

# **Displaced Kashmiri Hindus**

**A dialogue initiative**

**K. N. Pandita  
Jawaharlal Kaul**

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## Preface

More than two decades have passed when three lakhs Kashmiri pundits were forced to leave their homes just because they were Hindus and loved India as motherland. Scenes of burnt houses, looted household goods and valuables, murdered men, women and children, misery and agony still float before our eyes.

Government tells us to go back to our homes; most of those no longer exist. Some local political parties also echo the same suggestions but nobody is willing to give any concrete assurance of our safety, our livelihood, our honour and our rights. With successful operations of our valiant forces and through the Gods grace terrorism appears to be decreasing.

It is time we firmly and finally reject all suggestions and demands echoed by Pakistan and its Indian puppets and apologists to delink Kashmir from rest of India. Kashmiri Pundits, refugees of POJK, displaced due to terrorism and also those Indian citizens who migrated from Pakistan after partition have an inherent right to decide their own future without meddling of intermediaries who represent none but the vested interests.

After six decades of agony of partition and the illegal occupation of major part of Jammu and Kashmir State by Pakistan one can see the miserable conditions of the people living on the other side of LOC. We are grateful for those who made efforts and sacrifices to keep Jammu and Kashmir in Bharat but a lot more is to be done in this regard.

In spite of divided leadership of our community it is time to think deeply and agree upon a course of action for our future and the future of our generations. We therefore have started a process of dialogue with various groups in which eminent scholars are participating.

We hope that the government of Jammu and Kashmir as well as the central government will also respond positively and participate in

this dialogue with the displaced people. But the process will remain incomplete without the active participation of stakeholders. The genesis of the situation we are in is given in the following articles. This may prepare you for a meaningful discussion.

# Kashmir Conflict: Historical Perspective

*-K.N. Pandita*

Jammu and Kashmir State comprises three regions - Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. This hugely divergent region in the Himalayan declension was known to ancient historians and travellers as Kashmir Kingdom whose borders, at one time of history, extended to Gandhara, the modern Kandahar in Afghanistan to her west and to Yarkand and Kashghar (in present Xingjian province of China) to her north-east. Two Kashmiri kings, Lalitaditya Muktapida in 8<sup>th</sup> century, and Sultan Shihabu'd-Din in late 14<sup>th</sup> century had run over vast tracts of Central Asia then known as Turkestan. The main purpose of these extended incursions made after going through extraordinary physical hardships was to punish and pin down rapacious highlanders and barbaric hordes of those parts because they had become a menace to the security of the Kashmiri Kingdom.

Kalhan's Rajatarangini tell us that King Lalitaditya had ordered that only princes of royal blood would be the Commanders of the Passes (drnagapati) of Kashmir. Such was the strategic importance of these entry and exit points along the mountains girding Kashmir mandala. Strategic importance of these passes remains intact, rather is of grater relevance today than ever before. Had county's political leadership applied King Lalitaditya's theory of border security imaginatively to the situation that arose out of the incursion of tribesmen in October 1947, situation on the ground in Kashmir would have been different today. In this background imagine the Himalayan blunder of handing back the Haji Pir Pass in Uri sector to Pakistan in the aftermath of Tashkent Agreement with Pakistan.

The Hindu rule over the Kingdom of Kashmir came to an end in around 1339 A.D when, through stratagem, power was grabbed by a Muslim intruder from Swat (present NWFP) named Shahmir who had entered the valley as a fugitive during the reign of Suhdev and had become the beneficiary of royal munificence. Shahmir's son, Sultan Sikandar, for whom Muslim historians lavishly used the epithet butshikan , the iconoclast, was the first among the Sultans to begin

wholesale destruction of Hindu and Buddhist temples, viharas or shrines, and forcible conversion of people to Islamic faith.

He ordered destruction of renowned Sun Temple Martand at Matan, King Avantivarman's temple at Avantipora and Lalitaditya's temple complex at Parihasapora. Ruins of these massive structures eloquently speak of their grandeur and architectural splendour. Later Sultans, especially the Chaks and their powerful chiefs like Musa Raina, and also the late 15<sup>th</sup> century rabid Iranian missionary, Shamsu'd-Din Araki, the propagator of Nurbakhshiyeh order in Kashmir around 1475 A.D. caused maxim destruction of Hindu community and culture.

Kashmir's social and cultural improvement during the Mughal rule was possible because as a province of big Mughal Empire it saw a century and half of peace and tranquillity and free flow of trade and commerce. The Mughals had suppressed and subdued anarchical highlanders all along the Pir Panchal heights who were used to loot and rapine of peace loving people of Kashmir.

Mughal rule over Kashmir was followed by that of the Afghans whose Pashtun ethnic groups had attained supremacy following weakening of the Mughal power in India after Aurangzeb's death. Transfer of control of Kashmir from the hands of the vast, powerful and organized Mughal Empire to the lawless chieftains and broad-day robbers with slender control by power centre in Kabul promised no improvement in the affairs of Kashmir. The Afghan Governors (subedars) of Kashmir had low opinion of Kashmiris and evinced negligible concern for the welfare of the people over whom they ruled and from whom they extorted taxes. However, they had to employ literate persons from among the locals to run the wheels of administration.

History was repeated when some prominent Kashmiris, fed up with nearly half a century of oppression and rapacity of Afghan rule, came to the Sikh royal court at Lahore and sought its intervention. Amusingly, the Kashmiri delegation to Khalsa Durbar was led by a

leading Kashmiri Pandit from Dhars of Fateh Kadal Srinagar, a conspicuous Damra family that wielded influence with the local population.

Sikh rule over Kashmir began around A.D.1817 and an influential Dogra chieftain Gulab Singh, hailing from Jammu region, became a powerful courtier and commander at Khalsa Durbar at Lahore. By then the British had established their rule over the Indian colony but avoided interfering with the powerful Sikh kingdom as long as Maharaja Ranjit Singh was in power. After the demise of Ranjit Singh, Sikh Durbar showed signs of disintegration. The battle of Sabraon brought up the tail end. During the period of disintegration, each powerful commander tried to care out for himself a niche. Gulab Singh played his card with deftness as he had foreseen the fate of the kingdom. He realised that expeditions in Kashmir, Ladakh and northern regions could be rewarding without getting him involved in disastrous court intrigues and factional clashes. He had already conducted some expeditions in the northern region and annexed these to the Sikh kingdom under whose tutelage he set up some semblance of administration. Kashmir had already come under the Sikh rule who deputed Governors from Lahore. In all probability, Gulab Singh's northern frontier expeditions were undertaken with clearance from the rulers of British India. When the Khalsa Durbar failed to pay a chunk of the war indemnity to the victorious British, Gulab Singh volunteered to under-write the amount of indemnity. The Khalsa Durbar agreed to pass on Kashmir and the newly annexed northern regions to the custody of Gulab Singh. The deal thus scripted is called Amritsar Treaty.

It is incorrect to call the deal anything like the sale of Kashmir. Firstly, it was not only Kashmir Valley but Jammu region south of Pir Panchal range, Ladakh, Gilgit, Chitral and other adjoining regions also that passed into the possession of Gulab Singh. Secondly, sale of chunks of territory is nothing new in history. The history of the United States of America is a standing proof. Alaska was sold by the Russians to the US not too far in the past. Spain sold Texas to the US.

With the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846, Gulab Singh led an expedition to Kashmir and crushed the defiant Governor Sheikh Imamud-Din in a decisive battle fought close to the peripheries of the main city of Srinagar. He ascended the throne and assumed the title of the Maharaja of the State of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and Tibets (Tibet ha).

His intrepid commander General Zorawar Singh of Riasi was the hero of those northern region expeditions. Thus in 1846, Gulab Singh began giving territorial, political and administrative shape to the newly formed kingdom henceforth called the State of Jammu and Kashmir. With this began the era of Dogra rulers of Kashmir.

Maharaja Gulab Singh's son Maharaja Ranbir Singh succeeded his father in 1850. His expeditionary forces reached as far as Yarkand in Turkestan which alerted the British imperialists who forced him to withdraw his troops. However control over Shahidullah was retained. Maharaja Ranbir Singh took various steps to modernize the administration and brought some judicial reforms. He was also interested in preservation of cultural heritage of the State. He streamlined judicial system by promulgating the Ranbir Penal Code which is as valid today as it was during his days when it was pronounced. The British officers and tourists coming to Kashmir at this point of time in Kashmir history increased rapidly.

## **Regional politics**

While the Bolshevik revolution in Russia was shaping in the first decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the British rulers of India were guided by Curzon's Great Game policy in Central Asia, strategic importance of Kashmir began to dawn upon the policy planners. Their demand of deputing British Resident to the royal court in Srinagar already voiced during the reign of Ranbir Singh was intensified when much sober and prosaic Maharaja Pratap Singh ascended the throne. He could not resist the growing pressure as he was far less dominating than his father.

During the early years of the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh, British Resident in Srinagar became very active. A two-pronged strategy was adopted to check the penetrating influence of communist ideology. One was strategic and the other political. On strategic plane, Gilgit Agency was carved out of Gilgit Wazarat of Maharaja's domain and placed under British Commiserate. Its northern border touched with the Soviet Central Asian State of Kyrgyzstan to the north and Wakhan to the west. The remaining portion called Gilgit Wazarat was placed under a Governor appointed by the Dogra ruler of the State.

