Identity Politics in Jammu and Kashmir

Edited by
Rekha Chowdhary

Vitasta

Identity Politics in Jammu and Kashmir

Edited by

Rekha Chowdhary

Vitasta Publishing Pvt. Ltd.
New Delhi

Published by
Renu Kaul Verma for
Vitasta Publishing Pvt. Ltd.
2/15, Ansari Road, Daryaganj,
New Delhi - 110 002

ISBN 978-81-89766-35-1

Cover Design by Manoj Kumar
Layout by Vitasta Publishing Pvt. Ltd.
Printed by Vits Press, New Delhi

Contents

Preface

With plethora of literature already available, another book dealing with 'Kashmir' raises the inevitable question: What is so special and different about this book?

Kashmir has attracted the attention of researchers mainly due to the conflict situation. The central point of this book also remains the conflict situation. However, the perspective is different. Acknowledging the complexity of the conflict having a convergence between the external and internal dimensions, it seeks to focus on the internal dimensions and locate the conflict in the identity politics of Kashmir. While much of available work on Kashmir deals with the external dimensions of conflict, the internal dimension of conflict remains largely ignored. By focussing on the identity politics of Kashmir, an attempt is made in this book to confront the intricacy of the 'Kashmir issue' and understand its multi-layered reality.

Seen from the internal perspective, the Kashmir issue assumes complexity due to two factors: first, there is an inner dynamism of the Kashmiri identity, which makes it imperative to go beyond the simplistic representation of the politics 'in' and 'of' Kashmir. Second, there is the context of the political divergence within the state which calls for an attention to the multiple identity politics.

The identity politics of Kashmir is predominant politics of the state of Jammu and Kashmir; hence much of the focus of the book is on this politics. However, since this identity politics does not represent all the political expressions within Jammu and Kashmir, the book also goes beyond the 'Kashmiri identity politics' and seeks to explore the other manifestations of political identities within the state. Interestingly though, much of the identity politics in the state is in

response to the Kashmiri identity politics and in one way or the other makes 'Kashmir' as its reference point. Seen from this perspective, the book seeking to locate the multiple identity politics in the state of Jammu and Kashmir reflects on the limits and varied challenges to the 'Kashmiri identity politics'.

The purpose of organizing this book is to question the singular representation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and give a reflection to the plurality of its society. However, in bringing to the focus the layered, overlapping and multiple identity politics, the intent is not to repudiate or trivialize the Kashmiri identity politics. On the contrary, while acknowledging the centrality of this politics, the endeavour is to locate it in the context of the complexity of the internal politics of the state.

The book does not boast of exhausting all the issues related to the identity politics of Jammu and Kashmir. It is a small beginning and therefore the editor is conscious of all the gaps. Since the book was planned for academic purpose, many of the issues could not be covered in the book due to the paucity of academic resource. However, the eminence of the contributors makes up for the gaps. I sincerely acknowledge my gratitude to all of them for contributing to this book.

Rekha Chowdhary

Contributors

Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal	Journalist, political activist, executive editor *Kashmir Times*.
Badri Raina	Retired professor of English, University of Delhi, writer and activist.
Balraj Puri	Journalist, activist and author. He has written exhaustively on Jammu and Kashmir.
Ershad Mahmud	Freelance columnist and researcher based in Islamabad, Pakistan. He specializes in contemporary India-Pakistan relations and Jammu and Kashmir affairs.
Gul Mohammad Wani	Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir.
Krishna Misri	Educationist of Kashmir, retired principal, Government College for Women, Maulana Azad Road, Srinagar.
Lalit Gupta	Art Historian, Senior Instructor, History of Arts, Institute of Music and Fine Arts, Jammu.
Mohammad Ishaq Khan	Historian, retired professor, University of Kashmir.
Muhammad Ashraf Wani	Professor of History, University of Kashmir
Neera Chandhoke	Professor of Political Science, University of Delhi.

Pramathesh Raina	Retired Brigadier of Indian Army; now a writer.
PS Verma	Retired Professor, Department of Political Science, Punjab University, Chandigarh.
Ravinder Jit Kaur	Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Kashmir.
Rekha Chowdhary	Professor of Political Science, University of Jammu.
Riyaz Punjabi	Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir. He has been on the faculty of CSSS, JNU, Delhi.
Shyam Kaul	Senior journalist and commentator on Kashmir affairs.
Sonam Chosjor	PhD student, Department of Political Science, University of Jammu.
Vibhuti Ubbott	Researcher in Gender Studies, Centre for Women's Studies, University of Jammu
Yoginder Sikand	Researcher, has done in-depth research on Indian Muslims and Inter-community relations in Jammu and Kashmir.

Introduction

Multiple Identity Politics in Jammu and Kashmir

Rekha Chowdhary

Despite the fact that Jammu and Kashmir has been constantly in a state of conflict for the past six decades, it is only during the present phase of conflict that the inner complexity of the state has come to the fore more sharply. The armed militancy advocating separatism that overtook the Valley in 1989 brought to focus the 'specificity' of the problem in the identity politics of Kashmir on the one hand and the plurality of the political responses on the other. Militancy impacting the whole of the state generated a process which resulted in sharpening of multiple identity politics. The peace process initiated during 2002–2003 sought to focus on the internal aspects of the problem through a process of dialogue which further augmented the process. It triggered claims and counter-claims activating not only the various identity politics but also bringing to the centre stage the question of representation, in a very big manner. To counter the possibility that only the dominant political voices get to be accommodated in the peace process, various claims started being made. All these claims, while reflecting on the need for building a consensus through an intra-state dialogue, pointed to the intricacy of the problem due to the diversity and political divergence within the state.

I

Diversity, Divergence and Identity Politics

Jammu and Kashmir is a highly diverse society. Diversities operate here at multiple levels depicting a complex picture of the society. To begin with, there is the religious diversity. The three major religions of South Asia—Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism—have their followers in this state. The Muslims, though concentrated in the Valley, have significant presence in Jammu as well as Ladakh regions. While the Hindus are concentrated in Jammu region, the Buddhists are concentrated in Ladakh.

The demographic pattern of the state, however, is quite intricate. Kashmir is the only region which can be described as homogenous in terms of its religious composition. But even here there has been a prominent presence of Kashmiri Pandits. A very miniscule minority, the Pandits have been quite influential, occupying important position in the society and having a very high visibility. It is only after their mass exodus from the Valley in early 1990s that the Valley has lost its diversity. The other two regions are quite diverse. Jammu is a Hindu majority region and yet it has a significant presence of Muslims. Except for the Jammu-Kathua belt which is predominantly Hindu, the rest of the region has a mixed population. In fact, the Poonch-Rajouri belt has a predominant population of Muslims. The most diverse part of the region is the Doda belt, which has a slender majority of Muslims, has almost an even population of Hindus. Ladakh, though a Buddhist majority region, is evenly divided between two districts of Leh and Kargil. While Leh is Buddhist dominated, Kargil is Muslim dominated.

Besides the religious diversities, there are regional, cultural, tribal, caste-based and linguistic diversities. The state is composed of three regions—Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. These three regions are not only culturally and socially diverse but are also diverse in terms of their geographical terrains and their historical roots. It was as late as

the middle of the 19th Century that the three regions came together to form the state. Region is an important marker of the identity in the state and cuts across the religious continuity. Muslims as well as Hindus of one region not only perceive themselves as different from their co-religionists of the other regions but also emphasize their regional identity.

Multiple Context of Deprivation and Neglect

Diversities are so placed in this state that a complex social and political environment is generated. Firstly, there is no clear-cut context of 'majority' and 'minority'. Majority in one context becomes minority in another. Even when groups assert their collective strength and numbers, they claim their status of marginalization. Hence, one can see a multiple context of 'minority perceptions' in the state. Despite being part of the largest religious group of the state, the Kashmiri Muslims perceive themselves as a minority in the context of the larger reality of India. Their perception of marginalization emanates from the context of the relationship of the state with India, especially the intrusion of the Centre in the politics of the state and disregard of the local political aspirations. The Hindus of Jammu and Buddhists of Ladakh, though majority in their respective regions, perceive themselves as minority not only in the context of the Muslim majority character of the state but also in the Kashmir-centric political and power context of the state. The sense of deprivation and minority lies deep in many other ways—the Kashmiri Pandits perceive their minority status vis-à-vis the Kashmiri Muslims, while the Muslims of Jammu perceive their deprivation both vis-à-vis the Hindus of Jammu as well as Muslims of Kashmir. Similar is the situation of the Muslims of Kargil who perceive their marginalization both in the immediate context of the Buddhist domination in Ladakh as well as the power centre in Kashmir.

What is important about these multiple minority perceptions is that the status of minority and deprivation is not merely defined by the demographic factor of religion but also from other categories.

Besides the religion, the factors of region, tribal or caste status as well as economic backwardness define the sense of minority. Regional backwardness and discrimination therefore remains the constant discourse both in Jammu as well as Ladakh regions. In this discourse, Kashmir is portrayed as the centre of power and other regions facing 'neglect' and 'deprivation'. The regional context of backwardness is countered by the sub-regional context of deprivation. Whether in the Kargil belt of Ladakh, or in the Doda or the Poonch-Rajouri belt of Jammu region, one can see this discourse of sub-regional deprivation and neglect. Apart from the regional and sub-regional perceptions of marginalization, there are other similar perceptions based upon the caste and tribal factors. Besides the Dalits and OBCs suffering from minority perceptions, there are Gujjars and Paharis who perceive themselves as marginalized groups. Other than these, there are varieties of displaced people due to the conflict situation (the 'refugees' from across the LoC or the International Border), the people living in the far-flung areas and those living near the LoC who perceive themselves as neglected and deprived.

Overlapping Identities

Secondly, there is an overlapping context of identities. Though a distinction on the basis of a particular category can be established, yet the social identities operate in a rather fluid manner. There is neither a singular nor a homogenous character of identities. Overlapping context makes each identity internally differentiated. How plural and complex can be the nature of identities, can be illustrated from the example of Jammu which is culturally the most diverse part of the state. The region is a cultural mosaic with Dogras, Punjabis, Pothwaris, Gujjars, Kishtwaris, Siraji, Baderwahi and lot of other social groupings. Here neither the Hindus nor the Muslims form a homogenous category and are differentiated on linguistic and cultural basis. At least four different distinctions of Muslims are made here—the Dogra Muslims, Paharis, Gujjars, and Kashmiris. The Dogra Muslims belong to the

Dogra belt of Jammu region sharing their cultural identity with the Dogra Hindus. The Paharis are mainly the Rajput Muslims of the hilly areas of Poonch and Rajouri belt, which is predominantly inhabited by another Muslim group, the Gujjars. The Muslims of the Doda belt are mainly Kashmiri speaking and are culturally closer to Muslims of Kashmir. Like the Muslims, the Hindus are similarly classified as Dogras, Punjabis, Paharis, Siraji, Baderwahi, Kishtwari, etc.

Multiple and Layered Identity Politics

The complex nature of diversities determines the nature of politics as well. To begin with, there is a divergence of political aspirations, which leads to 'multiple identity politics'. As one can see, apart from the Kashmiri identity politics that informs the political movement in Kashmir, there is a range of other kinds of identity politics that makes the internal politics of the state vibrant. While some of these political identities operate parallel to each other, many others are located in a mutually exclusive and contradictory relationship with each other.

However, not all identity politics operate within the same paradigm. There is a layered context with each layer having a different context of its expression. The first layer that encompasses mainly the Kashmiri identity politics makes claims that are rooted in the nationalistic or sub-nationalistic aspirations of the people. The second layer locates itself within the power structure of the state and operates at the regional and sub-regional levels. The third layer situates itself in the context of collective marginalization on the basis of tribal, caste and other categories.

Kashmiri Identity Politics

The Kashmiri identity politics is rooted in the pre-partition period. Its history can be traced to the period of 1930s when the first manifestations of the articulation and organization of the political responses of Kashmir could be seen. Between 1932 (when the All

Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was organized) and 1939 (when it was reorganized and rechristened as National Conference), the contours of the Kashmiri identity politics were quite clearly established. The religious context of identity that had asserted itself during the mass response of 1931 (and later the establishment of the Muslim Conference) had by this time transcended itself to the more progressive agenda of the economic transformation and popular control over political power. The regional marker of the Kashmiri identity thereafter became quite sharp as the Muslim leadership of Jammu disassociated itself from the Kashmiri politics and followed an altogether different direction. It was the distinct regional dimension of Kashmiri identity that led Sheikh Abdullah to reject the option of joining Pakistan as it did not have much to offer to Kashmiris except the idea of homeland for Muslims. Sheikh, in fact, saw much advantage in joining India with its democracy, its plurality and its secular character. With the possibility of negotiating an asymmetrical federal relation with the Centre, the 'Kashmiri nationalism' did not have much problem in getting harmonized within the Indian nation-state. In opting for India over Pakistan, not only Kashmiri political identity was being secured but the material benefits to the mass of the Kashmiris accrued through revolutionary land reforms were also being protected.

The 'nationalist' question underlying the Kashmiri identity politics that was resolved by construing a harmonious relationship between the Indian nationalism and Kashmiri nationalism via the special constitutional status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, was reframed in the post-1953 period when Sheikh Abdullah was arrested and the logic underlying the Article 370 was questioned from the Indian nationalist perspective—to begin with from the fold of the RSS and Jana Sangh and later on from the platform of all Indian 'nationalist' forces. It was during this period that Kashmiri identity politics acquired strong 'nationalist' tones. The Plebiscite Front that was formed in the mid-50s replaced the National Conference in

providing a 'political vision' to Kashmiris. For a prolonged period of 20 years, when the mass of Kashmiris were under the spell of the Plebiscite Front, the Kashmiri identity was defined through assertion of Kashmiri nationalism which in essence was based on the idea of contestation of India's claim over Kashmir.

Though the sub-text of the Kashmiri identity politics was changed in the post-1975 period when Sheikh Abdullah joined the power politics, contestation of Kashmir's relationship with India remained the reference point of Kashmiri identity. However, the basis of contestation was changed from the 'issue of accession' to the 'issue of autonomy'. The background to this issue was provided by the intrusive politics of the Centre and its 'integrationist' approach vis-à-vis the state.

The continued intrusion of the Centre in the politics of the state, especially after the death of Sheikh Abdullah, changed the reference point of the identity politics of Kashmir once more. In the wake of three incidents—dismissal of the legitimately elected government of Farooq Abdullah in 1984, imposition of NC-Congress alliance of 1986 and the 'rigged' elections of 1987—the identity politics changed its course back to the contestation of India's claim on Kashmir, albeit with the massive protests with *azadi* slogans on the one hand and armed militancy on the other.

These two contexts of the identity politics of Kashmir—contestation of India's claim over Kashmir and contestation of the Centre-State relationship—though forming two different moments in the identity politics of Kashmir, also reflect the range of expressions of the Kashmiri identity. Interestingly, the two manifestations of identity politics are not to be seen as two different poles, reflecting two opposite contexts of this politics. The two are so related that these can be seen to be operating in continuation with each other as well as operating in a situation of simultaneity. Much of the *azadi* politics for instance has emanated from and has substituted the politics of autonomy. However, at the same time, while the dominant expression of Kashmiri identity

politics remains *azadi* in the present phase of separatism and militancy, there is definitely a streak of 'autonomy' politics even in the present phase which is reflected not merely in the political position taken by the National Conference within the mainstream politics, but also in the 'common' perceptions of Kashmiris swayed by the *azadi* sentiment. Since much of the *azadi* sentiment is a reflection of the failure of the Indian state to accommodate the Kashmiri aspiration for autonomy, this sentiment is quite fuzzy and can acquire any meaning within the broad range of identity politics (with autonomy at the one end and *azadi* on the other).

The homogenized exterior of the identity politics of Kashmir is coloured by various internal tensions, one such tension being the relation between the political aspects of the identity and the religious question. This tension is inbuilt in the very context of the evolution of the Kashmiri identity and its identification with the Muslims of Kashmir. Though many Kashmiri Pandits identified themselves with the Kashmiri identity and even contributed to the process of broadening its contours and secularizing its agenda, yet they, as a group, remained more or less outside this identity. The externality of Kashmiri Pandits became clearly pronounced with the contestation of Indian claims on Kashmir in the post-1953 period. However, the identification of Kashmiri identity politics with only the Muslims of Kashmir did not necessarily take it to the communal direction. The predominant expression of the identity politics of Kashmir remained secular in character though there were always assertions from within to define it from the perspective of religion. These assertions remained at the fringes till the very recent times. It was with the outbreak of armed militancy that fundamentalist forces came to the forefront claiming the pan-Islamic nature of the Kashmiri movement. The involvement of the foreign jehadi militants gave a further boost to these claims. However, as these claims became more pronounced, the resistance and opposition to these also became more sharp and explicit, generating a debate about the nature of the movement and its pan-Islamic or its indigenous political character.

Beyond the Kashmiri Identity

Beyond the Kashmiri identity politics, there are various other manifestations of the identities and their politics in Jammu and Kashmir. However, much of the identity politics outside the Valley is generated either in response to the specificity of the Kashmiri identity politics or in response to the 'predominance' of Kashmir in the power politics of the state. It is in this vein that one can analyse the regional identity politics either of Jammu or of Ladakh.

Though much of the identity politics here revolves around the issues of power and inter-regional relations, the context of 'Kashmiri nationalism' also has an effect on the identity politics of these two regions. In many ways, the regional politics can be seen as a terrain for the interplay of competitive nationalisms. Much of regional assertion is manifested in a manner that reflects a pronounced distance from the Kashmiri political positions (not only those manifested through the politics of *azadi* but also through the politics of autonomy) on the one hand and a declared proximity to the Centre on the other. For instance, the Ladakh Buddhist Association's politics around demand for union territory for Ladakh is a classic case in this context. In Jammu as well, one can see the reflection of this tendency often in the opposition to Kashmiri demand for autonomy. Rather than seeing this demand in the context of Centre-State relations, it is visualized in the 'nationalist' context and portrayed as anti-national. In both the cases, one can see the reflection of emphatic assertion of Indian nationalism as a means for contestation of Kashmiri nationalism.

However, it is the political divergence within the state that gets reflected in the regional identity politics of Jammu and Ladakh. The sense of political alienation that underlies the dominant politics of Kashmir is not felt in the same manner in these two regions. The concerns of these regions as well as sub-regions are specific to the issues of power sharing within the state as well as within the region. Unlike the Kashmiri identity politics, political concerns here do not revolve around the state's relationship with India. On the contrary, these revolve around the 'Kashmir-centric' politics of the state and

the inter-regional and intra-regional relationships. Much of the regional politics (as also the sub-regional politics) has 'Kashmir' as its reference point.

Both in the regions of Jammu as well as in Ladakh, there is a political discourse that revolves around the issues related to regional 'deprivation and neglect'. 'Kashmir' in this discourse forms the 'centre of power' within the state and is perceived to be dominating not only the power structure of the state but also controlling the economic and material resources. It is on this basis that the popular perceptions have been articulated around the concept of regional imbalances and a number of agitations have been organized both in Jammu as well as in Ladakh.

The politics of regional discontent is multi-layered and encompasses three kinds of issues: first, the developmental issues, mainly those related to the distribution of material resources; second, the issues related to the power balances within the state and third, the larger political and ideological issues related to the political status of the state. The first set of issues emanate from the structural changes that the state went through immediately after the abolition of monarchy in 1947. Apart from the land reforms and the extension of educational opportunities for larger number of people, the state was exposed to substantial 'developmental' activities in the decade of fifties and sixties which resulted in the social and economic mobility, especially in Jammu and Srinagar, the two urban centres of the state. The impact of these changes could be seen in the political responses of both the entrenched as well as the newly emerging middle classes. The entrenched classes (especially the rich landed class which in the wake of radical land reforms had to suffer the loss of land without getting compensation like its counterparts in rest of India) being the most vocal ones sought to define their dispossession in regional terms. Projecting the loss of their privileges as 'Jammu's deprivation' under a 'Kashmir-centric' politics, they gave a direction to the regional politics based upon zero-sum relationship between the two regions. The

politics of regional divide was further boosted with the enlargement of the middle classes both in Jammu as well as in Kashmir. There was this peculiar context of the state's economy, which while being flushed with money, was simultaneously defined by its perpetual status of dependency with no source of employment other than government jobs. The artificially enlarged state sector therefore not only became the source of intense competition but also a terrain for regional contestation.

However, though development issues have often found central space in the political discourse of regional deprivation, it is actually the issues related to the power balance within the state that remain at the core of the regional identity politics. There is a deep-rooted feeling in Jammu region that there is lack of political parity between the two major regions of the state—while Kashmir is the dominant political partner, Jammu does not have enough share in power. The politics of the state has been so structured that power politics has been dominated by Kashmiri political elite—not only because of the fact that Kashmir region has a larger share in the State Legislative Assembly but also due to the fact that unlike the fragmented politics of Jammu region, Kashmir has been representing itself in a more or less homogenous manner. With one party monopolizing the politics of Kashmir, it has also been in a position to monopolize the politics of the state, leaving not much role for Jammu's political elite. This position has recently changed with the era of coalition politics. Fragmentation of Kashmiri political responses and its regional politics being divided between two parties People's Democratic Party and National Conference has brought Jammu for the first time in the power scenario. Since 2002, Jammu's political elite have been having a greater share in power politics of the state. This, however, rather than subsiding the feeling of regional deprivation, has further sharpened the demand for regional parity.

However, besides these two sets of issues underlying the regional politics, it is the ideological stance around the final status of the

state that provides emotional substance to the identity politics. In response to the emotive identity politics of Kashmir, an equally emotive response is generated and sought to be presented as Jammu's response representing its divergence from Kashmiri politics, which in this context gets linked with the opposition of the 'Kashmiri' identity politics. One could see a reflection of this kind of politics during the 1952 Praja Parishad agitation of Jammu in which the politics of autonomy was opposed under the demand of *ek vidhan, ek pradhan, ek nishaan.*

Though each of these issues can be singled out in the context of regional politics of deprivation and discrimination, yet very often these overlap with each other.

Besides the regional identity politics, there is also the sub-regional identity politics. In the backward parts of Jammu as well as Ladakh regions, there is a vibrant politics articulating both the political as well as economic marginalization at the subregional level. The demands like Doda Hill Valley Council and the Poonch-Rajouri Hill Council, for instance, are raised to highlight the neglect of these areas both at the hands of the dominant state structure of power as well as in the dominant discourse of the regional politics. The reference point of this politics is both the 'power centre of Kashmir' as well as 'the dominant regional elite'.

The regional and sub-regional sentiments, though unevenly articulated and expressed, pervade the length and breadth of Jammu and Ladakh and become the basis of political divergence and discontent.

The identity politics of Jammu and Kashmir, however, goes beyond the regional and sub-regional level and involves other categories defined by their context of marginalization. Tribe, caste and gender are three categories which characterise the context of marginalization in Jammu and Kashmir. However, rather than a consolidated politics of marginal groups, there is an inner competition which is oriented more towards the elite rather than the people at the

margins. One can get a glimpse of such competition among the elite of the marginal sections in the intensely pursued identity politics of Gujjars versus Paharis—the two tribal/caste groups of the backward areas of Poonch-Rajouri belts of Jammu region.

II

The book is a compilation of articles which focus on identities and politics in Jammu and Kashmir. The objective of the book is to map all identity politics of the state with a view to represent the inner complexities of society and politics of the state. Such complexities assume importance both in understanding the conflict situation of the state as well as in contextualizing the peace process. However, the importance of the book goes beyond the context of conflict and peace process. Its aim is to locate the politics and society of Jammu and Kashmir in the perspective of the plural and multicultural politics of the state.

Various articles in the book therefore highlight the plural realities of the state and focus on social diversities and political divergence. The central idea underlying the book is to question any kind of singular representation of the state and its people and draw attention to its social and political intricacies. The book, therefore, can be seen as an exploration into the multiple and overlapping levels of identity politics of the state using the categories of region, religion, gender, caste, tribe, language, etc. Though history remains the reference point, yet the book is located in the present day political processes, more importantly, the last two decades of conflict. An attempt is, therefore, made to deal with the conflict, its location in the present phase and its linkage with the multiple political assertions within the state. The idea is to focus on the complexity of what is known as 'Kashmir problem' by emphasizing the point that while conflict is Kashmir-centric, its resolution has to go beyond Kashmir. The multiple identity politics within the state provides a challenge to the peace process and therefore

it is important to locate the whole issue of conflict and its resolution in the internal politics of the state.

Spread over five sections, the book focuses on multiple expressions of identity politics in Jammu and Kashmir. The first section starts with an introduction of the plurality and multiple identity politics of the state and then goes on to focus on the Kashmiri identity politics. Defining the multicultural character of the state, the theme of Balraj Puri's chapter 'Identities, Ideologies and Politics' is the pronounced diversities and plural identities. Identities, Puri argues, overlap at certain points and cut across at other and therefore cannot be easily separated on the basis of a single type of identity. Cautioning against the tendencies towards division of the state on grounds of religion, he makes a strong case for a democratic, federal, plural and non-centralised system. Only such a system can resolve the tensions of plural identities and harmonize them in the politics of the state.

Riyaz Punjabi in his 'Kashmiri Identity in a Universe of Competing Identities' focuses on the inclusive nature of identities and their historical coexistence as well their accommodative capacity. The interplay of multiple identities that has been going on for centuries has enabled these identities to survive and coexist. The identities expressed in their cultural forms played progressive role—cemented social structure and mobilizing people against colonialism and imperialism. However, it is the transcendence of the identities from the cultural to political domain that he considers problematic.

Ethnic identities, argues Neera Chandhoke, are constructed through a series of processes. But once constructed they often take inflexible modes and provide a basis for sharpening the political discontent. In her article 'Of Social Contracts: The Case of Kashmir', Chandhoke explores the reasons for political discontent in Kashmir, specifically its violent expression during last two decades. While referring to the strong ethnic identity politics of Kashmir, she mainly locates the discontent in the repeated infringement of social contract by the central government and erosion of democratic space.

Elaborating the process of formation and assertion of Kashmiri identity Gul Mohd Wani in his 'The Labyrinth of Kashmiri identity' focuses on Kashmiri nationalism and locates its roots in the history of oppression and the particular context of formation of the political consciousness. What was particular about the emergence of national awareness for Kashmiris was that it was secular in nature and above the sectarian considerations. It is around this popular consciousness that Kashmiriyat as a concept came to be invoked.

The secular tradition of politics that faced a twin-challenge during the period of militancy from the forces of religious fundamentalism on the one hand and violence on the other forms a matter of concern and analysis for most of these articles dealing with Kashmiri identity. Ishaq Khan, however, deals with the issue more closely in his paper 'Kashmiri Identity during 1990–1994'. The politico-religious consciousness that became visible during the early period of militancy, argues Khan was much more a reflection of resentment against India rather than a manifestation of an emotion for establishment of a Muslim state. Failure of the Kashmiri leadership, led to a simmering discontent among the youth which got manifested in their response both to the fundamentalist forces as well as for their option for violence.

The last two papers of this section focus on the regional identity politics beyond Kashmir. In the first paper 'Identity Politics of Jammu Region', Rekha Chowdhary emphasizing on the point of diversity and political divergence within the state of Jammu and Kashmir focuses on the nature of regional identity politics of Jammu.

In the last paper of this section, 'Beyond Kashmir: Understanding Ladakh', Sonam Chosjar analyses the factors leading to the regional discontent of Ladakh and locates it in the overall backwardness of Ladakh, homogenized power politics of Kashmiri elite and neglect of the political aspirations of Ladakhis. While dealing with internal intricacies of the Identity politics of Ladakh, specifically the political divergence that has evolved over the time between the Buddhists and Muslims, Chosjar focuses on the dangerous implications of fragmentation of the Ladakhi identity on the religious lines.

The second section of the book deals with the issue of Religion, Identities and inter-community relations. The paper 'Religion, Conflict and Peace Building' makes a case against religion being the basis of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir even when religion came to be implicated specially during the period of militancy. Cultural linguistic and regional affiliations often cut across religious ones. This makes pluralism a reality of the state and secularism a living ethos.

Ashraf Wani in his 'Religion, Economy and Political Crisis in Kashmir', explores the question as to how the factors of religion and economy contributed to the phenomenon of militancy. Religion, argues Wani did not inspire militancy though it certainly fuelled it. Dealing with the economic factor, he mentions the challenge of growing aspirations of the educated middle class. The mass support to militancy is, therefore, attributed to the failure to deal with this challenge.

Highlighting diversity among Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir, Yogender Sikand, in his paper 'Hindu Muslim Relations in Jammu: Alternative ways of understanding', seeks to challenge the claims of radical Islamists to represent all the Muslims of the state. He explores the religious practices of common Muslims of Jammu region and focuses his attention on Sufi shrines which he terms as the most influential local religious institutions for promoting inter-community relations in the region.

The fact that the Sufi shrines are the cultural spaces of Jammu region where people belonging to different faiths have been coming together has also been highlighted by Lalit Gupta in his paper 'Jammu Muslims'. He argues that Muslims are integral to the social fabric of Jammu and till 1947 also formed a part of the ruling elite and important members of civil society.

The identity politics of a miniscule minority of Kashmir is the focus of Ravinder Jit Kaur's paper on 'Religion and Identity Politics of Sikhs in Kashmir'. Kaur analyses the context of diversity and the assertion of the Sikh identity through various phases of Kashmir's politics. She focuses on the cultural integration of Sikhs as well as

harmonious inter-community relations which remained almost intact even during the period of armed militancy.

The third section of the book focuses on the context of the mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley and the implication that this situation has for the state in general and the identity politics of the Kashmiri Pandits in particular. Shyam Kaul deals with the implications of the displacement on the day-to-day life and the identity of the Kashmiri Pandits. In his paper 'Kashmiri Pandits', he notes that wherever the Pandits live today, they live with their ethno-cultural identity and they assert it whenever necessary. Though there always remains the challenge as to what extent can this identity be maintained outside Kashmir. The return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley, he argues, is linked with the response of the Muslims of Kashmir without whose involvement nothing can be achieved.

P Raina in his paper 'Roots of Kashmiri Pundit Identity' emphasizes on the shared cultural legacy of the Kashmiri Pandits and the Kashmiri Muslims. He reminisces as to how a common Kashmiri, Hindu or a Muslim was brought up in a culture of mixed influences and how these mixed influences helped generate a culture that could boast of plural values and inclusive ethos. The exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits, Raina argues, is not only a loss of the Kashmiri Pandits but a loss of *Kashmiriyat per se*.

In his 'Conundrum of Identity', Badri Raina explores the new dialectic of identity expressions in Kashmir in the context of the conflict situation in Kashmir in general and the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in particular. Making a case against any systematic or homogenized project of identity, Badri Raina argues, that group identities even at their most cohesive consolidation are riven with internal debate and dissent. Rather than representing a singular form of identity, individual subjects are conglomerate of identities. Identities, as Raina argues are not given by birth but are constructed and are processes.

The fourth section of the book deals with the identity politics of women and Dalits. Krishna Misri in her paper 'Identity Politics

of Kashmiri Women', tracing the history of the position of women in Kashmir and their patriarchal location analyses the relative emancipation of women in the modern period, especially in the context of the mass political consciousness in Kashmir. In liberal space the Kashmiri women over the period became partners in the struggle for creating opportunities. Education, economic independence and political consciousness brought about a paradigmatic shift in their lives and social fabric. The emancipatory logic of Kashmir was interrupted which had its implications for women. The limited empowerment led to limited identities of women and have become sites for contesting political ideologies and violence.

Arguing in the same vein, Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal, in her paper 'Women's Identity and Politics in Jammu and Kashmir', states that gender identity plays a subservient role in the larger political identity based on caste, religious and regional divide. Hegemonic identities within communities encouraged by the political tendencies of the state, she argues, marginalize women and inhibit the process of carving out a space for the expression of their gender identity politics. Focusing on the situation of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, she highlights the victimization of women as well as the assertion of their agency.

Focussing on the recent participation of women during Amarnath agitation in Jammu region, Vibuti Ubbott, in her paper 'Gender Identity and Participation of Women in Amarnath Agitation', focuses on the role of religion in mobilizing women for political purposes .

In his paper 'Dalits in Jammu and Kashmir', PS Verma analyses the impact of the land reforms and other policy changes on the lives of Dalits. He finds only a considerable improvement in the condition of Dalits during last six decades but also emergence of a sizable class of privileged elites comprised of bureaucrats, military and police officials, professionals and politicians. However, the impact of change has not gone beyond a point. The bottom layer of economy of the state is still formed by the Dalits. Besides concentrating on the internal differentiation among the Dalits, the paper also deals

with the dynamics of Dalit politics. It highlights the consolidation of Dalit identity as well as its assertion through alliance with other underprivileged groups.

The last section of the book attempts to locate the diversity of Jammu and Kashmir beyond the Indian administered Kashmir and introduce to the readers the idea of its cultural continuity with the Pakistani-administered Kashmir. Ershad Mehmood in his paper 'Socio-Political Realities of Pakistan Administered Kashmir', looks into the social complexities and political dynamics of that part of Jammu and Kashmir. The uncertain political status of the region has its implications for its internal politics. Intervention by the federal government, tribal politics, and diaspora investments are some of the factors that make local politics and cultural realities complex.

Section I
Identities and Politics in Jammu and Kashmir

1

Identities, Ideologies and Politics

Balraj Puri

Most significant but least noticed aspect of Jammu and Kashmir state is its multi-plural character. Its diversities are far more pronounced than any other state of the country. Followers of most major religions such as Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians and Jains live here. A few Parsis also used to live in Srinagar. Ethnic and linguistic diversities too are numerous. Apart from English which is used in offices, Urdu, the formal official language, and Hindi, the national language, the constitution of the state recognizes six more languages, viz., Kashmiri, Dogri, Punjabi, Pahari, Gojri and Ladakhi. Number of dialects spoken in different parts of the state is far larger—the census lists over a hundred tongues spoken by the people. Aryan, pre-Aryan, Tibetan, Mongol, Gujjar and Dardic stocks along with their numerous admixtures inhabit the state.

Geographical diversity is even more staggering. Rising from sea level in the plains of Jammu, some of the peaks are as high as 25,000 feet in Ladakh.

"Some idea of the extremely diversified nature of the country (sic) may be formed (by the fact) that it includes an endless variety and

wealth of natural scenery, lands as widely different from one another and in physical characteristics as are poles from the tropical and inhabited by people of manifold races, languages and religions. In this respect the state is indeed unequalled by any other principality in the world."[1]

Another important fact about these diverse types of identities is that at places they overlap and at other places cut across one another. In fact, no single identity represents all urges of members of a community. Moreover, the degree of consciousness of a particular identity did not remain constant and changed from time to time.

Although the post-modern thought has recognized the crucial role of community identification in movements for political empowerment, share in economic cake and cultural assertion, my own interest in and knowledge of the identities developed during my role as an activist in Jammu and Kashmir before and after Independence. The questions I faced included the following:

- Why could not the National Conference movement against a Hindu Maharaja gather much support in Jammu which was a Muslim majority region and more populous than the Valley?
- Why did Hindu Sabha, the earliest incarnation of the BJP, in Jammu support the Maharaja for independence of the state while the predominantly Muslim leadership of the National Conference opted for India in 1947?
- And why the same Hindu leadership became integrationist Indian nationalists after Independence?
- Why Prem Nath Bazaz, who was the most vocal voice for Pakistan in 1947, did not get any Muslim support and almost all his followers belonged to his own Kashmiri Pandit community?
- Again why did Kashmiri Muslims, who almost *en bloc* welcomed Indian army and cooperated with it to throw out Pakistan sponsored raiders in 1947, turn anti-India in the 90s?
- Why did lavish central aid to Kashmir add to alienation of the people? Is there an underlying consistency in their apparently changing attitudes?

- Finally, why did the Kashmiri Muslim intelligentsia, who had accepted Marxism almost as their political religion and got most powerful support for their urges from the Communist Party from 1942 to 1953, disown them and looked to America and eventually Islamists for support?

The list of questions is, in no way, exhaustive.

