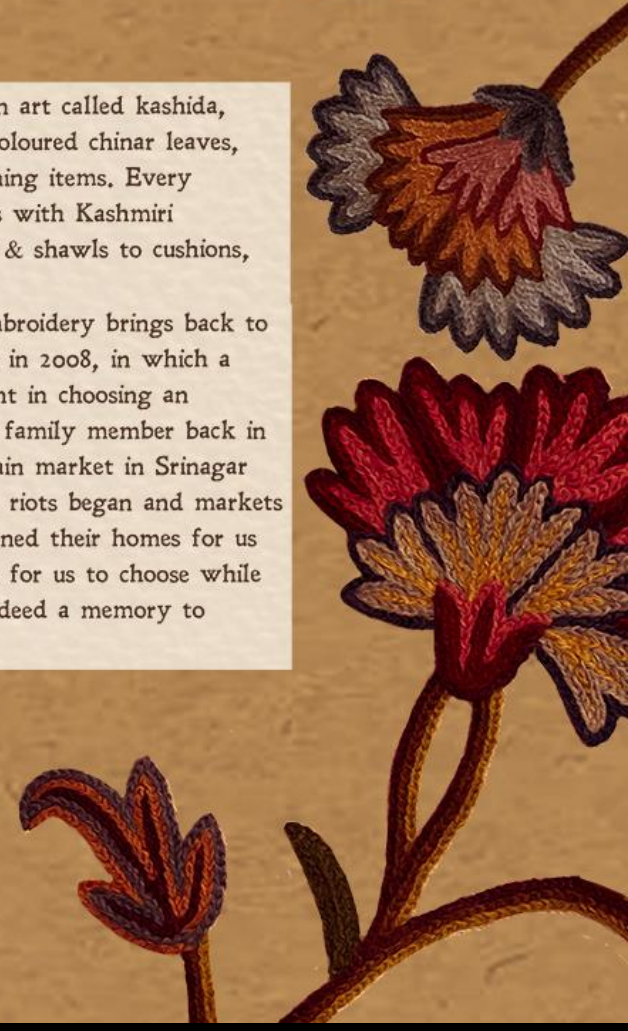
chain stitch is the most common type of stitch used in kashmiri crafts

kashida

کاشیدا

Traditional Kashmiri embroidery is an art called kashida, often done in the form of brightly coloured chinar leaves, flowers and patterns on various clothing items. Every Kashmiri cherishes owning such items with Kashmiri embroidery, from embroidered shirts & shawls to cushions, beddings and even tea cozies.

Personally an item with Kashmiri embroidery brings back to me memories of my visit to Srinagar in 2008, in which a considerable time and effort was spent in choosing an embroidered item as a gift for every family member back in Pakistan. It involved visits to the main market in Srinagar (Lal Chowk), but when the summer riots began and markets closed down, the local craftsmen opened their homes for us to visit, exhibiting their unique pieces for us to choose while we sipped Kashmiri pink tea. It is indeed a memory to cherish forever.





samavar سماوار

sum-a-war

a type of thermos used to keep tea and kehwa warm

ابا کے سرینگر کے اباؤں گھر میں ایک سماوار تھا جھوٹا سا جو دیکوریشن کے طور پر استعمال ہوتا تھا اس کے اوپر فارسی کا کلام لکھا ہوا تھا۔

جب ہم جناری میں ہوتے تھے تو ایک شاجی ڈاکو تھا۔ وہ بارڈر سے پار جاتا اور چیزیں لاتا اور لیجاتا تھا۔ اُس کو ایک بار ابا ملے، میرے ابا اور اپنے دادا۔ ابا چونکہ ڈسپنسر تھے تو کسی مجبوری کی وجہ سے ابا نے اُس کا ایلاج کیا۔

ابا بتاتے تھے کہ اُس کے ایلاج کی وجہ سے وہ اُن کا معتقد ہو گیا تھا کہ اُس نے ان سے کہا کہ شاجی مجھے کوئی حکم دیں میں سرینگر جا رہا ہوں۔ اپنے لئے کیا لے کر اوں؟ ابا نے اس سے پوچھا کہ وہ کیا لائے گا جب وہ سب کچھ چھوڑ چھاڑ کر یہاں آئے۔ اس شخص نے کہا کہ ابا اس کو بس اپنے سرینگر کے گھر کا پتہ بتائیں، وہ اُن کے گھر والوں سے مل کر آئے گا۔