On political level, the British Resident in Srinagar covertly but efficiently raised a pro-British constituency within Kashmir Muslim majority of the valley. British policy of divide and rule had already been pressed into service in the course of resistance to Indian National Congress' independence movement. It was now extended to Jammu and Kashmir. Under the rubric of suppression and denial of rights, the majority community in urban Kashmir was sensitized to its religious dimension. The real purpose was to bolster anti-communist and rabidly pro-Islamic mindset of the masses of people in Kashmir. The communal uprising of 1931 in downtown Srinagar, the role of Punjabi Muslims in fomenting that trouble and the mischievous report of Glancy Commission are vital proofs of communalising otherwise peaceful Kashmir of those days.

State level first regular political party viz. Muslim Conference could safely be called the offshoot of Indian Muslim League. Although it concentrated on the State only yet its approach being communal in content was akin to that of the Muslim League. What differentiated it from the Muslim League and inhibited it against openly aligning with that organization was the delicate difference between their objectives. While Indian Muslim League asked for partition of India on the basis of religion, the Muslim Conference did not propose division of the State on that count and advocated for a total Muslim State of Jammu and Kashmir. Amusingly, the separatists in Kashmir are vehemently opposing division of Kashmir as that would make them lose at least half of the territory now under Indian administration.

Muslim Conference was dominated by the Muslim leadership of Jammu and Mirpur and not Kashmir, though the last mentioned enjoyed maximum concentration of the majority community. In the valley, it had its strong protagonist in the house of Mir Waiz of Kashmir. This house enjoyed much respect and popularity among the Muslims of Kashmir and was known for upholding traditional Kashmirian ethos. Jamia Mosque in Nowhatta locality of downtown Srinagar district was the headquarters of Mirwaiz of Kashmir where they traditionally led prayers and delivered sermons to Friday congregations. Though rejecting anti-Hindu stance in an environment of surcharged emotions, the House of Mirwaiz, nevertheless, did carefully and cautiously cater to religious propensity of the masses of majority group in Kashmir.

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, a young Kashmiri student, and a small beneficiary of the Mirwaiz House, earned M.Sc in Chemistry from Aligarh Muslim University. He joined the politics of Muslim Conference and began interacting with its Jammu-Mirpur based leadership. Soon he found that though Kashmir had the majority of Muslim population yet the Muslim Conference under-played the role and importance of Kashmir. Even on the level of personal likes and dislikes, too, the Sheikh had the difficulty of adjustability. He was a man of strong ego, difficult to be controlled and channelized. In the closing years of 1930s the Muslim League had assumed more aggressive stance. Its repercussions were visible in J&K particularly in Mirpur, Muzafarabd and other places. People in Poonch, Sadhnoti, Bag, Kotli and Mirpur districts were generally soldiers by profession in British Indian army. Maharaja's government had raised their battalions and they were later on deployed in World War II at various fronts.

## **The divide**

Sheikh found that by remaining glued to Muslim Conference he would have to be subservient to the Mirwaiz House of downtown Srinagar. Both of these situations were unacceptable to him. Thus in late 1938, he took the historical decision of separating from Muslim

Conference and laid foundation of his party National Conference, which was destined to play crucial role in shaping the destiny of Kashmir in years to come. National Conference announced some broad features of its policy once its formation was officially announced. It spoke of communal harmony, devolution of power to the people, land reforms and working towards development and prosperity of the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir.

NC made much clatter about communal harmony and coined attractive slogans. This devalued Muslim Conference because of its communal trappings. At the same time, it mystified the ever sceptic Muslim upper middle class of the valley as well as the Hindu minority that was carrying the big backlog of communal repression against it for last seven centuries. The Sheikh made the best out of it in bolstering his profile. How much devoid of substance was his slogan of communal harmony is revealed by the letters of leading Pandit NC leader and his one time colleague, late Kashyapa Bandhu, written to him and recently published in their English version by Jammu-based Kashmir Sentinel in its issues. In his public rallies he usually began with recitations from the Quran and the verses of Iqbal.

In 1942, the Sheikh met Nehru in Lahore. Nehru had the reports of split of Muslim Conference and the Sheikh leading the separated faction with secular and non-violent tag attached to it. While Nehru found this ideology compatible with that of Congress, he embraced the Sheikh. And the Sheikh on his part found support from a vast national political organization of much consequence coming almost without asking. He embraced it. Thus began the long but wistful camaraderie between the two, which ultimately gave a new turn to Kashmir politics. Nehru's reckless support and patronization made the Sheikh secure against Hindu backlash from Jammu region. In order to convince Nehru that his secular credentials were recognized by even the predominantly Hindu region of Jammu, the Sheikh played the master stroke of raising voice for agrarian reforms.

Agrarian reforms formed the backbone of NC's Naya Kashmir Manifesto. This was the handiwork of the leftists who had been allowed entry into the National Conference.

## Raiders 1947

It was a clear signal that if Kashmir did not join Pakistan on its terms, Pakistan would use other methods. What were the other methods? The incursion of swarms of tribesmen from NWFP of Pakistan into Kashmir in October 1947 was the other method. At that point of time, the British rulers of India, on the verge of leaving this country, were closely watching the turn of events and the march of history. Abandoning Indian colony did not mean that the imperialist Britain would wind up its shop in Central and South Asia. Pakistan was the new but incidentally the cruder avatar to replace imperialism. The British Governor and Army Commander of NWFP forthwith entered into secret consultations with Pakistani and tribal personalities for launching incursion of tribesmen in Kashmir. All details were finalized and field commanders contacted. Fully armed and equipped tribesmen led the incursion into state territories on 22 October 1947. They fell upon defenceless Hindus and Sikhs of Muzaffarabad like wolves and vultures killing them in cold blood and kidnapping their females. Twenty four thousand Hindus and Sikhs were done to death in Muzaffarabad alone when the town fell on the night of 22 October 1947. A handful of Maharaja's foot soldiers were no match to the swarms of tribesmen. Still the bravery with which Brig. Rajendra Singh of State Forces held back the enemy at Uri and Bonyar is among the greatest heroic deeds in military history of the sub-continent. Town after town fell and the raiders stood knocking at the doors of Srinagar city. State administration came to the verge of collapse. Sheikh Adullah had been set free from prison, Panic struck as Hindu and Sikh refugees from Muzaffarabad, Dumel, Uri, Baramulla and other parts of the valley began pouring into capital city of Srinagar. The raiders went on large scale killing of Hindus and Sikhs and hordes of local goons raising green Pakistani flags and raising pro-Pakistan slogans swooped on Hindu and Sikh habitats and looted and plundered them to their hearts content. Emboldened by the gun wielding tribesmen, the quickly forgot the much orchestrated slogans and cliché of communal harmony which they used to raise with great gusto under the banner of National

Conference, One wondered how flimsy and fragile was Sheikh Abdullah's so-called nationalist movement.

Heroic Sikh Light Infantry fought great battles to save the airport and in the decisive battle of Shalteng close to the suburbs of the city of Srinagar, the gallant soldiers and officer of the Indian army inflicted crushing defeat on the invaders in which hundreds of them were killed. The enemy withdrew and the victorious Indian troops gave them a hot pursuit. Only 8<sup>th</sup> November, the strategic town of Baramulla was recaptured and Uri also fell to Indian troops thereafter.

Semblance of peace was restored in the valley. The guilty conscience of looting and plundering their harmless Hindu and Sikh neighbours made the local Muslims initially feel scared of Indian army. But soon they realized to their surprise that it was an army that delivered them also from the rapacity of the raiders.

## **Accession**

Many false and fabricated stories are told about the process of accession of the State to the Indian Union. There was nothing shady about it. The simple legal process adopted was that the Maharaja as head of the State, signed an instrument of accession as did other rulers of princely states. Accession was made with three heads, defence, currency and foreign affairs passing into the hands of the Union government. The arrangement was to continue till normalcy was restored in the State. Sheikh Abdullah had been released from the jail and by means of a proclamation was appointed as Chief Administrator of State administration in early November 1947.

Reports are that when Mehar Chand Mahajan met Nehru in Delhi and impressed upon him to send military assistance before Srinagar fell to the raiders failing which he was directed to take the flight direct to Karachi and negotiate a settlement with Pakistan. Nehru flew into a bout of rage and asked Mahajan to leave his room. At this point, the Sheikh, who was sitting in the adjoining room, overheard that the PM

was in one of his bouts of rage, stepped in and cooled him down saying that the troops must be flown in next morning.

Mehar Chand Mahajan was given that assignment by the Maharaja. And the latter was justified to direct his Premier to get into touch with Pakistan in case India dithered. The Maharaja and his premier were in extraordinary critical situation. Their fear was that if Srinagar fell, it would mean enormous disaster for the people of his state especially the minorities in the valley. He had already full reports of what had befallen these hapless people in two districts of Muzaffarabad and Baramulla. Neither the Maharaja nor his premier could be faulted.

## **Distortion**

Before we proceed with the narrative, let us revert to an earlier scene. Our adversaries have spread the canard that there were no raiders who attacked Kashmir in October 1947. They assert that there were actually the insurgents from Mirpur, Bagh, Sadhnuti, Palandhari etc. who had risen in revolt against the oppressive regime of the Maharaja. In fabricating lies like that they want to give legitimacy to the armed insurgency of 1990.