We did read in our text books that according to Marx, ideology was super structure which always represented the interest of the dominant class. But nationalism, religion, race, tribe, caste and language have played a far more potent role in identity making. However, initial enthusiasts of modernization while rejecting Marxism went to the other extreme in believing that the forces of globalization would sweep away all local identities. Daniel Lerner, in his pioneering and monumental work on modernization in Muslim countries, concluded that "the symbols of race and rituals fade into irrelevance when they impede living desires for bread and enlightenment, represented by modernization".[2] According to another scholar of Muslim civilization, CE Von Grunebaum, "scholars seem agreed" that against the "infusion of a rationalist spirit of modernization, Islam is absolutely defenceless". He added "the Muslim will have to choose between Mecca and Mechanization".[3]

In a review of Grunebaum's book on Muslim civilization published in 1955, I had criticized the over-simplistic conclusion of the enthusiasts of modernization. I had argued that forces of modernization will equip Islam to defend itself better and mechanization (industrialization and development) will make access to Mecca to easier.

There was a similar facile presumption on the part of the Indian national elite that after the foreign British rule and its policy of divide and rule ended, and with the development process and mobility of the people for business and jobs from one part of the country to another, a powerful Indian identity would develop and all smaller identities like regional, linguistic, religious and caste would vanish. Though reverse

has happened, concept of uniform and homogenized nationalism still persists. Most of the problems that Jammu and Kashmir is faced with can be traced to the attempts to apply this concept to it, ignoring its multi-plural character.

I need not detain myself in discussing theoretical inadequacy of this concept of Indian nationalism or that of scholars of early phase of modernization who perceived it as mere rejection of tradition.

Even a cursory survey of vast literature in post-modern thought on identity formation, complex interplay of identities, their role in shaping socio-political events, multiple identities of an individual or a community would detract attention from the main theme of this paper which is mainly concerned with understanding major identities of Jammu and Kashmir. Empirical evidence of recent past is enough to underline the obvious need for their understanding and recognition and the damage that has been done for not doing so. In an age when diversities, pluralism and multiculturalism are being acclaimed as most celebrated values, the unique nature of the state in this respect should be its greatest strength; if their interests and urges can be reconciled.

The diversity of the state is, no way, a sum of chaotic and fragmented identities. They are capable of being adjusted to form a meaningful whole through appropriate institutional arrangement which should follow the logic of the nature of these diversities.

The most pronounced and known identities of the state are its three distinct geographical and racial entities namely, Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh. The Pir Panchal range, which at nine to 11,000 feet is the highest, divides Jammu and Kashmir while trans-Himalayan Ladakh is linked with the rest of the state through 11,530 feet high Zojila Pass. Racially, too, the three regions are distinct from one another. While Kashmir is predominantly inhabited by pre-Aryan and non-Aryan races, most of Jammu is inhabited by an Aryan race and Ladakh by Tibetan, Mongolian and Dardic races. Some scholars have, of late, asserted that the Kashmiris, too, belong to the Aryan

race. This could be accepted only when the corresponding theory that is being mooted in the rest of the country about the Indian origin of Aryans is conclusively proved.

The three regions could have grown to their full potential and contributed to evolving a harmonious and composite personality of the state only in a federal set-up. But the unitary constitution that was imposed on it has inherent provision for regional tensions. It is by now universally recognized that federalism promotes unity in diversity while unitary constitution threatens unity even in a less diverse society. Those who argue, as a third alternative, that in view of the distinctness of the three regions, they should not remain together miss its other implications. For if homogeneity is to be the basis of a constitutional and political unity, none of the regions, in particular Jammu and Ladakh, will remain intact. Moreover, Muslims, who comprise 30 per cent population and are in a majority in more than half of the area of Jammu region and half of population of Ladakh region, despite their ethnic differences with Kashmiri Muslims, are so far disinclined to break the unity of the only Muslim majority state of the country. To divide Jammu and Ladakh on religious basis would be a disaster for all the three regions, with wider repercussions beyond the boundaries of the state. A fuller discussion on the respective merits and demerits of trifurcation of the state versus its federalization would, again, be a digression from our attempt to understand the nature of its major identities. Suffice for our present purpose is the obvious fact that the three regions can progress only if there is harmony and friendship between them.

I

Kashmiri Identity

Kashmir Valley, for a variety of reasons, holds a pivotal position in the politics of the state. This is not solely because the rest of the world knows the state by this name and it has been represented, nationally

and internationally, by Kashmiri-speaking representatives, but also because Kashmiris have led all the governments in the state since Independence.

Some of the unique features of Kashmir which make Kashmiris conscious of their unique identity include its geography, history, language and civilizational heritage. Geographically, it has existed in splendid isolation, though internally well-connected. Kashmir is "the largest valley in the lap of the largest mountain in the world".[4] Ranging from 10,000 to 18,000 feet in height, they enclose a plain of around 1,900 square miles. The fabled beauty of Kashmir, which has been described as paradise on earth, further inspires deep love for the land in a closely linked society.

Over 89 per cent population of Kashmir speaks Kashmiri. Koshur—as the language is called by the Kashmiris—is one of the oldest spoken and literary languages of modern India. It has over 600-year old recorded literary heritage, if Lal Ded is considered as the earliest Kashmiri poetess. According to Sir George Grierson, the pioneering authority on Indian languages, Kashmiri is not of Sanskrit (the mother of all North Indian languages) but of Dardic origin.[5] Though some scholars challenged this view, *Encyclopedia Britannica* also states, "Kashmiri is neither Iranian nor Indo-Aryan". However, GMD Sufi, author of the monumental work, *Kashir*, concedes, "the magnitude of the change wrought on the Kashmiri language by Sanskrit."[6] He also acknowledges the influence of Persian on it.

Again, Kashmir has, according to Sir Aurel Stein, the translator of the celebrated book of history of Kashmir, *Rajatarangini*, "the distinction of being the only region of India which possesses an uninterrupted series of written record of its history."[7] Archaeological and scientific evidence has established its antiquity to 5,000 years which, in terms of its continuity, no other region of the subcontinent can claim.

The original Naga tribes resisted absorption in the Vedic civilization by the Aryans. According to legends, some Nagas

attended the religious seminars of Nagarjuna at Nalanda and impressed by the way he contradicted the Vedic doctrines, invited him to Kashmir, to get his support for their own resistance to those doctrines. Sufi believes that "on account of his connections with Nagas, he received the name of Nagarjuna."[8] It was under his leadership that the fourth council of Buddhism was held at Harvan near Srinagar, in AD 100 where Mahayana School of Buddhism was founded. It was its Kashmiri version as it incorporated the indigenous Tantrik philosophy of the Nagas.

Nagas and other indigenous tribes continued to live in Kashmir even after it had accepted Buddhism. Durlabh Vardhana, who ruled Kashmir from AD 627 to AD 663, is stated to be the son of a Naga.[9] Even after interaction with Vedic civilization, Abhinav Gupta, the eminent Kashmiri philosopher, claimed the primacy of *agamas*, the religious texts of ancient Kashmir dating between 1st and 6th Century, over the *Vedas*.[10] Vasugupta (9th Century) and Abhinav Gupta (10th Century) synthesized indigenous religious beliefs, Buddhism and Vedic thoughts into Kashmiri version of Shaivism called Trika philosophy. Lal Ded represented the acme of pre-Islamic heritage of Kashmir.

Her spiritual heir, Sheikh Nooruddin Noorani, popularly called Nund Rishi, carried it ahead as part of its Rishi order. Islamic beliefs and practices enjoyed as much autonomy within wider Islamic tradition as Kashmir did during Vedic and post-Vedic tradition of India. It "neither affected the independence of Kashmir, nor, at first, materially changed its cultural and political conditions."[11] Abdullah Yusuf Ali traces practice of relic worship—as in Hazratbal Shrine where Prophet's (PBUH) hair is preserved—to Buddhist influence.[12] Dr Arthur Neve observes, "Kashmiri Muslim has transferred reverence from Hindu stones to Muslim relics.[13] Muslim saints are worshipped like Hindu gods and godlings."[14] Thus by the time Kashmir was Islamized, Islam had been Kashmirized just as Buddhism and Vedic tradition had been Kashmirized. According to Sufi, Kashmir "has imbibed the best of Buddhism, the best of Hinduism and the best of Islam."[15]

The process of Kashmirization of faiths is equally applicable to all admixtures of races that immigrated to Kashmir from ancient times. According to the renowned Kashmiri scholar and historian Mohammad Din Fauq, "even the people who came from Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan and Tukestan as late as six and seven hundred years ago were so mixed with Kashmiri Muslims in culture, civilization and matrimonial relations that "all non-Kashmiri traces are completely absent from their life."[16]

Kashmiri personality, shaped by various factors discussed above, is reflected in and is reinforced by popular concept of history which divides it into Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri periods. Kashmiris date back their period of slavery to 1586 when Akbar annexed Kashmir to the Mughal empire, followed by Afghan rule, Sikh rule and Dogra rule. They own the entire period before that (of which only 250 years are of rule by Kashmiri Muslim kings) with pride.

Kashmir thus had been a consensual society in which various beliefs and ethnic identities used to merge but which could not be merged or easily adjusted in a larger identity. There was always almost wholesale conversion, from indigenous beliefs and practices to Buddhism, to Shaivism and to Islam with microscopic minorities, who too shared common beliefs and practices; so that no tradition of dissent could develop. It is this character of Kashmiri identity which is responsible for and is reflected through its monumental achievements of the past and its current dilemmas. It was only such society which could be monolithized and regimented by a popular leader like Sheikh Abdullah which proved its greatest strength and weakness.

It was due to the strength of this identity that Kashmiri Muslims did not submerge in the mainstream of Muslim politics before the Partition of India as demanded by Jinnah. It received far better appreciation and support from Gandhi and Nehru. The Communist Party of India further stimulated intensity of Kashmiri identity and provided ideological expression to it. From 1942 to 1953, when in clash with Indian nationalism, the party championed all particularistic movements and supported their right of self-determination. Encouraging Kashmiri

Muslims towards more autonomy from India and supporting their right to decide whether to join Indian Union or Pakistan or form an independent state of their own,[17] the party opposed "interference of Anglo-American, Indian and Pakistan reactionaries."[18]

When Americans offered to provide a similar outlet to urges of Kashmiri nationalism, which the CPI had raised to fever pitch, Sheikh Abdullah, its supreme leader had no inhibition in accepting their support. However, the CPI which had described the Sheikh as "the tallest of the state's peoples leaders who led the biggest, the toughest and most glorious struggle" in 1947[19] condemned him in 1953 for "falling in line with the American intrigues and coming out for an independent Kashmir."[20]

Later, Pakistan and Islamist ideology championed the same urge for Kashmiri identity. In this context, the role of Muslim aspect of Kashmiri identity cannot be ignored. Kashmiri Muslims have, in fact, never been quite isolated from the universal identity of Muslim *umma*. But often there was no clash between the claims of the two identities. Of course, whichever identity was perceived to be threatened became more pronounced. While different ideological articulations represented urges of Kashmiri identity at different times, its excessive obsession with a single homogenous identity, which was perceived to be under perpetual threat, found expression in less and less liberal, tolerant and democratic ideology.

In the process, Kashmiri identity got fractured with the migration in the early 90s of Kashmiri Pandit minority which, though barely four per cent of Kashmiri population, is a highly talented community. Moreover, as the intensity of Kashmiri nationalism became sharper, it got isolated from non-Kashmiri Muslim population which outnumbers it. Before the Partition, Jammu was the most populous region of the state. The Cease-fire Line on 1 January 1949 was so drawn as to keep the non-Kashmiri Muslim area outside the Indian part of the state as the people in Pakistan-administered parts of the state do not speak Kashmiri and belong to the same ethnic stock as Jammu.

According to the last census in 1981 (as there was no census in 1991 and full figures of 2001 are yet not available), the Kashmir region comprises 52.36 per cent of the total population of the state. Out of it, over four per cent are non-Muslims while over 10 per cent, living on the periphery of the valley, are non-Kashmiris, like Gujjars and Paharis who linguistically belong to the family of languages spoken in Jammu. Even if sectarian groups like the Shi'as and other small ethnic pockets are discounted, most Kashmiri Muslims are a minority in the state. Not to speak of Hindus, non-Kashmiri Muslims constitute 44 per cent of the Muslim population of the state. As the divide between Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus—both Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri—continues to widen, they can only hope to reach to non-Kashmiri Muslims. But for that they have to somewhat shed their Kashmiri character. This poses gravest ever threat to the Kashmiri identity which was evolved over 5,000 years.

II

Jammu Identity

Jammu is, in many respects, a contrast with Kashmir. It is not geographically closed and compact. Far from being a melting pot of faiths and races as Kashmir is, it is a mosaic. It did receive new faiths and ethnic communities but far from merging them into a single entity as Kashmir did, it accommodated them as distinct separate identities. Thus it is neither religiously nor ethnically homogenous.

Though references to some of the communities, rivers and places are found in pre-Vedic, Vedic and Puranic literatures, its past record is still in the form of legends, folk-lore and oral history and awaits a modern Kalhan to put it in the form of a systemized historiography.

According to the last census, Jammu's population is 45 per cent of the state which lives in an area of 26,000 square miles. Starting from almost sea level on the right side of the river Ravi, it gradually rises to 10,000–11,000 feet high Pir Panchal range with Shivalik range

in between. On the south and west, it borders Indian and Pakistani Punjab. Unlike Kashmir, most parts of it are mountainous and sub-mountainous. Its plural society, almost entirely of Aryan stock, includes 66 per cent Hindus, 30 per cent Muslims and six per cent Sikhs. Three out of six erstwhile districts adjoining Kashmir region namely Rajouri, Poonch and Doda have Muslim majority.[21] Unlike Kashmiri Hindus who are all Brahmins, caste system is as pronounced in Hindus of Jammu as elsewhere in the country. Scheduled Castes, who constitute 16.17 per cent population of the region, comprise 31 per cent of the Hindu population. Scheduled Castes who were the main beneficiaries of the radical land reforms of early 50s are economically, socially and politically a more viable and distinct entity in the region than in many other parts of the country. Though languages of the region belong to a single family of languages, Dogri, Gojri, Pahari and Punjabi are the principal languages of the region besides a number of other dialects. They are spoken by all the religious communities except Gojri, the language of the Gujjars who are all Muslims.

Boundaries of the Jammu region have undergone many changes. Its numerous principalities had their alignments with neighbouring Kingdoms. Kashmir had come under direct Mughal rule somewhat earlier, during Akbar's rule. Jammu, on the other hand, is not known to have come under any outside direct rule except for brief periods. It was, for instance, directly annexed to Mughal empire by Emperor Mohammad Shah from 1733 to 1745 and to the Sikh empire by Maharaja Ranjit Singh from 1808 to 1820. During the latter period, however, due to a powerful resistance movement by legendary hero Mian Deedo, the Lahore Durbar's writ remained ineffective till Gulab Singh was installed as Raja of Jammu by Ranjit Singh under the latter's overall lordship which ended in 1846 after the defeat of his descendants by the British and Gulab Singh's agreement with the latter under the Amritsar Treaty.

Being the gateway to the state, political stirring in the rest of the country passed through Jammu before being transmitted to the Kashmir Valley and beyond. The modern political movement in

the state was initiated by Mahatma Budh Singh who resigned from what was then a very prestigious post of Deputy Commissioner to form Kisan Mazdoor Party in 1925, 14 years before the National Conference was formed in Kashmir. Dogra Sabha was the first non-official organization formed in 1905 by Lala Hans Raj. In 1931, when Budh Singh became its president it acquired a political character. He declared it to be the Congress Party of the state.

However, when the National Conference of Kashmir was recognized by the Congress as its counterpart in the state, the secular progressive, movement in Jammu was split. Though Budh Singh continued to be in the National Conference, many Hindu and Muslim leaders of Jammu found it difficult to sell the battle cry of Kashmir National Conference, viz., 'Dogra Raj Murdabad' to Dogra-dominated Jammu region. The Hindu Maha Sabha and Muslim Conference were quick to own them respectively.

In 1947, both of them supported the urge for independence of the state being nursed by the Maharaja with whom they shared a common regional and ethnic identity. Kashmir's Muslims led by Sheikh Abdullah tilted towards accession to India whose leadership recognized the right of the people to decide the future of the state against the Muslim League stands which recognized Maharaja's right to do so.

After Independence when political power was transferred from the Jammu-based ruler to Kashmir-based leadership and Muslim leaders of Jammu either migrated or were deported to Pakistan, the same Hindu leadership became votaries of uniform nationalism and started movements against state autonomy and regional autonomy. It was a clash between the urges of regional identity of Kashmir and Jammu and their divergent outlets that was the major cause of all the subsequent complications in the politics of the state.

The BJP, and its earlier incarnation Bharatiya Jana Sangh, was the main national party which sought to champion the urges of regional identity of Jammu through its ideology of uniform and ultra-nationalism. It was ideologically handicapped in recognizing the urges of the Muslims and other ethnic identities of the region.

Hence, though vocal, its activities only succeeded in dividing the region and its electoral base remained confined to two or three urban assembly constituencies.

Understanding and recognition of ethnic identities within Jammu as also their basic urges and interests are a pre-requisite of building a viable and healthy regional identity. The major identities of Jammu are as follows:

Dogra Identity

Dogri-speaking community, called Dogras, is numerically, culturally and politically the dominant community in Jammu region; which constitutes around 54 per cent of its population. The Dogras are mainly concentrated around the Shivalik range in the districts of Jammu, Udhampur and Kathua as also parts of Doda and Rajouri.

Duggar is believed to be one of the first stages of Aryan settlement in their eastward march from Taxila to Gangetic Plains. The reference to *Tugriya* in Vedic literature may possibly be to *Duggriya* or dweller of Duggar. Down the historical chronicles, more direct references can be traced to Dogras in *Nilamata Purana* and *Rajatarangini*. Various ethnic and religious waves from the neighbouring regions affected the evolution of the community. Its affinity with the Bhakti movement is indicated by a number of saints who preached in the areas and whose *samadhis* are places of worship.

Though Duggar region was never ruled by a Muslim King, it was a hospitable region for the Muslims who migrated to it due to political turmoil in Punjab and to the Sufi saints. Peer Budhan Shah a contemporary of Guru Nanak and Roshan Shah Wali are among the Sufi saints who are buried in and around Jammu city. Their shrines are revered by Hindu and Muslim devotees alike.

A secular festival observed with religious fervour is at Jhiri, 12 miles from Jammu city, is on the martyrdom of Bawa Jitto who immolated himself more than 500 years ago in protest against refusal of the landlord to honour his commitment of giving him three-fourth

of the produce of land that he had tilled. While Jitto symbolized egalitarian aspiration of Dogra peasantry, Mian Deedo symbolized patriotic spirit of Dogras as he led the revolt against outside rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Though warrior tradition of Dogras has been widely mentioned, little notice has been taken of their abiding contribution to the art and cultural heritage of the country. "It has even been accorded a place of honour in the artistic heritage of the word."[22] In present times, the heritage was represented by outstanding artists like KL Sehgal, Alla Rakha, Malika Pukhraj, Shiv Kumar Sharma.

In sum, Dogra identity represented a secular cultural mainstream of Jammu's regional identity.[23]

Gujjar Identity

In terms of numbers and uniqueness, Gujjars are the most important Muslim community, next to Kashmiri Muslims. Although majority of them live in Jammu region, some live in the periphery of Kashmir Valley. Mobile tribes among them go to Kashmir during seasonal migration. Some of them even visit parts of Ladakh for seasonal grazing of their cattle. They are thus a link between the three regions of the state.

While Grierson, KM Munshi and RD Bhandkar refer to their arrival in India in AD 6th Century,[24] others like Ali Hasan Chauhan[25] insist that they were original inhabitants of India. They built big empires in many parts of India including Rajasthan, Gujarat and Punjab. Some of them were anointed as Kshatriyas or Rajputs for their war-like qualities, others who continued their pastoral pursuits settled in the hills of Jammu and Kashmir and were converted to Islam *en masse*. They trace their ancestry to tribes mentioned in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and to the community of Nand and Yashoda who brought up Lord Krishna. They also claim kings like Prithvi Raj Chauhan and Kanishka as belonging to their community. All the historical facts and myths put together make them one of the proudest communities of India. They feel emotionally, at least, as close to the non-Muslim Gujjars in the rest of the country as to their co-religionists in the state.

Even after getting Scheduled Tribe status, they are still campaigning for the facilities to which STs are entitled in the rest of the country-like reservation of Assembly seats.

Pahari Identity

Pahari community lives on both sides of the LoC and on Indian side in Rajouri and Poonch districts of Jammu region and Kupwara district and parts of Baramulla and Anantnag districts of Kashmir region.

Though it has equally proud heritage, the urge for identity became sharper after the Gujjars acquired a Scheduled Tribe status. The people speaking dialects of Poonchi, Mirpuri and Muzaffarabadi have come together under the umbrella term Pahari to claim a Schedule Tribe status and share in political and economic power. Paharis include followers of Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism.

As a result of new renaissance movement of Paharis, a standardised language is being evolved in which written literature is being written. Historically, the Pahari-speaking areas lie on the route through which most of the cultural currents from the rest of the country passed *en route* to Kashmir. It has still a proud record (which is being revived) of its past heroes; political leaders, Buddhist monks, Hindu saints, Muslim Sufis, warriors and literary personalities.

An outstanding classical poet Mohammad Bakhash and his epic Saif-ul-Malook, though written in Potwari are being owned by Paharis and Gujjars as their languages bear a close resemblance to Potwari.

Other Identities

There are pockets of smaller identities in many parts of the region, including a pastoral tribe of Hindus called Gaddis. In Doda district, due to confluence of Dogra, Kashmiri and Himachali (of Chamba

district) culture, a number of local dialects are spoken, including Kishtwari, Bhaderwahi, Pogli and Siraji. Of course, speakers of one dialect can understand those of others.

The whole region can acquire a composite personality and play a creative role in the affairs of the state if it is empowered and, in turn, it concedes fullest devolution of power to districts, blocks and panchayats; not only as a measure of ensuring participatory democracy but also to protect smaller identities at every level.

III

Ladakhi Identity

The experience of Ladakh is no different in its relation with Kashmir valley. Though smallest in numbers, it is geographically, ethnically and culturally a unique part of not only of the state but also of India. Situated beyond the Himalayas, it has a little less than two lakh population which inhabits an area of 96,000 square km against 19,000 sq km of Kashmir and 26,000 sq km of Jammu, i.e., more than double than that of the rest of the state. It has 800 miles of common border with China—350 miles with Tibet and 450 miles with Sinkiang. Separated from the rest of the country and the world by Zojila Pass, 11,530 feet above sea level, the region is further sub-divided by Fatu La, 13,400 feet above sea level and was divided into two districts of Leh and Kargil in 1979. Buddhists are a little more than half of the population of the region (52 per cent) and mainly concentrated in Leh district while the rest are Muslims (48 per cent), who mostly belong to the Shi'a sect and live in Kargil district. Ladakhi—also called Bodhi, Balti, Dardi and Shina—is the main language spoken in the region. Speakers of one language can understand other languages easily.

Ladakh was on the celebrated ancient Silk Route. As an entry point of the trade between India, Central Asia, and Tibet for centuries, it was confluence of diverse cultures. But geographical position has

helped it to preserve its ancient culture and ways of life almost intact. Even now it remains land locked between November and June as Srinagar-Ladakh and Manali-Ladakh highways, which connect Ladakh with other parts of the country, remain closed due to high snow.

Indus, on the banks of which earliest civilization of the subcontinent began, forms a major lifeline of Ladakh region. It springs from the holy lakes of Mansarover and Rakas on the South Western slopes of Kailash mountains, at an estimated height of 16,000 feet. After passing through Leh, it is joined, 40 km below, by the Zanskar river. Dras river joins it near Kargil and the confluence of the Shyok river and Nobra river (which originates from Karakoram mountains) with Indus takes place east of Skardu. At Makpouri-Shang Rong, the Indus cuts the Deosai chain of mountains by a sudden sweep southwards where it receives the waters of Gilgit river.

Leh

Leh district has an estimated population of 92,000 spread over an area of 44,000 sq kms and is by far the largest district of the state; almost equal to the combined areas of Jammu and Kashmir regions. From Leh, road leads to Siachin—the highest battlefield of the world—by crossing the Ladakh range at Khardung La (over 16,000 ft high). As a Buddhist majority district, there are many world famous *gompas* (monasteries) situated on its high points on the mountains which are places of worship, isolated meditation and religious instructions.

Mahayana Buddhism, born in Kashmir, spread to Tibet, China and Japan via Ladakh. Buddhists owe their allegiance to Lamas who have their own discipline and hierarchical order. They used to go to Tibet for religious training which was called their spiritual home. But after the Communist takeover of Tibet and the flight of Dalai Lama along with his many followers from there, Lhasa has lost its status as a source of their religious and spiritual inspiration and a centre of their emotional affinity. As the main show piece of living Buddhism in India, Leh has acquired fresh importance as a centre of

Buddhist pilgrimage, art and architecture and destination of tourists and scholars. There are some religious places of Muslims also in Leh who constitute 15 per cent of the district's population; principal among them are Jama Masjid and Masjid Shah-e-Hamdan. Leh is governed by an Autonomous Hill Development Council in local matters. But unrest is visible due to what its leaders call Srinagar-based administration on other matters.

Kargil

Kargil district of Ladakh covers an area of 14,036 sq km with a population 81,000. Majority of its population is Muslims of Shi'a sect with Buddhist pockets in Zanskar tehsil and Shargol block. There is a small pocket of Shina-speaking Sunni Muslims at Drass but linguistically and ethnically they are closer to the rest of Kargil than to Kashmir. They have linguistic affinity with Shina-speaking people across the Line of Control.

Kargil lies at an attitude ranging from 8000 ft to 14000 ft above the sea level. Drass on Kargil-Srinagar highway is the second coldest place in the world where the temperature drops to minus 60 degrees. Kargilites are descendants of Mangol, Dard and Mon races. It, too, remained under the cultural domination of Tibet till it came under the influence of Islam in 14th Century. Kargil town, the headquarters of the district, is equidistant from Skardoo, Srinagar and Leh.

Ulema play an important part in the socio-religious life of the Shi'as of Kargil. Though their religion contains a distinct local cultural content, some of the Ulema have gone to Iran for theological training after they experienced an impact of the Khomeini revolution.

On account of the plight of Shi'as in Pakistan and of the people of Gilgit and Baltistan across the Line of Control, which are directly ruled by Pakistan with no voting rights for the National Assembly and without a local legislature, the people in Kargil never responded to the appeal of Pakistan. During the war of 1999, Pakistan infiltrators did not get any support from the local population. The war brought

Kargil on the tourist map of the country as it publicized battle posts like Drass, Batalik, Kaksar and Turtok and aroused the curiosity of the tourists. However, it is not enough to compensate Kargil's political and economic neglect. The people of Kargil are still administered politically and administratively from the far off Srinagar in summer and Jammu in winter as they do not have even the limited powers of even the district council.

Conclusion

Split Regional Personalities

Though Ladakh is the most distinct region of the state, in terms of race, culture, geography and physical features of the people, after its split in two districts, it has lost its regional personality as there is no common administrative, political and constitutional link between the two districts. Constitutionally and administratively the split region is a part of Kashmir division; though politically under the state government under a Kashmiri leadership. Leh's direct air link with Jammu and Delhi and similar proposed links of Kargil are widening the distance between the two district headquarters and the people living there.

Communal tensions were completely unknown in Ladakh some decades ago. But the vacuum created by weakening of Ladakhi identity is tending to be filled up by rise of communal consciousness; which might have wider repercussions.

Similar phenomenon is emerging in other two regions of the state where non-recognition of regional identities—constitutionally and politically—encourages communal identities. In fact, regional, ethnic and linguistic identities are most effective cementing force between different religious communities. Existence of religious communities cannot be denied and where needed may be recognized for specific purposes. But no political and administrative system can be built up on the basis of religious communities; nor would it satisfy all human urges. There is, thus, no justification for artificially projecting them by suppressing other aspects of human identity.

This study, it is hoped, would provide a vital clue to the understanding of the political developments before and after the independence of the country.

However, an obvious conclusion may be drawn viz., the way different types of identities cut across one another; they cannot be easily separated on the basis of a single type of identity. Identities overlap and thus each cuts across the other.

The above analysis in the context of multiple identities of Jammu and Kashmir has a reflection on the political arrangements. The present centralized system has proved to be a source of tension. As experience the world over has demonstrated, a democratic, federal, plural and non-centralized system alone can ensure harmony among diverse identities of the state and make them a source of real strength and model for other states of the country.

2

Kashmiri Identity in a Universe of Competing Identities

Riyaz Punjabi

Introduction

The identity formation in South and South-East Asian societies has followed a uniform pattern. These identities which evolved over a large span of time may be located in specific geographical and environmental spaces. They have the characteristics of a common language spoken by groups of people with a history of observing common traditions, rites and rituals. All these components have endowed these identities with an aura of primordiality. The prominent aspect of these identities has been their inclusiveness in absorbing new and sometimes even foreign influences of religions and cultures resulting in adding layer after layer in the formation of their distinct personalities. The incorporation of shared historical and cultural values shaped these identities in a mould in which the religious edges of the identity remained subdued or even dormant. It is interesting to note that the capacity of absorption and accommodation of these identities resulted in two diametrically opposite consequences. At one level, these identities remained humane and inclusive, incorporating and reflecting broader human and universal values. However, at the

other level, they acquired the traits of particularism which in the later stages of building multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nation states posed many problems. It is equally important to point out that as long as these identities remained and thrived in the domain of culture, they cemented the social structures. However, once they moved into the political domain, their fragmentary characteristics came to the fore. It is ironical that in one domain these identities reflected equanimity but in the other they appeared to be fractious.

Historically, identities were utilized to mobilize groups of people against colonialism and imperialism and they played a vital role in galvanizing people to achieve independence. Since the mobilizations took place on the assertions of a shared cultural identity, the inclusiveness of the identity became more prominent. However, in post-independence era of South and South-East Asian societies, the role and status of identities became a contentious issue in view of the dilution of their inclusiveness due to varied factors. The process of politicization of identities resulting in the sharp contest between identities has been threatening the social cohesion of societies. The contest has been assuming the forms of ethnic confrontation. Moreover, the fragmentation of traditional identities due to economic reasons has sharpened the schismatic edges of the identities.

Evolution of Kashmir Identity

Kashmir identity and its relationship with other identities, national, regional and sub-regional, has to be related to the foregoing formulations. Kashmir has the distinction of a recorded history of 5,000 years. Its identity, which has been described by scholars as *Kashmiriyat*, evolved through a process of acculturation absorbing diverse cultural elements and accommodating different religious practices ranging from Buddhism, Shaivism, Jainism, and Islam. These faiths, during varied periods of time, incorporated local customs and traditions within their respective folds, providing *Kashmiriyat* with distinct, inclusive and plural characteristics. The Muslim saints and scholars from Central

Asia who visited Kashmir to preach Islam permitted the observance of local traditions and rituals which nourished the cultural dimension of Kashmir identity. This special concession equally enabled Kashmir identity to maintain its historical continuity. Kashmir has its distinct variety of Rishi order which is similar to the universal Sufi order of Islam, but has its roots within Kashmir.[1] The special geographic location of Kashmir and a common language which bound the people of diverse faiths together and the social structure provided *Kashmiriyat* with a distinct form, content and personality. The accommodation and tolerance remained the hallmarks of Kashmir identity.[2] On the basis of this specific identity, the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir distinguished themselves from their co-religionists in rest of India. In some respects, their religious practices also differed from those being observed by their co-religionists in other parts of the country. This identity thrived within the domain of culture and provided a vital source for social cohesion. It withstood foreign invasions, the oppressive subjugation of foreign rulers and tyranny of a feudal autocratic socio-political order. The historical evidence supports the contention that religious bigotry and fanaticism was always rejected by the society. The promoters of the trends of religious fanaticism had to face social ridicule and even expulsion from the society.

Kashmir as a Political Entity

Kashmir came under the suzerainty of ruler of Jammu, Maharaja Gulab Singh, as a consequence of Treaty of Amritsar signed in March 1846 between the British government and Maharaja Gulab Singh in lieu of the latter's services to the British against the Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Gulab Singh became the first ruler of a new political entity named as Jammu and Kashmir. Gulab Singh later annexed Ladakh and added some more principalities from Jammu to the new state. The state, as a consequence of these developments, was formed with three distinct geographical regions, incorporating multiple distinct, cultural and linguistic identities. However, for historical,

geographical and political reasons, Kashmir identity remained the prominent and predominant identity of the state. The autocratic rulers devised their peculiar mechanisms of integrating the state. The relocating of feudal structures and creating a new exploitative system to suit their own interests aside, a new system of *Darbar* Move was introduced after creating two capitals for the state. Thus, Srinagar in Kashmir was designated the summer capital and Jammu was to be the winter capital of the state. The government offices would move to two different capitals in a calendar year which involved the movement of government officials and their families. Gradually, the other segments of population including businessmen, petty traders and labourers also became the part of this biannual movement of people from one region to another. This encouraged greater social interaction between the groups of people in the state.

Political Assertion

Kashmir identity moved from cultural to political domain during different phases of history. Thus, the first political assertion of Kashmir identity was reflected in a protest led by Kashmiri Pandits who raised the slogan of 'Kashmir for Kashmiris'. Kashmiri Pandits were well-educated in comparison to other sections of society at that point of time. Due to various historical and social reasons, they had been taking to government jobs which, by and large, remained their main occupation. They projected the grievance of discrimination in government jobs alleging that outsiders were being preferred in the jobs in the state over their heads. The protest resulted in the promulgation of 'State Subject Rules' which barred outsiders and those who were not inhabitants of the state by heredity from employment. They were also deprived from purchasing immovable property in the state. It is interesting to note that the last ruler of the state, Maharaja Hari Singh, insisted on the eve of state's accession to the Union of India that these rules should be retained and observed in Jammu and Kashmir state. Thus, the status of permanent residents of the state and their special

privileges provided under these rules have been guaranteed under the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir state.

Kashmir identity again moved to the political domain in 1931 with the formation of Muslim Conference party which raised the issue of employment of educated Kashmiri Muslims in different government departments. It may be pointed out that by the year 1930, many Kashmiri Muslims had returned to Kashmir after completing their higher education in Aligarh Muslim University and from some well-known colleges of Lahore, now in Pakistan. Initially, the Kashmiri political leadership invoked Kashmir identity towards the mobilization and articulation of grievances of educated unemployed Kashmiri Muslims.[3] However, within three years, the political leadership declared that the objective of their movement was to articulate grievances and restoration of rights of all the oppressed people belonging to different faiths and located in all the regions of the state.

As the political movement against the autocratic ruler gained momentum and people from different regions and faiths extended their support to the struggle, it appeared that Kashmiri identity had become a bridge between different identities in Jammu and Kashmir state. Be that as it may, Kashmir identity, with all its inclusive and plural characteristics, became an instrument of political mobilization in the state. This has been the case with other ethno-cultural identities which were invoked towards political mobilizations against imperialism in South and South-East Asia.[4] The interaction of political leadership in the state with the Indian national leadership, who were struggling against British imperialism, broadened their vision which resulted in the transformation of Muslim Conference into National Conference in 1939. This transformation reinvigorated the historical and cultural personality of Kashmir identity, which conveniently made it a part of larger national identity.[5] Moreover, Sheikh Abdullah used Kashmir identity as a bridge and projected its inclusive and pluralistic characteristics in converting Muslim Conference into National Conference.

It is important to note that during the initial phase of its political assertion, Kashmir identity did not have to compete with any other identity in the state in spite of the fact that the political leadership of the state often referred to 'Dogra' rule in their fight against the feudal-autocratic rule of the Jammu-based maharaja. The identification of the ruling dynasty with a specific group of people did not automatically lead to the assertion of the identity of that specific group at that point in the history of Jammu and Kashmir.

Challenges

Kashmir identity has undergone many a vicissitude during the last about more than 75 years since 1931 when it became an instrument of mobilization against feudal-autocratic rule in the state. It has also faced many challenges from different quarters at different points of time. These challenges have resulted in blunting and sharpening its varied edges.[6] The very first challenge came with the differences and ultimately the parting of ways between Mirwaiz Maulvi Yusuf Shah and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah representing two different political schools of thought. Ironically, Mirwaiz represented the brand of Islam specific to Kashmir. Even his designation, which literally means the Chief Preacher, is an anathema to Islam. In this contest of same identity with two dimensions, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his party National Conference emerged victorious as the inheritors of a composite, inclusive and progressive Kashmir identity.