وہ ڈاکو پھر جناری سے کہیں بارڈر سے چھپ چھپا کے سرینگر پہنچا۔ جب وہ ابا کے گھر گیا تو دادی سے مل کر کہا کہ اُنکا جو بیٹا ہے اکبر شاہ، وہ جناری میں ہے اور ٹھیک ٹھاک ہے۔ اُس کی بات پر دادی نے کہا کہ انہو نے 44 سے اپنے بیٹے کو نہیں دیکھا، سولہ سال ہو گئے ہیں اور اُن کو دیکھا ہی نہیں۔ اُس بندے نے پھر میری دادی کو کہا آپ مجھے کوئی ایسی چیز دیں جس کی اُنکو پہچان ہو، وہ میں اُنکو پہنچا دوں گا۔ دادی نے پھر اُس کو وہی چھوٹا سا سماوار پکڑایا اور کہا کہ یہ اُسکو بہت پسند تھا۔ اُنم اکبر شاہ کا نام لیتے ہو تو اُسکے نام پر یہ لے جاو۔

وہ شخص پھر کسی تربا بارڈر کراس کر کے ایک دن ابا کے پاس آیا اور اُنکی دسپنسر کے میز پر لاکر وہ سماوار رکھ دیا۔ اُس سماوار کو دیکھ کر ابا کے آنسو نکل آئے۔ ابا نے پھر اس سے پوچھا کہ تم مل کر آئے ہو امی سے؟ امی نے کیا کہا؟ اس نے بتایا کہ دادی نے کہا کہ مجھے تب یکن لائے گا کہ تم میرے بیٹے کے پاس سے آئے ہو جب تم اُسکی کوئی کمیز لاکر دو گے۔ اُس نے جو کمیز پہنے ہو گی وہ لاکر دو، دھولی نا ہو، جو پہنی وی ہو گی وہی اتار لانا، جس سے خوشبو ہو میرے بیٹے کی۔

جب وہ کمیز گئی اُس بندے کے ہاتھوں میری دادی کے پاس، اُسکے کچھ دنوں باد ہی دادی کی وفات ہو گئی۔ اور یہ سننے میں ابا تھا کہ جب وہ فوت ہوئیں تھی، اُنکے سر ہائے وہ کمیز تھی۔ اُنکو یکن ہو گیا تھا کہ اُنکا بیٹا زندا ہے اور تھیک ہے۔



samavar
سماوار

sum-a-war

a type of thermos used to keep tea and kehwa warm

At Abba's (Dad's) home back in Srinagar, there was a small Samavar that was used as a decoration. On it Farsi (Persian) verses were written.

When we were in Chinaari, there was a Shahji Daaku (Thief). He used to go across the border and would take things back and forth. One day he met my Abba, my Abba and your Dada (Grandfather). Since Abba was a Dispenser, he was obligated to treat that daaku.

Abba used to tell me that after he treated that person, that person believed he was in debt to my Abba. This Daaku asked my Abba that I am going to Srinagar so do you have any order for me? What should I bring back for you? Abba said to him that what can he bring back from that place when he himself left everything behind. The person said to Abba to give him the address of his house in Srinagar, he will go and meet your family.

From Chinaari, that person somehow managed to sneak across the border and reach Srinagar. When he reached Abba's house he met my Dadi (Grandmother) and told her that your son, Akbar Shah, is in Chinaari and he is doing well. On this my Dadi said that she hasn't seen her son since '44 it has been sixteen years and she hasn't seen him. The person said to my Daadi to give him something that her son will recognize, which he can take it back to her son. My Dadi then gave him that small Samavar and said that my son loved this. You are mentioning Akbar Shah so take it on his account.

That person then one day crossed the border and reached Abba and placed that Samavar on his dispensary's table. As soon as Abba saw that Samavar he got teary eyed. Abba then asked him that you met my Ammi? (mother) What did my Ammi say? He said to Abba that Dadi told him that I will fully believe that you met my son when you will bring back any shirt of his. Bring the shirt that he would be wearing that moment, without washing it, just bring it as it is, the shirt that has my son's scent in it.

When that shirt reached my Dadi through that person, she passed away after a few days. And this was being said that when she passed away, the shirt was by her pillow. She was sure that my son is alive and well.

FINAL PRODUCT

- Visual Journal
- Mix medium visuals



CONCLUSION

- Showcasing the aspect of Kashmir me and my family experience
- Presenting to the audience how different people have varying association to a culture through material objects



THANK YOU!