It has been already indicated that the raid of the tribesmen in 1947 had been planned soon after the partition of India on August 15, 1947. Responsible Pakistani sources have said it in very clear terms that Pakistani actors had began planning annexation of Kashmir in collusion with the British senior civil and military officers soon after the transfer of power. These conspiracies were hatched in Peshawar and the top British military officers were in full knowledge.

However, it is true that Islamists of the Muslim League and anti-Maharaja elements within and outside the State were prompting the ex-servicemen of the region to create difficulties for the State administration. The referendum in NWFP, in which nationalist Congress was badly mauled despite the influence which Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the veteran Pushtun leader and a staunch pro-Congress senior wielded, had repercussions on the disbanded

soldiers from present PoK. But to say that armed insurgency began in Mirpur and spread to entire J&K State as is orchestrated by Pakistanis is absolute nonsense.

As Chief Administrator during emergency period, the Sheikh lost no time in launching anti-Maharaja propaganda. He began giving himself more than necessary importance and ran the administration arbitrarily recognizing no control from any authority whatsoever. In a show of his pro-accession stance, he outlawed those who had tactically opposed state's accession to India. He was scared that their presence in Kashmir would expose him and weaken his position. Molavi Yusuf Shah, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir and the ancestor of present Mirwaiz Umar Farooq was forced to leave Srinagar. He went to Muzaffarabad never to return to his home in Srinagar.

## **Ceasefire and aftermath**

At midnight January 1, 1949, cease fire was declared in J&K. Observers raised questions about the timing and the location of troops at the time of cease fire. Strange questions have been raised. Why did Indian troops go slow after the capture of Uri? Why did not Nehru realise the strategic importance of Krishen Ganga Valley for the security of India's northern borders? Did Sheikh Abdullah want cease fire at the line of ethnic divide because the Punjabi/Dogri and Pahari speaking people were bent upon defying his authority and arbitration? Did the British Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee bring pressure on Nehru through the Governor General, Lord Mountbatten and his pretty wife Edwina? Who will answer these questions? Related with it is the question why was General Thimayya, the great soldier and commander who had won laurels for Indian army in J&K, removed and sent to Korea as UN military observer?

## **India in UN**

Much against the counsel of his cabinet colleagues, Nehru rushed to the UN Security Council with the request that Indian territory of

Jammu and Kashmir State had been invaded by Pakistan and the intruder be thrown out. What a piece of diplomatic naivety? Contrary to the expectations of Nehru, the US took more hostile stance than the UK at the Security Council. But for the veto of Soviet Union, the Security Council would have passed a resolution on Kashmir that would have become a source of great embarrassment to India. The Soviets had a score to settle with the capitalist. Nonetheless, the Security Council recognized Kashmir a disputed region whose status had to be decided. In other words it accepted Pakistan's position that Kashmir was the unfinished agenda of partition. Harsh realities of international politics now dawned on Nehru and his idealism collapsed. The question why Nehru took Kashmir issue to the United Nations has been hotly debated by historians and analysts. Nehru, in his idealism, believed that the US understood what colonialism meant and how it pursued the policy of divide and rule. He applied the principle to the US in the vain hope that the US would support India as an aggrieved case of British colonialism. Nothing could be more naive.

Sheikh Abdullah was part of the Indian delegation to Lake Success. There he realised that India had no friends in the Security Council and that she was given scurvy treatment by the big powers. Why to be with such a niggardly diminutive country and why not be in the basket of the former allies? Moreover, the Americans must have contacted him in Lake Success. His aspiration of independent Sultanate of Kashmir began tormenting him deep inside. His attitude after his return from Lake Success gradually changed from pro-India to neutrality and then to independent Kashmir. He talked of special status of Kashmir; he talked of only three powers surrendered by the Maharaja while retaining other powers; he talked of Muslim majority complexion of Kashmir and he talked of Kashmir as a distinct identity. His idiom changed with the change of location ---- Srinagar, Jammu, New Delhi. He became more and more defiant and dictatorial.

His patron-friend tried all he could to soften him and even went to the extent of signing an Accord with him in 1952 by virtue of which some

clarifications were made in regard to what powers the union had or had not over Kashmir. At this point of time, the Americans became more active in regard to Kashmir tangle. Adlai Stevenson, the American ambassador in India and once runner up for Presidential post in the US made private visit to the Sheikh in Kashmir. They met and talked in camera. The Sheikh became more and more defiant of Indian authority. In a public speech in RS Pora in early summer 1953, he openly gave call for secession from Indian Union. In a public rally of 13 July 1953 in connection with the Martyr's Day, the Sheikh almost humiliated Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the senior Congress leader and Union Education Minister who was the guest of honour. He had to leave the stage without delivering the address.

## **Sheikh's ouster**

On the night of 8-9 August 1953, Sheikh Abdullah was arrested in Gulmarg and removed from the office. Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad, his lieutenant, was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir. There were some small disturbances on the arrest of the Sheikh but Bakhshi controlled the situation deftly. Kashmir saw the light after going through agonising darkness of eight years. Sheikh's arrest was made when Nehru was away in London attending Commonwealth Conference and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai was holding temporary charge of Prime Minister. The man for whom Nehru suffered detention in Kohala some years ago was the same man who he put under arrest when he was the Prime Minister. How would one reason out this contradiction in Nehru's character?

While the Sheikh languished in the jail, his lieutenant (and to some, his evil spirit) Mirza Afzal Beg launched the Plebiscite Front with the agenda of deciding the future of Kashmir through a plebiscite as stated in the UN Security Council Resolutions of 1948 and 1949. Apparently the Sheikh kept himself away from the Plebiscite Front, but actually a large number of his followers made common cause with the pro-Pakistan elements and a network was spread throughout the length and breadth of the Valley to sensitize majority population

to pro-Pakistan line. The Plebiscite Front activists could not make much headway as long as Bakhshi was in power. His ouster made space for anti-national elements which New Delhi was unable to control directly or indirectly. In the armed uprising of 1989 and onwards, Plebiscite Front activists played significant role.

Ghulam Muhammd Sadiq came to power in 1963 as the leader of Democratic National Conference that had split from mainstream National Conference led by Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad. Sadiq tried to win the support of Congress by introducing it in State politics. How far this was strategically sound is what the history will decide. Nevertheless, the Congress found a toehold in the valley and Ladakh and became part of Kashmir politics in days to come.

During the tenure of Sadiq's successor Mir Qasim, Plebiscite Front once again found revival either owing to overt patronage of the regime or through interaction of external forces that had begun to evince interest in Kashmir imbroglio. This time the actors were not the imperialists and colonialist but the Islamists spearheaded by the conservative Saudi Arabian monarchical players behind the scene.

## **Second Stint**

Indo-Pak war of 1972, that saw the separation of Bangladesh from West Pakistan, was an eye opener for the Sheikh and his supporters of independent Kashmir. He changed his stance and asked for rapprochement with New Delhi. Sycophants and myopic advisors with influence among the kitchen cabinet of Indira Gandhi advised her to go in for one more Accord with the Sheikh in 1974 by virtue of which path was cleared for his reinstatement as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. A historical blunder was committed and today the people of the State are facing all that has befallen them.

The Sheikh sat back and re-assessed his position in a new set of circumstances. When he triumphantly entered Kashmir after release from internship in Kodaikanal, entire Kashmir came out on streets to give him a rousing welcome. He could not believe his eyes. He was

back to square one. But after assuming powers in rather very comical manner unprecedented in constitutional history, he changed his tone and tenor but sharpened his Machiavellian strategy of showing down the Indian State.

First he had to tackle with the enormous popularity which the Jamate-Islami of Kashmir had gained owing to good underground work done by Plebiscite Front in bolstering pro-Pak sentiments. He was a man who never tolerated political group or leadership that challenged his position. The opportunity came when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was sent to gallows by his arch enemy and diehard Islamist, President Zia of Pakistan. Bhutto had won the hearts of Kashmiri fanatics when he said that his countrymen would eat grass but make an atomic bomb. He had further said that Pakistan would win Kashmir even if she had to fight India for a thousand years. This kind of vitriolic charged with emotions is what Kashmiris usually like to hear. Therefore making best use of the opportunity, the NC workers prompted the masses of people and they massively attacked the Jamaatis, burned or looted their houses and threatened them with further dire consequences. After all, Zia was the bastion of Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami. The Jamaatis throughout the valley but more particularly in South Kashmir were subjected to atrocities.

At this point, the Saudi Wahhabi chapters intervened in Kashmir. Jamaat-i-Islami was funded by ar-Rabita based in Riyadh. Prince Turki, the Saudi intelligence chief deputed his interlocutors who succeeded in bridging the gulf between local Jamaatis and NC leadership. All bickering were submerged and slogans of fraternity emerged. Past was to be buried and future course was laid out by the Saudi leadership. Sheikh Abdullah chartered an airplane giving out that he with all his family was going to Iraq. Actually, it was a grandiose meeting with the Saudi top officials. The future roadmap of Kashmir as a Sunni Hanafi Muslim dominated state was approved. Saudis allocated budget for reconstruction of destroyed mosques, construction of new mosques and stipends for the seminaries and students of Islamic studies. All this was done under cover. We don't

know whether the Indian agencies had knowledge of all this or not. In all probability they had the knowledge but chose to turn away their face.