The second big challenge was posed with the massacre of Muslims in Jammu and their exodus to Pakistan in large numbers on the eve of partition in 1947. However, Kashmir identity asserted its historical role and Kashmir remained completely free from any communal violence when the entire subcontinent was caught in the flames of communal passions. The National Conference Party, led by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, fought against Two-Nation Theory which gave birth to Pakistan, with the instrument of *Kashmiriyat*. He successfully mobilized and organized his people against communalism and religious

fanaticism. The small group within National Conference which perceived Kashmir identity in a religious perspective was marginalized and its thesis was rejected on the issue of state's accession with the Union of India.

In the post Independence era, Kashmir identity got a fillip with the land reforms and cancellation of debts which brought about great structural changes. The State Constituent Assembly, with *Kashmiriyat* as its basic ideology, embarked on a task of reordering social, political and economic structures of the state. The Assembly paid attention to other linguistic and cultural identities in the state as well. However, in this pleasant emerging social scenario, Kashmir identity was placed under great strain when a Jammu-based communal grouping, Parija Parishad, supported by All India Jana Sangh (now Bhartiya Janata Party or BJP), started a violent agitation for the abrogation of Special Status granted to the state of Jammu and Kashmir under the Constitution of India. The agitation evoked sharp reaction from the leader of National Conference, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. In the turn of events, which are beyond the scope of this brief study, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's government was dismissed in August 1953 and he was subsequently arrested.

The National Conference Party had repeatedly claimed to be the guardian of *Kashmiriyat* and its leader, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, had been a great votary of Kashmir identity. He had invoked Kashmir identity to challenge the might of maharaja in 1931. He had equally made Kashmir identity a shield to defend the state from the flames of communalism that had engulfed the northern part of the country on the eve of Independence. He lad fought the Two Nation theory with the instrument of Kashmir identity. However, in the new and unexpected circumstances of his estrangement with the Union, he invoked the same very identity in leading a separatist movement in the state.[7] He later claimed that his quarrel with the Union of India was not on the fact of accession but on the quantum of autonomy of the state with the Union.

Fragmentation of Identity

In the face of the political developments in Jammu and Kashmir state post 1953, Kashmir identity found two different patrons and two guardians. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his faction of National Conference invoked political dimension of Kashmir identity for mobilization and assertion. However, this faction of National Conference strictly guarded against sharpening the religious edge of the identity. The other faction of National Conference, led by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, who succeeded Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and emerged his arch rival, equally claimed the guardianship of Kashmir identity. In this contest of guardianship, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad concentrated on sharpening the cultural edge of the identity. He received overwhelming support from intellectuals, writers, poets and artists in his initiatives of a cultural renaissance in the state. He paid special attention in reviving and promoting other linguistic identities particularly the Dogri language pre-dominantly spoken in Jammu. The dispensation led by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad embarked on massive developmental projects in the state. The impact of new initiatives launched by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad resulted in the dilution of the political edge of Kashmir identity to a major extent. However, over a period of time, strains started appearing on the overall personality of the identity. The secessionist political phase in the state created a space for sharpening its religious edge. Ironically, the emergence and assertion of other linguistic and cultural identities, in absence of a mechanism of a harmonious relationship, accelerated the process of sharpening the religious edges of the identities leading occasionally to communal mobilization and ultimately polarization at the social levels in the state on religious lines.

By the time Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah returned back to the mainstream after Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah Accord of 1975, the process of fragmentation of Kashmir identity had started. The emergence of new identities, viz., bureaucratic, professional and commercial, added new dimensions to Kashmir identity. It is

the normal social process in other societies too. However, in case of Kashmir Identity, due to many local, national and international factors, the mechanisms to reconcile the new components did not emerge which led to the denudation rather than enrichment process of Kashmir identity. In the meanwhile, as pointed out earlier, a gradual process of sharpening the religious edge of the Identity set in. In fact, a new political group, Jamaat-e-Islami, whose earlier activities were confined to the field of education, emerged asserting the Muslim edge of Kashmir identity.

It needs to be recognized that in presence of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the religious edge of Kashmir identity, although in a slow process of assertion, by and large remained dormant. It became evident when the Shariah Bill introduced by Jamaat-e-Islami leaders in the state Legislative Assembly was rejected in 1997. The bill was aimed at abolishing the institution of adoption, deemed to be un-Islamic, from the state. The bill equally was aimed at removing another anomaly, based on Islamic law, in which a daughter, who preferred to stay with her parents after marriage, was entitled to a share in property equivalent to that of a son. Ironically, in the post-Sheikh Abdullah phase of Kashmir history, National Conference party which claimed to be the guardian of Kashmir identity, for various reasons remained indifferent to the processes of chipping of the cultural components of the identity. There were other factors equally responsible for this phenomenon. Kashmiri language, which provided a succor to the survival and nourishment of *Kashmiriyat*, was being abandoned gradually by the people in Kashmir. Kashmiri language survived as a medium of verbal expression and communication. However, it could neither become the medium of instruction in educational institutions nor could it acquire the status of a medium of official communications. Kashmiri has been recognized as a national language under Schedule VIII of the Indian Constitution and has been declared as a regional language under Schedule VI of the State Constitution. In the last 57 years, the efforts to make it a medium of instruction even at

the primary level, have met with little success. There is not a single newspaper being published in Kashmiri due to the lack of readership in the Kashmir valley. Urdu and English languages are gradually replacing Kashmiri as a language of communication at personal and domestic levels. The new generation is gradually losing proficiency in Kashmiri language, hence resulting in losing their moorings which are rooted in historical traditions, as well as social and cultural values of Kashmir. It is axiomatic that language is the carrier and constitutes the mode of transmitting traditions and cultural values from one to the other generation. The exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir valley has further added to the process of denudation of Kashmir identity. Identities are placed in the sub-conscious mind of the people and it is not easy to erase or egress them out. However, these identities need constant nourishment and oxygen. In the absence of both these ingredients, Kashmir identity is getting reduced to a mere territorial identity. This territoriality is dispossessing it from its ideological and cultural content which has been the hallmark of *Kashmiriyat*.

New Universe of Identities

The massive development projects initiated and implemented by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, coupled with the revival and promotion of other regional languages and the respective cultural traditions located in diverse locales of the state, resulting in heightening the levels of expectation of people living in different regions of the state. In this back ground, a centralized planning system of development complicated the methods of articulation and expression of these identities. This is the corollary of such systems elsewhere also.

In the post-Independence period, when a separate constitution was being drawn up for the internal governance, and also regulating the constitutional relations between the Union and the State, the State Constituent Assembly, in recognition to the linguistic diversity of the state recognized the seven regional languages of the state. In fact, these languages represent different regional and cultural identities in the

state. The special social engineering measures and welfare programs aimed at the amelioration of their conditions has gradually led to their political and cultural assertion. This has equally led to an expanding universe of identities in the state. The host of linguistic and cultural identities represents a rich diversity in the state of Jammu and Kashmir which in many ways represent the sub-continental diversity and plurality. In a healthy competition, these identities have the potential of complementing and enriching each other. But they have equally the potency of creating dissensions and friction.

The process of assertion of other regional or sub-regional identities in Jammu and Kashmir, although gradual, did not take off on a positive note. These identities asserted themselves with the claims of disparities in the allocation of resources towards their economic development. These claims of regional disparities, although rejected by independent Commissions of Inquiry set up by the state governments from time to time, pushed these identities towards exclusive enclaves. This exclusivity at times appears to threaten the very cohesion and integrity of state.

In retrospect, the process of drift and exclusion of identities in Jammu and Kashmir started from Ladakh region of the state. Ladakh represents an identity of shared history, cultural values and traditions. Initially, the people of Ladakh genuinely suffered neglect and had to face hardships. Moreover, the agrarian reforms of 1951 hit the Buddhist monasteries hard since they had to surrender lands allotted to them by feudal rulers. Historically, the kings and rulers had been granting lands to temples and monasteries for their maintenance. This practice led to the emergence of institutions of Agrahara and Dharmarths. The Brahmins and monks sustained themselves and their families on these institutions. The agrarian reforms adversely impacted a large number of Buddhist monasteries along with the monks who sustained themselves on these very institutions. This resulted in a perception of persecution which was aggravated with the practices of neglect and apathy on the part of successive state governments towards

Ladakh. The harsh climatic conditions added to the frustration of the people of the region. The cumulative impact of these factors should have resulted in the political assertion of a Ladakhi identity shared by the people living in different parts of Ladakh region. However, on the contrary, a process of ethno-religious assertion emerged with a major section of Ladakhi Buddhists in Leh district of Ladakh demanding a separate state with the status of a Union territory. Thus, Ladakhi identity was truncated into Buddhist and Shia Muslim identities.

The identities in Jammu region share common ethno- cultural and even to some extent linguistic traditions. Moreover, they share the regional contiguity. The Jammu identity suffered a severe jolt when parts of the territory which shared the ethno-cultural-linguistic traditions with this region particularly Muzaffarabad and Poonch, were occupied by Pakistan and are now known as Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The exodus of Muslims from Jammu and the replication of this process on the part of Hindus and Sikhs from Muzzafarabad, Poonch, Bagh and other areas now under the occupation of Pakistan, put the Jammu identity under considerable strain and introduced distortions to it. In the post- independence era, the ethno-linguistic identities in Jammu region made significant strides to which intellectuals, writers, authors and poets made considerable contributions. However, Jammu identity, unlike Kashmir identity, could not acquire a cohesive form. It remains divided, at the cultural levels, among Dogri, Pahari and Gujjari identities. The Jammu identity was projected as a cohesive territorial identity occasionally in the context of regional disparity to which other sub-regional identities also extended their support. It is interesting to note that Jammu identity never posed any serious challenge to the cohesion of the Jammu and Kashmir state. It was pointed out by the Gajendragadkar Commission, which was appointed by the Jammu and Kashmir government in 1965 looking into the issue of regional imbalances, that it did not find any popular support for regional autonomy in Jammu. It is equally important to note that fringe political groups espousing the demand of a separate Jammu state have failed to enlist any popular support for their demand.

These positive trends in the Jammu region have created an ambience for other identities to thrive and assert, apart from consolidating the cohesion and solidarity of the state.

Interplay of Identities

It needs to be recognized that Jammu and Kashmir is a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic state. The interplay of these identities has been going on for centuries enabling these identities to survive and coexist. These identities have forged inter-community relations of the people living in different regions of the state. The fragmentation of traditional and historical identities due to the processes of modernity which has added new components to the traditional identities has further cemented the inter-community relations in the state. The new identities based on administrative services, professions, commercial relations and ever expanding technological field have made the plural identities more inclusive and accommodating. This process is blocking the political initiatives to sharpen the religious or parochial edges of the identities. The growing phenomenon of urbanization, which can pose problems at the other levels, is equally diluting the traditional contours of the identities in the state.

In their original domain of culture, the identities in the state are thriving. The Dogri language which had been recognized under the Schedule VI of the state constitution has now been recognized under the Schedule VIII of the Indian Constitution. The state government made significant contribution to the initiatives in obtaining this recognition. The formation of two Hill Development Councils in Ladakh with considerable autonomy in developmental and financial spheres has opened the avenues to satisfy the identity urges of the people of the region. It is equally important to note that processes of political socialization have further forged the bonds of identities. That during the periods of political mobilizations, the fractious potential of identities is invoked by sharpening the fluid edges of the identities,

the plurality of these identities has remained the hallmark in Jamm and Kashmir. The political socialization processes in the state ha blunted the divisive edges of the identities.

In conclusion, the identities in Jammu and Kashmir have survive many a challenge and they have coexisted over centuries. Howeve the new challenge remains to reallocate them mainly in their cultur domain. This formulation does not deny them a space in the politic domain to play a healthy and progressive role. Thus, the politic dimension of identities cannot be wished away provided they do no assume divisive political roles. In this perspective, a big challenge ha been before Kashmir identity due to ongoing turmoil and violenc The accommodative and assimilative edges of Kashmir identity hav been reduced to a state of dormancy. In case these edges are not restored to their original health, the identity issues are bound to explode in larger conflict, engulfing major parts of South Asia.

3

Of Social Contracts: The Case of Kashmir[1]

Neera Chandhoke

How to find a form of association which will defend the person and goods of each member with the collective force of all, and under which each individual, while uniting himself with the others, obeys no one but himself, and remains as free as before? This is the fundamental problem to which the social contract holds the solution.

Jean Jacques Rousseau[2]

Introduction: Addressing a Debate

Militants in the Kashmir Valley speak of setting up a state of their own or of secession from the Republic of India. Secession, however, is by no means a clear-cut issue. For one, secession in the name of the self-determination of a people begs the question of who exactly these people are; whether an intangible entity called the 'people' does not contain significant minorities which does not subscribe to the goal of secession. There are other disturbing considerations that need to be taken into account, for instance that any 'disputed' territory is likely to be inhabited by a plurality of groups, each of which think of the world in ways that are different to the manner in which the group

demanding secession does so. As Schofield suggests in the context of the Kashmir problem, there is no collective will [*re* secession] among the heterogeneous inhabitants of Jammu and Kashmir.

This recognition may have some bearing on our understanding of ethnic conflict. Ethnic conflict, it is generally agreed, is about the terms on which a group seeks to redefine its own territorial boundaries at the expense of the larger territorial unit of which it has till then formed a part. What we need to recognize is that internal minorities within the group, which demands a 'state of its own', as well as other ethnic groups within the territory are also parties to the conflict inasmuch as their interests are affected, both by the conflict and by the outcome.[3] What about the rights of these groups/minorities to determine their own future? No self-respecting democrat can afford to overlook this aspect; not these days when minority rights have been foregrounded in much of the literature on democracy.[4]

But this would mean that ethnic conflict is not only about one group, which united by a sense of political grievance, confronts the state through the use of violence. It is also about the ways in which the leaders of the group seek to monopolize power in a given territory. To put it differently, ethnic conflict is basically about who will control power in a defined area through the employment of violence, not only against the state, but also against dissenting groups.

Therefore, the proposition that every ethnic group should have a 'state of its own' on demand may not prove a sensible option, for the partition of a territory into two or more sovereign units has seldom resolved the issue of minority rights within the 'new' state. Consider the case of Pakistan; within a short span of 24 years after the formation of the state, erstwhile East Pakistan seceded to form Bangladesh on the ground that the Bengali-speaking community was discriminated against by West Pakistan. Second, we need to accept that partitions are seldom clean affairs; not only do they imprint bitter and unerasable memories on the collective consciousness, but also leave legacies of unresolved boundary disputes and of other matters half done. India and Pakistan have on three occasions gone to war over disputed boundaries and on other instances come close to war.

Consequently, scholars have worked hard and worked overtime to draft solutions to a rather intractable problem. If we were to sum up the proposals on offer, they boil down to essentially two sets of recommendations: power sharing and protection of cultural rights.[5] In effect, the only way to prevent secession is to practice the politics of redistribution and recognition regarding ethnic groups. Both these suggestions inevitably dilute, if not dissolve, images of homogenous and centralized nation states, which is not necessarily a bad thing considering that the nation state has proved one of history's most serious mistakes. More importantly, mechanisms of power sharing, regional autonomy, linguistic and religious rights, representation of group interests in decision-making bodies, and decentralization will, it is hoped, reduce the intensity of separatist demands and neutralize challenges. Institutionalization of power sharing may well reassure secessionist or potential secessionists that their interests will be represented and their vital concerns protected within the existing political community.[6] Of course, the danger is that monopoly over resources within the territory may also fuel separatist ambitions. But on balance, the federal argument is infinitely preferable to the one that opposes federal arrangements. "Whereas decentralization may provide cultural minorities with greater resources to engage in collective action...," writes Hechter, "at the same time, it may erode the demand for sovereignty."[7]

Arguably, the idea that federalism and cultural rights may serve to resolve problems of separatism presumes that the predicament was created in the first place by the centralization of power and denial or suppression of cultural rights. Get rid of these distortions, suggest theorists, and you will have resolved the crisis. The problem is that armed conflict in Kashmir—1989 to date—does not perfectly fit into the theoretical slot constituted by this genre of reasoning. For one, the Muslim community in Kashmir—sections of which lead militancy in the

Valley—was, at least in theory, granted control over power in the state. Second, the Indian Constitution specifically guarantees the educational and cultural rights of minorities vide articles 29 and 30. Third, the state has undergone the kind of economic and social transformation which the rest of the country has reason to envy, for a massive programme of land reforms ushered in an epoch of relative equality. For instance, poverty figures in the state are extremely low compared to Bihar, UP, and Orissa. In sum, central government's policies towards Jammu and Kashmir may have been mixed, often misguided, frequently arbitrary and unjust, at times overtly coercive, and at other times, overtly accommodating. But to say that the inhabitants of the Kashmir Valley have been subjected to outright repression or denial of cultural rights would be to misrepresent the issue.

Yet, Kashmir from 1989 onwards has been wracked by brutal violence. Confrontation between militants and security forces has led to thousands of deaths, the imposition of draconian laws, and massive violations of civil liberties. The cost ordinary people have had to pay for a conflict, which is not of their making, is stupendous. Consider that out of the 322 surveys our research team carried out in the Kashmir Valley[8], 45 per cent of the respondents: 55 per cent in the high-conflict areas [HCA] and 34 per cent in the low-conflict areas [LCA] told us that the conflict had affected them personally. 26 per cent of the respondents told us that they were subjected to harassment by the security forces, and 21 per cent said that they were suffering from psychological depression. The incidence of psychological depression in HCAs in Kashmir is 27 per cent compared to 11 per cent in LCAs. That 34 per cent of the respondents in LCAs suffer harassment at the hands of the security forces compared to 21 per cent in HCAs is deeply suggestive of the fact that people who do not live in conflict areas are adversely affected by the fall-out of the conflict.

What was the cause for the outbreak of violence in Kashmir? Outbreak of conflict does not belong to the sphere of 'happenstance'. Conflicts are produced and reproduced through political acts as much as they are resolved through political acts. I will argue that the

reasons for the outbreak of militancy have to be looked for in the failure of political institutions in Kashmir, notably in the violation of the social contract which set the 'rules of the game' in the first place. But fortunately, contracts are not set in stone, it is possible, therefore, to either renegotiate the social contract, or craft a new one which incorporates new demands and which rectifies shortcomings of the earlier one.[9]

I argue in this paper that the main reason for political discontent and resort to violence in Kashmir has to do with repeated infringement of the social contract by the central government, acting often in tandem with the state government. This has been accompanied by insistent erosion of the democratic space which permits articulation of political discontent. In effect, in Kashmir, not only did the state violate the contract, but democratic institutions also failed to channel political restiveness. Therefore, dissatisfied groups had little option, but to resort to the use of violence. Since violence not only breeds its own trajectories but is self-reinforcing, conflict in the Valley took on a life of its own.

This can perhaps be attributed to the following reasons. One, it has something to do with the strong sense of ethnic identity in the Valley, an identity which, let me hasten to add, was forged and propelled into the public sphere simply because the state practised bad faith. Arguably, ethnic identities are constructed in and through a series or a combination of political processes. But howsoever constructed ethnic identities may be, once they have been constituted in often inflexible and antagonistic modes, they do lend a rather sharp edge to the weapon of political discontent. Further, once ethnic identities have been catapulted into the public realm as political strategy, they prove, as history has shown, not only inflammatory, but they also outstrip all efforts to contain them. An analysis of the way in which political discontent has sharpened ethnic identities and vice versa is woven through the discussion below.

Second, Jammu and Kashmir borders a neighbour, Pakistan, which, rocked by its own political instability, has repeatedly fished in

troubled waters for various reasons. I shall not take up this issue in this paper except tangentially. But I do think that far too much has been laid at the doors of Pakistan and the Islamic brand of 'terrorism' that it exports. Despite the fact that much ink has been spilt on exploring this theme, and though more than a little academic energy has been expended on the 'P' factor, the roots of the Kashmir problem lie in processes that are internal to democracy and federalism in India. Quite what these processes are forms the substance of this paper.

The argument proceeds in three parts. The first part is historical inasmuch as I focus on the controversy that surrounded the signing of the original contract in Kashmir. In the second part of the paper, I investigate the manner in which the social contract has been infringed. The argument in this section is organized around some of the preliminary findings of the survey conducted in Kashmir. In the third section, I draw out the implications of this analysis for theories of ethnic conflict.

I

It is perhaps significant that the 'signing' of the social contract which incorporated Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union[10] was by acrimony and bitterness. In order to understand the complexities of the issue, we need to briefly examine the political biography of Jammu and Kashmir. Till 1947, Jammu and Kashmir was a princely state that lay outside formal control of the colonial state. The state itself had come into existence in 1846, when the British East India Company deeply unsettled by the factionalism which had pervaded Punjab in the aftermath of the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the 1830s,[11] and motivated by geo-strategic considerations, sold "all the hilly or mountainous country ...eastward of the river Indus and westwards of the river Ravee ...being part of the territories ceded to the British government by the Lahore state" to the Hindu/Dogra ruler of Jammu Gulab Singh, for a sum of Rs 75 lakh. Separate territories under different sovereignties were patched together to create the state of Jammu and Kashmir: Jammu, the Kashmir Valley, Ladakh and

Baltistan, which had been occupied by Gulab Singh in the period 1830–1840, and Gilgit, which was captured by him in 1860. In 1935, the British government formally leased the Gilgit Agency which had been under their *de facto* control for a period of 60 years. In 1936, Poonch, formerly an independent kingdom, became a part of Jammu and Kashmir.[12]

"The underwriting of Dogra rule by the British," writes Rai, "began a process that enabled the overlooking, if not the outright exclusion, of the elementary rights of the people of Kashmir."[13] From 1846 onwards, Dogra policy towards the Muslim inhabitants of the Valley was based on religious discrimination, economic exploitation, heavy taxation, and denial of political rights. This not unexpectedly created massive discontent, which was tapped by Sheikh Abdullah in 1931, when he set up the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. The objective of the party was to protect the interests of the Muslim community against the tyrannies of the Maharaja. In 1939, the Muslim Conference was replaced with the secular and more inclusive Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (NC). Other non-Kashmiri Muslim leaders such as Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas resurrected the Muslim Conference in the aftermath of the Pakistan resolution of 1940, but it was the NC that was popularly seen as representing the interests of the people of the state. In the meanwhile, Sheikh Abdullah had allied with the Indian National Congress, which was at the forefront of the struggle for independence, and established close personal relations with Pandit Nehru in 1938.

On 17 July 1947, the British government enacted the Indian Independence Act and set the stage for the transfer of power to India and the partition of the country. The Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, advised rulers of all princely states to join either India or the new state of Pakistan. When it came to Jammu and Kashmir, the Maharaja decided to keep his options open and proposed a 'Standstill Agreement'[14] with both countries on 15 August 1947, though he did consider the option of joining Pakistan if that would leave his powers and privileges intact. On 15 August, the British restored Gilgit Agency to Jammu and

Kashmir, and on 18 August 1947, the Radcliffe Award on boundaries gave India a road link to the state through Gurdaspur in Punjab.

Here begins a period of tussle between India and Pakistan for control over Jammu and Kashmir for a number of reasons. For one, since the frontiers of undivided Jammu and Kashmir border China and Afghanistan, the region is geo-strategically significant for both the countries.[15] Second, all the rivers, upon which Pakistan is dependent for its water supply, flow out of the state. Third, the western flank of Jammu and Kashmir borders Pakistani Punjab, and this, according to the Government of Pakistan, gave it rights to the territory. Fourth, Pakistan claimed Jammu and Kashmir because an overwhelming majority of the population in the Valley is predominantly Muslim. On the other hand, for India, the incorporation of Jammu and Kashmir into the Union was crucial, because this would both validate its declared policy of secularism and invalidate the Two-Nation Theory which had led to partition.

Pakistan was well aware that the Maharaja would opt to join India if his wish for independence was thwarted. It was equally clear that Sheikh Abdullah who became the head of the emergency administration in the state in September 1947 would opt for India, given the close links of his party with the Congress, his own personal links with Pandit Nehru, and the fact that NC had officially adopted secularism.[16] Further, the Sikhs, the Hindus, and the Buddhists in Jammu and Ladakh would oppose accession to Pakistan.

Internal developments in Jammu and Kashmir provided Pakistan with the opportunity it was looking for: to intervene in the state. In August 1947, the Muslim community of Poonch, provoked by the misrule of the Maharaja and by reports of massacres of Muslims in Hindu-dominated eastern Jammu districts during the Partition[17], revolted under the leadership of demobilized soldiers.[18] By 3 October 1947, the rebels who had acquired control over much of the district of Poonch, along with the pro-Pakistani chieftains of Muzzafarabad and Mirpur in Western Jammu district, proclaimed the formation of 'Azad

Kashmir' in Pakistan. Shortly afterwards, Gilgit and neighbouring states including Hunza and Nagar signed Instruments of Accession with Pakistan on 18 November 1947.[19]

On 21 October 1947, Pakistan backed an armed incursion into the state by some several thousand Pashtun tribals from the North West Frontier Province, though the Pakistan government insisted that it was not involved in the raid. After taking the town of Muzaffarabad, the raiders headed for Baramulla, where they inflicted untold atrocities on the population. Killing almost 3,000 of the 14,000 population of the town, they subsequently moved towards Srinagar. The Maharaja, forced by circumstances to make up his mind on accession, signed the Instrument of Accession with India on 26 October 1947, and sought military assistance to repel the invaders.[20] The Instrument was accorded legality when Lord Mountbatten accepted it the next day. But here occurs a twist in the tale, a twist that haunts politics in the Kashmir Valley till today. In the letter that accompanied the acceptance of the Instrument of Accession, Lord Mountbatten stipulated that after the invader was cleared and law and order restored, the question of the state's accession should be settled by a reference to the people. This was consistent, wrote Mountbatten, with the policy of the government of India that in the case of any state where accession was disputed, accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people.

Since the Maharaja had acceded to India, Indian troops landed in Srinagar on 27 October 1947 in order to contain the onslaught of the tribal raiders. By 14 November, Baramullah and Uri had been recaptured by the Indian army. In the meanwhile, two meetings held between Pandit Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan to resolve the continuing tension caused by the tribal incursion came to naught, because the Pakistani government continued to insist that accession of the state of Jammu and Kashmir to India was based on fraud and violence. On 1 January 1948, India lodged a formal complaint against Pakistani aggression in the Security Council under article 35 of the Charter

of the UN. Later that month, the UN set up a three-member UN Commission for India and Pakistan to mediate the problem.

Fighting resumed in April 1948 when Pakistan sent three brigades of regular troops into the Valley. In April–May 1948, the Indian army retook Rajouri in Jammu, and moved north. The Security Council under the heavy influence of the US and the UK, both of which were interested in protecting their strategic and economic interests in West Asia, adopted three resolutions in 1948 and 1949 calling for the withdrawal of Pakistani forces, reduction of Indian presence in the state, and the appointment of a Plebiscite Commissioner who would oversee the holding of a plebiscite. The UN resolution adopted on 13 August 1948 recommended that a final decision on the status of Jammu and Kashmir 'shall be determined in accordance with the will of the people'. Thus not only was a bilateral problem internationalized, a rider was once again attached to the act of accession—the holding of a plebiscite. This was followed by a call for a cease-fire in August 1948 as an essential step for the holding of the plebiscite to determine the wishes of the people.

The cease-fire finally came into effect on 1 January 1949. In July 1949, the military representatives of the two countries signed the Karachi Agreement demarcating the cease-fire line which stopped short at the Siachen Glacier (at map coordinate Point NJ 9842), and both troops withdrew to behind the cease-fire line.[21] In effect, the cease-fire formalized the tripartite division of the territory of Jammu and Kashmir. India retained less than half of the undivided Jammu and Kashmir, that is, a major part of Jammu, Ladakh and the Kashmir Valley. One third of the region, which consists of a sliver of territory extending from the north to the south of western Jammu district, is under the control of Pakistan. Pakistan also controls Skardoo in Ladakh, and the thinly-populated Northern Territories of Gilgit and Baltistan. Aksai Chin, occupying 16.9 per cent of the area of the state and almost no population, came under the control of China during the 1950s. In 1963, Pakistan ceded to China another 2.33 per cent of the land claimed by India.[22]

In March 1950, the UN wound up the United Nation Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) and appointed a UN representative in India and Pakistan, and a Plebiscite Commissioner. However, the recommendations of the Plebiscite Commissioner did not find favour with the prime ministers of both the states. In December 1952, another resolution of the UN called for troop reduction by both countries. Whereas Pakistan accepted this, India did not. In the meanwhile, India had tilted towards the Soviet Union which had emerged as a formidable power in the UN, even as Pakistan allied strategically with the US. The Soviet Union backed India's position that the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India was not in dispute and further discussions in the UN were deadlocked. Subsequently, although the Kashmir issue has been periodically raised in the UN, the problem has not been resolved.

The promised plebiscite was never held, but Kashmir's accession to the Indian Union was seen by India as settled for the following reasons. One, the Maharaja had signed the Instrument of Accession. Second, though Sheikh Abdullah, the leader of the most popular political party in the state and the head of the state government since 1947, vacillated on the issue of whether Jammu and Kashmir should opt for independence or join India or Pakistan, in 1948, he declared in the Security Council that "Kashmir and the people of Kashmir have lawfully and constitutionally acceded to the dominion of India".[23] Third, a few weeks after the Maharaja had acceded to India on 27 October 1947, the working committee of the NC passed a resolution recommending the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India, and the resolution was ratified by a special convention of the representatives of the people of the state. Throughout the war from October 1947 to December 1948, the NC supported India. Fourth, the State Constituent Assembly which was convened in October 1951, to which delegates were elected on the basis of full adult franchise, approved accession. The Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, which was adopted in 1957, made the state an integral part of India. The then prime minister of the state, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, declared

in the first broadcast he made to the nation that "the democratic movement in the state has been consistently fighting for the realization of an autonomous status for the state within the Indian Union."[24] Whereas accession was not disputed, the issue of autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir was so disputed. Fourth, though the Security Council had recommended that Pakistan withdraw its troops from the territory as a condition for holding the plebiscite, this was not carried out. In fact, in 1948, India had accepted the recommendation of the UN Commission on India that a plebiscite be held in Jammu and Kashmir, but Pakistan rejected the idea on the assumption that given the strong influence of Sheikh Abdullah, the state would opt for India.

Though in November 2004, President Musharraf of Pakistan had dropped the demand for a plebiscite, the never-held plebiscite remains on the political agenda. Schofield points out that in 1989, when the Valley witnessed a popular uprising, some were still fighting for a plebiscite so that they could join Pakistan, and others wanted a plebiscite for the exercise of the third option, that of independence. Yet, other inhabitants of the state—the Buddhists, the Ladakhis, and the Shi'a Muslims of the Kargil area—have not demanded the holding of a plebiscite and did not support the uprising. The formerly nomadic Gujjar and Bakherwal Muslims also did not support the uprising, and the Hindus and the Sikhs have in any case regarded Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India.[25]

Now contractarians assume that the social contract is binding because parties consent to the terms voluntarily and in full awareness of what is it that they are giving up and what they expect to receive in return. The problem is that contract theorists abstract the metaphorical 'signing' of the contract, both from the messiness of political life and from histories and biographies. Consider, for instance, how the Hobbesian state of nature is both pre-political and historical. In the real world, however, matters cannot but be different for the parties to the contract—individuals/groups and the state—are embedded in history as well as politics. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, since the signing of the Instrument of Accession was accompanied by the commitment

to hold a plebiscite in the state, the failure of the Indian government to hold the plebiscite for reasons detailed above, led to the feeling among some sections that the contract itself is not legitimate.

Consequently, political grievances that had accumulated in and through the controversy that surrounded the 'signing' of the contract continue to stamp collective memories. The scars could have healed if the central government had respected the terms of the contract. Political passions could have been soothed, and aroused popular energies could have been channelled through democratic institutions. But since, as I seek to show below, the central government failed precisely on this account. Historical memories of 'harm done' were to feed into the inventory of political grievances to create an explosive situation in the state within a rather short span of time.

II

It is generally agreed that the first generation of Indian leaders was remarkably prescient inasmuch as it recognized that the federal system had to be based on geography as well as identities. Today, the idea that cultural groups should control power in their own spaces has taken hold of intellectual imaginations the world over. But in India, the principle which was accepted as far back as 1908, was institutionalized in 1956 through the formation of linguistic states. In Jammu and Kashmir, this assurance was given to the Muslim majority in the Valley, for despite the fact that the state is both multi-religious and multi-cultural, it is the Muslim majority in the Valley which has, through a series of historical events detailed above, become politically significant. Further, the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir should have assuaged any fears that the rights of the community would be infringed in any way.

If this constituted the core of the federal contract between the Centre and the states, the establishment of democracy in the country assured citizens that their interests would be protected. Most democrats agree that the best way to prevent discontent, which is arguably an intrinsic feature of mass politics, from spilling over into the streets

is to channel it through institutions and procedures. And defenders of federalism concur that the best way of preventing discontent is to decentralize power to local elites. If division of powers between central and state governments provides the core safety valve in a federal system, political and civil rights, a functioning rule of law, and a free press constitute the hub of democratic practices. It is this understanding that is codified in the social [federal/democratic] contract. It follows that if the social contract is violated in any way by any entity, if the expectations generated by the social contract are frustrated, if institutions fail to neutralize discontent, practitioners of politics may well feel that they are justified in taking up arms. It is precisely this that happened in Jammu and Kashmir.

In the late 1990s, the federal system in the country underwent a historic transformation because of the rise of regional parties and the establishment of coalition governments in the Centre. In earlier times, however, the principle of state autonomy had been somewhat unhappily violated by the central government under the control of the Congress Party and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Even as the Congress attempted to monopolize and centralize power through a series of manoeuvres targeting non-Congress governments, the space of state autonomy shrank drastically. This led to massive discontent in various parts of the country. But the consequences proved disastrous when it came to Kashmir, for the violation of the federal principle tended to be interpreted as a threat to the right of the dominant ethnic group to control power. In sum, the politicization of ethnic identities that had taken place during the time that preceded the signing of the contract, added an extra dimension to Centre-State relations. It is this extra dimension which has made conflicts within the state so inflexible.

In effect, we can discern two sets of tensions at work in the federal system. The first set of tension marked relationships between the central and state governments, with each struggling to expand its domain. The second set of tension operated between political

parties which claimed to represent the interests of the community: the National Conference on the one hand, and political parties such as the Congress on the other. Often the two sets of leaders worked against each other, with one set invariably siding with the central leadership. Intra-elite competition for control of respective states often took ugly forms and resulted in factionalism and defections. This in turn led to the collapse of state governments, political instability, the imposition of President's Rule, and suspension of democratic life.

The inability of state leaderships to safeguard state autonomy and their collaboration with the central leadership in the making and the unmaking of governments resulted in a third set of tension erupting onto the political scene between the central/state elites on the one hand, and 'new' leaders who challenged the legitimacy of the former, often through the use of extra-institutional methods. In Jammu and Kashmir, political leaders were forced to resort to the use of violence because they were denied opportunities to participate in the democratic process.

Given that the central government, the state government, and political parties vying for power failed to respect the respective mandates of the social (federal/democratic) contract, it is not surprising that citizens in the state, as our research shows us, hold these three political institutions responsible for the outbreak of violence. The research team interviewed the inhabitants of the highest conflict ridden districts of Kashmir. Within the districts, we identified village(s) that were most affected by violence (HCA) and village(s) that were least affected by the conflict (LCA). We asked respondents who they thought were responsible for the outbreak of violence: political parties, the state government, the central government, security forces, external powers, separatist organizations, or other organizations. In Kashmir, a large percentage of 322 respondents in both HCA and LCA held that three political institutions, political parties, central government and state government, were responsible for the conflict in some way or the other.

Fixing Responsibility

	HCA	LCA
Political Parties	47.2	62
State Government	56	74
Central Government	44	63
External Powers	52.1	57.4
Security Forces	50.3	59
Militant Groups	32	23

(figures in percentages)

The largest number of respondents in HCA and LCA in Kashmir feel that the state government is responsible. Given that the conflict continues particularly in HCA in Kashmir, it is significant that after the state government, external powers, security forces and political parties in that order, are held more responsible for the problem than the central government. In LCA, on the other hand, the state government, central government, political parties, and external powers are seen as more responsible than security forces for the problem. Substantially, lower numbers of people in Kashmir hold the separatist groups responsible, though it is interesting that the percentage of people in HCA who think that separatist groups are responsible is higher than in the LCA.

When asked why these institutions were responsible, the answers ranged from corruption of all three institutions, failure to meet basic needs in the case of the state government, and failure to respect identity in the case of the central government. When it came to the question of how far these three institutions had helped to resolve the problem, the almost majority opinion is that they have exploited the conflict for political and economic gains. The question that becomes significant in this context is: In what way did political institutions contribute to the conflict?

Much of the anger in the Kashmir Valley has been fuelled by two developments in state politics. One, that the terms on which the state was incorporated into the Indian Union have been massively violated

by the central government in connivance with the state government. Second, whenever political groups other than those belonging to the dominant political party in the state—the National Conference—have tried to enter the democratic process, their efforts have been frustrated. This, as we shall see, has led different political groups, which before the 1987 elections to the State Legislative Assembly were perfectly willing to participate in the democratic process, towards militancy. As far as the people of the Valley are concerned, the state government dominated till 1992 by the National Conference, and the central government controlled by the Congress Party, are deeply compromised as the data gleaned by our research project shows. All three institutions have connived to thwart the aspirations of the people of the state, prevent the expansion of the democratic space, proscribed the entry of new political groups into the political process, and in general infringed the democratic rights of the people of the Valley. If this has led to militancy on the one hand, on the other it has led to deep disenchantment with the political process.

As Koithara points out, the contest in Kashmir is not just between India and Pakistan. There is an important third party to the conflict, the large number of discontented people in the state. Though Pakistan has been trying to destabilize the region for long, Koithara goes on to argue, its efforts bore fruit only in the 1990s because of the intensification of frustration within the Valley.[26] Widmalm suggests that the roots of political violence in Jammu and Kashmir lie in the acts of the political elites and the weaknesses of institutions in the late 1980s. As a result, by 1989, the political opposition in the state relinquished its faith in the usefulness of competing within what was left of the democratic framework.[27] It is not that democracy and federalism were not established in Jammu and Kashmir; it is that both these processes were not given a chance to be institutionalized. Even as the people of the state were denied access to political institutions that could channel popular aspirations and guide expressions of discontent into permissible forms, even as the federal contract was repeatedly flouted, even as opposition to

policies in particular and to politics in general was interpreted as anti-national, and as threatening to the territorial integrity of the nation, protests took the form of extreme violence. That discontent was harnessed to the cause of Islamic jihad by Pakistani-sponsored elements and by mercenaries from Afghanistan and other parts of the Islamic world is not surprising. What is disturbing is that the Indian state failed to see that this would necessarily happen if democratic institutions were to degenerate.

Consider, for instance, how the terms of the original contract were violated within a period of hardly 10 years. In May 1949, the leadership of the central government and that of the National Conference decided that the provisions of the Indian Constitution regarding the powers of the central government vis-à-vis the state governments would not apply to Jammu and Kashmir, and that the state would have a constitution of its own framed by a constituent assembly. This gave Jammu and Kashmir a unique status as the only state which is governed by a constitution of its own.

The accession of the state to the Indian Union was formalized vide the Indian Constitution, but the Constituent Assembly honouring the 1949 settlement with the leadership of the NC incorporated article 370 which laid down special provisions for the state. Accordingly, the powers of the Indian Parliament to make laws for the state were limited to defence, external affairs, and communication.

The government of Jammu and Kashmir was not only granted complete jurisdiction over other areas in the state, but also given the right to have its own flag.[28] More importantly, the provisions of the Indian Constitution could be extended to the state only with the concurrence of the state government and ratification by the constituent assembly. Article 370 was implemented by the first Constitution [Application to Jammu and Kashmir] Order in 1950.

In October 1951, the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly was elected on the basis of adult franchise. On 24 August 1952, the Delhi Agreement, which was the product of negotiations between the central leadership and the leadership of the NC, stated that:

- All powers other than those specified in the Instrument of Accession would remain with the state government.
- The state government would regulate the rights of the permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Though the provisions of the fundamental rights chapter of the Indian Constitution applied to the residents of Jammu and Kashmir, some exemptions were made particularly in regard to compensation for land reforms.
- Hereditary rule was abolished.
- Disputes between the Centre and the states and between states would be arbitrated by the Supreme Court.
- The jurisdiction of the Election Commission would extend in the case of Jammu and Kashmir only to elections to parliament and elections of the President and the Vice President.
- Whereas article 352 which empowers the central government to declare emergency was applicable to Jammu and Kashmir only in cases of external aggression, in cases of internal disturbances emergency provisions could be extended to the state only with the concurrence of the state government.
- Article 356, according to which President's rule can be imposed in the states, and article 360, which gives the power to the central government to declare financial emergency, could not be extended to Jammu and Kashmir.

In 1953, Sheikh Abdullah was arrested because he, despite his own earlier defence of accession to India in the Security Council, had made public statements on independence for Jammu and Kashmir. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad took over as 'Prime Minister' of Kashmir, a post which he occupied for 10 years. The period was marked by the gradual but insistent erosion of the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir. In 1957, the Constituent Assembly ceased to exist after having drafted a Constitution for Jammu and Kashmir, which came into force on 26 January 1957, and after having formalized accession to India on 15 February 1954. Now the only barrier to the full integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union was

the state government; a barrier which was removed by the compliant PM of Jammu and Kashmir. The violation of the social contract began in full earnest even as the jurisdiction of the central government was gradually extended to cover all subjects in the Union list.

In 1958, the special provisions which governed the representation of the citizens of the state in the civil services were abolished, and the state ceased to be financially autonomous. In 1959 and 1961, the permit system that governed the entry of non-citizens into the state was done away with, and the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the Central Election Commission was extended to the state. In 1964, article 356 of the Indian Constitution, which allows for the takeover of the state by the central government, was made applicable to Jammu and Kashmir, and a Delhi-appointed governor replaced the *Sadar-e-Riyasat* who was formerly appointed by the State Legislative Assembly. The governor of Jammu and Kashmir however continued to exercise the powers meant for the *Sadar-e-Riyasat* under article 92 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution, without the governor being responsible to the Legislative Assembly.

In sum, the social contract, which had allotted to the state of Jammu and Kashmir a great deal of autonomy, and which had limited the powers of the central government over the state, was dissolved by the central government in connivance with the state leadership in a span of a decade and a half. The controversy that had dodged the signing of the original contract was intensified in the process.

The situation was still manageable for as Sheikh Abdullah wrote in his autobiography about the Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah accord which ensured his release from prison in 1975: "I told my Indian friends that there is no difference of opinions as far as Kashmir's accession to India is concerned. However, I have differences on the limits of accession. We had defined limits of accession through mutual agreements and it had resulted in the shape of article 370 (of the Indian Constitution guaranteeing the special status of Kashmir). The Indian leaders distorted this article forcibly and unconstitutionally, which separated us (from the Indian mainstream). If this situation is

retrieved and the *status quo ante* is restored, our differences would be resolved."[29] But further events cancelled out such resolution, because in 1985, the residuary powers of the state government were transferred to the central government. It is not surprising that all conversation in the Valley on the origins of the conflict begin with complaints of the breach of the social contract.

If the federal principle and particularly the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir was insistently eroded by the central government, internal politics in the state were marked by two factors both of which inhibited democracy in a major way. Firstly, the NC monopolized political power right up to 2002 often through massive electoral malpractices, denying, thereby, space to other political formations which could otherwise have become a part of the democratic process. Secondly, the NC often entered into amoral alliances with the Congress Party in order to retain its hold on power, a fact that led to tremendous disillusionment particularly in the aftermath of the 1987 elections. That political groups were forced to resort to extra-institutional means, particularly the use of violence to press their point, is not entirely unexpected. The findings of the research project, that the largest numbers of respondents in the Kashmir Valley hold the state government and political parties above the central government responsible for the conflict, makes sense only in this context.

Consider, for instance, the way in which the NC employed every means available to monopolize power. In 1953, Sheikh Abdullah vacillating between defending accession to India, independence for Jammu and Kashmir, the holding of a plebiscite in the state, and ensuring the greatest possible autonomy for the state, was arrested. He was released in 1958 to be re-imprisoned within three months once again. Subsequently, he was in and out of prison till 1975. The arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953 catapulted Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad into the political domain as the prime minister of Jammu and Kashmir, and he, as suggested above, was responsible for allowing the central government to whittle down the autonomy granted to Jammu and

Kashmir. Under the leadership of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the NC won a majority in the 1957 and in the 1962 elections. It also won the 1967 elections and 1972 elections after it had merged with the Congress Party in 1965. In January 1975, Sheikh Abdullah took over as chief minister with the support of the NC which had merged into the Congress. In July, he resurrected the NC. Sheikh, as the leader of the NC, came back to power in the June–July 1977 elections, generally hailed as the most free and fair elections held in the state. This was mainly because the Congress had been weakened with the dismissal of the Indira Gandhi emergency regime in the 1977 General Elections, and the Janata Party under PM Morarji Desai was in power at the Centre.

For the first time since 1947, democracy was given an opportunity to work in Jammu and Kashmir. For 10 years, the state witnessed not only democratic practices but relative stability, calm and the absence of any kind of religious fundamentalism or violence. According to Widmalm, Amanullah Khan, the head of the separatist group Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) operating in '*azad* Kashmir' is reported to have said that even in 1983, conditions for launching a military campaign were not favourable. Widmalm concludes that when democracy was functioning in a relatively peaceful way in Jammu and Kashmir, the demand to change the political status of the region was neither heard nor supported.[30]

The tide turned in 1982 when Sheikh Abdullah died and the mantle of leadership of the NC fell on the shoulders of his son Farooq Abdullah. From here, a period of deliberate subversion of democratic institutions, which despite five years of democratic rule were still weak, and the subversion of the democratic tradition, which was still fragile, began. The NC, already associated with large-scale corruption and nepotism, and wracked by factionalism, was to further add to its blemished record, when under Farooq's leadership, it entered into a series of sordid compromises with the Congress Party.

Prior to the 1983 state elections, the Congress, determined to capture the mandate in Jammu and Kashmir, began to negotiate with the NC for an electoral alliance. Differences however cropped

up over the Resettlement Bill[31] and the two parties were unable to resolve the issue of seat sharing. Consequently, the Congress and the NC contested the elections separately and the NC won 46 seats from the Valley with Congress winning 26 seats from Jammu. Notably, the two communal parties—the BJP and the Jamaat-e-Islami—did not secure any representation in the legislature. The elections, which saw an electoral turnout of 70 per cent, were however accompanied by wide-spread malpractices, an event which accelerated the erosion of the already insubstantial democratic spirit.

Factionalism in the NC was used by the Congress to destabilize the state government. In July 1984, the new governor of the state, Jagmohan, dismissed the Farooq government on the charge that his party had lost a majority in the state following the defection of 13 members of the government, of which 12 belonged to the NC. Farooq was ordered to step down without a vote of confidence in the assembly. The move expectedly provoked a storm of protest as one more proof of PM Indira Gandhi's arbitrary treatment of non-Congress governments. A new government, which under Shah was sworn in by the governor, however lasted only two years. In March 1986, the central government withdrew its support to Shah and imposed Governor's rule. But six months before the Governor's rule was to end, the central government reinstalled Farooq Abdullah as the CM. The re-establishment of cordial relations between the Congress and Farooq Abdullah, who had barely two years earlier become a victim of the power play of the former, generated tremendous distrust of both the state government controlled by the NC and the central government controlled by the Congress. This was exacerbated when the two parties, blithely ignoring earlier differences, allied to fight the 1987 elections. The turn out in the election was as high as 75 per cent, the NC won in the Valley and the Congress in Jammu, but communal organizations arrived onto the scene with the BJP securing two seats and with four among eight independents belonging to the Muslim United Front (MUF). The 1987 elections themselves were marked by coercion, electoral malpractices of a high order, and massive rigging. From here begins

the slide into violence which heralded the arrival of fundamentalist organizations in the Valley.

The near monopoly exercised by the NC over state politics, either as a part of the Congress or in alliance with the Congress, meant that independent political organizations had little chance of entering the arena of formal politics. This is not to say that independent political organizations did not exist. In 1963, the Awami Action Committee led by Mirwaiz Mohammad Farooq and the Plebiscite Front led by Mirza Afzal Beg had become the focal points of political dissent. In 1964, the Kashmir Liberation Front was set up in Pakistan, which later became the JKLF. In 1969, when Sheikh Abdullah announced that the Plebiscite Front would contest elections, he was externed from the Valley and the Front declared unlawful. It was only in January 1973 that the ban on the Plebiscite Front was lifted.

In 1987, only a few days after the alliance was forged between the Congress and the NC, a hitherto unknown organization called the Muslim United Front, led by the Jamaat-e-Islami under the leadership of Ali Shah Geelani and several other Islamic groups, called for strike in the Valley.[32] Though the MUF secured two seats in the Legislature, other leaders were prevented from doing so through rigging. For instance, the founder of the Peoples Conference in 1978, Abdul Ghani Lone contested the 1987 elections from Handwara, where he confronted a NC candidate Chowdhary Muhammad Ramzan. The counting of votes was disrupted by the police, both Lone and his lawyer were prevented from observing the counting of votes, and Lone was declared to have lost the elections despite all evidence to the contrary. Subsequently, Lone opted out of electoral politics. Representing the moderate voice of dissidence, Lone was assassinated in 2002. Bose suggests that electoral malpractices in the 1987 elections were the reason why Yusuf Shah, who belonged to the Jamaat-e-Islami and who contested under the banner of the MUF, became Syed Salahuddin, the commander-in-chief of the dreaded Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, the largest guerrilla force fighting the government of India in the Valley.

For though he was reportedly winning the 1987 elections, when the results were declared, his opponent who belonged to the NC was the winner. When Yusuf Shah protested, he was imprisoned along with Yassin Malik, his election officer. On his release, Yassin Malik subsequently joined the JKLF as a core member after having received training in arms in POK.[33] In sum, leaders who were denied a chance to participate in electoral democracy turned to militancy, simply because the democratic system was corrupted by two parties who were determined to hold on to power.

The controversial 1987 elections proved the flash point in the turn to armed struggle. Reportedly thousands of young men crossed the border to undergo training in Pakistan. The NC and Congress passed the JK Special Powers Press Bill in the Legislative Assembly, which imposed complete censorship in the state. In 1988, widespread protests and violence rocked the Valley, and three bombs exploded in Srinagar. MUF members quit the legislative assembly and formed the extremist Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. Jagmohan, who was brought back as governor, dismissed Farooq Abdullah's government and imposed President's rule, which led to protests, demonstrations, large-scale arrests and police firing. In February 1988, the State Assembly was dissolved. By 1990, violence had escalated and the army's presence in the Valley was reinforced with the extension of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the introduction of the Disturbed Areas Act. These Acts, along with the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act and the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities [Prevention] Act, which was introduced in 1978 and 1987, completely paralysed democratic life in the state. Even as moderate leaders belonging to the JKLF were arrested, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen which is backed by Pakistan came to play a dominant role in militant politics.

The JKLF launched a movement in 1990 against the Indian government and to reunite the state with POK. This received immense support. The scale of the popular uprising took everyone, including the JKLF, by surprise. In major part, the uprising was propelled by the fact

that democracy was not given a chance to be institutionalized in the Valley. To this was added discontent over the political economy of the state. The latter is cause for some regret because the scale of economic and social transformation in the state finds little parallel in the rest of the country. As early as April 1948, Sheikh Abdullah in keeping with the promises made in the manifesto '*Naya Kashmir*', which had been adopted by the NC in the 1940s, had launched upon the most ambitious land reform programme in the country. Land reforms transferred a total amount of 92,927 acres in 1951–52, 66,755 acres during 1952–53, and 36,619 acres during 1953–54, to the tiller. Approximately, 230,000 acres of cultivated land was transferred to 200,000 tillers by the end of 1953 and about 800,000 acres up to 1961.[34] Land reforms changed the structure of rural economy, and the pattern of landholdings reversed from large landholdings to smaller ones. However, whereas the increase in small holdings created a greater sense of equality and social justice, they also resulted in extreme fragmentation and parcellation of land with the average farm size being considerably below the size required for optimal farming. 70 per cent of holdings are below the size of one hectare and big farms of 5 ha and above constitute only 2 per cent or less of total holdings. The average land holding in the region is only 0.9 hectare compared to 1.82 hectare in the rest of the country, and 46 per cent of landholdings do not exceed half a hectare.[35]

The problem is that small landholdings are negatively correlated with productivity. For one, 60 per cent of the sown area is heavily dependent on rainwater for irrigation. Second, small land holdings do not benefit from modern techniques of production—tractors, chemical fertilizers, and plant protection measures. In sum, by the mid-1960s, institutional change via land reform had failed to transform agriculture. In order to increase productivity, the state initiated various policy measures such as institutional finance, a public delivery system, responsive price mechanism, and a diversification of commodity markets. A strategy of 'Intensive Agricultural District Programme' and 'High Yielding Varieties of Seeds Programme' was pursued from

1960 onwards. This was accompanied by the grant of major subsidies, which amounted in 1981 to Rs 26.03 crore. A cooperative movement was established to accelerate the pace of growth by providing finance for crops, to facilitate marketing, and to raise the standard of living in the countryside.

These strategies have fetched some positive results in the form of high yields of food, rice, maize and wheat, which are grown in 75 per cent of the total cropped area in the state. However, cropping patterns, lack of irrigation due to power shortages, climatic difficulties, and the low size of landholdings have resulted in a deficit of food grains. The state has to import grain, milk, mutton, cereals, vegetables, and wool from neighbouring states. Moreover, Kashmir has a weak industrial base and it possesses no large scale industries. Medium scale industries operating under the public sector have performed poorly, as a result of which under employment and unemployment have grown into severe problems. Verma has shown that areas of highest conflict in the Valley—Anantnag, Baramulla, and Sophore—are precisely areas that suffer from high unemployment.[36]

Conceivably, frustration over lack of democratic opportunities was exacerbated by lack of economic opportunities. These two factors combined to create a popular upsurge in the Valley in 1990. In a few years, however, the movement subsided and gave way to extremist forms of politics even as the spiral of popular discontent against denial of democratic rights was harnessed by pro-Pakistani militants such as the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and by Islamist jihadis. Violence rapidly spread to the rural areas, leading to the large scale exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits. By 1993, thousands of militants including those belonging to the Harkat-ul-Ansar, which is associated with the Afghan Mujahideen, were operating in the Valley. In the meanwhile, a number of former militant leaders formed the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in 1993, renounced violence and disassociated themselves from the militants. The APHC provides a moderate voice in the Valley for independence with pro-Pakistani groups being in

a minority in the alliance. Prone to factionalism and to splits, the APHC has, however, not been able to displace the NC.[37] In the meanwhile, the Valley continues to be torn by violence. Even as an elected government practices formal politics and the Hurrriyat shows itself willing to partake of formal politics, the militants practice extra-institutional politics. The Kashmir Valley has had to pay a heavy price for the subversion of democratic norms and the undercutting of democratic institutions.

III

Conflict breeds its own trajectories and it becomes difficult to analyse with cool analytical precision why it erupted in the first place. When it comes to ethno-national conflict, matters become even more knotty. For not only does ethno-nationalism appeal to complex emotions such as the desire for shelter in a homeless world, not only does it complain that the community which can provide such a home is itself in search of a safe haven, it also offers simplistic solutions for current predicaments—'a state of one's own'. For these reasons, ethnic identities acquire a larger than life presence in any conflict and it becomes difficult to sort out which exact combination of factors led to the conflict in the first place.

Perhaps the only way to do this is to see how ordinary people, especially those who live in high conflict zones, view the entire situation. Our research shows that despite the fact that identity politics is generally seen as the reason for militancy in the Kashmir Valley, 59 per cent of respondents in Kashmir feel that political institutions are responsible for the conflict. 30 per cent of respondents said that political parties are responsible for the conflict because they do not raise issues of basic needs. But only seven per cent of respondents feel that political parties do not raise issues of identity.

In response to a question of why the state government is held responsible for the conflict, the pattern across the state is a little different. 44 per cent of respondents in the Valley feel that the state

government is corrupt, 41 per cent are of the opinion that the state government is responsible for the conflict because it does not resolve the issue of basic needs, and 7 per cent opine that the state government is responsible because it does not raise issues of identity. As far as the central government is concerned, 16 per cent of respondents said that the government is corrupt, 35 per cent of respondents in said that the central government is responsible for the conflict because it does not address issues of basic needs, and 27 per cent feel that the central government does not address issues of identity.*

In sum, an overwhelming percentage of respondents in Kashmir hold the three political institutions as responsible for the conflict because of corruption and failure to negotiate basic needs. In comparison, the percentage of people who think that the failure of political institutions to heed issues of identity led to the conflict are minuscule. These findings hold somewhat interesting implications for our understanding of the causes of political conflict. Perhaps the causes for ethnic violence have to be sought in violations of the social contract and in the failure of political institutions to channel democratic practices.

To return to the debate with which the argument in this paper began, federalism, democracy and minority rights are the best tools to deprive potential separatists of incentives to demand a state of their own. However, this prescription can only work if the rules of the game codified in the social contract are respected and if the expectations generated by the contract are not belied. More important than formulae, which seek to resolve conflict and violence, is respect for the basic precepts of the democratic and federal contract. Short of that, movements demanding statehood will inevitably spring up with large numbers of people feeling that it is more profitable to employ 'terrorism' to force recognition of the right to self-determination than force one's way into political spaces that have been closed to them.

---

* Comparison of the responses of the inhabitants in the HCA and LCA in Kashmir are provided at the end of chapter.

Fixing Responsibility: Kashmir

	Political Parties			State Government			Central Government		
	HCA	LCA	Avg	HCA	LCA	Avg	HCA	LCA	Avg
They are corrupt	52.6	64.6	58.6	42.4	44.7	43.6	18.9	12.0	15.5
Do not raise/ resolve issues of basic needs	34.2	25.3	29.8	43.5	37.7	40.6	35.1	35	35.1
Do not raise issues of identity	9.2	4.0	6.6	6.5	7.9	7.2	21.6	33	27.3
Some other reason	3.9	6.1	5.0	5.5	9.7	7.6	8.2	7.0	7.6
Don't know	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	0.0	1.1	1.4	0.0	0.7
No response	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

4

Labyrinth of Kashmiri Identity

Gul Mohammad Wani

Introduction

South Asia for a long time has been a hotbed of ethnic conflict. Its strategic location in history as a crossroad—often a terminal destination—for major population migration has contributed to its becoming one of the world's most ethnically diverse geographic regions. But South Asia is spiritually unique in that it is where followers of almost all major religions live. The combination of ethnicity and religious ideology gave impetus and direction to conflict in the region. By all means, religious differences have aggravated and sustained ethnic conflict, yet religious affinity could not always succeed in containing such conflict, especially since the partition of subcontinent on religious grounds. The lingering Kashmir question provides a prime example of the acuity of the ethnic dimension in modern South Asian politics and in its precedence over traditional religious brotherhood. The spread of European-inspired nationalism in many parts of the multi-ethnic British empire during the early part of the 20th Century augmented many nationality formations, as well as other groups, sense of ethnic distinction, and ignited their own traditional consciousness. However,

the roots of present day Kashmiri identity anxiety preservation date back to 1586 and 1846 (British connection gave additional fillip to it). Mughal Emperor Akbar eliminated the semi-independent Kashmiri principality as part of imposing direct Mughal rule throughout the empire and the latter when Kashmir was sold to Dogra Maharaja Gulab Singh through the Treaty of Amritsar.[1] The Mughals, as a colonial power, tried to psychologically ostracize Kashmiris during their rule. A song, popularized by the Mughal armies sent by the emperor Akbar, is caustic even today. Even if you are suffering, it says, from widespread famine, do not expect any help from three people: the Kumbus, who will cheat you by their cunning, the Afghans who will only spite you, and the Kashmiris, who will only narrate their own sob stories in response and end up trying to get something out of you rather than giving you anything.[2] The essential distrust between centre and periphery articulated centuries later was born essentially during Mughal period. According to MJ Akbar: "The first clash of cultures between Delhi and Kashmir only resulted in the former sneering at the latter and the Kashmiri wishing nothing more than he be left alone. Very little has changed in 500 years."[3] The 1846 Treaty of Amritsar further generated a sense of humiliation among the Kashmiris.[4]

What the founding of Dogra rule in the aftermath of 1846 brought about was the creation of a new system of agrarian exploitation, with a parasitic urban growth based upon it. The land grants—Jagirs and Chaks—assumed institutionalized form. The new polity combined political authority with economic power. However, the clash between Kashmiri identity and Dogra usurpation was noticeable when the treaty met with an uprising. The political upsurge of 1931 can be understood better against the backdrop of socio-economic and political conditions since 1586.

At the time when political consciousness started taking shape in Kashmir, the condition of both the peasantry as well as the class of artisans was pathetic. Walter Lawrence, the settlement officer of the time, recorded that when he started settlement of land, everything,

save air and water, was under taxation.[5] Most oppressive was the system of *Begar* (forced labour). The oppressed masses suffered in silence, yet attempts were made to organize resistance from time to time, however of limited nature. For instance, in 1847, shawl weavers went on strike protesting against heavy taxation policy of the state. In 1865, they further demonstrated and demanded increase in wages. The silk factory workers came out in the open on the streets in 1925 against the oppressive working conditions.[6] Kashmir witnessed a number of movements throughout the 20th Century—in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s. Representing the interest of the lower classes, these movements intensified Kashmiri yearning for fulfilling their emerging sense of national feeling and 1931 was the culminating point in that.

The above brief account of Kashmir history would enable one to assess the basic needs and urges of Kashmiris. The history of oppression was bound to create in the minds of the people of the state an intense desire for self-government and independence. The Kashmiris had not participated in any important way in the governance of their country ever since the Mughal conquest. The re-assertion of the Kashmiris was thus a historical necessity.[7] In the first organized political uprising of 1931, the plebeian masses (artisans, traders and peasants) stormed the capital of Srinagar. The uprising threw up a new leadership for the movement in the form of emerging middle class, which played a crucial role in the linguistic and cultural awareness of the Kashmir community.[8] This leadership handed down to the common people the distinct heritage of Kashmiri literary and cultural pride. The social significance of the emergent local nationalist elite lay not only in the interpretation it provided of the Kashmiri past and the present or the contribution made to the literary and cultural traditions but, above all, in the fact that it made this knowledge a part of a wider popular consciousness. The spread of nationalist consciousness in this way opened up a space for an inclusive political movement (launched earlier under All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference) into a nationalist mould under All Jammu and Kashmir National

Conference. The change in the ideological basis of the movement (from the limited interests of elite under the Muslim Conference to the socio-economic and political interest of the masses under the National Conference) should be regarded as a symbolic advance of the secular nationalist forces in the state and a stage in the radicalization of the middle class.

In the 1940s, the nationalist movement in Jammu and Kashmir came under the telling spell of Marxism. The political consciousness in the Valley was rising above parochial limitations and assuming a rather radical character. As already noted in the annals of history of Kashmir, there are numerous examples of the solidarity of workers in their struggle against the exploiters. The decisive influence of labour ideology in the freedom struggle came through the organization of the trade union movement. Mazdoor Sabha was organized in the Valley. This was followed by the emergence of various other unions of drivers, carpet weavers, tonga drivers, etc., all under the Mazdoor Sabha. During any protest activity, the leaders of Mazdoor Sabha would educate the workers about the objectives and meaning of nationalist liberation movement. The left wing in Jammu and Kashmir National Conference became politically active and to propagate the philosophy of Marxism and communism opened up a study circle at Dalgate. Thus by 1943, there had emerged a big group of CPI progressives in the National Conference who were able to influence its future strategy in a decisive manner, leading to adoption of 'Naya Kashmir' by National Conference as its future goal. The National Conference adopted the *New Kashmir Manifesto* in 1944. To quote NN Raina, the prominent Kashmiri Left leader: "No sector of national movement in the sub-continent, conceived of anything like this document. The fundamental rights resolution of Karachi session of the Indian National Congress or even the Lucknow and Faizpur sessions respectively in 1936 and 1937 are miles behind in their democratic content from the point of view of common people."[9] The reactionary elements within and without the state criticized the

plan and Mirwaiz Yousuf Shah of Muslim Conference allied to All India Muslim League labelled Naya Kashmir as anti-Islamic.[10] The Kashmiri Pandits, represented by the Yuvak Sabha, also voiced their concerns against the plan which threatened to dislodge their position within the administration of the state.

The 'New Kashmir' programme at the end of the day proved to be nearer the Kashmiri aspirations. In the foreword to the Manifesto, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah attempted to reclaim his status and position of his party as the leader of the Kashmiris, both of which were willing to incur sacrifices for their uplift:

> Progress is a continuous struggle—a tempestuous struggle ... The National Conference has been fighting the battle since inception of the freedom struggle. The struggle has continued but it should have a definite future programme... This struggle of ours is the struggle of the workers against stone-hearted exploiters who as a class of discriminators have lost the sense of humanism... In our New Kashmir, we shall build again the men and woman of our state who have been dwarfed for centuries of servitude, and create people worthy of our glorious motherland.[11]

The period from 1940s to 1950s was the hey days of the articulation of the notion of *Kashmiriyat* by the National Conference. The Jammu and Kashmir information bureau fetches the information that among first goals the Sheikh Abdullah's government set for itself was to involve all Kashmiris in a nation building programme. A certain phraseology of nation, nationality and nationalism was invoked to fire the Kashmiris with local Kashmir nationalism. In this context, Mridu Rai writes, "selected cultural fragments from an imagined past were collected to construct a *Kashmiriyat* that would draw in both Pandits and Muslims. This was evident, for instance, in the periodization adopted by Sheikh Abdullah and his associates in their recounting of the history of the Valley. Their reconstruction of the 'biography' of Kashmir moved not from periods of Hindu to Muslim to Sikh rulers but from an age of Kashmiri rule, through

a long interregnum of 'foreign' dominance beginning with the Mughals in 1586 before the end of Dogra hegemony marked a triumphant return to rule by Kashmiris. Day after day, and week after week, Kashmiris were told that they had been 'slaves' of alien rulers for more than 500 years until their final liberation after 1947."[12] This espousal of secular ideology contributed to emergence of national awareness among Kashmiris which was above sectarian considerations. Votaries of *Kashmiriyat* never lost sight of their religious affinities, nor were these deemed incompatible with a regionally-shared culture. Small wonder, therefore, national poet of Kashmir, Ghulam Ahmad Mehjoor's, patriotic poem was adopted by the National Conference as the *Qaumi Tarana* (national song) in those important years to build bridges of understanding and reconciliation between communities:

> Who is the friend and who is the foe of your native land?
> Let you among yourselves thoughtfully make out.
> The kind and stock of all Kashmiris is one;
> Hindus will keep the helm and the Muslims ply the oars;
> Let you together row (ashore) the boat of this country.[13]

Far from being an abstract concept invoked from above by the political elite, *Kashmiriyat* has come to symbolize for all what being a Kashmiri is about. It was thus the societal value that was being expressed in the words of Sheikh Abdullah, the great nationalist leader of Kashmir:

> The fundamental rights of all men and women to live and act as free citizens to make laws and fashion their political, social and economic fabric so that they may advance the cause of human freedom and progress are inherent and cannot be denied though they may be suppressed for a while. I hold that sovereignty resides in the people, all relationships, political, social and economic derive authority from the collective will of the people.[14]

Determinants of *Kashmiriyat* as Kashmiri Identity

Geographical Compactness

Geography has played an essential role in preserving the distinct identity of Kashmir and has also largely determined history, culture, living style, and stages of development of this identity. Enclosed by mountain ranges from 10,000 feet to 18,000 feet high, 'Kashmir is the largest valley in the lap of the largest mountains in the world'. In a long historical sweep, the physical boundaries of Kashmir have waned and waxed during different intervals of its history. At one time, borders of Kashmir extended up to Central Asia. In the 8th Century, Kashmir had a unique position in the Indian subcontinent. The king of Kashmir, Lalitaditya, had ruled not only Kashmir but over very large parts of northern and central India. He had also sent an ambassador to China. During different periods of history, Kashmir was connected through trade and commerce with the outside world. The historical accounts graphically provide the details of caravans carrying merchandise across to Bukhara, Samarqand, Kholan and Sinkiang in Central Asia through the borders of Kashmir. The extension of borders and trade relations of Kashmir with exterior world largely influenced the native culture and language. Aurel Stein thus comments:

> Kashmir owes its historical unity and isolation to the same facts which gave to geographic location a distinct and in some respects almost unique character. We find here a fertile plain embedded among high mountain ranges, a Valley large enough to form a kingdom for itself and capable of supporting a highly developed civilization.[15]

A still powerful force which explains the continuity of Kashmiri life is the love and devotion which Kashmiris have for their motherland. They have been referring to it as *Mouj Kashir* (Mother Kashmir). This attachment for the homeland is reflected in folk and poetry which abounds in praise of the springs, rivers, gardens and the sacred shrines

of their homeland. Kashyap Bandhu, a prominent Kashmiri Pandit freedom fighter, thus reveals his attachment to Kashmir:

> *Bulbul Na Yeh, Wasiyat Ahbab Bool Jayen*
> *Ganga Ke Badle Mere Jehlum Mein Phool Jayen*
> [He wished that if he died outside the Valley, his ashes should be carried back to the Valley for immersion in the Jhelum, instead of the Ganges.]

It is this sacralization of territory that imparts the deep emotions and sentiments which render Kashmir identity so potent a social force.

History

The Kashmiri's self-awareness as a distinct ethnicity is rooted in history. Kashmiri Sanskrit authors were first to write about the creation of the country and its people. Thus, the *Nilmata Purana* has an interesting tale to narrate about the above fact: "O best amongst the kings, the Goddess Uma is the same as *Kashmira*. What was formerly an enjoyable, heart-enrapturing lake for six *Manvantaras* since the beginning of the *Kalpa*, became a beautiful territory in this *Manvantara*,"[16] said Vyasampayana to Janamejeya in reply to his question as to why a woman was coronated as a ruler of *Kashmira*. With this, the tale about the origin of the land and the people unfolds. But over the decades, researchers have found that in the making and evolution of Kashmir, certain fusion has taken place between Dravid (Darad) beliefs and those of Aryans. In this context, Akther Mohidin writes:

> The roots of the identity of the Kashmiri people shall have to be found in much earlier civilizations than are otherwise being taken into account. May be it is the bone and blood of the very ancient Dravid (whatever goes with it) civilization which has survived as the ethnic/cultural core and around which the present edifice has been built in collaboration with the Aryans, the Ionian Greeks, the Konkan, Brahmans, the Gypsies and the Central Asians. The migrants had to attune their genius to this core and get themselves absorbed and assimilated when contributing towards the growth and vitality of this unique people, or also be condemned to remain aliens.[17]

Kaleidoscopic Mosaic

"Identity is a continuous anthropological, sociological and cultural process from the first Glacial Period and the beginning of the second Ice Age in the south-west of the Himalaya."[18] Burzahama, a place 10 miles from Srinagar city, is famous as one of the two megalithic sites in the extreme north-west of the Indian subcontinent. It has thrown considerable light on the pre and protohistoric periods in Kashmir. The dates of Burzahama finds have been fixed at 2400–1500 BC almost same as that of Indus Valley civilization. Kashmiris have witnessed two great cultural and political revolutions in the bygone ages. First, in the 3rd Century BC, when Buddhism ousted Vedic Brahminism and established an equitable social order. The second revolution took place in AD 14th Century, when Hindu polity lost its progressive potentialities and was replaced by Islam. Buddhism was introduced into Kashmir and was nurtured by King Ashoka who built 500 *Sangharamas* in the Valley. Five centuries before Kalhana (early native historian), the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsiang entered the Valley of Kashmir and was shocked to find that even temples of heretics were flourishing side by side with *Sangharamas* of the believers. Thus GMD Sufi writes: "The cult of Buddha, the teachings of *Vedanta* and the mysticism of Islam through Persian sources have one after other found a congenial home in Kashmir."[19]

With the advent of Sufi missionaries from the 14th Century, Kashmir society began to experience several changes of far-reaching importance. The philosophy of egalitarianism and philanthropy of Sufi's reshaped and reoriented the indigenous mystic traditions in the emergence of the Rishi order in the Valley. Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani popularly regarded as national saint of Kashmir was

the founder of the Rishi order of Kashmir which matched with the ethos of Kashmiris. The Rishi order—along with Buddhist concern for the good of all combined with Kashmiri Shiavism, which in due course of time became harmonized with the humanist ways of Islamic Sufism—is what has now passed into the cultural heritage of Kashmir. Through the kaleidoscopic mosaic of the past detailed above, one can glimpse the growth of a common culture, a native pride, a togetherness and mutuality that has been called *Kashmiriyat*, something unique to the Valley.