## **Wahabis**

The year 1975 marks the beginning of massive propaganda of Jamaat-i-Islami in Kashmir. Sayyid Ali Shah Geelani, till then an ordinary school teacher in Sopor, began his new career in the new avatar of Jamaat-i-Islami activist. Ghulam Nabi Fai, the organiser of Kashmir American Council in the US (recently sentenced by a US court for three year imprisonment for clandestinely receiving huge monies from Pakistan for anti-India propaganda in the western counties), and late Ayyub Thukar, who had migrated to London, were among the early students of the Jamaat-i-Islami seminary run by Ali Shah Geelani. Thousands of Jamaat-i-Islami schools were opened throughout the length and breadth of the valley. Rabid Wahhabi propagandists calling themselves Allahwale flocked to Kashmir and spread out like locust in rural areas brainwashing the youth in fanatical Islamic ideology and anti-India hatred. The State government turned blind eye to all this extensive propaganda spree that swept entire Kashmir like a whirlwind.

Export of Islamic Revolution of Iran to Muslim dominated regions of the Asian-African Continents was one of the ideological benchmarks of Ayatollah Khumeini's Islamic ideology. Khumeinites were ruthless, secretive and determined diehards. They made inroads into Kashmir and built a network among local Shia leadership. It is interesting to know that the earliest Kashmiri Islamist militants who received training in terrorist camps in Meshhad, the eastern town of Iran, were some Kashmiri Shia boys. A Shia delegation from Iran visiting Srinagar in early 1980s offered to furnish all mosques in the city with Iranian carpets. The Shia taxi drivers in Srinagar inscribe pro-Khumaieni slogans on the body of their machines.

When reports reached Saudi intelligence agencies (most probably through their Pakistani conduits) that the Khumeinites were trying to

make dent into the Kashmiri Muslim segment, they flung into action. The Wahhbis (now Salafis) and Jamaat-i-Islami activists joined hands, were galvanized into action and planned retaliation in a manner that the impact of Khumeni revolution would be neutralised. Thus began large scale plan of Islamization of Kashmir in which Pakistan and its intelligence agency ISI were to play a crucial role.

## **Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front**

A large number of edisplaceds from PoJK to the tune of 7 lakh have settled in specific places like Luton, Manchester, and Yorkshire etc. in UK. Their elders came as stokers and then brought their relatives and friends. Britain needed manpower after the WW II. These people were not happy with Pakistan. Their home remittances amounted to a couple of billion pounds annually. But their villages remained backward and under-developed. Electric power generated from Mangla Dam went to Punjab and even to parts of Sindh but PoJK villages were left to darkness. No tax money was paid for utilising water resource of PoJK.

However, the ISI found an exciting alternative which channelized this critical if not antagonistic segment of Pakistani Diaspora in UK to hate-India discourse. They were told to take active part in the liberation campaign of Kashmir; they were promised that liberated Kashmir would give them space, authority, power and political constituency. Amanullah Khan of Astor, and his cohorts were trapped. Kashmir Liberation Front came into being in Luton, UK. Anti-India criminal activity of this group began with the kidnapping and murder of Ravidra Mhatre, Indian Counsellor in the Indian Mission in UK. This Diaspora acted on the blue print prepared for them by ISI and thus training camps for terrorists were opened in parts of PoJK. They were promised that after liberation of Kashmir from Indian control, they would become the masters of the Paradise on Earth where they could not only invest their affluent booty but also would rule over illiterate and ignorant Kashmiris. The full story of this episode will be found in Hashim Qureshi's work titled Unveiling of the Truth. This is the same Hashim Qureshi who had hijacked an

Indian plane to Pakistan in 1971. He was first lionized to the extent that Bhutto came to the airport to greet and welcome his daring act. But after Pakistan's defeat in Bangladesh war, Hashim Qureshi was charged as an Indian spy and incarcerated. He spent nearly a decade in Pakistan jails and then sought asylum in Holland and settled down there as a refugee.

Initially Kashmir Liberation Front made rapid success because Indian security forces and intelligence agencies were taken by surprise. The organization received command and direction from Pakistan. Kashmiris moved in drones across the border to join training camps, obtain training and return to the valley to fight Indian presence. Crossing the ceasefire line through unchartered routes was made possible by the local guides and sympathizers. Back home after completing their training in PoJK training camps, Kashmiri militant youth spread awe and fear first among the minority community of Pandits by killings hundreds of their members in cold blood and scaring the rest to flee their homes. By the mid summer of 1990, entire Kashmir Pandit minority was expelled from their home and hearth and it sought shelter in Jammu and other parts of the country. Elected government, a coalition of NC and Congress, resigned and fled the state. The ministers and MLAs ran away to Jammu, occupied government bungalows, deployed security to protect their persons and held confidential meetings regularly to find ways of establishing contacts with militant leadership in the valley. The Chief Minister left for London where he engaged himself in golf playing and basking in the warmth of his family affection. He left ordinary people defenseless. But he knew very well that his party men had established liaison with the militants and did not lose their ground.

When Jagmohan, the Governor tried to take strict steps to put down lawlessness, and in the process a limited force had to be used, entire Indian government rose on its feet. Benazir demanded his ouster and New Delhi succumbed sheepishly. Jagmohan's monumental work *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir* is the most authentic record of contemporary history of the State.

Soon KLF was converted into JKLF and continues under that title till date. As a result of its initial success, Pakistan/PoK based JKLF leadership began to believe that secession of J&K from India was a matter of days. To push the matters, they declared a grand march of volunteers to cross the LoC near Chakothi in early 1992. Amanullah Khan and others said they would be in the forefront of marchers. The real idea behind that euphoric march and willful defiance of the LoC was to convey to Islamabad that JKLF was waiting in the wings to take over the control of Kashmir. It had no idea that Pakistan had other ideas about “liberated” Kashmir. It banned crossing of LoC by the marchers; the marchers defied the ban and Pakistani defense forces opened fire killing nearly twenty people and wounding scores of others. Pakistan's real intentions in Kashmir dawned upon JKLF.

Alarmed ISI now floated several terrorist organizations to counter JKLF. Hizbu'l Mujahideen was foremost among them. The other groups, small or big, appeared under tantalising Islamic iconic names. ISI promoted various groups within the valley also and each lionised its criminal activity in the name of Islam and jihad. Many Kashmiri Muslim leaders suspected of pro-Indian proclivities were gunned down. Octogenarian Maulana Masudi fell to their bullets. Mirwaiz Maulavi Muhammad Farooq was gunned down in his Hazratbal residence. Many more became fodder for the guns of militants no matter which group it was and who had sanctioned gunning down of the victim.

Now Pakistan is faced by its Frankenstein. In the process fierce triangular struggle is going on in that country. Army, judiciary and the elected government are the contestants. The fourth element that is making its presence felt stridently is of religious militant legions under one banner or the other. They continue to receive financial support from Wahhai/Salafi sources. They are obsessed with the idea of establishing Islamic Caliphate in Asian Continent. In the process, the big worry with the US is about the control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Washington is apprehensive that the armed theocratic elements in Pakistan might succeed in laying hand on the arsenal. If

that happens, the situation could become extremely dangerous. The grapevine has it that the US has established partial control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. It is difficult to confirm or repudiate the rumor.

Pakistan has not dismantled terrorist training camps in PoJK. Volunteers and Islamic legions recruited by various militant organizations in Pakistan under one or the other nomenclature fill these training camps waiting for the opportunity to sneak into Indian side. Pakistani army gives them fire cover to facilitate their infiltration. However with advanced surveillance strategy and new tactics of fighting infiltration Indian army has been foiling most of the attempts of infiltrators. But in final analysis, the question is not whether Kashmir remains part of the Indian Union or not. The question is how long the Indian Union is going to accept an Islamized, nay Arabised Kashmir within secular Indian Union.

## **Terror, torture and the death**

*—Jawaharlal Kaul*

It is said that the wave of terrorism that has swept the subcontinent was born in India. Though exaggerated, the claim is not without merit. So called fundamentalist ideology in Islam is commonly attributed to the Wahabi sect of Saudi Arabia which propagated a form of religion which makes it almost impossible for the Muslim community to coexist in peace with other religious groups. But Wahabi philosophy of Islam did not find favour immediately with the Indian Muslims. It was only when some Muslim Maulvis actually conceived their own native version of fundamentalism by defining the Islamic shariat in what they called in its real form.

Maulana Maudoodi's definition of Islam is different from what most Indian Muslim scholars propagated in India. The founder of Jamait-e- Islami presented Islam in a way which resembled the Saudi sect, but in much more matter of fact manner. The Islam of Abu-Allah Maudoodi is simple and unambiguous. It is based on what he understands by shariat, the Islamic law. According to him the God created this world (Kayanat) with all the creatures, vegetations and all the bounties in it. Man was his special creation. He was appointed Amin (caretaker) and allowed to enjoy every bounty of the world provided he followed the rules and regulations that God had made for him. These Quranic rules and principles were mandatory for him and these could not be changed, amended or enlarged (Tarmeem and tardeed) in any way. These laws were sent down through Prophet Mohammad to the mankind.