Culture and Literature

In evolving the present context of Kashmiri identity, culture has played a significant role. The history of Kashmiri culture remains a colourful one. For about 2,000 years, Kashmir remained the home of Sanskrit learning and from this small Valley have emerged masterpieces of history, poetry, romance and philosophy. Patanjali, who was a Kashmiri, is considered to be the greatest Sanskrit grammarian. Pandit Ratniviera wrote 14 books on Buddhism, and Mulla Mohsin Fani wrote on religions of the world called *Dabistan-i-Mazahab*. It is worth mentioning that in the rest of India, scholar's education was deemed incomplete unless he had undertaken a scholastic pilgrimage to Sharda University in Kashmir. Some valuable works in Sanskrit were produced during Muslim period as well. Books in Persian, as at present known to us, are about 350 in number. In the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin, Mulla Ahmad Allama translated the *Rajatarangini* and *Mahabharata* into Persian. Being a centre of oriental learning, Kashmir is also known as *Iran-e-Sageer* (miniature Iran). Kashmir has produced great Persian poets and scholars like Gani Kashmiri and Fani. The vast Kashmiri folklore tells the story of Kashmiri ethnic development and gives a hope of future redemption.

The concept of Kashmiri identity as a political ideology emerged also in Kashmiri poetry both in past and in contemporary times. Sometimes there were moments when the political strategy of

various groups, including poets was to build bridges across religiously defined communities to evoke an older tradition of culturally based regional coexistence. The reference to this has already been made. One of Kashmir's poetic icons, Habba Khatoon, is remembered as both suffering and resisting the Mughal Emperor Akbar's annexation of Kashmir in the 16th Century: A peasant woman with whom the last indigenous king of Kashmir fell in love because of her songs, she continued to sing lyrical poetry and wait for him after he was banished by Akbar.

Religion and Blending of Cultures

The majority of the people in the Valley of Kashmir are Muslims. According to the census of 1971, Muslims constitute 94 per cent of the population of the Valley and Hindus 4.7 per cent. There is a tiny Sikh and Christian population as well. The Kashmiris' ethno-cultural distinction is reinforced by their religious practices. They embraced several religions one after another—Naga worship, Buddhism, Brahmanism and Islam. All these produced in them a blending of cultures at once tolerant to beliefs of others. Moreover, even after their conversion to a new faith, the people of Kashmir have rarely renounced or abandoned the old ethnic-cultural values and modes of life that their ancestors had cherished through thousands of years.

Needless to mention here that 'a Kashmiri Muslim shares in common with the Hindu compatriot many inhibitions, superstitions, idolatrous practices as well as social liberties and intellectual freedoms which are unknown to Islam'. Mention may be made here that the Muslims in Kashmir have retained their old surnames such as Kouls, Bhats, Razdans, Dars, etc. Moreover, there exist many similarities in the rites of death, births and marriage between the two communities. The use of henna and the prominence of walnut and salt in the rites are some other features which are shared by both Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. Even after their migration from Kashmir in the wake of militancy, Pandits have shown a preference for '*halal* meat'

at Jammu and other places. Both the communities of Muslims and Pandits were historically at the forefront of preserving the Kashmiri identity. Jawaharlal Nehru (himself a Kashmiri) 'regarded Kashmir as a definite historical, cultural and linguistic unit'. He was proud of the fact that Kashmiri Pandits were 'more recognized in India as Kashmiris'. Nehru badgered Mountbatten so often on Kashmir and so passionately that Mountbatten once described him in an official report as 'pathological'.[20] Kashmiri Pandits were the first to raise the issue of Mulki and non-Mulki, which resulted in the appointment of the state subject definition committee and its acceptance by the Maharaja in 1927. Justice AS Anand (ex Chief Justice of India) while quoting Clive Parry writes that "the comment that there does not seem to have been written law of state nationality does not hold good so far as the state of Jammu and Kashmir was concerned."[21]

Egalitarian Character of Society

An important feature of the social life of Kashmir is almost total absence of caste distinction or tribalism among Muslims in the Valley. Crime before the onset of militancy was non-existent in Kashmir. The Kashmiri society is characterized by its close-knit network of relationships. A small society with a strong sense of internal solidarity and external exclusiveness has its own norms of social behaviour. The joint family system prevailing in the Valley ensures that the norms of social behaviour are observed. The institution of family is in transition with nuclear families emerging but mainly as part of the extended family system. One of the direct consequences of social solidarity in the Valley is protectionism in thought and practice. Kashmiris are kind-hearted people committed to basic morality. As far as the nature of politics in such a society, ZM Qureshi writes: "Our survey gives out an unmistakable impression that the amount of political awareness, the understanding of political issues and the insistence on expressing political opinions are high and widespread in the Valley. The egalitarian character of society and an intimate level of political

communication in a framework of the close-knit society significantly contributed to the emergence of Kashmiris as politically the most conscious community in India."[22]

Challenges to Kashmiri Identity

The development of Kashmiri identity was earlier in pre-colonial period marred by weak solidarity of peasants, shawl weavers and small factory workers. The virtual absence of a viable intelligentsia too could not legitimize and popularize Kashmiri sense of collective or stimulate its liberative aspect. Unfavorable historical circumstances did not allow the transformation of Kashmiri society from communal to associational.

Political unity, which seems to have largely eluded the Kashmiris, has been aspired from as early as the 20th Century, when the Kashmiris national poet, Ghulam Ahmad Mehjoor, exhorted them to forget about their divisions:

> Who is friend and who the foe of your native land
> Let you among yourselves thoughtfully work out
> The kind and stock of all Kashmiris is one
> Let you mix milk and sugar once again
> Hindus will keep the helm and the Muslims ply the oars,
> Let you together row ashore the boat of this land.[23]

As a matter of fact, lack of group solidarity is the most conspicuous characteristic manifested by the Kashmiris ever since ethnic consciousness began to rise among them in the early years of 20th Century. The lack of solidarity among Kashmiris can be analysed from the perspective of social contradictions between common Kashmiris and self-serving leaders. In contemporary times, near clannish leaders are engaged in bitter feuds among themselves that has aborted the development of Kashmiri national consciousness into full-fledged nationalism. These clan leaders are respectively seeking support and legitimacy from two belligerent nation-states of India and Pakistan to preserve their

fiefdoms. Another very important reason for lack of Kashmiri solidarity is how external powers have from time to time exploited the internal feuds to their advantage. Earlier on, during the 16th Century, Shia-Sunni discord and other conflicts were taken advantage of by Akbar which resulted in annexation of Kashmir. During the anti-maharaja movement in 1931, the solidarity of Kashmiris witnessed cracks; first, because Kashmiri Pandits did not join the freedom movement, and second, the factionalism in the political movement personified in the clash of *sher* (lion: a nickname for Sheikh Abdullah) and the *bakra* (goat: a nickname for Muslim Conference leader Mirwaiz Yousf Shah). The latter received overt and covert support from Maharaja's administration and the former remained mostly dependent on singular support of Jawaharlal Nehru. Consequently, by the middle of 1932, there was developing an active and, at times, violent political rivalry in the Kashmiri ranks in Srinagar between bands of supporters of Sheikh Abdullah and followers of Mirwaiz. In the post 1947 period, greatest damage done to the growth of Kashmiri identity was due to the political disunity of Kashmiri leadership. The Indian state, as an external agency, contributed to this disunity all in the name of national interest. The Kashmiri leadership could little realize that disunity has opened floodgates for erosion of autonomy and identity for which they had laboured hard. In this context, late former chief minister of the state, Syed Mir Qasim, wrote: "I must inform my readers that whenever New Delhi feels a leader in Kashmir getting too big for his shoes, it employs Machiavellian methods to cut him to size."[24]

The political solidarity suffered in a major way in 1953 when prominent Kashmiri leader and prime minister of the state Sheikh Abdullah was arrested by his own deputy, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. A split in the political leadership between those hankering for closer integration with Indian union and those clamouring for greater autonomy to Kashmir remained a virtual permanent streak of state politics. In the post 1947 period, ethnic solidarity of Kashmiris equally suffered erosion when Kashmiri Pandits for various socio-political reasons started identifying themselves with the larger Hindu religious

majority of India. Contrary to their stand before 1947 that Kashmir is for Kashmiris, they later shifted their stance and sought greater political and cultural integration of the state with the union of India. In the words of a Kashmiri Pandit:

> It remains a fact that owing to a narrowly conceived notion of self interest and group aggrandizement the Kashmiri Pandits have since independence sought to play down their ethnicity often dividends have accrued.[25]

In the ongoing political movement, the issues central to Kashmiri solidarity have assumed renewed centrality. Firstly, for reasons of almost complete exodus of Pandits having moved to different parts of the country since the uprising began in January 1990. The Pandit migration was described as split in the Kashmiri identity with one part swayed by the Hindu wave while another submerged by Muslim fundamentalism.[26] Deeply conscious of this division, all strata of Kashmiri leadership ranging from mainstream to separatist have appealed Pandits to forget the past and return to Kashmir. The prominent separatist leaders, Yasin Malik and Shabir Shah, have addressed the Pandit migrants in Jammu and other places and asked them to come back, for Kashmir, in their view, is incomplete without them. Needless to mention here, Kashmiri Pandits are now feeling a renewed urge to maintain their *Kashmiriyat* after they felt psychological loss of self. The answer to Kashmiri Pandit identity crisis is not sterilized Pandit *Panun Kashmir* homeland which some extreme sections of Pandits are demanding but their contribution to evolving an inclusive Kashmiri identity and its enrichment. The second reason as to why Kashmiri solidarity has become imperative is the manner in which we see mushroom growth of parties and leaders on the chessboard of Kashmir political scene.

The Hurriyat Conference (a conglomerate of separatist parties) is divided though its senior leaders had signed a document of consensus stating their intention to confront ideologies of hegemony in a united manner. The state and non-state actors with the instrumentality

of political violence have sharpened the divisive components of Kashmiri identity. This trend needs to be arrested or else every village in Kashmir will get divided into conflicting camps. However, on the positive side, while Kashmiris may be overtly divided, yet on crucial political and social matters, they exhibit unanimity. Further, it is quite universal that conflict and competition are characteristics of all societies. Though the adverse effect of weak solidarity on Kashmir nationalism is undeniable, the influence of the former on the latter is not atrophic. Kashmiri nationalism survives even if by western criteria it is underdeveloped. In the changing context of détente between India and Pakistan, the Kashmiri identity has started reasserting and occupying an independent space. But all this is possible only if the geopolitical knots of their question are disentangled. In this context, one of the formidable suggestions is that policy makers and scholars in Pakistan, India and elsewhere should 'deconstruct Indian and Pakistani nationalist narratives and agendas in relation to Kashmir.'[27]

The erosion of pluralist moorings in Kashmiri identity, particularly due to migration of Kashmiri Pandits, has over the years generated a heated debate on the nature of *Kashmiriyat* mostly among policy makers and scholarly community. As has been pointed out at the outset that no discussion on identity question can be complete unless cognizance is taken of that debate with a view as to how *Kashmiriyat* came to be defined over time in response to wider social, cultural, economic and political developments in Kashmir. Both Kashmiri identity and *Kashmiriyat* have been synonymously used over the years. These might have originated in different time perspective but both concepts contain and represent all that makes Kashmir distinct in terms of history and culture. There is divergence of opinion as far as conceptualization of *Kashmiriyat* is concerned. To GM Zahid (well-known Kashmir expert) *Kashmiriyat* is 'constitutive of universalism, humanism and brotherhood'. HD Sankalia reputed anthropologist says, "Kashmiri identity is a continuous anthropological, sociological and cultural process from first glacial period and the beginning of

second ice-age in the north-west of Himalayas."[28] Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who was its strong advocate, believed that "*Kashmiriyat* is rooted in culture and language". Sheikh symbolized *Kashmiriyat*—a spirit of independence and secularism by free will to a largesse comity. He challenged the least sign of hegemony and even spurned the largesse of subsidized food for Valley as the gold by which the soul of Kashmir was being purchased by political manipulators. Kalhana, an early historian, had stated it quite clearly while adding a new dimension to *Kashmiriyat*. He wrote: "The country may be conquered by the force of spiritual merit but not by the force of soldiers. The inhabitants are afraid only of the world beyond."[29]

Contrary to the above exhortations is the articulation of *Kashmiriyat* by those who find certain mischief in its propagation and an intellectual trap. Writing in local daily *Greater Kashmir*, Idris Shahid wrote: "It is just another word to say to the Kashmiri to break from your religion ...It is a subtle way to dig at the foundations of a people's faith, especially at a time when they are increasingly drawing to the religion and trying to understand the *Qur'an*." He further writes that "prior to the uprising of the 90s, one would hardly hear the word in Kashmir's political parlance."[30]

In any case, one may argue that the above perspectives on *Kashmiriyat* are not only contextual but have evolved from certain vantage point and reflect ideological positions of people and institutions. Zutshi questions the notion of *Kashmiriyat* as a unified cohesive vision of Kashmir's past that ignores perhaps deliberately crucial internal differences and contradictions of religion, sect, caste, class, region, language and ethnicity. However, while interrogating the concept of *Kashmiriyat* one cannot ignore the rich and unique culture of Kashmir and social and political experiences of the people. *Kashmiriyat* is a sense of belonging to the past. It is Janus faced: one face looking to the future, the other to the past. It is an appeal to link ones mind, ones roots. *Kashmiriyat* is a weapon of non-violence and Mahatma Gandhi had correctly visualized just after Partition that

Kashmir is both the title and the test of Indian nationhood. While the Kashmir problem is largely a conspicuous side effect emanating from the formation of subcontinental state system by the colonial apparatus, *Kashmiriyat* reflects the desire to contain India-Pakistan rivalry in the region at this particular time.

5

Kashmiri Muslim Identity 1990–94

Mohammad Ishaq Khan

I

Ever since the 1930s, Srinagar's historic mosques—the Khanqah-e-Mu'alla, Jama Masjid and Hazratbal—have remained the focal point of politics of the Muslims of Kashmir. From December 1989, however, almost every mosque in the Valley became a vehicle of protest and mass mobilization. The novel method of raising slogans for the freedom of Kashmir and the establishment of *Nizam-e-Mustafa* after each prayer was devised to generate politico-religious consciousness among the people. For many, the Islamic revolution in Kashmir seemed imminent.

I had almost begun to allow the idea to enter my mind that the ground was perhaps being prepared for some revolutionary change. But then, an elderly Muslim in our locality whispered in my ear: "The day is not far off when sanctity will be restored in the house of Allah. Don't be carried away by the emotional outbursts of the people. All that you see happening now in the mosques in the name of establishing an Islamic state or an independent Kashmir is not Islam but the popular manifestation of anger against India."

The point made by the pious Muslim was not without any logic. But I could not fully reconcile myself with his thinking in view of the creation of Islamic ambience in everyday life in all respects. The attendance in the mosques at the appointed time of prayers was phenomenal; some young men, whom I had always found loitering outside the mosque of my locality during congregational prayers, had now grown beards and managed the whole show in rousing people to anger.

One salient feature of the Islamizing process was the closure of cinema halls and prohibition of liquor. The reformatory zeal of the activists of the Allah Tigers in this respect caught the attention of the readers of the Urdu dailies of Srinagar. Thousands of bottles of liquor were destroyed during numberless raids conducted by the Allah Tigers. Video tapes and cassettes of the Indian and Western movies were also seized and their dealers warned not to indulge in trade likely to bring about moral degeneration of Muslims. The transporters were instructed to use only such cassettes for the entertainment of the passengers as were likely to improve the moral tone of the Kashmiri Muslim society. The Dukhtaran-e-Millat even went to the extent of forcing pardah through forcible means.

The call for jihad against what was termed 'Brahmin imperialism', 'Indian imperialism' and 'Hindu fascism' from the pulpit of the mosques was given wide coverage in the local press at the point of the gun. Muhammad Azam Inqalabi claimed in one of his writings that his *mujahideen* would be able to wage jihad against 'Indian imperialism' from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. It is other matter that it was widely believed that his outfit probably never crossed the double figure. Not only the imams of the mosques delivered fiery speeches against Indian occupation of Kashmir, but many knowledgeable persons were persuaded or seized in certain cases for delivering sermons on jihad. When in the chilly weather of early 1990, some activists of my *mohalla* urged me to speak on jihad, I disappointed them by stressing the importance of the greater jihad, that is, the struggle against one's own baser self.

Various factors contributed to generating jihad consciousness among the youth. Primarily, it was Jagmohan's appointment as the governor of Kashmir for the second time that was construed as the triumph of what was called 'Hindu communalist' forces at the centre. There was a widespread apprehension that the new governor might order large-scale killing of Kashmiri Muslims. What almost confirmed this fear in the collective psyche was the encouragement given by the governor to the migration of Kashmiri Pandits from their ancient land. The atmosphere had already become surcharged, not only as a result of provocative slogans raised in the mosques, but also due to a systematic propaganda of a certain vested interest among the Kashmiri Pandits that their community was being forced to lead anti-India processions and face bullets at the hands of 'their own security men.' Such an allegation was never confirmed officially; yet the BJP carried on a vicious propaganda about the fate of the Pandit minority caught in the whirlpool of 'Muslim fundamentalism'. Little wonder, exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from their ancient land followed.

Was there any threat to Kashmiri Pandits? Did they face extermination against the rising tide of the so-called 'Muslim fundamentalism'? Were they really forced to leave their homes? Such questions are crucial to our understanding of the challenges of immense magnitude that the militant movement began to face from its very start. In fact, the movement that was essentially rooted in the genuine political aspirations of the people for a lasting and durable settlement of the Kashmir problem, now, in the aftermath of the exodus of the Pandits, seemed to have been deprived of its intrinsic historical character, thanks to a web of deceit, lies and intrigues woven on all fronts. It was not simply the machinations of anti-Kashmir lobby but also the unprecedented involvement of the youth in the militant movement under the influence of the Jamaat-e-Islami and some other religious organizations that played no less a role in perpetuating the misconception of equating it with 'Muslim fundamentalism'.

True, at the start of militancy in Kashmir, the Jamaat-e-Islami leadership was divided on the question of its response to the handful of

youth who had vowed to liberate Kashmir from the 'Indian yoke' under the banner of JKLF. But there seems to have been a strong group within the Jamaat itself that had long been in favour of waging jihad against 'Indian occupation' of Kashmir. It is no surprise, therefore, that the Jamaat leadership had no other alternative, but to openly espouse the militant movement launched by the JKLF. Whatever the underpinnings of the claims of the JKLF and the Jamaat vis-à-vis secular and Islamic foundations of the militant movement, the least emphasized fact is that there was a simmering discontent among the youth against the Indira-Sheikh Accord. Sheikh Abdullah, in spite of his towering stature and charisma, had begun to lose popularity among the youth and was generally viewed as a 'traitor' in their estimation. The main argument that was always put forward by the critics of Abdullah's ideology was his failure in obtaining a place of honour and dignity (*izzat abru ka maqam*) for the Kashmiris not even in the secular India of his dreams, not to speak of their place in the comity of nations.

That Kashmiri Muslim identity politics had begun to develop in a certain direction even after the Indira-Sheikh Accord can be gauged from the ridicule to which Sheikh Abdullah's idea of *izzat abru ka maqam* was subjected to in the Srinagar press. In particular, the daily *Aftab* in its popular column *'khizr sochta hay Wular kay kinaray'* often derided the claim of Sheikh Abdullah in securing a place of dignity and honour for his *qoum*. While such criticism of the Accord was rooted in Kashmiri Muslims' historical experience during the long period of their struggle for plebiscite, on the other, the Jamaat-e-Islami's main mouthpiece, the *Azan*, looked at the dilemma of Kashmiri Muslim identity from the perspective of Two-Nation Theory. The sullen resentment of the Kashmiris, therefore, against Abdullah, in spite of his popularity, was expressed at various social gatherings and friendly conversations.

II

I had never imagined the culmination of Kashmiri Muslims' penchant for discussing politics in their characteristic humour and satire in the

emergence of militancy, given their acquiescence in the sovereignty of India by participating in the elections. However, my musings on the usual conversations with my compatriots often enable me, as a contemporary historian, to take the missing threads concerning the militancy in Kashmir. Here is recorded the conversation of one Shabir Ahmad Khan with me. A distant relative of mine, Shabir visited my house for the first time at Magarmal Bagh. I was surprised to see him. What was more surprising, however, was the time chosen by him for meeting me. It was the holy month of Ramadan. He called on me just 40 minutes before *iftar* and left the premises of my house just 15 minutes before the solemn time of breaking the fast.

Shabir: How long will India continue to rule us?

Author: So long as we are with India.

Shabir: But neither you nor I are Indian at heart.

Author: May be true in a certain context! But you cannot ignore the deep-rooted impact of the quandary in which Kashmiri Muslim leadership, particularly National Conference and the Jamaat-e-Islami, has found itself. The conversion of Plebiscite Front into National Conference and the Jamaat's decision to participate in elections, in spite of the Plebiscite Front's boycott call, are some examples.

Shabir: Don't be pessimistic about the future of your nation. The day is not far off when you will find some Kashmiri youth in action. They are trained in handling sophisticated weapons. Their main purpose is to awaken the dormant spirit of freedom among Kashmiris. In fact, I have come to seek your positive help for the movement which we are going to launch for the liberation of Kashmir.

Author: Won't you inject a spirit of militancy among the students of your university?

Author: (laughs at the idea)

Shabir left without showing resentment. But he borrowed Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* from me in order to acquaint himself with what he called the 'militant spirit of his Kashmiri ancestors'.

My last meeting with Shabir took place at a social function. The *barat* party of my cousin sister's son (Shabir's cousin) was due to leave Barzalla Baghat at 8.30 pm for Bijbehara, a town situated at some distance from Srinagar. Perhaps, more than hundred persons were to accompany the bridegroom. As women began to sing the traditional *wanwun*, guests started approaching towards a fleet of cars. Shabir's eldest brother, Farooq Ahmad Khan, my old friend and a class fellow at Kashmir University, had recently purchased a Maruti car. He offered me a lift. But Shabir appeared on the scene: "Don't take the risk of travelling with... He is just learning to drive. Would you like to travel with me, please?" I could not say no to the courteous Shabir. We were the last to board the car. 'Let us be backbenchers,' Shabir remarked after starting to drive. For a few minutes, I could see the fleet of cars disappearing from my gaze as Shabir was driving very slowly. But suddenly, he drove at such a volcanic speed on the Srinagar by-pass that for a moment I thought that the end of my life was near. Within a few minutes, our car had left behind everyone. I protested that it was against the Kashmiri tradition to leave behind the bridegroom's car. But Shabir was driving so fast that within no time we had reached the Sangam bridge. Here he stopped the car and began to talk in a relaxed mood.

Shabir: "Well, what do you think?"

Author: "Thanks be to Allah who saved us in spite of your rash driving. You nearly killed me."

Shabir: "Hasn't India killed us? How long are we going to bear misfortunes passively? We ought to bear our misfortunes bravely. As an experienced driver, I know how to drive India off."

While I was deriving pleasure out of what appeared to me a boastful treat before the feast amidst loud laughter and with my eyes gazed at the meeting of the waters of the rivers Jhelum and Liddar, a car horn made Shabir shout loudly; "Now it is time to follow the bridegroom's car."

What later happened in the Valley was certainly an unexpected and unforeseen event for many, but not for men like Shabir, whose urge to survive as a 'nation' had driven them on. I do not know whether he belonged to the supreme council of any militant organization or not; but the only sad fact is that Shabir died in a fatal accident at Batote during the closing days of Ramadan in 1993 while driving home from Jammu. What a tragedy that Shabir could not celebrate the birthday of his child which was only a day away! It is also a pity that Shabir's preoccupations and my musings on the events in self-imposed seclusion never gave us an opportunity to exchange ideas on the future of Kashmir since our memorable conversation at Sangam.

III

Another personal anecdote pertaining to the pre-1988 period is not without significance for a historian. Ali Mohammad Dar was one of my favourite and brilliant students. After passing his MA in History, he applied for registration under my supervision to the PhD programme. He would have been my first PhD student had not the university administration rejected his application under the cover of some misapplied technicalities. Subsequently, Ali Mohammad got a job in the state police department.

The news of my student's recruitment in the state police service came as shock to me. The young boy's affable manners, piety, honesty, and scholarly disposition appeared to me a serious disqualification for the profession he had been compelled to choose by fate. The state police department had earned a bad name not only in view of rampant corruption in its rank and file but also on account of the vitriolic

culture of the policemen. Ali Mohammad was a staunch adherent of the Jamaat-e-Islami. In spite of his reactions to my classroom lectures, I loved him for the heat he generated in the classroom on various issues of academic significance from his particular ideological viewpoint.

Once in a blue moon, Ali Mohammad happened to visit me, he would not leave the premises of the department of history without provoking my thoughts. Here, I recall his last visit to the university. No sooner had I taken over as Head of the Department of History on 1 September 1988 than the sub-inspector of police dropped in but this time only to express is heart-felt congratulations on my elevation to professorship. He exchanged ideas on issues ranging from Kashmir politics to Sufism over a cup of tea. And when we boarded the bus at Hazratbal for Lal Chowk, the theme of discussion was Sufism. Although he was critical of the passivity of the Sufis, to my utmost surprise, he talked about his association with some living Sufis. Some of the names mentioned by him belonged to the cadre of the Jamaat-e-Islami. True, I have always loved to meet the Sufis; but I do not know why I never had any inclination or an occasion to see the Jamaat's dynamic individuals in the Path (*tariqa*). During the course of our conversation, while Ali Mohammmad was discussing Islam and Sufism in the context of resistance versus passivity, he remarked: "Kashmiris' commitment to the non-violent tradition of their Rishis and Sufis has been responsible for their pacificism and slavery of every kind. So long as they do not come out of their ignorance and superstitions, they will continue to be the victims of the cultural onslaught launched by India."

While Ali Mohammad seemed to me speaking in the vein of my acquaintances owing allegiance to the Jamaat's and the Ahl-e Hadith, I was not at all convinced by the argument. But then, he unwittingly said: "The only way to get India out of Kashmir is armed resistance." I retorted to the soft-spoken sub-inspector: "But you know that ours is not a martial race." As the bus was hardly half a mile away from the storm-centre of the Valley, Maisuma,

Ali Mohammad said, "According to the *Qur'an*, the condition of a nation cannot change unless it strives. We have always striven through peaceful means but to no avail. Now the time is ripe for resisting the onslaught of every kind—cultural, political, etc. We have to decide whether to allow ourselves to get assimilated in the Indian culture or become part of the *umma*. Shouldn't the valiant sacrifices of the Afghan *mujahideen* against the world power inspire the youth of Kashmir? Shouldn't we learn a lesson from the Iranian Revolution? Didn't Iran defy Western imperialism?"

With Ali Mohammad's defiant mood ended our last meeting and the bus journey too. He took leave of me requesting me to pray for him and for the success of the 'Islamic ideology' to which he was committed from his student days. And I patted the thoughtful sub-inspector thinking that he was dreaming for a romantic politico-religious ideal, but then I was unable to perceive or foresee that my lovable student with gentle manners also possessed immense potentialities of a prospective militant. I was, therefore, neither surprised nor shocked when I learnt about his dismissal during Jagmohan's governorship along with some police officials. Until I happened to see Professor Mohammad Ashraf Saraf in London in 1992, I had no information about Ali Mohammad. I was told that he was busy somewhere in Afghanistan training the Kashmiri youth. Ali Mohammad is a cousin of the once dreaded militant Mohammad Ahsan Dar, who is now in jail.

IV

It seems that the idea of launching a militant struggle was not simply implanted in the mind of Kashmiri youth by any outside agency, but as a matter of fact, it was the logical corollary of periodic political instability characterizing Jammu and Kashmir for the greater part of this century. Some questions are also suggestive in this regard:

- Wasn't Shabir Ahmad Shah already in a defiant mood to take the bull by the horns?
- Wasn't the foundation of Mahaz-e-Azadi by Sufi Mohammad Akbar viewed as a challenge to the Indira-Abdullah Accord?
- Wasn't the Jamiat al-Tulaba particularly actively involved in combating the forces of 'cultural onslaught'?
- Didn't Kashmiris on the other side of the border reject the Accord?
- Didn't the issues raised by the Muslim United Front with feverish haste during the electioneering and the subsequent bulldozing of its plans by the state power (Rajiv-Farooq alliance against the so-called 'Muslim fundamentalism' rather the so-called Rajiv-Farooq Accord) force even the sensitive minds to scratch their head for a solution of the Kashmir problem?

No event in history is an isolated phenomenon. The state power as well as the press in the largest democracy of the world have since been busy deluding the world into believing that militancy in Kashmir has been implanted from outside. I do not hold a brief either for Pakistan or militants. But then Pakistan's interest in the geopolitics of Kashmir is understandable for historical reasons. However, the question why Kashmiris cold-shouldered the 'infiltrators' from the other side of the border in 1965 evades an answer. Didn't Kashmiris want freedom then? Didn't they upset the apple cart of Pakistan in 1965? How come then that, after nearly a quarter of a century, Kashmiri youth decided to infiltrate into '*azad* Kashmir' (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir)? I do not want to go into a futile debate whether Pakistan is responsible for abetting and encouraging militancy in the Valley or not. On the contrary, I am emboldened to ask whether infiltration on either side has been checked successfully? Even if we

agree that the strict vigilance on this side of the border has checked infiltration, isn't it foolhardy to expect that such an ad hoc measure will solve the problem? And so long as the 'line of control' continues to cruelly divide brethren on both sides of the border, Kashmir will continue to remain an active volcano in South Asia. The periodic volcanic eruptions have already caused an irreparable loss in men and money to the people of the subcontinent.

While the state power in India has always aimed at bludgeoning Kashmiris into sullen submission, Pakistan's territorial claim to Jammu and Kashmir on the basis of religion, geography and history has caught them between the devil and the deep sea. Perhaps there would have been no problem had the people of Jammu and Kashmir been given the option of exercising their will to remain with either India or Pakistan in 1947. The fact is that both countries sought to integrate Jammu and Kashmir by hook or by crook without ever giving its people the right to determine their political future.

Much water has continued to flow down the Jhelum since Partition. From 1947, Kashmiris have gone through fire amidst vested interests gaining advantages from a disturbed state of affairs. It is not politicians alone who have fished in troubled waters but, paradoxically, security forces have also sadistically derived maximum advantage in this jeremiad. The Disturbed Areas Act has only served the disgraceful interest of the vilest specimens of humanity masquerading as political demagogues, smugglers and exploiters of every kind. This Act has caused a great deal of suffering to those who have been crying for peace. Isn't it an open secret that some militant organizations in the Valley spent the public money worth lakhs of rupees for securing the release of their activists? Isn't it also a sordid reality that not a few families had no other alternative but to grease the palm of some security officials for securing the release of the most gentle and innocuous of the human beings? The fact is that both '*azad Kashmir*' (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) and the 'Indian-administered Kashmir' are inseparable parts of the lacerated heart called Kashmir. Even if

India erects a concrete wall, notwithstanding attempts at sealing and mining the sparsely populated high mountains along the border, such a prescription would be viewed as a patchwork. Time indeed is the great healer but isn't it opportune for the people of India and Pakistan to realize that it is no longer fashionable, nay warrantable, to harp on the myth that Kashmir is either an 'integral part of India' or 'the jugular vein of Pakistan'? Isn't there restlessness of human souls on either side of the so-called actual line of control? Shouldn't repeated attempts at crossing the border clandestinely or occasionally be viewed from the human angle? How long will the Indian and Pakistani forces prevent the union of hearts? How long will the UN observers enjoy themselves in observing such a tyranny being perpetrated on the teeming millions of humanity?

6

Identity Politics of Jammu Region

Rekha Chowdhary

I

Heterogeneity of Jammu, Multiple and Overlapping Identities

Jammu and Kashmir represents a very interesting context of plurality that persists from the social to the political realities of the state. Of all the regions, Jammu is the most heterogeneous. Its heterogeneity extends beyond the religious composition to linguistic, cultural, tribal and caste categories.

Though Hindus form the majority here, the Muslims also have a strong presence. However, the division between the two communities is not very neat and clean and the presence of the two communities makes interesting context of mixed living within the region. The Jammu sub-region (comprising the districts of Jammu, Samba, Kathua, and Riyasi) is predominantly Hindu but also has significant presence of Muslims. The Poonch-Rajouri sub-region (comprising the districts of Poonch and Rajouri) is predominantly Muslim. The Doda sub-region (comprising three districts of Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban)

is a Muslim-majority area but has a very substantial population of Hindus. This sub-region actually exemplifies the religious complexity of the Jammu region.[1]

However, the religious division does not define the social or political existence of people of the region as other affinities based on caste, clan, community, and tribe cut across the religious divide. Neither the Hindus nor the Muslims are homogeneous category as their identification with their tribe, caste or clan is deep-rooted and gets reflected in the variety of identity politics that operate in this region. Among the Hindus, the caste divisions are the most prominent. Apart from the caste Hindus, there are Dalits and the OBCs. The caste Hindus (mainly comprising Sharmas, Rajputs and the Mahajans) are the most visible ones occupying the positions of power and monopolizing the privileges as bureaucrats, professionals, traders, businessmen, political leaders, etc. While each of these entrenched castes is quite politicized, however, it is the competition between the Rajputs and the Sharmas that forms the basis of much of caste politics in Jammu region. Dalits, who form around one fourth of the total population in the Hindu-dominated districts, are gradually consolidating themselves. Though still not aggressive in the assertion of their identity politics, they are conscious about the importance of their political constituency and therefore form an important social and political unit.

Like the Hindus, the Muslims are internally divided on the caste and tribal basis. Thus, the Rajput Muslims tend to distance themselves from other Muslims of the region. A part of the erstwhile landholding class, the Rajput Muslims perceive themselves as a distinct social group having more in common with the Rajputs among Hindus as compared to non-Rajput Muslims. Like the Rajput Muslims, the Gujjars, who are 100 per cent Muslims, also form a distinct category. Defining their identity more on the ethno-cultural basis rather than on the basis of religion, they have greater affiliations with the Gujjars of northern India. Another distinct category of Muslims within the

Jammu region is that of the Kashmiri-speaking Muslims who are concentrated in the district of Doda but also have presence in Poonch-Rajouri sub-region. Besides these, there are the Dogra Muslims of the Jammu-Udhampur belt.

Apart from other factors, the diversity of the region is reflected in the linguistic-cultural patterns of the region. Dogri culture and language has its predominance but does not represent the whole region. It is the districts of Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur and Riasi which comprise the Duggar belt of the region. The two districts of Poonch and Rajouri, as well as the Doda sub-region, are quite distinct from the Dogra belt. In Poonch-Rajouri belt, there is predominance of the Paharis and Gujjars. The Gujjars are traditionally nomadic tribes, many of whom are in the process of settling down. The Paharis are those people who mainly reside in the foothills of the Pir Panchal range and speak various Pahari dialects including Pothwari, Poonchi, etc. The Doda belt, comprising three districts of Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban, itself is quite diverse and represents a number of cultural and linguistic groups. A large population is ethnically Kashmiri, having migrated from Kashmir at some point of time. Apart from these Kashmiri-speaking people, there are many non-Kashmiri people speaking a variety of languages including Siraji, Baderwahi, Kishtwari, Pongali, etc.

Jammu, therefore, can be seen to be having a number of distinct social categories which are often extended into political ones. Some of the distinct groups asserting their ethnic identity within this region include the Paharis, Gujjars, Dogras, Baderwahis, Kishtwaris, Kashmiris, etc.

II

Regional Discontent

In Jammu region, a feeling of political neglect has been persisting since early 50s. This feeling emanates from the context of power politics

which has remained Kashmir-centric, with token involvement of the political elite of Jammu. It has also much to do with the specificity of the conflict situation of Kashmir and the political responses of the Centre vis-à-vis this state. There is a feeling that in all political negotiations that are undertaken to address the Kashmir problem, Jammu is taken for granted and the political arrangements are imposed on Jammu.

It is around this feeling (which is deep-rooted in the political consciousness of people of this region) that Jammu has been erupting from time to time. However, in the absence of a regional party (comparable to the National Conference as a regional party of Kashmir), the politics of the regional neglect has often been appropriated by the Hindu Rightist organizations, and communalized in the process; this despite the fact that the politics of regional divide is as much widespread in Muslim-majority sub-regions of Jammu like Doda, Poonch and Rajouri as the Hindu majority areas.

Right from the time of the state's accession in 1947, the Rightist forces have taken a lead in politicizing the issue of Jammu's regional interest vis-à-vis Kashmir. The tone of this politics was set in 1952 in a major agitation launched by Praja Parishad, a Jammu-based party having close linkage with the RSS and Bharatiya Jana Sangh. The agitation echoing the slogans of '*Ek Vidhan, Ek Pradhan, Ek Nishan*' (One constitution, one president and one symbol) contested the basis of the special constitutional status guaranteed by article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Projecting the full constitutional integration of the state with India as the political aspiration of Jammu, the Praja Parishad sought to emphasize the divergence between the politics of Jammu and Kashmir.

It is due to the role of the Rightist political parties that the political discourse of regional discrimination and political deprivation has been popularized at the commonsensical level in the urban areas of the region. However, over the period, this politics has transcended its Rightist mould and has been adopted by political parties across

the ideological divide. The regional deprivation has remained the predominant discourse of the region and is invoked time and again by the political organizations and parties not merely for electoral mobilization but also for agitational politics. A number of major agitations have erupted in Jammu in which the issue of regional discrimination and regional imbalances has been raised. Following such agitations, a number of commissions have been appointed to go into the question of regional discontent. Two such prominent commissions include the Gajendragadkar Commission and the Sikri Commission.[2]

Despite the fact that the politics of regional discrimination is generally articulated by the Hindu-Rightist parties, the feeling of regional discrimination does not remain confined to the Hindu-dominated areas of the region. The Muslim-dominated areas of Jammu share a kind of antagonism against the 'Kashmir-dominated' structure of power; though for the backwardness and marginalization that the people of these areas suffer, both the political elite of Jammu as well as of Kashmir are held responsible.[3] Among the common grievances that the people of this area have against the Kashmiri leadership is the deliberate neglect of the area, especially its tourist potential.[4]

Analysing the issue of regional discontent of Jammu region, Balraj Puri argues that it is psychological in nature, even though it is expressed in material terms. According to him, it is not the development issues that form the basis of regional discontent. It is the political imbalance within the state that underlies all feelings of discrimination and deprivation.[5] While confronting the issue of regional imbalances and regional discrimination, the Gajendragadkar Commission pointed towards the political reasons for the discontent. It observed that "even if all the matters were equitably settled, we feel that there would still be a measure of discontent... In fact, we consider that the main cause of irritation and tension is the feeling of political neglect and discrimination, real or imaginary from which certain regions of the state suffer."[6] It is for this reason that the commission had

recommended that "a convention should be established that if the chief minster belongs to one region, there should be a deputy chief minister belonging to other region. By another convention, the number of the cabinet ministers belonging to the regions should be equal."[7]

Seen from this point of view, one can argue that much of the politics of regional discontent has been related to the context of the power politics of the state. The power politics of the state, till very recently, had been so organized that it drew its support from the Kashmir region only and therefore remained Kashmir-centric. Due to the single party dominance on the one hand and the homogenized response of Kashmir in favour of the dominant party, the power was mainly held by the Kashmir-based political elite with merely a token presence of Jammu's political elite. The fact that the electoral response of Jammu region was fragmented among a number of political parties, Jammu's elite did not have much scope to share power. The exclusion of the regional elite from the power politics resulted in the reinforcement of the discourse of regional deprivation and the perpetual politicization of the issue of regional discrimination.

The conflict situation also generated a feeling of 'political neglect' of the region. Since 1947, the Kashmir-specificity of the conflict has resulted in the national and international focus on the Valley. The political arrangements that are suggested by the Centre for the state are generally in response to the political demands being made from within Kashmir. Though these responses have failed to satisfy the people in Kashmir, these have generated adverse response in Jammu as well, since these are seen to be imposed on the region irrespective of any sensitivity to the local demands. The lack of negotiability of the political elite of the region in the broader context of conflict or the Centre-State relations has gradually resulted in a perception that the region is being politically neglected both by the power centre within the state as well as in the Centre. There is a feeling that in all political negotiations that are undertaken to address the Kashmir problem, Jammu is taken for granted and the political arrangements are imposed on Jammu.

III

Political Divergence and Identity Politics

The politics of regional discrimination is a manifestation of the ideological divide that exists between the two major regions of the state. There is a political divergence between the identity politics of Jammu and that of Kashmir valley. Kashmir's identity politics is organized around the contestation of state's relationship with India and a strong urge for change. This urge for change operates within the paradigm of 'Kashmiri nationalism' and has a range which is reflected around the politics of 'autonomy' on one side and the politics of '*azadi*' on the other. The logic of the identity politics of Jammu is quite different. Rather than being 'India-centric' (demanding autonomy/*azadi* from an 'intrusive' Centre), the politics here is 'Kashmir-centric' and the issues are raised within the context of inter-regional or intra-regional relationships.

The context of political divergence and the regional specificity of the identity politics could clearly be seen during the last two decades of militancy. The separatist politics that emerged as the dominant response of the Valley did not have much impact in Jammu, though militancy did take roots in certain parts of the region. Other than the Kashmiri-speaking part of the Doda sub-region, the separatist movement did not find much support here. However, even in this sub-region, one could not see the replication of the intensity of the separatist sentiment and politics that one could find in Kashmir. The districts of Poonch and Rajouri, the two predominantly Muslim districts of the region bordering with Pakistan Administered Kashmir, remained untouched even by militancy for quite some time. It was only in the late 90s that these areas became active in militancy-related activities.

The complicity of the local population in the militancy, especially among the Gujjars inhibiting the upper reaches of these areas, however, has been based less upon the emotional reasons and more on material

and situational reasons—they are either forced to provide food and shelter to the militants or are lured by money.

Sharpening of the regional identity politics has been one of the implications of the Kashmir-specific separatist politics. While the militant violence in itself generated a political response against militancy, the popular separatist sentiment in the Valley resulted in the expansion of space for the Rightist politics and a counter-assertion of chauvinistic 'regional' and 'nationalist' sentiments. The incidence of selective killings of minorities by the militants aimed at provoking communal backlash in the Doda region as well as the presence of large number of jihadi militants in this area, created a situation which was congenial for the assertion of forces of the Hindu-Right. Like early 50s, these forces took the lead in appropriating the politics of Jammu and raising the 'regional' issues. It is for this reason that the BJP's political influence during the period of 90s was increased and at one point of time, it could win both the Parliamentary seats of the region.

Though the BJP could not sustain its religion-based politics in the context of plural realities of Jammu region, it gave a lead to the assertion of the regional identity politics, which was followed by other political parties. The demand was raised for reorganizing Jammu's relationship with Kashmir and 'Regional Autonomy' became the dominant discourse of region. How vigorous was this discourse during the mid-90s could be seen from the fact that even Kashmir-based National Conference had to incorporate it in its politics. This party came forward with the promise of Regional Autonomy to Jammu in its manifesto (along with its primary demand of State Autonomy) during the 1996 Assembly Elections.[9]

The assertive regional politics was also reflected in the reactive demand for the reorganization of the state. Under different banners, a number of organizations, mostly holding their links with the RSS, raised the demand for reorganization of the state and separation of Jammu from Kashmir (on the logic of incompatibility of the political aspirations of the people of Jammu with that of Kashmir). These organizations had sought to introduce the agenda of division of state

in a very serious manner.[9] Though these demands did not have much impact on the overall politics of the region, yet they did succeed in sharpening the politics of regional divide throughout the period of late nineties.

Implications of Political Divergence on Inter-Regional Relations and Future of State

Recognizing the political divergence between the two regions, Puri has been forcefully arguing about the close linkage between the 'Kashmir tangle' and the political responses of Jammu region.[10] According to him, there is no possibility of the resolution of the Kashmir problem in isolation without addressing the political discontent of Jammu region. Such political discontent, in his view, has been located in the nature of the power politics of the state which is Kashmir-centric and ignores the regional aspirations of Jammu. While recognizing the need to address the Kashmiri discontent, preferably through restoring the state autonomy, he has been making a strong case for 'regional autonomy' of Jammu. Jammu, he argues, provides a strong clue to Kashmir tangle. In his opinion, there are two dimensions of the problem: one related to Kashmir that lies at the helm of the Centre-State relations, and the other related to Jammu, that lies at the intra-state and inter-regional level. The two dimensions are so entangled that without resolving one, the other cannot be resolved. All efforts made by the Centre to deal with Kashmir issue, without addressing the Jammu's discontent vis-à-vis Kashmir, have faced some opposition from Jammu, mainly because these did not address Jammu's discontent.

It is in support of Puri's argument one can refer to the 'autonomy' debate that was initiated by the National Conference (NC) government in early 2000. Seeking to present 'restoration of autonomy guaranteed to the state in its pristine form' as the basis for solution to the 'Kashmir problem', the state government had initiated a debate with the Centre around the question of restoration of the pre-1953 status of the state. However, the debate put the NC

government on back foot as the government of India completely rejected the demand. One of the reasons for such a response of the central government was that the debate had raised emotions against the demand for autonomy in Jammu. Though the regional divide that was projected on the issue of autonomy was more apparent than real, the fact that the debate had been initiated by the Kashmiri leadership and had remained thoroughly Kashmir-centric without responding to the political sensitivities of Jammu region resulted in strong reactions against it.

IV

Intra-Regional Identity Politics

There is another very important dimension of the identity politics of the region that operates at the peripheries and reflects the context of diversity and political divergence at the intra-regional level. Both in the areas of Doda sub-region (now comprising the three districts of Doda, Kishtwar and Ramban) as well as in the Poonch-Rajouri sub-region, there is a persistent feeling of discontent. This discontent emanates from the context of backwardness and marginalization of these areas. On various indices of economy and development, these areas fare much worse than other parts of the region and feel neglected both in the context 'Kashmir-centric' power politics as well as in the context of 'Jammu-centric' discourse of the regional elite. This feeling of neglect is therefore reflected in the demands for Hill Council (on the pattern Leh and Kargil Hill Councils) both in the Doda as well as the Poonch-Rajouri sub-region.

While much of the sub-regional identity politics of Jammu operates within the parameters of the identity politics of the region, there is also the reflection of the sub-regional politics being placed in opposition to the regional identity politics of Jammu. In contrast to those who argue for administrative and economic decentralization from regional to sub-regional areas, there are those who demand for the

reorganization of the region itself and its division into three regions, viz., Jammu, Doda and Poonch-Rajouri.

The sharpening of the sub-regional identity politics can be located in the very nature of the politicization and expression of Jammu's regional identity politics. Since much of the regional identity politics of Jammu is appropriated by the Hindu Rightist parties and is asserted through the demands made in the elite interest, the people in the peripheral areas do not identify with this politics. With the organizations affiliated with the Sangh Parivar raising the issues of regional discrimination, the discourse of these organizations is inevitably represented from the dominant Hindu perspective. Much of this discourse was evolved during the 1952 agitation, led by the Praja Parishad, and was articulated later by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and BJP on the one hand and the other variants of the Hindu-Right including the VHP, Shiv Senas of various kinds, Bajrang Dal, etc. Since the hold of these parties and organizations remains limited to the Hindu-dominated areas of the districts of Jammu, Kathua, Samba, Riasi and the Hindu belt of Udhampur, the people of Muslim-dominated belt of Jammu do not identify with this politics. Moreover, the issues raised by these organizations are more oriented towards the elite interest and do not represent the backward areas and sections of society. Most of the agitations spearheaded in the name of regional discrimination of Jammu have focussed on the interest of the educated middle class located in the urban centres. It is from the perspective of the most developed parts of the region that the issues of regional discrimination and regional imbalances have been raised. The real backwardness of the region, which is represented by the poverty, illiteracy and backwardness of the marginalized sections of society mostly situated in the peripheral sub-regions, is not reflected in this discourse. This has resulted in a sense of alienation in these peripheries and therefore assertion of the sub-regional identities.

Apart from the sub-regional identity politics, there is another kind of identity politics that is assuming significant dimensions

within the Rajouri-Poonch sub-region. This relates to the assertion of the Gujjar and Pahari identity politics. The Gujjars, who form a substantial part of the population of this area and asserting their tribal identity, have been granted a Scheduled Tribe status and by virtue of this status are entitled to reservation in government jobs. Though the discontent among Gujjars still prevails due to the denial of the political reservation (in the Legislative Assembly) at par with reservation for STs in the rest of states of India, the very ST status of the Gujjars has generated a parallel identity politics among the non-Gujjar population of the area who claim to be part of another tribal identity—the Pahari identity. Over the period, there has been a growing assertion of the Pahari identity politics and demand has been made for recognition of their tribal status and grant of ST status. Since this demand is seen to be raised at the peril of the Gujjar community who feel threatened that they would lose out on the advantages of reservation in government jobs and educational institutions if Paharis are also given the advantage of the ST status, they have been opposing this demand. However, this has resulted in strong assertion of the parallel identity politics of Gujjars and Paharis which gets reflected in the political polarization of the Poonch-Rajouri sub-region. Due to the intense political mobilization of the two communities, the Gujjar versus identity politics has become the most crucial dimension of the electoral politics of this region.

V

Amarnath Land Row—Implications of Aggressive Identity Politics

The internal politics of Jammu and Kashmir during last two decades has become quite aggressive. The situation of militancy has sharpened the context of diversity and political divergence and has generated multiple identity politics within the state. Much of such identity politics, operating in terms of 'we' and 'they', has been constructed

around polarity between different regions and sub-regions. Thus, it is not only the politics of 'Jammu versus Kashmir' or 'Kashmir versus Ladakh' that has been sharpened in last few years, but also the politics of 'Leh versus Kargil', 'Jammu versus Doda', 'Jammu versus Poonch-Rajouri', etc. The internal polarization that is taking place, consequently, has dangerous potential as it can give substance to the divisive agendas.

The heightened sensitivities promoted by multiple levels of identity politics may generate an environment which might be unsettling at times. This is the situation that the state was placed in during the summer of 2008 when the Amarnath land row generated an inter-regional divide which also polarized the society on communal basis. This was the first time when mutually exclusive assertions were made from the context of the regional identity politics of Jammu vis-à-vis Kashmir.

The whole issue revolved around a government order diverting forest land to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) to begin with and later the revocation of that order. The order gave the SASB the right to build fabricated temporary structures during two months of Amarnath Yatra. However, more than the order, it was the assertion of the CEO of the SASB—representing the ex-officio chairman, the Governor, General SK Sinha—that the land was given permanently to the Board to build permanent structures that generated the massive response in Kashmir. General Sinha had already incensed Kashmiris through his proactive politics reflecting his saffron bent of mind. He had a self-proclaimed agenda of changing the 'mindset' in Kashmir which he wanted to do by redefining *Kashmiriyat* based essentially on its Hindu past. It was in this background that diversion of land to SASB was seen as another intervention of General Sinha in pursuing his saffron agenda. The fear of 'demographic change', therefore, became the basis of mass mobilization in Kashmir.

To quell the agitation which was assuming dangerous proportions in Kashmir, the order was revoked but it generated another kind

of politics in Jammu. The BJP and the like-minded organizations terming the revocation of the order as an assault on the 'Hindu sentiments' demanded that the original order be restored. These organizations succeeded in mobilizing enormous support from Hindu-dominated areas of Jammu region not only on the ground of religious sentiments but also on the basis of regional and national sentiments. The revocation of the order was portrayed as anti-national and anti-Jammu decision taken under the pressure of separatists to appease the 'Muslims of Kashmir' without taking into consideration the sentiments of 'Hindus of Jammu'.

The land related eruption in the state has led to certain implications of far-reaching nature, changing the very nature and the course of politics. What can be defined as the most serious implication of the land row was the fracture in the relationship between the two major regions of the state which despite the political divergence had not, at any point of time earlier, had acquired acrimonious nature. The discordant politics this time went much beyond the issues of regional discrimination to the issue of economy and trade. While during the Jammu agitation, economic blockade of Kashmir was called for, after the agitation, the Kashmiri traders have given the call for boycotting the trade through Jammu.

The antagonism between the two regions had implications for plural and secular character on the other. The region which survived all kinds of provocations during two decades of conflict to communalize its politics faced two severe cases of communal clashes in Kishtwar and Poonch.

However, it is the plurality of the state in which people have the common stake and therefore maintaining its sanctity remains one of the most important concerns of the region. The divisive tendencies though assertive at a particular moment, fail to transcend beyond a point. That is the reason that despite going through the most volatile phase of identity politics which generated tensions between the regions, sub-regions and communities, the region bounced back to

its normal ways of political life. The Assembly Elections that followed immediately after the election brought the political realities of the state as well as region back in place. The 'chauvinistic' tendencies and antagonism against the 'Kashmir-based' parties that marked the period of agitation was fizzled out in the wake of electoral mobilisation. However, the Amarnath agitation has brought out the very volatile potentials of the identity politics of the state.

7

Beyond Kashmir: Understanding Ladakh

Sonam Chosjor

The high profile politics of Kashmir, and the compulsive focus on the debate on the issue of separatism and autonomy, substantially leads to the mistreatment of the colossal basis of plurality of Jammu and Kashmir. Because of this proclivity, the issues of assertion of the regional identities of Jammu and Ladakh have, more or less, escaped sober academic attention. This has led to a serious gap in acquiring a holistic understanding of the internal dynamics of the politics in Jammu and Kashmir, consequently leading to a hole in the academia vis-à-vis a peculiar characteristic of rise of ethnic politics in India: that there has always been a parallel assertion of sub-regional identities in Jammu and Kashmir in relation to the more popular movement of autonomy and separatism in the Valley. The rise of ethnic consciousness at regional/state levels has led to the rise of alienation among some minority groups at sub-regional levels (like the rise of ethnic politics in Jammu and Ladakh vis-à-vis Kashmir) leading, consequently, to parallel sub-regional movements along with the mainstream ones. These movements, by and large, have been short of critical academic

attention. The present article tries to present an analysis of the nature of politics in Ladakh and its internal dynamics.

I

Ladakh in Politics and Politics in Ladakh

The present day Jammu and Kashmir, 'on the Indian side of the Line of Control, is formed of three distinct regional identities, Ladakh is perhaps politically most important of them all.'[1] However, till date, Ladakh is counted as no more than a 'conflict-ridden border land [...] devoid of sweet and soft of nature'.[2] In the perception of mainstream Indian citizens then, India stretches from 'Kashmir to Kanyakumari'. Some popular Bollywood songs well depict this typecast picture of India. Thus in realistic sense, Ladakh remains, more or less, only on the political map of India, not in the collective psyche of mainstream Indians. Aggarwal argues that "central and state policies either domesticate Ladakh's historical and racial differences by the process of tribalization, or else acknowledge and exaggerate them in distinctively gendered forms, so that backwardness, barrenness, and dysfunctional sexuality became characteristics of its women and its soil."[3] These kinds of projections also preoccupy the premise of Bollywood and Hollywood movies based on, or shot in, Ladakh. "[T]hey reinforce the structure in which the Centre is masculinized and the border becomes female and raced."[4] Not surprisingly then, even highly educated Indians use the racial stereotyped imaginations to perceive the Ladakhis.

On the political front, the patriotic credentials of Ladakhis always have had to face the acidic test of jingo nationalism because of their facial resemblance with the Chinese.[5] Outside Ladakh, Ladakhis have generally been looked down upon as *Gorkhas* and *Chinkis* by the mainstream Indians, who proudly cherish, at the same time, India's historic stand on the racial apartheid in South Africa.[6] It, however, hardly matters that someone raised in a metropolitan city like Delhi

or Mumbai hardly experiences the ideas and senses of Indianness that a person raised in a border area like Ladakh does. Aggarwal argues that more real 'ideas of Indianness' can be experienced only in areas and regions like Ladakh where the 'border becomes a space where the state expresses itself through a habitualized performativity and repeatedly asserts the physical and symbolic authority over its citizens.'[7]

'Ladakh in politics' has, hence, become no less than a kind of misnomer phrase, inapt to comprehend and think of the region for officials and the academia. It hardly figures in the official and academic political discourse of Jammu and Kashmir at any level. The academia and the media have never been serious about the political facet of Ladakh. High profile academic debates seeking solution for Jammu and Kashmir have never bothered to indulge Ladakh as a stakeholder. People-to-people contact has been reshaping the contours of India's foreign policy vis-à-vis Kashmir during the last few years. The reopening of the road connecting two conflict-prone regions, Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, has been projected as a success story. But the opening of the Kargil-Skardoo road still remains a figment of the imagination as New Delhi and Islamabad are still apprehensive about letting the people of these two very peaceful regions meet. Like the people of Srinagar, they were also divided from their kith and kin during the Partition. Indo-China trade is booming and Nathula has been thrown open since July 2006 for trading purposes with very good dividends for both the countries subsequently. But opening of the Demchok-Manasarovar trade-cum-pilgrimage route, which can prove to be a boon for the fragile economy of Ladakh, is still a wishful thinking because of lack of political will on the part of Indian policy makers.[8]

The media and, to a larger extent, the academia, have been obsessed with stereotyped portrayals of Ladakh constructed mainly by the Western travelogues. Their projection of Ladakh has been that of a 'romantic notion of an idyllic land, eclipsed from time and space', similar to the one the Western travellers used to have about Tibet at

a point of time.[9] The academic imagining of Ladakh is preoccupied by the Tibetan-centric view of Ladakh, and the Buddhist-centric perception of Ladakhi identity.[10] In the popular imagination, Ladakh, because of its geographical proximity and cultural/spiritual links with Tibet, has always tended to be perceived as another Tibet. In fact, the very interest of the academia in Ladakh, which began only after the 1970s when it was thrown open for foreign tourists, seemed to have been generated by Ladakh's proximity—physical and religious—with Tibet, which had been closed for foreigners for many years.[11] On the other hand, the interest in Tibet was generated by 'Western travel writings on Tibet through the ages'.[12] Not surprisingly then, Ladakh has been popularly known as 'Little Tibet', 'Western Tibet' or 'Indian Tibet'[13] in the academia and in the media, giving an erroneous impression, albeit inadvertent it may have been, about Ladakh: that it is a 'Land of Lamaist Buddhism' like Tibet; and that its inhabitants are the followers of Lamaist Buddhism as most of the Tibetans.[14] This, however, is not to be in breach of the fact that Ladakh used to have excellent monastic, trade and pilgrimage relations with Tibet at one juncture in history.[15]

But the obsessive romanticization of the past sometimes tends to eclipse the present reality in Ladakh: that about half of Ladakh's population constitutes Muslims, majority of those living in Kargil.[16] Such a constrained perception adds to the idyllic perspective of seeing Ladakh 'predominantly as a quaint, colourful backdrop for adventure holidays, populated by maroon-robed lamas living in whitewashed monasteries perched on hilltops.'[17] Such a dearth of attention in real-politic logic subsequently leads to the lack of understanding about the political articulations of the region vis-à-vis the state and national mainstream, and, more importantly, about the internal dynamics of politics within Ladakh—like that of Kargil's relationship with Leh, and the Muslim's relations with the Buddhists.

Therefore, Ladakh has never tended to be counted in the realm of politics. The popular Indian imagination by and large rules out

the possibility of any kind of politics in what many call the 'peaceful trans-Himalayan region'. Even those who think of, or have heard of, politics in Ladakh generally try to define it in the straight-jacket of the politics of union territory (UT) being championed by Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA), and lately by the Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF).[18] For almost all the outsiders, and even for many Ladakhis, then, politics in Ladakh begins and ends with UT and the LBA/LUTF. Generally, the internal dynamics of politics in Ladakh, as analysed later, escapes critical attention: for example, why the Muslim leaders of Kargil oppose the LBA and its demand of UT, and why there is a perceptible rift between Leh and Kargil at large, or between the Buddhist-Muslim relationship, principally, in Ladakh?

II

Looking Back: Ladakhi History and Indian Nationalism

To get a nuanced understanding of the nature of politics in Ladakh and the space Ladakh has carved for itself in political discourse of Jammu and Kashmir, it usually becomes relevant to recount the modern politico-historical background of Ladakh.

In the middle of 10th Century, after the assassination of King Lhangdarma, the Tibetan empire broke up and Ladakh became an independent kingdom. Thereafter, Ladakh remained an independent kingdom for about 800 years, ruled by its own kings—from Spalkigon (990–1020) to Tundup Namgyal (1829–1834).[19] In 1842, Ladakh was annexed by the Dogra ruler of Jammu, after a series of expeditious forays by Zorawar Singh, the general of the Dogra ruler Gulab Singh.[20] Then, for the next century, Ladakh remained a part of the Dogra kingdom. With the accession of the Dogra-ruled state (Jammu and Kashmir) to India, Ladakh also became a part of India in 1947.[21]

Becoming a part of India had been well-cherished by the Ladakhi leaders. Right from the very beginning, its leaders felt very easy to

associate its political fortunes with democratic India. That is why way back in 1949, when Jawaharlal Nehru visited the region, the Buddhist leaders sought what they called "the bosom of ... gracious mother (India)"[22] for the betterment of the region and its people. Coming out of the 100 years of 'autocratic' Dogra rule, it was easy for the people of Ladakh to fine-tune their political fortune with 'democratic' India.

Two factors seemed to have contributed immensely in making the Ladakhis faithful to India. One is the plunging of the Indian Army in Ladakh during the tribal invasion from Pakistan in 1948 and liberating Ladakh from what many Ladakhis believed (and still believe) the brink of another era of political enslavement after the Dogra rule. The elderly persons in Ladakh would still tell the kind of indebtedness they owe to India and the Indian Army for what they did for the Ladakhis in 1948. The second factor seems to be the relatively wider democratic space and greater developmental spoils Ladakhis enjoyed subsequently in democratic India in stark contrast to hardships they had to suffer under the Dogra rule immediately before 1947.[23]

Therefore, Ladakhis naturally evolved as patriotic Indians despite the lack of earlier connection.[24] From 1949 onwards, there have been movements for fuller integration with the Union of India, and also for the conferment of a national status for Ladakhi language.

Ladakh's relationship with the rest of the state and also the political status of Jammu and Kashmir were not resolved when ceasefire was declared in 1949. At this juncture, Ladakhi Buddhist leaders appeared to have preferred a partition of Jammu and Kashmir.[25] In 1949, Chhewang Rigzin, the president of the LBA, submitted a memo to Jawaharlal Nehru in which he expressed that Ladakhi Buddhist were a 'separate nation by all the tests—race, language, religion, culture—determining nationality.' The memorandum further asserted that they (Buddhists) had no affinity or 'link or connection' with the Kashmiris with the exception of a 'bond of cohesion' of common ruler in the Dogra regime.[26] But these wishes of the Buddhist leaders could not materialize, and they had to adjust their political fortunes

once again in Jammu and Kashmir, but this time under the newly emerged leaders of Kashmir.

Politics of Union Territory and Communal Claims

Despite the democratic setup after 1948, a sense of deprivation vis-à-vis the ruling dispensation in the state—'predominantly Kashmir based'[27]—and a demand for separation from Jammu and Kashmir to form a union territory. Ladakh has been the preparatory juncture of the popular perception of politics in Ladakh. Ladakhi Buddhist leaders have always complained of neglect and maltreatment in the Kashmiri-dominated government in Jammu and Kashmir.[28]

Ever since the memo of 1949, the political discourse in Ladakh has, more or less, been controlled by the LBA, and, of late, it has always revolved around the issue of union territory. The justification put forth for the union territory demand has generally been based on the articulation that the Kashmiri-dominated government in the state has never been sensitive to the needs, aspirations and peculiar problems being faced by Ladakh and its people. Hence, Ladakh has lagged behind the other two regions of the state in every sphere of life.[29] The leaders generally seek the attention of the state for the following matters: despite constituting almost two-third of the state territorially (i.e., more area than the remaining 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir put together), Ladakh (both Leh and Kargil) has got only one seat in the Parliament and four in the State Assembly; the Government of India is yet to include the Ladakhi language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution despite the dearly-held wishes of the Ladakhis; also Ladakh is yet to get fully connected with the rest of the country through an all-season motor road as the only roads leading to Ladakh passing through Kashmir (via Zojila) and Himachal Pradesh (via Rohtang and Taklang Pass) remain closed for at least six months in a year; and a sign of grave negligence is also

the fact that Ladakh got a degree college as late as 1994! Hence, they claim that given the vastness of the area, and the very high cost of living there— because of lack of primary facilities like road, electricity, proper educational institutions, etc—it is unjust to treat the region as a couple of districts.

The second set of arguments (though related to the first one) has been that Ladakh has got a distinctive regional identity with different sets of problems peculiar to the region and its geo-climatic conditions. Therefore, the mainstream policies of the government, and its parameters of development, do not hold well enough for its betterment. Hence, it needs to have a separate administration to frame and prioritize its own developmental agendas. This claim is justified on the basis of Ladakh's geo-climatic conditions and the problems caused by it, and its geo-strategic importance along with the unique socio-cultural heritage.

However, one question that escapes critical thought is: Is union territory status mainly championed by the Buddhist leaders, the only solution to redress these grievances? Of late, there have been divisions among the Buddhist leaders regarding the question of the union territory movement. Moreover, the LBA's obsession of justifying the movement in the name of religion makes the union territory claim more problematic. The LBA has always been fixated with giving the movement a fanatic tinge. One can observe this tendency right from 1949 (when LBA submitted its first memorandum to the Government of India), till the most recent memorandum in 2000. Ever since the NDA's 'state-sponsored Sindhu Darshan'[30], there have been reports of 'dangerous liaisons'[31] of the LBA with the Hindutva forces in Indian politics that could saffronize the region and transform its stability forever. The LBA has now started 'openly and actively' associating 'itself with the VHP, RSS, and Panun Kashmir, not merely accepting their expressions of support, but actually joining a common platform with them for trifurcation or quadrifurcation if one includes the demand for *Panun Kashmir*'.[32]

One thing that the LBA has kept repeatedly propagating, directly or indirectly, is that the Ladakhi Muslims are not sincere to the region, and, hence, to the nation. That is why it generally constructs a very exclusivist notion of Ladakhi identity restricting it to the religious domain.[33] Not surprisingly then for the LBA, 'Ladakhiness' and 'Buddhistness' are one and the same thing. The LBA asserts that the Ladakhi Muslims do not fit into the category of 'Ladakhis' because they are 'connected by the ties of religion with the majority population [Muslims] of Jammu and Kashmir'.[34] In fact, as van Beek argues, the LBA knew the importance of communal claims in the Indian democracy because of the wrong legacy of communal politics in India, perhaps one of the most persisting legacies of the colonial era.[35]

By 1969, the LBA leaders realized that presenting letters and memoranda were not enough to get attention from New Delhi and Srinagar. It launched a massive agitation with the slogan of 'Buddhists in Danger'.[36] The agitation was launched in reaction to a small private incident over a family property between a Buddhist brother and a Muslim sister.[37] The LBA exploited the situation and went on to the extent of accusing the minority Muslims in Leh of causing damage to the Buddhists, their properties, and monasteries.

Having seen the prospects of success in getting the state's attention through communal agitations, LBA launched another agitation in 1989, in which it forced the local Buddhists to socially boycott the local Muslim population, which remained active for about three years. Initially, van Beek informs, the agitation was supposed to be launched as a unified struggle of all Ladakhis (including Muslims) to redress their common grievances: for example, 'little/non-representation of the Ladakh in the State Assembly'; 'sabotage of Scheduled Tribe issue'; 'dismantling of Ladakh-related institutions' (like the Ladakh Affairs Ministry) in the state government, etc.[38] However, it was transformed into a sectarian Buddhist movement culminating in the social boycott of the local Muslims.[39] Given the LBA's claim that the agitation was a step forward in acquiring the union territory status for Ladakh,

one cannot understand what was the need to boycott the Muslims? Contrary to the LBA's claims, the Muslims alleged that the agitation targeted the Muslims and their property.

In February 2006 again, breaking a calm of over 15 years, the Muslims and Buddhists of Ladakh region once again came to the brink of odium with each other as communal tension once again broke out between the two communities over an alleged desecration of the *Holy Qur'an* at a mosque in Kargil. The LBA and its counterparts in Kargil, Islamia School, almost repeated the 1989 episode.[40]

However, the LBA has always been paid off for communal agitations. The central government, while persuading LBA to give up communal demands/claims, conferred the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in 1989 and the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) in 1995 as a compromise for the union territory demand. Nevertheless, the LAHDC proved to be a damp squib because the then Farooq government in the state did not allow any quantum of autonomy to be exercised by this democratically elected body reducing it an inward appearance of mortgage autonomy.

In 2000, the LBA again presented a memorandum to the members of Parliament justifying the renewal of its union territory demand.[41] By 2002, a new political conglomerate in the name of Ladakh Union Territory Front (LUTF) had already made its appearance on Ladakh's political scene by what they called 'dissolving all party and political differences' to put forth a unified fight, as they told, for union territory. This initiative was hailed as a very good step forward not only in Ladakh but outside Ladakh as well. The LUTF significantly had the support of both the Buddhist and the Muslim leadership in Leh, and people had put great faith in this unfaithful organization (as it turned out to be later on).

The fallacies and the shortcomings of the LUTF were exposed very soon when some of its key leaders decided to leave it to revive the Congress.[42] Ever since, Ladakh has witnessed a kind of bi-partisan politics between the LUTF and Congress. In December 2002, the

coalition government led by Mufti Mohammad Syed, within less than two months of its formation, devolved power to this body to enable it work in its true spirit as apart of its 'Healing Touch Policy'.[43]

III

Beyond Union Territory Politics

But regrettably, the Ladakhi leaders have so far failed to think beyond the union territory politics. They still persist with the same old mantra of politics to mobilize people for voting them. Even more unfortunate is the fact that the leaders of the two districts (Leh and Kargil) remain confined in their respective cocoons and have never concerned to fashion a common platform to articulate their political demands in one voice. It is here that the question of emptiness and worthlessness of the union territory movement comes to the forefront. The first precondition for the realization of union territory status for the LBA, or any other organization, is necessarily going to be the winning of the confidence of the Muslim leadership of Kargil. Without their support, the union territory demand is going to be a completely futile exercise as the government of India is unlikely to heed attention to a demand raised by one section of Ladakhi population and opposed by the other half. Therefore, if the LBA (or any other organization) is sincerely serious about the union territory status, the first precondition is to take the local Muslims into confidence.

But with all its anti-Muslim rhetoric, the realization of union territory demand seems to be a wild dream for the LBA (or other parties with Buddhist base) because it has been completely reluctant to take the primary step of taking the local Muslims in confidence. This means two things: (1) either the LBA (or other parties supporting the union territory demand and the LBA) is/are not serious about the union territory demand—meaning that they only use it as a trump card for vote bank politics, or (2) they do not have the capacity to

spearhead the union territory movement. Regrettably, the leaders of Kargil, on the other hand, remain happy to be in their own insulated space (sometimes also indulging in anti-Buddhist jingoisms) rather than trying to redefine the political discourse in Ladakh by giving it a more secular dose with long term visions.

Practically, then the union territory movement remains only a vote bank apparatus. All the political parties having their respective bases in Leh, procure votes in the name or with the pledge of acquiring union territory status for Ladakh; and the leaders in Kargil purchase votes by opposing the same. Hence, every parliamentary election in Ladakh gets reduced to a union territory and religion affair—nothing more than a Leh-Buddhist versus Kargil-Muslim, or supporters and non-supporters of union territory demand. Whichever party the people vote for, they vote with the same hope that they might get what they voted for sooner or later, but without exactly knowing (or without being led to know by the leaders) as to what union territory is, how it can be realized, and what are the hurdles and complexities in its way. What they know, or are being led to know, is that with the homecoming of the union territory status, all kinds of problems that Ladakh faces today would be completely done away with in one stroke.

Nonetheless, apart from the rhetoric during or around elections, every political party or organization provides only lip service to the union territory movement. Once the elections are over, union territory is hurriedly put back on the back burner. The leaders feel very comfortable with the empty promise of UT, after all it helps them to shirk and wriggle out of the real problems being faced by the common masses in terms of education, employment, road, electricity so on and so forth. As the union territory issue looms too large in the collective conscience of the people of Leh, they tend to forget (or are led to forget) the basic issues that effect their daily life directly or indirectly.

When all's said and done, one should not forget to ask whether 'UT-Ladakh' is a realizable goal or a wishful thinking. Given the present state of Jammu and Kashmir, it is very difficult for the Indian government to consider the union territory option for Ladakh.