Since Mohammad was the last prophet (khatamul Nabi) no person or leader had the right to make any change and these laws will remain unchanged for eternity. Maudoodi did not like the policies propagated by Muslim League which he dubbed as Political Islam. According to him “not a single Muslim League leader from Jinnah to the rank and file has Islamic mentality or Islamic habits of thought. They do not look at political and social problems from the Islamic viewpoints. Their role is to safeguard the material interests of Indian Muslims by every possible maneuver or trickery.

When Maudoodi was propagating the 'true' Islam in India a fundamentalist Muslim party founded by Maulvi Yusuf Shah, then Mir Vaiz (Chief Priest) of Kashmir was already agitating for Muslim rights in the Kashmir Valley. Though fundamentalist in character, it was not prepared to go that far. Kashmiri Muslim Leadership was in favour of Islam which did accommodate other communities. Separatist element was introduced after a little over a decade when India got freedom. Although Maulana Maudoodi migrated to Pakistan after partition his organization Jamait-e-Islami was not dissolved. Jamait-e-Islami India in changed circumstances made a declaration that the Jamait will confine its work to the fields of religion and social service only and will refrain from political matters. But in an strategic move, Kashmir branch of Jamait-e Islami was delinked from the National jamait. The decision to be a non-political organization was not applied to it. It is significant that Islamisation of politics did not come through Mir Vaiz of Kashmir nor any native Islamic Clergy.

Politicians used it in different stages. Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah insisted on Article 370 because he argued that it was important to protect the interest of Kashmiri peasants against the rich land seekers of rest of the country. Apparently he wanted to protect the poor from the rich business classes of India. He did not want to implement the Indian laws of equality because these laws were not in tune with his policies of abolishing absentee landlordism without paying any compensation. In the second phase the 370 became an important instrument to protect the demographic predominance of Kashmiri Muslim in Kashmir. He wanted to preserve the Muslim majority character of the State, in other words Article 370 was communalized. It was obvious that entire political activity should be guided by the dominant Muslim character. It was in the third stage that he openly started to move away from India.

Roots of Muslim separatism in Indian Muslim intelligentsia had been already sown by some English scholars who were in favour of a separate Muslim Identity. Sir Theodore Morrison was the Principal of

Muslim Anglo Oriental College, Aligarh which is now the Muslim University of Aligarh. He wrote an article in 1932, in which he argued “Hindu and Musalman are two separate nations, as much separate from each other as different nations of Europe. Muslim civilization cannot survive in any Non-Muslim Government especially if that government happens to be a democratic government. In a democratic system different rules of governance and social behavior are standardized and therefore Muslim cannot live and govern themselves in their own ways”.

He also assured Muslims that they should not consider themselves alone, because there are others who are anxious to preserve their culture. Of course the others were the British Government, officers, and thinkers. This article was published in 1932 almost during same time in which Maudoodi was preaching his version of Islam, and it took a few years for the message to seep in the minds of the Muslim leadership. Slowly the influence of those Hindus and Muslims decreased, who had fought the British together in 1857 and continued to believe that the Indians should strive for independence collectively without any consideration of religious differences.

Many of Muslim scholars and writers had been advocating a common heritage and what they called Ganga-Jamuni Culture. But once the message of the Morrison was understood Muslim League developed a philosophy which advocated a movement of separation from the Hindus. The demand for separate country was born. It was not a few English scholars who wanted the Muslims to stand away from the Hindu masses but a large section of the British politicians and scholars worked for this purpose. When the British Government decided that they had to leave India an interesting conversation between Mountbatten and former Prime Minister Churchill make this attitude clear.

When Lord Mountbatten went to see Churchill before he left for India, Churchill said to him “I am not going to tell you how you do it, but I'll tell you one thing - Whatever arrangements you may make, you must see that you don't harm a hair on the head of a single

Muslim.”

I said,” I have no wish to harm the hair on anybody's head. Muslims are very largely my army companions. Of course I won't”

“Yes, but they are the people who have been our friends, and they are the people the Hindus are going to oppress, so you must take steps that they can't do it.”

I said, “I quite agree.”

That the Muslims are to be protected from Hindus and encouraged to remain out of the democratic fold was a feeling across the party lines in Britain. It is not surprising that the British wish to keep Muslim Majority Kashmir out of the Indian union was part of the Mountbatten's political mission.

Though first step in Indian Muslim politics projected it as a campaign to protect the poor Muslim from the powerful feudal and rich Hindu leadership; But it was a logical second step to argue that it is not the question of economic welfare only, but socio-religious identity of Muslims had to be preserved which can only happen in a separate country with a government which confirms to laws of Shariat. One can clearly see the resemblance between different stages of propagation for a separate country in India and the different arguments advanced from delinking Kashmiri society from rest of India under Article 370 and slogans of autonomy etc. In Jammu Kashmir, Jamait-e-Islami continued to function as it did in pre-partition India; with a clear fundamentalist objective. Sheikh Abdullah did not accept the philosophy of Jamait-e-Islami openly because by changing the Muslim conference to National conference he hoped to get Congress support against Maharaja. But Jamait-e-Islami was able to cultivate a sizable following among the clergy as well as educated classes. As for Islamic agenda is concerned Jamait-e-Islami was able to make Sheikh Abdulla irrelevant and project him as adversary to the interests of Muslim cause.

## War of thousands wounds

When Pakistani leaders decided that low intensity war, which is another name for exporting terrorism to destabilize the administration is a better option to the open confrontation with India; they started an elaborate training operation in Pakistan and POK. As one Pakistani strategist put it this was a war of inflicting thousands wounds to the enemy, meaning India. It was obvious that a sizeable number of Kashmiri youth had to be recruited because ultimately it had to be shown that it was an indigenous revolt against Indian occupation. Ground had been already prepared by fundamentalist organizations like Jamait- E- Islami and others for waging a jihad against India and her supporters in Kashmir.

It was therefore not difficult for Pakistani agents to lure comparatively less educated or illiterate youth of poorer family backgrounds to cross over to the Pak occupied areas under the guidance of trained Pak agents. Pakistan had built many training centers in POK where the boys were given a preliminary training for seven to ten days in arms such as hand pistols, AK47s, and hand grenades. The most important part of the training was indoctrination by the Mullahs and the Mujahidin leaders through oral lessons and video shows. Video propaganda had two aspects; one was to fill the boys with hatred for India and security forces as well as Hindus by showing fake encounter scene and abduction of women.

Many of these scenes were lifted from video films of West Asian and other areas of conflict and were camouflaged as genuine Kashmiri scenes. Second aspect was to build a sense of velour and confidence to avenge the “wrongs” done to the Muslims. Initially these camps were mostly in POK areas but gradually when it was necessary to upgrade the training to several weeks, camps had to be built in interior Pakistan. Some of the well known politicians and zamindars provided their farmhouses for this purpose. By the end of the century Indian security forces had obtained knowledge of about 105 training camps, 49 of these were in POK, 48 in Pakistan and 8 in Afghanistan.

Longer training courses were designed with the help of ISI and Afghan Mujahidin and more sophisticated weapons were provided to the Kashmiri militants. In this stage new weapons which were introduced in the Kashmir were MMC, LLC, AK47, 56 and 74, sting rockets, sniper rifles, mortars and anti tank weapons.

By 1980 terrorist organizations were also undergoing change. In 1984 high military officers of Pakistan approached Hashim Qureshi to “get us young people for training from valley so that they could fight India on return”. Hashim Qureshi was the co-founder of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front which stood for independent Jammu Kashmir, free from both India and Pakistan. According to Hashim Qureshi he refused this offer because terrorist operations in Muslim dominated Kashmir will turn this movement into a religious confrontation and will defeat the very purpose for which his very organization was formed. But his second in command Aman-ullah Khan accepted the Pakistani offer. In this way Aman Ullah Khan was trapped in the grand scheme of ISI.

A chain of subversive activities was launched in Kashmir. It was during this time that some notorious Mujahidin leaders of Afghanistan also extended their help to ISI. One of them was Gulbaddin Hekmatyar and his Hizb-i-Islami. By the time Aman-Ullah Khan realized that he was trapped in a war of attrition with no end in sight, and tried to get out, it was too late for him. Qureshi had to already leave Pakistan and seek political asylum in Netherlands, in Western Europe.

Kashmir had been a sacred cause for Pakistanis, right from the time of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Afghanistan provided a great training ground and a model of insurgency for those fundamentalist organizations and ISI for so called liberation of Kashmir. Initially ISI was only supportive of jihad in Kashmir but soon it was in total control of all the jihadist organizations operating in Jammu and Kashmir. According to Yossef Bodonsky “in order to escalate their Islamic Jihad, ISI established in early 90 the Markaz-Dawa, a center for worldwide Islamic activities. Maulvi Zaki, the center's spiritual

leader, told the trainees that their destiny was to fight and liberate the land of Allah from the Infidels where ever they might be". Trainees were from Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, Afghanistan and Pakistan. After the fall of Soviet offensive in Afghanistan new Afghan Government started giving full support to Pakistan's Kashmir operation. In December 1993 deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan Maulana Rehmani said that they cannot remain aloof from what is happening to the Muslims in 'Occupied Kashmir', Tajikistan, Bosnia, Somalia, Burma, Palestine and elsewhere. He said, "We are not terrorists but Mujahidin, fighting for restoring Peace and preserving honour." By this time Islamic Jihad had become truly an international network. In 90's some very sophisticated weapons acquired from Afghanistan and arms bazaars of Pakistan were introduced in Jammu and Kashmir. 107 rockets, soviet and Chinese models of automatic grenade launchers and solar power timing devices were captured from the terrorist in Jammu and Kashmir. By 1994 ISI had 2500 trained Mujahidin assigned to Kashmir.