Firstly, union territory status falls in the trifurcation scheme, and any government at the centre will conceive the division/trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir as a bad ploy as it (Jammu and Kashmir) is being, generally, hailed as no less than a symbol of Indian secularism. Second, union territory for Ladakh, even without trifurcating the state, will sharpen the demand for Jammu state, again leading to trifurcation. But, even if the trifurcation is done with good intentions, it may still be conceived as a weak strategy—a division on religious lines, thereby indicating that different communities cannot coexist in secular India. Third, and most importantly, India needs Jammu and Ladakh to recite the nationalistic hymn so as to help India render the separatist movement in the Valley ineffective. In that way, India can prove a point to the international community that the separatist movement going on in Jammu and Kashmir is only a sectarian one—opposed by the Jammuites and Ladakhis who run their respective parallel movements for fuller integration with India.

IV

Politics of Ladakhi Identity and Alienation of Muslims

At a broader level, the justification put forth for the union territory demand has been the distinctiveness of Ladakhi identity and giving it a political expression. Mr Rigzin Jora, MLA Leh and Minister for Tourism and Culture, Jammu and Kashmir Government, told in an interview that "Ladakh region is a unique cultural, geographical and ethnic identity. The problem there is that the uniqueness of this identity has not got its full expression in the political terms."[44] However, the leaders of Ladakh have so far failed to come to a consensus of what are the essential ingredients of Ladakhi identity. This may mainly be because of the exclusivist and communal politics of the LBA. It is important to mention here that why LBA matters too much in the politics of Ladakh despite having popular political

parties in the region since very long time. There has been a huge overlapping in the membership of the communal organizations and political parties in Ladakh. More often than not, the Buddhist leaders find it easy to follow the LBA bandwagon to collect cheap votes by evoking emotional issues. All the Buddhist leaders in Ladakh today are either still members of the LBA, or had been its key members at one point of time or other.

The LBA's construction of an exclusivist Buddhist identity as the real Ladakhi identity, and its deliberate attempts to exclude the Muslims, especially the Sunnis of Leh, from the category of Ladakhis by branding them as 'outsiders' or 'non-loyal Ladakhis' alienates the Ladakhi Muslims. The LBA generally provokes the masses by constructing imaginary fears of demographic imbalance, conversions, a future Muslim-dominated Ladakh and so on. All these go just in line with the Hindutva myth in the Indian politics. Such kinds of miss-projections of Ladakh have only alienated the Muslim Ladakhis as Ladakhi identity is much more than the distorted religious identity presented by LBA and its followers.

At times, the LBA even tried to associate the Ladakhi Muslims with the separatist movement going on in the Valley. However, it is important to mention here that there has not been a single stray incident of secessionism or anti-national movement in Ladakh till date. Despite the fact that half of its population constitutes Muslims, there has not been a single Ladakhi Muslim so far been alleged for any kind of links with the secessionist movement in the Valley. Rather, they have always condemned the use of violence as a means of political bargaining by the militant groups in the Valley.

In fact, a more realistic and inclusive conception of Ladakhi identity has been propagated by the Muslims of Leh and Kargil districts in the aftermath of 1989 Buddhist agitation:

> 'When one talks of Ladakh, one is talking about [200,000] people of mixed Indo-Aryan (Dard, Kashmiri and Indian Origin) and the Mongoloid descent living along the course of the high Indus and its tributaries; of a people who profess Islam and Buddhism in equal numerical strength, and yet speak the same language in different phonetic forms, share the same cultural roots and life style despite the difference in faith'.[45]

They accuse that the LBA has created a perception, 'that the Muslims of Ladakh'—Sunnis of Leh in particular—are 'outsiders' and 'recent settlers'.[46] To bear out their Ladakhi identity, the Muslims trace their Ladakhi pedigree and claim that they were brought into Ladakh by its King Jamyang Namgyal in the 16th Century as *Mkhartsong-pa* (palace traders). For the legitimacy of their claims, they point out that the accounts of Ladakhi history (including the indigenous 'Ladakh Chronicles') approved their existence as Ladakhis. They also argue that Ladakhis as a whole, faced discrimination under the Kashmiri elites, not only the Buddhists.

It is, then, not surprising that the Muslims of Ladakh, particularly those of Kargil, always oppose the union territory movement. Therefore, whenever the Buddhist leadership raises the union territory demand, the Muslim leadership of Kargil loses no opportunity in rejecting and criticizing the same.

This, however, does not mean that all is well in Kargil. Even in Kargil, the social and political discourses have been, more or less, overtly controlled by some fanatic Mullahs and Sheikhs.[47] Apart from the antipathy towards the LBA, the opposition to the union territory movement, the leaders of Kargil seemingly lack any political wisdom. They apparently oppose it for the sake of opposing the LBA and the Buddhist leaders. The political short-sightedness of the Kargili leaders was very well reflected when they rejected the mechanism of local Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Act in 1995, modelled on the Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council, only because it was materialized at the effort of the Buddhist leaders of Leh as a concession to the Union Territory demand. They blindly rejected this political mechanism—nowadays being hailed from many quarters as a good model for developing the peripheral

regions—because of their obsession for opposing the Leh-based leadership without any kind of substantive long-term vision. Only when they saw that the LAHDC mechanism was working well for the betterment of the people in Leh district did they accept the same in 2002 for Kargil.

V

Language of Politics and Politics of Language

It is, then, quite apparent that, despite the pay-offs of communal politics, the language and grammar of the political discourse in the trans-Himalayan region have been detrimental, among other things, in alienating the Ladakhi Muslims, and hence kept them detached from the union territory movement. So, unless and until the LBA and other stakeholders of union territory in Ladakh secularize the language of their politics with more rational ingredients, the dream of union territory is likely to remain nothing less than a daydream.

On another front, the language of politics has also been harmful in shaping the politics of language in Ladakh. Ladakhi language is one of the essential components of Ladakhi identity because anybody from anywhere in Ladakh can interact with everybody from every part of Ladakh easily (without an interpreter). For the past many years, this secular component of Ladakhi identity has also been politicized by the vested interests.

Spoken Ladakhi or *Phaskat* is a Western Tibetan dialect, which is completely different from Classical Tibetan or *Choskat* in terms of grammar, style, phonetics and vocabulary. But it can be written very conveniently in the Tibetan script with minor changes in the grammar.

However, the LBA and some fanatic leaders/scholars are not even ready to accept Ladakhi language as Ladakhi because of their mythical beliefs. These uncompromising scholars from Ladakh propagate that

the writing of spoken Ladakhi language, should not be tolerated all. A very popular news magazine from Ladakh, *Ladags Melong* (Mirror of Ladakh), was unnecessarily attacked by them for popularizing the Ladakhi colloquial.[49] Their accusation was that this will dilute the purity of Classical Tibetan, thereby leading to the dilution of the Buddhist religious texts and teachings (which are, more or less, written entirely in Classical Tibetan) through their possible translation into Ladakhi language.[50] They even go to the extent of saying that Buddhism is so intimately connected to the Classical Tibetan language and script that any kind of its interpretation in Ladakhi colloquial will lead to its dilution. In short, Buddhism and Classical Tibetan, according to them, cannot be separated, and whosoever tries to do this is bound to face serious repercussions.

However, the fact is that a common Ladakhi cannot understand Classical Tibetan. Even the Tibetans themselves have become very much liberal in deviating from Classical Tibetan in writing school text books and newspapers in simple and spoken languages. It is quite understandable that for the common Ladakhis, Classical Tibetan is an esoteric language.[51] Only few people or scholars with special knowledge can understand it. These few scholars enjoy great privilege as interpreters of the religious texts, all of which are written in Classical Tibetan. Therefore, the popularization of spoken Ladakhi and the translation of Buddhist teachings into it are likely to substantially reduce their significance in Ladakhi society. Consequently, the scholars who call themselves the protectors and the preservers of Buddhism are, probably, afraid of interpreting Buddhism in spoken Ladakhi as they fear that they might lose their elevated standing among the common people as the interpreters of religious texts and teachings. They also are afraid that popularization of conversational Ladakhi would cut Ladakh off from the more popular and wider Tibetan literary world.[52] Consequently, they refuse to go along with Ladakhi language.

The irony in Ladakh, however, is that, on the one hand, its leaders and scholars press Ladakhi language to be included in the Eighth

Schedule of the Indian Constitution, while, on the other hand, they do not give Ladakhi language the respect it deserves by discarding it in favour of the Classical Tibetan, a completely alien language for the common Ladakhis. The LBA and Buddhist leaders have since long been pushing hard to make Ladakhi language be counted as one of the national languages by getting it incorporated in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The Muslims of Ladakh bear a grudge that if the Buddhist leaders want Ladakhi language to be recognized as a national language, it should not be known as the 'Bodhi' (which is generally associated with Classical Tibetan) as persisted by some Buddhist leaders. The Muslims endure that the language should be called 'Ladakhi' to make it more representative of the region.[53] This is apparently logical, because spoken Ladakhi has no affinity—in forms of grammar, style, phonetics and vocabulary—with Classical Tibetan. Hence, it is needless to say that for the Ladakhi leaders it becomes imperative that the logic of 'a language of secular politics' in Ladakh should also be inclusive of 'a politics of a secular language' in the region.

Conclusion

There is an ominous need to understand the political dynamics of the region in a more methodical mode rather than insulating Ladakh from the mainstream discourse. Nor should it be confined to the narrow frame of union territory politics. While understanding the fact that the modern Ladakhi politics had originated with the popular political sentiment against the Kashmiri-dominated government in the state, a serious effort is also required to understand the internal political dynamics—principally in terms of the inter-community relations between the Muslims and the Buddhists, which, of late, have shown the tendency of becoming very volatile. In 1989 and again in 2006, the clashes between the two communities almost brought the long basis of communal harmony in the region on the verge of extinction. As of now, the inter-community relations in the region

are far from satisfactory. This might be exploited by the rightist forces from outside Ladakh for breeding fundamentalism in the relatively peaceful region.

Already there are reports of links between the LBA and the saffron forces outside the region. The rightist forces from Kargil have also shown similar tendencies of linking up their fate with the sentiments of Islamic fundamentalists rampant in the not so far distant neighborhood. At this instant, a hostile competition between the saffron forces and the Islamic fundamentalists in this strategically sensitive region is the last thing that Ladakh and India can afford to have. And so, there is an urgent need to understand the undercurrents of the internal political dynamics and to secularize the political discourse, before Ladakh 'become[s] yet another political battlefield where religion will divide people, create dissonance, change cultures, rewrite history, falsify our past.'[54] There is a burning need to make both the Muslim and Buddhist leaders realize the futility of their present mutual antagonism based on the politicized form of their respective religions. Both will have to be made to realize the inescapable necessity of secularizing the political discourse to acknowledge each other as equal stakeholders in any kind of future political mechanism to settle Ladakh's political destiny.

Section II
Religion, Identities and Inter-community Relations

8

Religion and Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir

Rekha Chowdhary

Nature of Conflict and Role of Religion

The 'Kashmir conflict', as it has manifested itself during the last two decades, cannot be defined as a religion-based conflict. It is a purely political conflict that has arisen out of indigenous political reasons. Though it has both external as well as internal dimensions (external dimensions are located in the history of Partition, and the claims made by Pakistan on Kashmir due to its Muslim majority character), yet these are the internal dimensions of the conflict that have sustained it for the last six decades or so. These internal dimensions of conflict are located in the ethno-nationalist identity politics of Kashmir on the one hand and the context of popular alienation caused by the existing political situation of the state on the other. The excessive intrusion of the Centre in the politics of the state, continuous manipulation of the local politics, and the failure of democratic and federal arrangements have perpetuated the sense of alienation in Kashmir.

The way the conflict manifested itself did not have religious undertones. It came out in open in 1989 and was triggered by the results of an election, popularly perceived to be rigged. Many of those who joined militancy and resorted to politics of violence had participated in 1987 Assembly Election as candidates, campaigners or supporters.

The factor of religion did assume importance at a later point of time when the religious mercenaries joined the militancy. However, it is pertinent to note that the beginning of militancy was not made by Islamic groups. It was started by indigenous groups like Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) that did not espouse the Islamic cause. The cadre of the JKLF was however eliminated by the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen which perceived the problem from the standpoint of religion and pursued the goal of merger of the state of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan. Hizb, though having an indigenous base, was created and sponsored by Pakistan. Religion came to influence armed militancy in a big way only with the entry of pan-Islamic militant groups like, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Al Badr. These organizations invoked the ideology of jihad and perceived the Kashmir conflict purely in the context of global Islam.

Religion has also not formed the basis of popular separatist sentiment. Rather than religion-based demand for merger with Pakistan, the sentiment that has been expressed since 1989 has been in favour of *azadi* or independence. As a matter of fact, fundamentalist politics that occupied some space in the early stages of political upsurge in Kashmir found it difficult to expand its base due to the resistance coming from within the society. Not only people resisted against various kinds of cultural codes including dress code for women, but they also showed their resentment against the foreign mercenaries using the gun in the name of religion. The support that people gave to indigenous militancy and violence in the initial stage was not available for the foreign mercenaries. In fact, it was their presence that led to delegitimization of violence in Kashmir.

II

Religion—A Factor of Identity Politics

The factor of religion, however, cannot be denied in the present conflict, especially in the context of the identity formation as well as in the process of political mobilization. Two recent valuable studies focussing on the process of identity formation in Kashmir (Chitralekha Zutshi 2003, and Mridu Rai 2004)[1], have located religion along with region as important components of Kashmir identity. According to Rai, "both religion and region were important ingredients of Kashmiri sense of self". However, how the identity expressed itself depended upon the shifting nature of balance between these two elements at a particular historical moment. Referring to the shift, she finds the "pendulum swinging from moments in which a regional sense of belonging still encompassed a definite sense of religious difference to those others when religious affiliations fractured regional identity."[2] Similar reference to the process of balancing between the notion of Islam and that of Kashmiri nation has been made by Zutshi who focuses her study on the growing salience of Islam in the definition of Kashmiri identity in the late 19th and early 20th Century. Rejecting a very simplified notion of *Kashmiriyat* reflecting the notion of Kashmiri nationalism based on perfectly harmonious relationship between religious communities, she highlights the complexity underlying the relationship between 'region' and 'religion' on the one hand and the religious context of identity, on the other. The concept of "Kashmiriness was", she argues, "and continues to be, a series of dynamic identities that have emerged in interaction with, and at times been overshadowed by, other forms of belonging, particularly the religious and national."[3]

It is the Kashmiri Muslim identity politics that forms the core of present conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. This politics grounds itself in the contestation of Kashmir's relationship with India. Religion, as already stated does not necessarily define the nature of such

contestation. Though there are quite a few organizations and leaders who seek to establish a clear cut relationship of separatism with Islam, yet the dominant expression of the contestation does not follow the line of religion.

Identification of separatism with the people of one religion, however, does not make it necessarily a communal or fundamentalist politics, mainly for the reason that there are internal diversities within this politics. It follows a range in which the fundamentalist groups occupy some space in the margins, yet its central point remains informed by the liberal traditions. The internal differentiation in itself makes space for an intra-community dialogue which makes it difficult to hold politics hostage to religious dogmatism.

Nature of Conflict—Internal Dialogue within Separatist Politics

The notion that the Kashmir conflict emanates from religious reasons and is inherently linked with the global agenda of Islam has been internally contested by the leading separatists of the Valley of Kashmir. Except for Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who heads one of the factions of All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), there are not many among the popular separatist leaders who believe in the idea of religion being the basis of conflict. Geelani, however, has been taking the position that the movement in Kashmir cannot be described as political. According to him, it is the religious struggle of Muslims of Kashmir and a part of the global Islamic movement. The fact that the jihadi elements had come to Kashmir to help the local militants was proof enough that religion was an important factor in the movement.

However, this position is not shared by many other separatists. The general view about the conflict is that it is a indigenous political struggle which is not related to the global context of jihad. That Geelani's position remains internally contested can be seen from the political discourse of other senior separatists like Yasin Malik. These

separatists not only clearly define the movement in the local context of Kashmir and emphasize its political dimensions but also explicitly declare its secular character.

The sharpest critique of religion being the basis of the separatist movement in Kashmir however came from AG Lone, who, challenging the position taken by Geelani, had argued emphatically that the issue of Kashmir was political and not religious. "Had it been a religious issue, then we would have to fight religiously, according to the tenets of religion." A religion-based argument, according to him, ignored the distinct nature of the movement and overlooked the diversities of Jammu and Kashmir. "We believe in the undivided state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is disputed and yet to be settled. Its formal settlement is to be done by the people of the state by a fair plebiscite, without going into the question whether it is a Muslim issue or another issue. It is a complicated issue because this disputed territory is not inhabited by the Muslims alone. There are other faiths as well. Then there are regions, Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Azad Kashmir, Northern Areas, Gilgit..."[4] He, therefore, took a stand against the relevance of jihadi elements in Kashmir. His major objection to their presence was their religious agenda. "They are not for *azadi*. They are for international jihad and have their own global agenda." The movement belonged to Kashmiris and should be controlled by Kashmiris only. Thus his important statement: "We are thankful to them [the guest militants]. But when it comes to the settlement of the dispute, it will be the Kashmiris—their militants and their political leadership—which will have to represent the people of Kashmir."[5]

The debate raised by Lone reflects the popular sentiment as well. The response of the people to the jihadis or the fundamentalist organizations enforcing politics based upon religion has not been very enthusiastic. As already stated, there has been, in fact, a silent resistance both against the fundamentalist organizations seeking to change the cultural practices as well as against the jihadi elements.

III

One important dimension of conflict, where the factor of religion assumes importance, relates to the situation of armed militancy and its implications for the religious minorities in Jammu and Kashmir. There are two contexts in which one can pose the issue of minorities as they were impacted by militancy: firstly, the mass exodus of almost the whole community of the Kashmiri Hindus from Kashmir immediately after the onset of militancy, and secondly, the targeted killing of minorities.

Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits

The mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits in the wake of separatist politics and armed militancy in 1990 has posed the question of religion in Kashmir in a big way. In fact, many Kashmiri Pandit leaders have taken the position that the exodus is the result of the extremist and fundamentalist tendencies in Kashmir. Defining the movement as an Islamist movement seeking merger of Kashmir with Pakistan, these organizations talk about 'the grand strategy' for 'annihilating the Kashmiri Hindus'. Terms like 'ethnic cleansing' and 'genocide' are used to describe the phenomenon of exodus.[6]

To establish their point, the Kashmiri Pandit leadership has sought to reinvent and redefine history and sought to argue that there has been a continuous persecution of Pandits in Kashmir for centuries together. It is in this context that the argument is put forward that exodus of Pandits is not a new phenomenon and whenever the community has been under religious pressure, its response has been similar. A very popular reference is given about the earlier exodus when 'only 11 families' were left in Kashmir, rest of them were either forcibly converted or migrated to other places in India.

Such 'community legends', as Henny Senders would like to call it, have preceded the present exodus and have been invoked this time as well. The important point underlying these legends is the rejection of

any idea of smooth inter-community relationship in Kashmir. On the contrary, point is made about sharp divide between the Muslims and the Hindus and the endangered status of the "Pandits as a minority, always persecuted by the majority and its religion".[7]

Immediately after the exodus, the Panun Kashmir, a political organization was formed which referred to the exodus as a systematic effort on part of the Muslims to oust the only minority in Kashmir. Naming armed militancy as a 'Muslim religious crusade' of which the Kashmiri Hindus became 'first victims', it referred to the killings of prominent people such as Justice Neelkanth Ganjoo, political activists like Tika Lal Taploo and Prem Nath Bhat, as an evidence of "the culmination of the long secessionist movement carried on by the fundamentalist forces in Kashmir since 1947 and overtly and covertly supported by Pakistan."[8]

The movement resulting in the displacement of the only minority of Kashmir has certainly posed a big question not only about the nature of political movement of Kashmir but also about the response of the separatist leadership and the Muslim community. However, before one arrives at a conclusion, it is important to ask three questions: First, was the espousal of religious sentiments underlying the movement the reason for the exodus of the Pandits? Second, what has been the response of the Kashmiri separatist leadership to the question of exodus and return of the Pandits? And third, was the exodus a result of the lack of trust between the Muslims and Pandits?

In response to the first question, though one can refer to the role played by the fringe organizations that tried to give a religious colour to the movement in early 1990 (the time the exodus took place) and their use of mosques and media to threaten the minorities, yet the scale at which the exodus took place cannot be attributed to this factor alone. The Pandits left the Valley in a situation of chaos and uncertainty as the Valley was in the grip of terror and there was total collapse of political authority and order. Not only the Pandits, but even the Muslims identified with the Indian state were targeted

by the militants and many of them were forced to flee from Kashmir. Lot of brunt of the militant activities was to be faced by the political activists, especially those belonging to the National Conference. (The party counts more than 400 victims of militant violence). It was the result of such a situation that the political parties almost went into hibernation after January 1990.

As regards the response of the Kashmiri separatist leadership to the question of exodus and their return, most of them have expressed regret about the exodus of Pandits and blamed their migration to the Indian state. In recent period, almost every one of the separatists has argued that Kashmir and Kashmiri culture is incomplete without Pandits and has made appeals to them to come back to the Valley.

In response to the third question, it is important to note the absence of acrimony between Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims before and after the exodus. There was quite a shared space between the two communities. Apart from speaking the same language and sharing the same cultural ethos, they participated in each other's festivals and shared each other's moments of happiness and grief. So much so that they even shared the common spiritual space. Pandits along with Muslims thronged to the famous shrines spread all over the Valley. Though in cities like Srinagar, the Pandits lived in clustered localities like Karan Nagar and Habbakadal and also felt the sense of the rivalry with the emerging middle class Muslims, but in the rural areas, the situation was quite different. Except for the few villages which were dominated by the Pandits, in every other village they formed a very miniscule minority. But being more educated and prosperous, they were revered by the local Muslim population. Almost every Muslim child was schooled by a Pandit teacher, hence, the bond that the educated Muslims still feel with the Pandits on this count is quite emotional.

The inter-community relations before the exodus were as cordial as one could desire them to be. Despite the Muslims and Pandits following different faiths, there was no tension between the communities. In fact, except for two very brief periods in 1931

and 1986, Kashmir did not witness much expression of antagonism between the two communities.

Many analysts have commented on the syncretism that prevailed in Kashmir. Mridu Rai has equated it with the common context of religion in the Indian subcontinent where "on a popular level there was everywhere a continuity of traditions rather than divergence and this continuity formed the basis of syncretism".[9] However, Rai finds such continuity of traditions and syncretism operating more in Kashmir due to something that was more distinctive about its social structure. To quote her:

> ...what made the Kashmiri social structure so singular was the pattern of interaction between the Hindus and Muslims deriving from the Valley's Hindus consisting solely of Brahman caste. This forced a relationship of ritual and economic interdependence between Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims. In the absence of the full panoply of *jatis* that characterized Hindu society elsewhere, the Pandits, whose caste status excluded them from either manual labour or work deemed polluting, relied heavily on Muslim specialist groups for the provision of essential services and liturgical goods... Thus, while religious differences were fully acknowledged, there were also vital ties that bound these groups in the region.[10]

Unavoidable social interaction between these communities helped not only to forge familiarity with each other's lifestyle but also tolerance for each other's religious faith.

However, the 1931 communal riots form the major exception to the tradition of tolerance and common bond. However, Prem Nath Bazaz strongly argues that the upheaval of July 1931 was neither "the handiwork of arch conspirators" nor "the outcome of religious zeal". It was, on the contrary, a result of the emergence of political forces that had joined together against 'despotic rule of Dogras' and against 'feudalism'.[11] Chitralekha Zutshi similarly rejects the argument that the tensions in 1931 were motivated by religion. The rioting, according to her, was not a job "of a frenzied mob looking to kill

in the name of religion, but one intended to redress the immediate economic grievances of Kashmiri Muslims".[12] According to her, "the tussle between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits in and after 1931 was more about political and economic representation than religious antagonism. Kashmiri Muslims, tired of being excluded from education, the government, and the lower rungs of the administration, rallied around the cry of 'Islam in danger' raised by youth recently returned from British India with professional degrees. Significantly, the looting following the Central Jail incident was concentrated in the Vecharnag locality of Srinagar, home to Kashmiri Pandit petty administrators and moneylenders..."[13]

With the exception of the 1986 riots in limited areas of Anantnag district, there have not been instances of communal tensions in Kashmir in post-1947 period. The bond between the Muslims and Pandits was visible all through up to the period of their exodus. Even during 1990, when Pandits left the Valley, they carried the memories of goodwill and cooperation from their Muslim neighbours and friends. Most of the displaced Pandits recollect the assurance given by the Muslims about their protection till the time they were threatened by 'outsiders'. This situation has been recorded by one of the Kashmiri Pandit intellectuals (ON Trissal) in the following manner:

> In the late 1989, when militancy surfaced in the Valley, the Muslims in general, whether as a neighbour, friend or a colleague asked their Pandit brothers not to leave their homes and provided security to them. Many Muslims accommodated Pandit families in their houses to save them from militant attacks. There are instances when Muslim ladies, at the risk of their lives, stood at the doors of Pandit houses, to stop militants from entering their houses. Not only this, but when militancy gained the upper hand and the common Muslim himself came under the threat of the gun, timely information was provided to the Pandits so that they flee to safety.[14]

There are two more factors that reflect upon the relationship between the Pandits and Muslims. Firstly, the fact that a few thousand

Kashmiri Pandit families that still chose to live in Kashmir after the exodus of the community at large did not feel any threat to their lives from their Muslim neighbours. In fact, their existence in Kashmir after 1990 has been possible mainly due to the protection given to them by the Muslim community and the trust that existed between the two communities. It is a different matter that these Pandits became the soft target for the militants and were massacred a number of times by the militants. The first of such massacre took place in 1997 in the Sangrama village of Badgam district. Seven Kashmiri Pandits were killed at that time. This was repeated in 1998 when 26 Pandits were killed in Wandhama on the eve of India's Republic day. In 2003, 24 Pandits were killed in Nadimarg. It is important to note that most of these killings took place when the government was planning to rehabilitate the displaced Pandits back to the Valley. However, these massacres did not go very well with the sensitivities of the Muslims and each time strong popular resentment against these killings was expressed in Kashmir.

The second factor relates to the continuing bond between the Pandits and Muslims even after exodus. Apart from the fact that the relationship between the neighbours and friends belonging to the two communities continues at various levels, there is a strong feeling in Kashmir that is being articulated forcefully for the last few years, that Kashmir is not complete without the Kashmiri Pandits. Not only the mainstream political leaders, but even the moderate separatists have been stating the fact that the exodus of the Pandits has meant a loss to the Kashmiri ethos. The loss of the sense of diversity provided by the presence of Pandits, howsoever miniscule minority they might have been, is considered to be a major loss of the Kashmiris.

Muslim-Pandit Relationship: Political Aspects

Before closing the discussion about the inter-community relationship in the Valley, it may be pertinent to refer to the disjuncture between the social and political relations of the two communities. Despite a

close cultural bond and a harmonious inter-community relation, there were strong political differences between the Muslims and Pandits.

For a number of historical and social reasons, the politics with which the Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits identified since 1930s till date has remained almost exclusive. The political movement of Kashmir, led first by the Muslim Conference and later by the National Conference, gave rise to a politics with which not many Pandits could identify. In fact, they were quite uncomfortable with that politics and saw it aimed against their privileged position—whether it was the demand for educational and employment opportunities under the banner of the Muslim Conference or the demand for land reforms under the National Conference. Anathema towards this politics was quite inevitable among the educated Pandits, who were, till now, almost monopolizing jobs and holding land.

Divergence of political response based upon divergent economic and social interest, came to be reinforced, through the process of identity politics. This identity politics privileging the demand for autonomous political space over the socio-economic issues, while imagining a unified Kashmiri collectivity, came to be more clearly associated with the Muslims. The Pandits, most of whom could not identify with this politics in the earlier period due to the divergence of their socio-economic interest, now had additional reason to exclude themselves from this politics based upon the contestation of state's relationship with India. Identifying themselves with India, the Pandits did not feel happy with such a contestation.

Political divergence between the Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims that was registered much before 1947 continued to segregate the two communities till 1989.

With two communities diverging politically, there developed almost mutually exclusive political perspective having no middle ground. In fact, no attempt was made to find middle ground on either side. On the contrary, gulf was widened with the mutual suspicion of each other. Thus, while the Pandits saw the Muslims as essentially

opportunist (living on Indian money and playing politics to uproot it), the Muslims saw Pandits as Indian agents and informers.

The two communities continued to live side by side, engaging each other at the cultural levels but totally disjointed at the political levels. Such a political gulf, led to tensions which often came out in open but never assumed belligerent form. There would be occasions like a cricket match between India and Pakistan when one could feel the tension (Muslims siding with Pakistan and Hindus siding with India), or during any political activity where the Kashmiri Muslims would be involved in large numbers.

It is this political tension between the two communities that can be seen as one factor underlying the exodus of the Pandits. One can imagine the situation in February-March 1990 when the Pandits started leaving the Valley; it was the time when thousands of people swayed by the conviction that independence was around the corner, were thronging on the streets of Srinagar chanting the slogan of *azadi*. The writ of the state was totally ineffective and the militants were calling the shots. The fact that most of the Muslims identified with both with the slogan of *azadi* as well as with the militants, did not appeal to the sensibilities of the Pandits.

IV

Targeted Killing of Minorities

During the last two decades of militancy, there have been a number of occasions when the selective killings of the minorities have taken place in Jammu and Kashmir. These killings have been motivated with the clear-cut objective of provoking communal backlash in the rest of the state and with the motive to polarize the society on religious basis. Apart from the massacres of Kashmiri Pandits left in the Valley mentioned above, there has been the massacre of Sikhs. In 2000, 17 Sikhs were massacred in Chattisinghpora. Similar kind of provocative

killings of Hindus has been tâking place in Jammu as well. The year 1998, for instance, witnessed a number of such massacres—28 Hindus in Prankote village in Riasi, 25 members of a wedding procession in Chapnara village in Doda, 17 Hindus in Kishtwar, and 34 construction workers in two outposts out of Doda border, in Chamba. Such killings have been repeated in the later years. As stated above, these killings have been motivated with a view to polarize the society and to generate a reaction from the Hindu fundamentalist forces. In the last few years, Jammu's Raghunath temple has been targeted twice by suicidal attacks, so has been the crowded railway station of this Hindu-dominated town.

It cannot be argued that such provocative militant acts have not produced any effect. The Hindu fundamentalist parties have used each of these incidents to portray the separatist politics of Kashmir as fundamentalist in nature aimed at victimizing the Hindus and Sikhs. Starting from the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus to the massacres of Hindus and Sikhs, these organizations have sought to generate a psyche of victimization of the minorities in the state.

Similar impact can be seen in the three militancy-infested districts of Jammu region, viz., Poonch, Rajouri and Doda. This impact is to be seen more clearly in the urban areas. The towns of Poonch, Rajouri and Kishtwar have been the targets of communal mobilization, by the Hindu fundamentalist forces, especially by the BJP. Here one could see the palpable tension during the peak of militancy. Mutual suspicion and sense of insecurity even led to segregated community life and resulted in erosion of the traditional practice of revering and sharing each other's religious festivals. Many of these festivals provided a good opportunity for people of different religions to appreciate and participate in each other's community life.

Though conflict during the past two decades has impacted the lives of various groups in different manners, it is seen in isolated and selective manners by each of the group, thereby leading to segregated responses that quite often also tend to be antagonistic in nature.

There are lot of stereotypes that each of the community has about the other. These stereotypes generate mutual fears and phobias which tend to be overplayed in certain respects in certain situations. The fear of being outnumbered by the rival religious community seems to be all-pervasive in the state and promotes lots of sensitivities. In Kashmir, there is a general fear about the forces that are working behind the scene to change the Muslim-majority character of the state. Hence, any issue that involves the denomination of the population becomes sensitive and controversial. Thus both the census and Election Commission's enumeration of population in last few years has been severely contested. More recently, the fear of demographic change became the basis of the massive response during the Amarnath agitation. In Jammu, similarly, there is the fear among Hindus of being outnumbered by Muslims and hence a very common reference is made to the Muslims surrounding the city and the imminence of the time when they (Hindus) will have to seek refuge outside Jammu. These fears and phobias are quite entrenched in the psyche of the middle class and are accepted and circulated almost without any questioning.

However, this scenario remains, more or less, limited to the towns and its effect has not percolated to the rural areas. However, to probe further the context of religion with reference to the ongoing conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, it may be appropriate to refer to the tradition of inter-community relations in this state.

V

Inter-community Relations in J&K

Hindus and Muslims, the two major communities in Jammu and Kashmir cannot be either seen as antagonistic or ever-clashing communities. Despite following different faiths and occupying different social locales, there is sufficient space that the two communities commonly share. Both in Kashmir as well as in Jammu, the traditional coexistence between the Hindus and Muslims that has

often been noted, reflects not merely a cultural-linguistic bond, but also a shared value pattern based upon the principles of tolerance and non-dogmatic pursuance of faith.

Being a plural society, the state presents a very interesting picture of multiple and over-lapping identities that make it difficult for any one of these identities to acquire an over-arching role. Religious identity therefore remains important but not the exclusive category for self-definition of people here. Cultural-linguistic and regional affiliations often cut across the religious bonds. Rather than being reflected as homogenous categories, the Hindu and Muslim communities are internally fragmented at various levels. Hindus, for instance, are divided on linguistic, regional and caste basis. The Kashmiri Hindus, for instance, have a distinct sense of identity which is defined as much by its regional and cultural markers as by the religious ones. Their level of interaction with the Hindus, or for that matter with the Brahmins of Jammu has been much more limited as compared to their interaction with the Muslims of the Valley. Besides regional distinctiveness, it is the caste that still operates as one of the major marker of identity among Hindus. Hence, there remains a relationship of rivalry among the three entrenched castes among Hindus—the Brahmins, Rajputs and Mahajans—as well as these castes and the Dalits.

Muslims of the state categorize themselves as Kashmiris, Gujjars, Paharis, Dogras, Punjabis, or Ladakhis following almost an endogamous existence and even displaying, many a times, a sense of rivalry, if not disdain, for each other. The attempts to generate a homogenized politics based on religious affiliation of Muslims under the banner of Muslim Conference failed in pre-1947 period as it got divided on regional basis with Kashmiri Muslims leadership choosing to convert the Muslim Conference into the National Conference and the Jammu's Muslim leadership reviving Muslim Conference and aligning with Muslim League. In post-1947 period also, rather than a convergence between the politics of Muslims of the two region, there has been an inter-regional rivalry with the Muslims of Jammu region nursing strong grievances against the Kashmiri leadership. The

divergence in the politics of the Muslims of the two regions becomes very clear in the present scenario when one notices that the separatist politics that remains at the core of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir is located mainly in Kashmir Valley and has not extended itself among Muslims of Jammu region. Of course, the Muslim dominated areas of Jammu region are militancy-infested but the separatist sentiment as it manifests itself in Kashmir, does not manifest itself in the same manner in Jammu region. Almost all of the separatist organizations are located in the Valley. So much so, even the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has had not much presence in Jammu region.

Inter-community Relations in Jammu

The communal frenzy that had overtaken northern India did not leave Jammu without an impact. It was the result of such frenzy that the Muslim-dominated character of this region was changed after 1947. While a large number of Muslims migrated to the other side of Line of Control, many were also killed. The same fate was met by the Hindus living in the Muslim-dominated areas which came under the control of Pakistan.

However, the post-Partition period did not reflect much of impact of the communal violence of the partition period. The inter-community relations during the past six decades have remained quite vibrant and with the exception of few minor incidents, the region has not reflected communal tension.

Unlike Kashmir Valley, which has very small minority population, Jammu is almost evenly divided between Hindus and Muslims. In the whole region, there is mixed living and communities live side by side having sufficient interaction at economic, professional and educational levels. The tolerance that the region has shown in the face of various kinds of provocations, especially during the period of militancy, has been remarkable. Apart from the targeted killings of Hindus and Sikhs, there have been repeated attacks in the major temple and railway station of Jammu. These attacks, however, have

failed to trigger communal tension in the region. This despite the fact that after the last shoot out in the Raghunath temple, the VHP and other Hindu organizations had started working on Jammu as its Hindu constituency and projecting the militant attacks here as attacks on Hindus.