Although the terrorism in Kashmir is said to have started by General Ayub Khan but subsequent governments in Pakistan including that of Benazir Bhutto fully subscribed to program. According to Political analyst Yossef Bodansky "insurgency in Kashmir had become an important part of national security policy of Pakistan ... Mrs. Bhutto had repeatedly emphasized the centrality of annexation of the entire Kashmir for long term development of Pakistan. The new rail line that will connect Karachi and central Asia must pass through Indian held Kashmir to be engineering wise and economically effective".

Pakistan's argument was that India cannot afford to wage a full war against a nuclear Pakistan unless Indian leaders are willing to accept the destruction of many cities in India. In fact Pakistan's spokesman in 1995 clearly hinted about it "If India carries another aggression it would not be a war of thousand years or even a thousand hours but only a few minutes and India should not be oblivious to the potential of devastation." Also the demand of Kazi Hussain Ahmed, the Jamait-e-Islami senator is significant. "Let us wage jihad for

Kashmir, a nuclear armed Pakistan would deter India from a wider conflict.”

Before the end of eighties the terrorist machinery was ready to strike big. It only needed a co-operative administration, which was provided by Gulam Mohammad Shah.

## **Cleansing operation of Gul Shah**

Gulam Mohammed Shah had been a hardcore fundamentalist from the very beginning; someone who wanted to achieve the objective of establishing a theocratic Islamic state with no place for any other religious community. Because of poor political wisdom he was made the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir by Congress party even though his own party National Conference (Khalida) had only over a dozen MLA's in the house.

He immediately started the Islamizing of the bureaucracy by excluding the “KP” officers from all decision making. He did not disagree with fundamentalist organizations like Jamait-E-Islami or local version of JKLF in promoting an Islamic agenda, but he disagreed with them about the methodology. According to him conflict with Pakistan will not achieve anything because open wars between India and Pakistan have not loosened the grip of India on the Kashmir. It has actually weakened and divided Pakistan. Why should we waste our energies on Pakistan when we have other means within our reach? His so called means were to create conditions where central government would have no locus standi in running Kashmir government, even if the Hindu majority Jammu and Buddhist Laddakh opt out of the state.

He struck an Islamic agenda by constructing a mosque inside Jammu Secretariat. His argument was unambiguous “I'm a true Muslim; I say prayers five times a day. It is the right of every Muslim that he is allowed to pray five times a day. Hence it is necessary that there should be a mosque in the government office”. It was not only a communal demand but also highly impracticable step for a

government whose declared policy was to protect the rights of every religious segment and maintain peace. If you allow one section of your bureaucracy to leave office five times a day you cannot prevent other communities to do the same. With so many interruptions no office can function. It was natural that the demand to build a mosque in the Jammu Secretariat will be echoed at district and tehsil headquarters as well.

This demand was opposed by the Hindus of Jammu. They prevented the government to build the mosque. Gul Shah was enraged and he decided to turn this event into a major confrontation between Hindus and Muslims. Unfortunately a controversy was raging throughout India because of the reopening of Babri Mosque for the worship of Hindus. Some organizations in Kashmir valley were demonstrating against this and they decided to join the supporters of Gulam Mohammed Shah to wage a war against the minorities for the sake of Shah Masjid.

On 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1986 Gulam Mohammed Shah returned to Srinagar and stayed there only for a few days but during these days massive demonstrations in Srinagar on the controversy of Babri Masjid –Ram Janam Bhoomi were already taking place. Supporters of Shah floated a rumor that all the Masjids of Jammu are being demolished. On this occasion followers of Shah and separatist organization converged into a massive anti Hindu movement. It was declared that Islam is in danger and India and Hindus are responsible for the destruction of mosques all over the country. Pakistan Zindabad slogan rent the skies.

Surprisingly several other political and religious figures jumped in the fray, one of them was Mufti Mohammed Sayeed who was once the central home minister of India. He saw a chance to push Gulam Mohammed Shah out of power and take over the seat of the Chief Minister of Kashmir. Qazi Nisar was already fomenting hatred against Hindus, his agenda obviously was to oust Maulvi Farooq from the seat of Mir Vaiz of Kashmir by usurping control of hundred of mosques in Kashmir valley. Mir Vaiz Maulvi Farookh Ahmed was

not very active in this agitation and he did not like Gulam Mohammed Shah personally. Some elements in Central Government were also cool to him.

## **The dance of death and destruction**

So when hundreds of Muslim Government employees from Jammu rushed to Srinagar in hired trucks and buses it was easy to incite the emotions of the villagers along the National Highway. Fundamentalist organizations combined with the workers of both factions of National Conference joined in a looting spree of the helpless Hindu villagers in Anantnag District. Looters had a clear agenda to loot the properties of the Kashmiri Hindus which was later put on sale, to burn their houses and destroy the small temples in the villages. The temples were not only destroyed but the stone idols were removed from the temples and deliberately broken into pieces. People in the villages ran away without giving any resistance because they were neither prepared for this assault nor equipped to give any resistance to the armed gangs.

It was reported that some elderly Muslims managed to hide children and women of some of the Hindu neighbors but when the real intention of the organizers of the anti Hindu riots were known to them they had to change their attitude. When this writer met an elderly Muslim in one of these villages later on he told me that “Indeed it was my duty to save our Hindu brethren from any physical harm but situation have taken such a turn that it would not be possible for people like me to repeat such a gesture if such a situation arises”. What had happened meantime which forced him to change his attitude?

According to him while he was visiting Anantnag town for some purchases he heard two young men talking about him. One person was telling the other that this old man had given refuge to Hindus in the village. The other replied that it is necessary to teach a lesson to such people next time. The old gentleman said to me “tell me in such situation who will venture out to save your children knowing well

that my own children will be in the peril “. Nearly five hundred houses were looted, fifty of them were completely burned. A boycott was enforced in some of the villages. Wonpoh, Lukbhawan ,Fatehpur, Gautamnag, Salar, Akura were only a few of dozens of villages which were subject to humiliation loot and plunder.

Gulam Mohammed Shah at the end of his rule once said “In twenty months I have faced twenty problems. I had to accompany the President to Vaishno Devi. Priests applied tilak to him and garlanded him and when they came to receive me I told them that as a Muslim I don't believe in these ceremonies“. He had consistently refused to attend any function organized by Hindus in Jammu including the Dusshera ceremonies which was attended even by his Father-In-law Sheikh Abdullah and his Brother In law Dr Farookh Abdullah. But Gul Shah refused to attend such functions on the plea that he had been taught from his childhood that all such ceremonies are non-Islamic and should not be attended.

In spite of his Muslim agenda he could not save himself. Government of India could not retain him against the great public agitation in Jammu and large scale looting in Kashmir. He had to be dismissed. Although it was he who organized Kashmiri Muslim bureaucracy into a communal mindset he could not control it. Separatist organizations by this time had already cultivated their links with bureaucracy and the J & K police. In such a situation Farookh Abdullah's return to the power too was totally ineffective in dealing with the growing clout of the separatist organizations.

## **Immediate reasons**

Hindus have been leaving Kashmir valley right from 15 August 1947 when India became independent and was also partitioned. But the initial wave of migration was prompted not by any local factors or separatist movement but by Pakistani Tribal raid. Raiders were motivated by Zar and Zan of the Kashmiri Hindus. Large scale arson and looting resulted in thousands of families leaving their villages and seeking refuge in Srinagar city. Many of these Kashmiri Pandits

and Sikh families did not return to their homes and migrated to different cities in India.

Even after raiders supported by regular Pakistani Army were pushed back from the valley a trickle of migration continued. Economic discrimination and lack of job opportunities due to peculiar policies of the government forced many Kashmiri Pundit families to leave Kashmir year after year. Pakistan sponsored separatist movement in Kashmir was launched in Jammu and Kashmir way back in sixties.

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1966 Maqbool Butt of JKLF ambushed a security inspector Amar chand and killed him. He was arrested but he was able to escape from prison and crossed to Pakistan in 1968. He Hijacked an Indian Airlines Plane Ganga and force land in Lahore where it was torched. Maqbool sneaked back to India but was captured and was sentenced to death in Feb, 1984. But JKLF which he co-founded with Hashim Qureshi, another Kashmiri Youth was not truly a fundamentalist organization; it was more an organization with regional ambitions. Even after Aman-ullah Khan accepted the offer of ISI it remained a low key and manageable separatist movement. It took the route of terror against India as well as Hindus when Pakistan realized that JKLF under the leadership of Khan was echoing the dangerous slogan of the third option as well. Direct interference and penetration of organizational and administrative levels by ISI stooges pushed JKLF in the background and groups influenced by Jamait-e-Islami and other fundamental groups in Pakistan took major control of the anti-India movement. An ordinary worker of JLKF Yaseen malik broke away from the parent organization and formed his own outfit under the same name and joined hands with mainstream of terror politics.

After the rise of separatist movement in Kashmir assisted by the government agencies openly under the Chief Ministership of Gulam Mohhammed Shah, hundreds of families in Anantnag District bore the brunt of the first terror attack on peaceful Hindu population who had been residing in the rural areas along with the majority Muslim communities for centuries. The Plan to strike terror in the minds of

the rural population of Hindus and to drive them out of their homes, succeeding in forcing another panic migration of the Hindu families mostly from the Anantnag district which was the centre of first major terrorist attack, However the real cleansing operation began in late 1989. JKLF announced its terror campaign officially in July 1988 and a selective killing of the minority was started in the valley. This created a terror wave in Kashmiri Pundit all over the valley because more than the actual killings, threatening letters received in almost all parts of Srinagar city and other towns triggered a massive exodus. Jammu and Kashmir police had been penetrated by the terrorist elements and were either defunct or their loyalty was doubtful.

When the government could not ensure the protection of the helpless Pundits they saw no option but to leave their homes in haste by whatever means they could find. Some of them were in such a panic that they did not even lock their houses before leaving. The letter written by the former Governor Jagmohan to Rajiv Gandhi in 1992, after the exodus gives the pathetic picture of this cleansing operation. Why was it necessary to remove Governor Jagmohan from Kashmir? Local politicians like Farooq Abdullah feared that if Jagmohan remains in the saddle for longer period the political space for Sheikh Abdullah's family may altogether vanish. Separatists groups considered Jagmohan as the biggest obstacle in their plans and Pakistan raised a hue and cry about fictitious cruelties of Jagmohan on Kashmiri Muslims. He was projected as a tyrant. Even US pressured India to replace Jagmohan. As usual, India yielded and appeared too willing to disgrace the man it had decorated earlier.

### **Governor Jagmohan's Agony**

Excerpts of the letter written by the then Governor of Jammu Kashmir Hon'ble Jagmohan to the then Prime Minister of Union of India Sh. Rajiv Gandhi:-

“Whatever the vicissitudes of the Kashmiri Pundit's history and whatever unkind quirks their fate might have brought to them in the past, these all pale into insignificance in comparison to what is

happening to them at present. The grim tragedy is compounded by the equally grim irony that one of the most intelligent, subtle, versatile and proud community of the country is being virtually reduced to extinction in free India. It is suffering not under the fanatic zeal of medieval Sultan's like Sikander or under the tyrannical regime of Afghan Governors, but under the supposedly secular leaders like you, VP Singh and others who's unabashed search for personal and political power has symbolized calculated disregard of the Kashmiri displaced's current miserable plight and the terrible future that stares them in their eyes. And to fill their cup of pain and anguish there are bodies like 'committee for initiative on Kashmir' which are over anxious and over active to rub salt into their wounds and to label anyone who wants to stand by them in hour of distress as communal."

"In a soft, superficial, permissive and in many ways cruel India which has a tragic distinction of creating over one lakh refugees from its own flesh and blood and then casting them aside like master less cattle to fend for themselves on the busy and heartless avenues of soulless cities, chances for Kashmiri Pundit's to survive as a distinct community are next to nothing."

Even in this atmosphere of terror some families of Kashmiri Pundits remained in the valley both in Srinagar city as well as some villages and towns. 30% of such families when contacted said they would prefer to die in their homes rather than go somewhere else. 20% could not leave because of economic compulsion or lack of any help from others. But most of Kashmiri Pundits who did not leave immediately hoped that the terror wave will pass soon and things will improve again. Such families were initially given some protection and assurances by their neighbors as well. But unfortunately those hopes did not materialize.

In fact even those families which had received reassurance from their neighbors and their friends were disillusioned soon. Selective killing operations continued and were directed to those villages where sizeable number of Hindu families had refused to leave their villages

under the threat of terrorism. Some heinous massacres which took place in Nadimarg, Wandhama and Sangrama are a few examples. Even the Muslim neighbors who were cooperative before advised them to leave, “we are not sure that we are safe ourselves and therefore cannot guarantee your safety”. This was generally the argument advanced for this change of attitude and in many cases the anxiety for their own safety was not unfounded. But otherwise also individual killings also convinced the Hindu residents that they will not survive in this atmosphere.

### **Those who did not leave immediately**

Three examples will illustrate these phenomena. Sarvanand Kaul Premi was a teacher and a poet in Sofshali village of the Anantnag district. He remained in the village even after the exodus of the majority of Hindus because he believed that as a popular teacher and a respected poet of Kashmir nobody in his village will ever harm him. But on 28 April 1990 a group of people arrived at his house and after terrorizing the family members took away Premi. They promised that he will be returned in one piece but he and his son were found dead hanging upside down from a tree. Their foreheads were nailed, eyeballs crushed, whole body was burned with cigarette butts. Naturally, no Kashmiri Pundit in that village and adjoining village had the courage to stay back and die.

Another example is of a college teacher in a private degree college and his wife. He was popular not only in his students but also respected by the management. Principal of the college and the management had assured him that he will be provided all protection he needed and he need not leave the job and migrate to Jammu. His wife too was the principal in another private school run by a Hindu Trust. School was taken over by a local body having full support from a well known separatist outfit. It was renamed. The lady teacher was requested to stay on to run the school but she had to obey new rules and regulation about syllabus, the uniform and the morning prayers etc. The lady principal agreed to teach and administer the school. But

after a few months a sympathetic ex- student came to her and said “madam you should be careful, things are changing. I don't like the way some of my colleagues are behaving”. The lady principal was not very apprehensive since she had been assured of total protection by the new management.

One day as she was teaching in a classroom, something hissed passed her ear barely missing her head. Suddenly the whole class was alarmed by a shriek of a young student sitting in a front row. The student was profusely bleeding because he had been shot. The shot had come through the open window facing the street and was actually aimed for the Principal who fortunately escaped death because at that very moment she bent down to pick a piece of chalk and the bullet just passed by her, and hit the boy sitting in the front row. After this incident the teacher couple was in panic. A meeting was held in a room of the principal of the college in which friends and colleagues of the professor advised the couple to leave for safety right away.

Third example is of Ompura village in Badgam Tehsil, hardly a few kilometers from Srinagar city. A group of militants barged into the house of Dina Nath Ompuri and demanded to talk his son Bharat Bhushan. Bharat Bhushan was working In Sher- i -Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura as an ordinary technician. They took him away with a promise that he will be returned safe. But early next morning a village woman came to the house informing his father that his son is by the river side. He was there but hanging from a tree! Dead! Tortured with sticks and burned by cigarette butts. Around this time a nurse working in the same institute Sarla Bhatt was abducted on 19<sup>th</sup> august 1990 by terrorists, brutally raped and killed. Several such gruesome killings of young men and abduction of women took place during 1990.

## **How Many**

Most pathetic aspect of tragic story of Kashmiri Hindus is the confusion about number of displaced persons leaving Kashmir under the threat of terror. An organization on the basis of census conducted

of Kashmiri Pundit families in 1990, has estimated that 75343 families were living in Kashmir but by 1998, 74692 families migrated from the valley.

An estimate of the number of people residing before the migration and migrating out of Kashmir valley has been given as 3,67,289 and 3,64,130 respectively. It means only 5% families were still residing in Kashmir valley after 1998. Officially no census has been conducted about the number of the people who were forced out of the valley after 1989 and therefore various writers including the Government of Jammu and Kashmir and Government of India have been issuing different figures from 1,50,000 to over 4,00,000. Reason is that the number of Kashmiri Pundits was shown to be much less than what they actually were even before the wave of terrorism began in 1988.

It was a clear case of willful political fraud, because the ruling parties did not want to acknowledge that Kashmiri Pundits constituted about 10% of the population and deserved a bigger role in state's political and administrative affairs. Following figures will illustrate this confusion about different claims. It is said that in the census of 1941 Kashmiri Pundits were enumerated at 79,000 in the valley. If we factor the growth rate in Jammu and Kashmir, the number in the 90's would have been 1,60,000 to 1,70,000. If it is claimed that 95% of them had left, it will come to 1,50,000 people who had to migrate. But a report in 2010 of Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of Norway suggests that 2,50,000 people were displaced in Kashmir. A CIA report prepared on this subject states that about 3,00,000 were displaced from Kashmir. Majority of the displaced persons were provided shelter in camps in Jammu and adjoining towns, some of them were also accommodated at temporary camps in Delhi.

During first fifteen years of terrorism it has been reported that about 105 educational institutions belonging to Hindu communities were burnt down. Religious and cultural centers of Kashmiri Pundits including the temples destroyed or burnt were 103. 14,413 business establishments and shops belonging to the Hindu community were either looted or burned down. Before migration eleven hundred people in different cases were tortured and killed.

## **Can displaced Hindus Return to the valley**

Political parties as well as state and union Governments have been advising displaced persons to return to their homes in the valley and begin life afresh but fail to spell out the ways and means of such an initiative. Where those displaced persons are supposed to go whose houses no longer exist, have been damaged or set of fire or who were to force to sell on throwaway prices? It is said that there are many houses still undamaged and are in habitable conditions.

If displaced persons are persuaded to go back and to occupy them, can the governments, state or union ensure the safety and honour of the families which are willing to take the risk? Again, the families which have been forced to leave their hearth and homes in distress have either found some jobs in other states or are living in miserable conditions without any hope of proper livelihood or suitable home in Camps in Jammu or elsewhere. How are they supposed to live if uprooted again in Kashmir valley where they have become strangers in last two decades and where present generation of locals can hardly recognize them? They need jobs or any means of sustenance. Governments have been declaring from housetops that all basic demands have been met and many schemes have been sanctioned. Some of these schemes are already being implemented. But neither the displaced people are enthusiastic about these, nor are the hardcore fundamentalist happy. Tormented and the tormentors, both are unconvinced. This is because these so called policies, schemes or initiatives are not based on facts, lack of basic understanding of the situations and ground realities, are not coordinated with other related factors and are conceived without taking any cognizance of the requirements of the displaced persons. Many of these schemes appear simply eyewash.

It is said that peace has returned to the valley and the separatist and terrorist organizations are on the run. All the terrorist activities are under control and there is no threat to life or property now. It is time that Kashmiri Hindus must return to the valley .Government offered

to give one time compensation to those whose houses have been burned or destroyed so that they can build new ones. But in this so called normalcy, displaced persons do not consider it safe to live in their previous localities any longer, nor is it possible for the administration to provide security for small groups of families in far flung areas. It was in this context that government offered a comprehensive rehabilitation scheme for Kashmiri displaced persons in October 2011. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced in Jammu that the Government will be spending 1618.40 crore to facilitate the displaced persons to resettle in Kashmir valley. According to this scheme housing assistance was to be given for various categories of the houses from two lakhs to 7.5 lakhs depending whether the house was partially damage or fully. It was also declared that 3000 jobs will be created in Jammu and Kashmir for displaced youths. Third component of the scheme was that those Displaced Kashmiri Pundits who may return to the valley immediately will be accommodated in transit camps which will be built in different districts of Kashmir.

Like all previous initiatives of the state and central Governments this comprehensive rehabilitation scheme too did not generate any enthusiasm in the Kashmiri displaced persons for the simple reason that the Governments do not try to understand the real problem of the displaced persons. Kashmiri Pundits did not leave their homes under some imaginary fear, it was real. Forced expulsion under the threat of death and dishonor was not something the displaced persons imagined. It was also clear that it was done to pursue a cleansing operation which was helped or sponsored by some politicians and the government officials too. It was not possible to forget the role of a Gulshah who was the chief Minister of Kashmir with the help of central Government run by the Congress Party.

The displaced persons can hardly forget that many separatist leaders did play major role in fermenting anti-Hindu sentiments in the valley and that even now these separatist leaders and groups have been issuing threats and setting terms for return of Kashmiri Pundits to the

valley. Capacity of such leaders and groups to disrupt fragile peace in the valley is well known to every one including the Government of Kashmir as well as the Central Government. Expulsion of Kashmiri Pundits from valley destroying their houses and places of worship had a definite method and was part of a long term plan sponsored by local fundamentalist groups as well international forces of Jihad. In such a situation how can families of displaced persons feel reassured scattered all over the valley in isolated clusters of a dozen to a few dozen families .

According to a statement of the state government in Jammu and Kashmir assembly no Kashmiri displaced had come forward till March, 2012 to take advantage of the rehabilitation scheme announced by the Government . But there was some response for other two components of the scheme, namely creation of jobs for the displaced persons youths and the temporary shelters for those who may return to the valley for employment etc. 3000 jobs had were created for this purpose.” After going through the selection process in respect of 2148 candidates' appointments letters have been issued but only 1441 have joined.” About 500 transit shelters were built in Anantnag, Pulwama, Baramulla and Kupwara districts. But unfortunately living conditions of these transit camps has dissuaded the other displaced persons who may have been thinking of returning to the valley. The residents of these camps live isolated from rest of the population for fear of violence and cannot muster courage to contact even other Kashmiri Pundits official who may be working in the district headquarters. Most of them refuse to be photographed by journalist and request the visitors not to identify the camp in there writings. Fear is writ large on their faces. In such cases when separatist leaders like Ali Shah Geelani and others like him issue their oft repeated statement that if Kashmiri Pundits have to return to valley they should not reside in clusters. No exclusive clusters will be allowed. So even two years after the so called rehabilitation scheme was announced by the Government the displaced persons who returned live in fear and uncertain of their future.

Why are hardcore as well as moderate separatists leaders vehemently opposed to rehabilitating the returnees in clusters or in large groups, where they can recreate some sort of community life for themselves? Because if scattered all over the state a few thousand displaced persons who may return to the valley can have no community life, no power to assert their civic rights, no political importance and no capacity to resist as citizens any injustice inflicted by the administration or others. While in big clusters, colonies or townships of Kashmiri Pundit displaced persons may acquire cultural and social cohesiveness and may be able to exercise their political, civic, cultural and rights effectively. This exactly is what the separatist leaders and most valley based political groups do not want.

Even today Kashmiri Pundit as a community, in their eyes can dilute anti-India propaganda and therefore they want to deny the right of dissent to the displaced persons who may want to return.

The future of Kashmir is paramount question which weighs on the minds of Kashmiri displaced persons. No displaced, however he may wish to settle in the abode of his forefathers will compromise with any separatist ideology and strategy, nor will he compromise with any plan or conspiracy for disintegration of the State. Kashmiri displaced persons have been subjected to the tyranny of displacement because they have been perceived as loyal citizen of India. Displaced persons are proud to be so.

## **What is the way out ?**

Every Displaced wants to return to Kashmir but not at the cost which will render their return meaningless for them as community and make it a futile exercise for the Government of India. Home coming means being accepted with security and honour. It means that the displaced persons should have chance to rebuild their community which has passed through tremendous stress and strains during past twenty three years. The community has been forced to scatter in far flung areas which is threatening the very cultural roots for which the community was known in the past. So when we talk of return to our

ancestral land it does not mean acquiring a piece of land or an accommodation to live in. It even does not mean a few thousand government jobs only. The return to the valley means return to the roots, to cultural moorings and to a cohesive community life. Houses and jobs are only initial steps to that goal. So what should be our attitude towards the schemes announced by the government? We have to remember that the goal we have setup for us cannot be achieved in short time. We have to begin somewhere and government scheme however impracticable or flawed they may be or can be that first step, provided that both the State as well as the Central governments realize that luring the displaced persons to the valley without ensuring the security and cultural needs of the returnees is likely to cause more agony to the displaced persons and will prove only a futile exercise.

We must insist that if government wants that Kashmiri Displaced persons should return to the valley it must ensure that:-

- Displaced persons who opt to return should be provided land, housing grant and loans to develop their own settlements, large enough to be able to have community sense and social security, to redevelop their cultural and religious centers as well create infrastructure for overall development.
- Such large settlements may be developed near the main business and administrative centers like Srinagar or around the religious places which have been the cementing force for the community.
- Such settlements may be extensions of the present cities or towns and need not be exclusively populated by single religious groups only. Kashmiri Pundit community does not believe in religious exclusiveness and wish to live in brotherly relationship with Muslim community.
- It is the duty of governments to ensure that separatist elements and terror groups do not interfere with the affairs of the displaced returnees and do not issue threats or dictate terms about

settlements or political or social views of Kashmiri Pandits. It is more important that not only the governments but also other political parties in Kashmir should not be influenced by the threats or propaganda unleashed by the fundamentalists and be committed to the peace full and practical settlement of Kashmiri Displaced persons and all Hindus who may have migrated before 1989. A clear and definite space has to be created in Kashmir valley for all minorities to live in peace and honor.

### **For us to ponder**

- A. If we have to return back to our homes we have to build our community afresh in highly changed circumstances. It is therefore necessary to adjust our attitudes to changes that have taken place and are going to take place.
- B. A community can sustain itself only if it develops a sound economic base for its material well being, strong and vibrant cultural institutions, a broader and comprehensive consensus about its social, cultural and national goals. And last of all we must develop a practical intra-community and inter-community relationships.

It is important that the governments both in Srinagar and New Delhi come forward and participate in frank consultations and discussions with different groups of displaced people without any preconceived notions. A long term solution is not possible in making one sided decisions which do not take into consideration the ground realities prevailing in the State. Fear of uncertainty is also increased by the perpetual demands made by the political parties including the ruling combine to de-link the State of Jammu and Kashmir from rest of India. It is unfortunate that the central government is indirectly and perhaps inadvertently encouraging such elements through initiatives like Interlocutors etc. which only manage to increase sense of uncertainty in the State. It is a serious problem and indulging in unrealistic and futile intellectual experiments can make the problem even more complicated. A long lasting solution of a problem of such

magnitude and so many dimensions cannot be obtained by any executive order but by serious and honest dialogue between the real stakeholders.

It's also important that an awareness campaign be launched in rest of the country so that the people of India may clearly understand the dimensions and the implications of the issue relating to Jammu and Kashmir and lakhs of displaced people forced out of their homes.

While organizing this dialogue we believe that, besides displaced communities of Kashmir valley and Pak Occupied areas of Jammu and Kashmir State, all Indian citizens are also stakeholders, because Jammu and Kashmir is directly linked to the integrity of India as a nation and security of our country.

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