There are various reasons that can be attributed to the failure of communal politics to instigate inter-community tensions beyond a point. First, there is the fact of mixed population in whole region. Though there is a tendency to live in similar community clusters, yet, these clusters are not completely closed. Even when predominantly habited by one community, these may be surrounded by clusters of other communities. Besides, there are many areas where people still live in mixed way. There are many ways in which acceptance for other groups and other religious practice has been culturally incorporated. It is not strange to see the structure of a mosque and a temple located in the same vicinity. Similarly, a Hindu is as familiar with the *azan* from a mosque as a Muslim is to the sound of devotional songs played at full blast from the temples or *jagrata* (all-night devotional music) in reverence of Vaishno Mata.

Despite all kinds of aggressive communal mobilization, the religious identity has not succeeded either in homogenizing different cultural groups or in becoming the primary identity of people. Muslims of the region, for instance, rather than forming one over-arching category, remain culturally divided between Gujjars, Paharis, Dogra and Kashmiri Muslims. Hindus, similarly, are divided on caste basis. Not only there is different categorization of caste Hindus and Dalits but even among caste Hindus, there are strong divisions and rivalries. The Rajput versus Brahmin politics has continued to dominate the electoral politics. Culture still continues to bind people together in many subtle and silent ways. Apart from all this, there is an interesting common religious space provided by the Sufi shrines. In fact, Hindus flock these shrines in greater number, especially on Thursdays when there are special prayers. While following different religions, they can still share the same space.[15]

The traditional inter-community harmony of Jammu region came under a stress during the Amarnath agitation that took place during the summer of 2008. The revocation of the Government Order that had allocated land to the Shri Amarnath Shrine Board for construction of the fabricated structures during the period of pilgrimage generated a response in the region, in which the parties and organizations affiliated to the Hindu Right appropriated the political space and spearheaded an agitation in which people were mobilized on the basis of religious sentiments. Though there was a strong undercurrent of regional sentiments that helped the agitation to be sustained for more than two months, the religious sentiments made it an exclusive movement of Hindus. Though some Muslim organizations located in the city of Jammu did show their solidarity with the Sangharsh Samiti that was spearheading the agitation, it was mainly a movement representing the 'hurt Hindu sentiments'. Since the leadership of the movement was in the hands of the Hindu chauvinistic groups and parties, the agitation generated some kind of communal response as well which ultimately culminated in the communal clashes in Kishtwar and Poonch towns. More than the open clashes, however, it was the polarization of the society in Jammu on communal basis during the period of agitation that remained the point of concern.

However, it is the plural nature of the region which helped overcome the divide that was created during the period of agitation. The chauvinistic regional and communal voices that had captured the political space during the agitation receded into the background as the normal political processes were restored. The Assembly Election that immediately followed the agitation actually saw the changing of the political milieu.

Conclusion

During the present phase of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, secular ethos of the state has faced challenges from numerous sources. Religion has been implicated in the politics of the state in a variety

of manners. However, despite the provocations of the extreme kind, the divisive politics has failed to assert itself. This is not to argue that the intervention of the factor of religion has not generated any kind of tension at the societal and political level. On the contrary, there have been situations of unprecedented nature which have tested the resilience of the plural society a number of times: the emergence of the fundamentalist forces seeking to overtake the separatist and militant politics of Kashmir, threatening to change the very nature of its liberal political and social responses; the mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley challenging the context of diversity; the provocative targeted killings and massacres of minorities aimed at communalized political response; religion-based identity politics and mobilization of people around the divisive politics, etc. These situations certainly have impacted the political responses at the ground level. However, these responses have been countered by the social and political realities of the state which make it very difficult for the divisive politics to assert in a sustained manner.

Religious identity is but one aspect of the multiple and overlapping identities that are invoked in this state. There are many other contexts and markers of identity which make it difficult for homogenizing tendencies of a religion-based politics to assert themselves. However, the challenge remains and till the time the conflict is not resolved in a manner that is inclusive, the plurality and diversity of the state would continue to face strains from various sources.

9

Religion, Economy and Political Crisis in Kashmir

Muhammad Ashraf Wani

Like any other historical process, the present political crisis of Kashmir is the result of all extremely complex game of interactions of different factors, some of which can, however, claim dominant role. This paper attempts to answer the question: Did religion and economy play any role in the emergence of militant movement in Kashmir?

I

Religion and Militancy

Given the fact that militancy in the state of Jammu and Kashmir remained confined to the Muslim community alone and took deeper root, especially among those sections of the society which had the orientation of "political Islam", it has genuinely engaged the attention of scholars to search for the linkages between religion and the political crisis in Kashmir. One group of scholars attributes the emergence of militancy to the phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism *per se*,[1] while others consider that religion merely mediated between an essentially political and economic problem.[2] In this paper, I have tentatively

argued that while religion divided Kashmir into two broad identities with diametrically opposite extra-territorial political loyalties after 1947, religion, however, did not inspire militancy as much; but only fuelled it. The militancy was basically the handiwork of secular factors and agencies. It is only when it broke out that religion came into play.

With mass conversions to Islam during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries[3], Kashmir society came to be divided into two religious identities—Kashmiri Hindu and Kashmiri Muslim. While all other castes and out-castes embraced Islam, the Hindu society of Kashmir was left to be represented by only one caste—Brahmins, locally known as Bhattas. Both the Hindu and the Muslim communities were so particular to draw the line between themselves that they not only stuck to their faith-oriented views, rituals and ceremonies, but they also maintained marks of distinction in minute details of everyday life.[4] Consequently, two cultural streams went hand-in-hand in Kashmir: one seeing its face through the mirror of Islam and evaluating itself from the standards set by the *Ummah,* and the other through the mirror of its past, Hinduism and Hindu culture elsewhere.

Until 1947, when the Indian subcontinent, with which both the communities had intimate emotional, cultural and economic ties, was yet to be divided, the only political aspiration of both the communities was to have a political establishment of its credo to safeguard its economic and religious interests, as they were groomed into this thinking by the medieval state system where the personal religion of the ruler guided the state policy.[5] It should, however, be remembered that right from the days of Kalhana, the Kashmiris, like any other *quom,* had a deep sense of patriotism promoted by their bitter experiences as subjects of empire builders.[6] However, once the Indian subcontinent came to be divided on the basis of religious geography, Kashmiri Pandits turned out to be resolutely pro-Indian and the Kashmiri Muslims obstinately pro-*Ummah,* symbolized by the newly created Muslim state on its borders—the area with which

Kashmir had intimate relations since the hoary past. Yet, until 1953, the pro-Pak attitude of Kashmiri Muslims was more labial than practical as the Kashmiri Muslims rallied round the personality of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah[7], who, without quarreling with the popular sentiment, was pro-Indian.[8]

However, the situation changed from 1953 onwards with the launching of the Plebiscite Movement[9] which continued for 23 long years under the leadership of Sher-e-Kashmir (the Lion of Kashmir), who was almost deified by the Kashmiri Muslims.[10] The Plebiscite Movement under the charismatic leader ended up in creating a deep rooted anti-India and pro-Pak mentality among Kashmiri Muslims.[11] To be sure, by 1975, Kashmir society was divided into two mutually incompatible religio-political identities: one gravitated towards India and the other towards Pakistan.

Having said that, the fact, however, remains that the emergence of militant movement in Kashmir was not inspired by religion. It is not the product of any fundamentalist or jihadi ideology. On the contrary, it was engineered by purely secular elements that have not even a distant relation with fundamentalism. All the founders of the movement—right from Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhat, through Shabir Shah, down to Yasin Malik—have unmistakably established secular credentials.[12] In fact, all of them are equidistant, both from Pakistan and Hindustan.

In order to substantiate the fact that religious ideology had not the least role in the emergence of the militant movement in Kashmir, it is germane to briefly delineate the religious profile of Kashmir on the eve of the onset of militancy in Kashmir.

Speaking in terms of Kashmiri Muslim society's response to Islam, we see that Islam was received at different levels creating many religious categories with their distinctive outlooks on the religion. The main religious groups were: A'tiqadis or Khush A'tiqadis, Ahl-e Hadith, Tablighi Jamaat, Deobandis, Jamaat-e-Islami, Mirwaizis (the followers of Mirwaiz family) Shi'as and Ahmadis. Except Jamaat-e-Islami and

Mirwaizis all other beliefs had practically divorced religion from politics. Significantly enough, none of them, not even Jamaat-e-Islami or Mirwaizis, subscribed to the ideology of underground activities. The argument needs a further elaboration by throwing light briefly on the nature and character of each of these religious persuasions.

A'tiqadis or Khush A'tiqadis

The dominant majority of Kashmiri Muslims are, what they themselves claimed to be *A'tiqadis* (literally believers). *A'tiqadis* are those whom the Europeans and the Purists call 'saint and tomb worshippers' for not having parted their ways with the past.[13] While the *A'tiqadi* belief system originated from the symbiotic syncreticism of local traditions and Sufistic Islam[14], it was promoted by the state through the imams, *khatibs* and custodians of mosques and shrines. These imams, *khatibs* and custodians were either integrated with the state-sponsored religious organization called Anjumani Tabligul Islam[15]—the religious wing of National Conference—or they were the employees of Muslim Auqaf Trust controlled by National Conference.[16]

However, though the *A'tiqadi* belief system by itself was not even distantly related to create religion-inspired separatism among this biggest section of Kashmiri Muslim society, the unflinching loyalty which these people had with Sheikh Abdullah did create a deep-seated antagonism among them against India, following the sustained movement of Plebiscite, which the Sheikh launched from 1953 to 1975. That National Conference was abundantly aware of its own created deeply embedded anti-India mass mentality, it is no wonder that the leadership did not reveal the contents of the 1975 Accord[17] to the people, instead hoodwinked them by spreading piquant propaganda that suited the popular mindset, promoting the pro-Pakistan sentiment even after 1975. For example, as a mass mobilization technique, it demonstrated rock salt and green handkerchiefs in the election rallies[18]—both symbolizing Pakistan. And in order to finish its political opponent, it sponsored and led the

anti-Jamaat riot in 1979, following the execution of ZA Bhutto, who in Kashmir, was regarded the architect of the 20th Century *Ummah* (Muslim brotherhood) and the creator of the Islamic Bomb.[19]

However, when, with the passage of time, the real face of National Conference got exposed, the separatist mentality fostered by it, mostly among its *A'tiqadi* followers, revolted first against its own creator in the shape of giving mass support to Muslim United Front (MUF), regardless of *A'tiqadi* differences with its leaders[20] and subsequently by taking up arms when the democratically expressed dissent met with ruthless response.[21] It is interesting to note that all the founders of the militant movement belong to the *A'tiqadi* religious section of Kashmiri Muslims.[22]

In the dominant *A'tiqadi* religious aura of Kashmir, the counter religious ideologies had little space to grow and multiply. That is why put together all the other religious groups constitute only a small percentage of the Sunni Muslim population.

Of the non-Khush *A'tiqadi* religious groups, the most influential and well organized was the Jamaat-e-Islami—a cadre based party and the one that was mainly rooted in rural Kashmir.[23] The basic ambition of the Jamaat-e-Islami was to capture power with the romantic idea of establishing an Islamic state in the Indian Union. However, it was against its basic constitution to take recourse to any underground activity or to spread communal hatred[24] except mobilizing the masses by raising slogans "*Yahan Kya Chalai Ga? Nizama-i Mustafa*"[25](What will work here? The order of the Prophet Muhammad). It believed in capturing power through democratic means. For creating a mass base for itself, it established a network of schools, most of which, especially in Srinagar, were closed down, following the Sheikh's assumption of power in 1975.[26] It did not consider fighting elections in the name of Indian Constitution in any way militating against Islam; but for it, there was no room for underground activities in *Shariah*. Not unexpectedly it disowned its youth wing Jam'it-e-Tulba when its leaders were found involved in anti-Indian activities and established what was called as Shubai Tulba.[27] Until 1989, the

Jamaat-e-Islami maintained this stand even when Shabir Shah had earned a great fame among the masses for the spurt in his anti-Indian underground activities. According to JKLF press statements of early 1990, they had approached some Jamaat leaders namely Mohammad Yusuf Shah (Salahuddin of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen) in the late 80s to accept the leadership of the nascent militant movement but he had flatly refused to accept the offer. Perhaps, the Jamaat did not expect the kind of public response the militancy ultimately received in the Valley.[28] No wonder, therefore, when it found the en mass support to the militant movement during late 1989 and early 1990, and the spectacular success, it gained in closing down cinemas and wine shops[29]—something which Jamaat could never dream of through democratic means.[30] The religion-oriented political party Jamaat-e-Islami reconsidered its earlier stand to carve a space for itself in the new circumstance as well as to create a safety mechanism for its cadres in the face of impending threat to their life and property. Being a political party and claiming legitimacy on the basis of religion, it was more vulnerable to militancy than National Conference or any other pro-Indian party. In dragging it into militancy, the extremist faction of the Jamaat, which was born out of the political persecution of the hegemonistic power[31], played a prominent role. Once the Jamaat got involved in militancy, it gave militancy a long life of more than a decade as its cadres could be easily mobilized and motivated in favour of a call for jihad.

A small segment of Kashmiri Sunni population comprised Ahl-e Hadith, Tabligi and Deobandhi schools of thought. Significantly, all of them eschewed politics. Ahl-e Hadith group's activities revolved round adhering to some distinctive religious rituals such as *rafadain*, offering eight *rakats* instead of 20 as *tarawih*, not chanting *darud* and *aurad* loudly and strictly refraining from such popular religious beliefs as 'saint and tomb worship' which they regarded as shirk (polytheism) and quite significantly for which they earned the contemptuous name 'Kota' from the *A'tiqadis*.[32] However, in their belief system, religion was almost a private affair having nothing to do with politics. This

attitude of the Ahl-e Hadith is indicative of the enduring impact of the ruthless persecution the Wahabbis suffered in 1857.[33] They had divorced religion from politics to such an extent that in spite of the persuasive religious slogans of Jamaat-e-Islami during the elections, the Ahl-e Hadith remained out and away from it. Instead it voted in favour of National Conference. It may be mentioned that both Haji Mohammad Shahdad, the President of Ahl-e Hadith and Ghulam Mohammad Chicken, its General Secretary, were staunch loyalists of National Conference.[34] In early 90s, a militant group namely Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen emerged out of Ahl-e Hadith, but it petered out quickly, for Ahl-e Hadith as a group was not oriented towards taking confrontation with the state.

The Tablighi Jamaat, which has a recent origin in Kashmir, is so apolitical that its followers do not even read a newspaper much less listening to radio or watching TV as they believe that politics pollutes one's mind and soul, distracting one from the way to Allah.[35] Sheikh Maqbool, a minister in the NC government ultimately had to part ways with politics, for, being an *Allah Walah*, it was pre-requisite for him to wash his hands of politics. That Tabligees divorced politics from their preaching and acted as a modern Sufi missionary movement, it is understandable to see Jamaat-e-Islami ill disposed to it, dubbing its members as *status quo*-ists, *khanqahis* and escapists.[36]

There was also a group of people called Deobandis. They had received religious education in Dar al-'Ulum Deoband and consequently followed the Deobandi school of thought. True to their ilk, they are the followers of 'puritan Islam' refraining from 'saint and tomb worship', but it was against the basic position of this school to support the two nation theory as Deoband school was essentially a nationalist school, though in the Kashmir environment it desisted from openly avowing its political ideology, and merely concentrated on giving religious education for producing *imams*, *khalibits*, *muddaris* and *ulama* for the preservation of Islam in the face of the wave of rapid westernization. Like Ahl-e Hadith and Jamaat-e-Islami, they too were contemptuously called *A'tiqad* and Kotas by the *A'tiqadi* mass.

With the increasing threat which the National Conference faced to its political hegemony from Jamaat-e-Islami, the former, in a bid to tighten its control over the masses, created cynicism against the Jamaat through its well-organized network by dubbing them as *Bad A'tiqad* (wrong believers). In this way, the *A'tiqadi* and *Bad A'tiqadi* schism was further exacerbated under the state patronage for isolating the Jamaat-e-Islami from the masses.

There is also a cult mainly concentrated in Srinagar. For want of a better name, it may be called Mirwaiz cult, for its followers rallied round the Mirwaiz family. The Mirwaiz family enjoyed a distinctive religious position since the construction of Jami' Mosque in 1402, but assumed a new and dynamic role towards the beginning of 20th Century when the celebrated Mirwaiz, Maulvi Ghulam Rasul, founded the Injumani Nasrat al Islam, a socio-religious movement aimed at purging Islam of the un-Islamic accretions, reforming the society by eradicating the social evils and popularizing education among the Muslims.[37] No wonder, he is called Sir Sayyid of Kashmir. This and its traditional position as Mirwaiz of Kashmir earned for the family a mass base up to 30s of the 20th Century. His successor Maulvi Yusuf Shah extended all out support to the nascent freedom movement in Kashmir. He provided the Reading Room Party with the ready-made platform of Jami' Masjid and the mass support which the Maulvi enjoyed.[38] However, soon differences arose perhaps on account of the unimaginable popularity which the Sheikh was able to win. For sometime, the Mirwaiz was won over by the Maharaja[39] but in the 40s, he joined hands with Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas to revive the Muslim Conference.[40] On account of the tussle with National Conference, the followers of Maulvi family turned out to be more a political party than purely the *mureed* of a religious head whose centre of activity has been the historic Jami' Masjid. As the Muslim Conference ultimately supported the Two Nation Theory, the followers of Mirwaiz came to be known as Pakistanis.

Yet following their persecution by the Nationalist government after it assumed power in 1947[41], the followers of Mirwaiz became

more as enemies of National Conference than nursing ill-will against India. It is interesting to see Mirwaizis showing readiness to have truck with centrist forces to settle scores with their traditional enemy. That is why the Janta Party succeeded in wooing Maulvi Farooq against NC in 1977 elections. That the Mirwaizis had long back compromised with their one time strong pro-Pakistan position is evidenced by the fact that none of the founders of militant movement belonged to this section, and the militancy could not hold ground in the faction though for its survival it supported a militant group called Al Umar Mujahideen; but like Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen it had also a very short life for the pro-Pakistan sentiment was only skin deep in the group as except for keeping his flock together by occasionally targeting the policies of government on the pulpit of Jami' Masjid the Mirwaiz was satisfied with the lavish *nazar wa niyaz* he received from his committed followers of downtown Srinagar.

Besides the above categories of Sunni population, there are two non-Sunni groups namely Shi'is and Ahmadis, the former constituting about five per cent of the total Muslim population[42] and the latter just a very slender minority. The Shi'is mainly reside in Srinagar, Budgam and Baramulla districts. On the eve of militancy in Kashmir, we observe a few significant features in the Shi'i community of Kashmir. First, notwithstanding some religious differences with the Sunnis, which provoked sectarian conflicts in the past, the 20th Century is underlined by cordial relations between the two sects. Second, having suffered equally under the sectarian rule of the Maharajas, the Shi'is formed an integral part of the mainstream politics reared around National Conference ideology, though lately the Indian National Congress also succeeded in wooing a section of it. Third, unlike the Sunnis, the Shi'is are united under the institution of Imam. However, on the eve of militancy, there were three factions of the Shi'is following three different imams of different political persuasions. One major group followed the imam who was gravitated towards NC; other was affiliated with Congress, and the third had consistently maintained anti-establishment position. While the first two imams had sizeable

following, the latter, namely Maulana Abbas, had a very small number of followers. Consistent with his anti-establishment policy, Maulana Abbas joined hands with '*Azadi*' Movement. But as the Maulana did not represent the dominant tradition, it is understandable that Hizb-ul-Mominin—the militant group consisting of the Shi'i youth—could not hold ground in the community. Thus, despite being more orthodox than the Sunni population[43] and in spite of being the supporters of the concept of the *Ummah*, especially after the Iranian revolution, the pro-National and pro-Congress imams neutralized the separatist sentiment of the Shi'i community from becoming a movement. While the institution of imam and its appropriation by National Conference and Congress is mainly responsible for making Shi'is as mere onlookers, the minority psyche and the consequent overriding concern of the community to survive the crisis also prompted it to observe prudent silence. Not surprisingly, therefore, while on the one hand the Shi'i community did not provide recruits to the militant movement, at the same time, it did not furnish *mukhbirs* to the security forces or resorted to any such activity that would make it vulnerable in the atmosphere of violence.

The Ahmadiyas are a negligible minority in Kashmir with no political or religious ambitions except to maintain their identity without antagonizing the dominant tradition.

II

Economic Crisis and Militancy

There is a proverb in Kashmiri which is generally repeated, echoed and re-echoed. It goes as *Yed dag gai bed dag* (The stomach pain is the most shooting pain), signifying that the material factor plays paramount role in shaping the behaviour of humans. Although the material factor did not give rise to militancy in Kashmir, nevertheless it fuelled it. Before I elaborate the statement, it is in place to mention that the material aspirations of mankind do not have an immobile time. They grow

at equal speed with the growth of technology, economy and culture. On account of the technological, economic and cultural development, different reference cultures emerge at different times making all the members of the society see their self-image and reach self-appraisals through the mirror of reference culture—the culture of the upper class—to find a respectable position in society. As the be all and end all of the members of society becomes to emulate the reference culture characterized by dynamism and prohibitive cost, insatiable lust for money and resources predominates the collective mentality of the society. As it is not possible for the mass of population, especially in a poor society, to obtain the standards set by the reference culture, it creates mass disaffection.

Given the dynamic habit of wants, the economic aspirations of the Kashmiris have also undergone revolutionary changes since 1947. In 1947, the basic aspiration of the rural folk of Kashmir was to have food, clothing and shelter and safeguard from official oppression.[44] The demands of the urban Kashmir were also not too much gigantic. The urban Muslim educated class was too small to face any problem of unemployment.[45] The urban artisan had emotional attachment to his hereditary craft, and unlike his modern counterpart the other lucrative professions, which were still peripheral to Kashmiri society, had not taken his heart out of his occupation. The artisans and craftsman simply needed the promotion of their crafts and the urban population as a whole wanted food and fuel supplies on cheap rates.[46] The demands of both rural and urban population were easily met. The aspirations of the rural population were satisfied simply by a stroke of pen giving land to the tillers[47] and restraining the officials from oppressing the peasants, which further added to the popularity of Sher-e-Kashmir (Sheikh Abdullah) of the freedom movement days, especially in the rural areas.

However, the situation changed considerably from the late 60s of the 20th Century. With having slowly and gradually crossed the poverty line consequent upon the considerable economic development after 1947, education and emulation of reference culture became the

basic aspiration of the whole society. With this new saga also emerged new problems, for, while the Centre did not have the will, the state government did not have the resources to respond to the challenges before it could give birth to the crisis.

It is a well-known fact that the Muslims of Kashmir, especially the rural Muslims and the urban poor, started receiving education from the 50s of the 20th Century and it got momentum from the 60s. But by the time they became aspirants for government jobs, the unemployment problem had already engulfed the state in the absence of any worthwhile employment generation sector. Tourism industry provided employment to a very small section of the society, mainly of Srinagar city; fruit industry is restricted to only a few pockets of the Valley and the traditional craft industry has lost attraction except for a few of its traders. Barring orchard land, which as mentioned earlier, is confined to a few specific areas, agriculture is almost a losing economic activity in Kashmir as the input in the staple crop paddy exceeds the output. Kashmir has just one-crop-a-year economy; and the man-land ratio has drastically declined. In the contemporary Kashmir, the biggest zamindar possess not more than two acres of paddy land and the number of such zamindars constitutes just a minuscule number. In this situation, it is understandable to see everybody hankering after government jobs, especially when it assures prosperity without accountability. While unemployment by its own right creates disaffection in the society; misrule, however, makes it explosive. Honesty and fair play have an inherent quality of defusing tension, but if reverse is the case, it kindles the fuel. Quite against the expectations of the people, the National Conference government turned out to be as corrupt and nepotistic as any other previous government—a fact well-known to even a common Kashmiri.

Having failed to satisfy the aspirations of new generation, the revived National Conference—the party of the masses for decades before it assumed power—quickly lost the mass base and the disaffected youth was first thrown in the lap of its adversaries and

subsequently won by the militancy. To be sure, the mass response which the militancy received in its initial years was no less the result of the deep-seated resentment the people bore against the dominant minority (to use the term of Toynbee) as it was the result of the lack of emotional integration with India. That the largest number of youth who joined militancy belonged to the poor sections of the society clearly testifies to the crucial rule of economic factor in sustaining the Tehreek, as the militancy is known in common parlance in the Valley. With the fast increasing number of unemployed youth, there is an apprehension that the economic factor may now take precedence over other factors in keeping the pot boiling.

More importantly, the growing problem of unemployment has started giving birth to economic nationalism which beyond doubt can provide more solid and far-reaching powerful ideological basis to militant movement than religion. The creative minority has begun to establish relations between poverty and politics. For example, it is being articulated that Kashmir's tourist industry, with its tremendous potential to revolutionize the economic condition of Kashmir, could not grow because India has, for its own reasons, disqualified the whole neighbourhood of Kashmir from visiting the Valley; and thus Kashmir is poor for being a part of India. The same argument is advanced with regard to the strangulated trade of Kashmir. Those good old days are being recalled with nostalgia when Kashmir used to be a meeting ground of the merchants of its whole neighbourhood and the Kashmiri merchant used to trade with China, Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, the present Pakistan and India without any man-made barrier. It is also being forcefully argued that Kashmir's natural resources are not being exploited because India wants to cultivate and perpetuate a sense of dependent mentality among Kashmiris as it fears that economic prosperity of Kashmir would lead to political assertion among them. With the growth of education and unemployment this new thinking would gain wide currency and force a decision upon the retrograde mindsets.

III

To sum up, the radical politics, which surfaced in Kashmir in 1989-90 with an agenda to liberate Kashmir both from India and Pakistan, did not emanate from 'jihadi' ideology; nor did it flow from misrule of the successive political regimes. Religion and the material factors only added fuel to the fire. The fire had already broken out and it was primarily caused by political discontent. Despite the presence of myriad religious organizations in Kashmir, none of them, however, blazed the trail of militancy. While most of them eschewed politics, those with political ambitions namely, Jamaat-e-Islami, were ideologically against the politics of violence—the stand they maintained till militancy became the mass movement, threatening the survival of those elements and organizations which were reticent to become a part of it. Indeed, the militancy was pioneered by a few young men, and none of them belonged to any organization espousing the ideology of 'Political Islam'. They, in fact, openly rejected the language of religion, and took issues on it with the religio-political parties who, as mentioned above, joined militancy under compelling circumstances. Doubtless, as a strategy for mass mobilization, the pioneers of militancy imposed ban on cinemas and wine shops but it was just a propaganda technique to create a movement out of an apparently calm climate. Once it was achieved, they completely withdrew from mixing religion with politics. Also, the pioneers of militancy have been as critical of Pakistan as they have been of India. Significantly, it is they who for the first time popularized the language of *azadi* in the state; until then, the pro-Pak sentiment was the dominant collective aspiration of Muslims..

It is equally wrong to presume that pioneers of militancy were the product of misgovernance. The harbingers of militancy did not comprise a bunch of deprived young men frustrated by unemployment, corruption, poverty, denial of democracy and other wrongs of the successive governments. None of them was enamoured of any version of socialist ideology. Many of them, no doubt, participated in electoral politics by supporting a 'semi disloyal opposition', but it was nothing

save an expression of their deep seated animosity against the dominant ideology which suppressed the collective sentiment.

Certainly, the root of militancy lies in the deeply embedded collective political sentiment which threw up from time to time the 'great men' who represented the sentiment and put into action the will of the people. Yet, there is no denying the fact that this sentiment would not have become a movement had the general public not been utterly dissatisfied with the ruling establishment owing to rampant corruption, nepotism, loot of public wealth by a few families, unemployment and mass poverty. Indeed, the inexorable urge of the governments to pursue the politics of denial was goaded by the ruling cliques' insatiable lust to misuse power in the environment of complete absence of accountability. On account of the mass unrest, the gun-wielding youths who were not more than 10 to 20 in number, not only received rousing public reception but their ranks swelled in thousands once they set foot in the Valley. Thus, while the leaders of militancy are the products of the unresolved Kashmir problem, their armies generally comprised the deprived sullen subalterns.

10

Hindu-Muslim Relations in Jammu

Yoginder Sikand

Media and academic writings on Islam and Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir focus almost entirely on the Muslims of the Kashmir Valley, who are depicted as somehow standing for or representing all the Muslims of the state. This is, to an extent, understandable, since they form the single largest Muslim community in the state and are also the most politically powerful and vocal. What is, however, generally overlooked is the fact that the Kashmiri Muslims form less than half of the total Muslim population of the state. In addition to the Kashmiri Muslims, there are large numbers of Muslims in other parts of the state, who are quite distinct, in terms of language, ethnicity, sectarian affiliation and historical experiences, from the dominant Sunni Muslims of the Valley. These include the Sunni Argons, Nurbakshis and Shi'a Baltis of Ladakh, the Gujjar and Bakkarwals of Poonch and Rajouri, and diverse Muslim communities in the Jammu province. These communities are generally ignored in writings about the 'Kashmir problem'. Yet, it is crucial to highlight their voices, not only because, collectively, they are more numerous than the Kashmiri Muslims, but also because the ways in which they see the 'Kashmir

problem' and its possible solution are often in contrast to the dominan Kashmiri Muslim perspective.

This essay seeks to provide a broad overview of divers understandings and expressions of Islam among Muslims of Jammu. I focuses, in particular, on the vexed issues of peace and jihad and inte community relations. Highlighting alternative ways of understandin these issues, it seeks to uncover theological resources contained in Islam or 'ordinary' people that can help interrogate and challenge the claims of radical Islamists to represent Islam and the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir.

I

Muslims in Jammu

Jammu is popularly known as the 'City of Temples', owing to its large number of Hindu shrines. Most of the inhabitants of the town are, of course, Hindus, but the town also has a fairly substantial Muslim population. Although there are a few local Dogri-speaking Muslims in the town, most of them appear to be fairly recent settlers, from Poonch, Doda, Rajouri and from the Kashmir Valley.

In the 1947 Partition riots, Jammu witnessed a large-scale slaughter of Muslims, with thousands killed and many more forced to flee to Pakistan. Jammu town was almost completely depleted of its Muslim population. The violence in Jammu was in contrast to the situation in the Kashmir Valley at this time, which remained largely peaceful and did not witness any communal violence directed against the small non-Muslim minority. It was only from the 1950s onwards that small numbers of Muslims began settling in Jammu, mainly from other parts of the state.

Despite its recent history of communal antagonisms, which is further reinforced by the strong presence of right-wing Hindu organizations in the town, Jammu has not witnessed any large-scale communal riots in recent years. This is remarkable, given the situation

in the Kashmir Valley. There have been minor clashes between Hindu and Muslim groups in Jammu, generally in the wake of massacres of Hindus in Kashmir, but the local administration has been able to prevent these from breaking out into full-fledged communal riots.

The Muslims of Jammu town lead a somewhat ghettoized existence. Most of them live in the town's two almost entirely Muslim localities. Living together provides them a sense of safety. There is, however, considerable interaction between the Muslims and the local Hindus and Sikhs, at the personal as well as economic and professional levels. Despite this, there are few, if any, organized efforts to promote any sort of inter-religious or inter-community dialogue. Communal stereotypes remain deeply-entrenched. Few, if any, of the several NGOs in the town are engaged in actively promoting communal harmony. When asked why this is so, the typical reply is that community, including religious leaders, is simply not interested in such work. This complaint generally goes along with a routine denunciation of religious leaders, who are alleged to use religion simply as a means of self-aggrandizement and are, therefore, not interested in dialogue. They have, so it is often claimed, a vested interest in preserving and promoting communal differences. This fits in with a certain image of many religious leaders of being not 'really religious' at all. Another reason that is often put forward to explain the absence of any organized work to promote inter-community dialogue is that although some religious leaders do feel the need for this, they do not have the contacts and the resources to do such work. Since there is little or no interaction between religious leaders of the different communities, it is not surprising that even those who are interested in promoting dialogue are unable to do so.

On the whole, therefore, it would be safe to say that in Jammu, as elsewhere, most people have little understanding of the religious beliefs of other communities. The University of Jammu does not have a department of religious studies. Scholars associated with the university have done little research on local religious belief systems and nothing

at all on inter-community relations and perceptions in the region. There is no literature available on the subject, and none of the several Hindu and Muslim bookshops in Jammu stocks any such literature. The local Press also displays little interest on the issue.

Religious Mechanisms for Inter-Community Interaction: Sufi Shrines of Jammu

Despite the lack of organized efforts to promote inter-faith dialogue in the town, there are local mechanisms that work, in their own limited ways, to promote a certain interaction and ecumenism between the different communities. For instance, it is not rare to find shops and buses displaying pictures of images associated with different religious traditions. This might be construed, in some cases, as simply good business sense, but in other cases, it does reflect a sincerely held belief of all religions being valid in their own ways. They have an important symbolic importance, especially if they are displayed, as they often are, in public spaces. It is, however, important not to exaggerate the prevalence of this sort of attitude. It is not very common, and is rather the exception than the rule. Then again, such images and associated beliefs are generally confined, not surprisingly, to some Hindus, and it is rare for them to be seen in Muslim, Sikh or Christian shops and vehicles.

The single most important and influential local religious institution for promoting inter-community in Jammu town, as almost everywhere else in India, are the town's numerous Sufi shrines or *dargahs*. *Dargahs* are mausoleums that house deceased Sufi saints or Muslim mystics. The general belief is that the saints are still alive, in a spiritual sense, and, being close to God, can sometimes intercede with Him to have people's requests met. The analogy with a government department is often used to explain this belief. Just as one cannot approach the head of the department without going through a clerk, so, too, it is said, it is sometimes difficult to approach God directly. One is, so it is believed by many, more likely to have one's requests met if one approaches God through the mediation of the saint. This is

especially the case since one recognizes oneself as a sinner, and hence acknowledges that one is unlikely to have one's requests met if one acts on one's own.

This belief transcends community boundaries and unites believers in the powers of the Sufis in a shared sacred tradition. This is not to say that people from different communities view the Sufis in an identical way. Muslims, typically, see the Sufis as true Muslims, sometimes as missionaries of Islam, and as *awliya* or 'friends of God'. Hindus who flock to Sufi shrines tend to see them as pious beings, in the same rank as genuine *sadhus* and mendicants who have renounced the world, although, strictly speaking, not all the Sufis were world-renouncers. Some Hindus even think of the Sufis as incarnations of God or as *devta* (deities). Needless to say, this is a view that Muslims do not agree with.

Jammu is home to a number of Sufi shrines, many of them being several centuries old. Interestingly, the vast majority of those who visit the shrines are Hindus from different castes. The shrines provide the only arena where people of different communities participate together in common worship and devotion. As such, then, they are a unique institution for promoting inter-community interaction at the religious level. Hindus who visit the shrines sometimes prostrate before the graves of the Sufis, a practice not common among Muslim visitors who believe that prostration must be made only to God. Hindu devotees also sometimes touch the feet of the shrine custodians in reverence. They take oil from the clay lamps placed in the shrines, which they believe to be blessed, and apply it on their foreheads or wipe their hair with it. Some of them even press the graves of the Sufis as if massaging the tired bodies of the saints.

People from different communities offer prayers together at the graves, and there is no set format for this. Generally, the visitors pray silently, cupping their hands in front of them or holding them up, in Muslim fashion, in supplication. Sometimes, the custodians of the shrines, almost all of whom are Muslims, recite some verses from the *Qur'an* and then offer a prayer in Dogri or Urdu for the welfare of all

the devotees present. After the prayer is over, people accept little drops of sugar as *prasad* or *tabarruk*, which may be offered by the custodian or by a person he appoints, who may be a Hindu or a Muslim.

Thursday evenings are special occasions for the shrines, when large numbers of people visit them. Another popular occasion for visiting the shrines is during the *urs* celebrations of the buried saints. *Urs*, in Arabic, means marriage, and marks the death anniversary of the saint, whose death is commemorated as his symbolic meeting with God. Some people visit the shrines simply out of devotion and reverence. Many, however, come in the hope that they would have their requests met through the mediation of the saint. It is common for Hindus who visit the *dargahs* to also visit Hindu shrines in order to have their prayers granted. In this sense, the *dargahs* are seen as seats of invisible power that one can, through proper devotion, access, and not necessarily as specifically 'Islamic' or 'Muslim' shrines in a narrow sense. The saint is believed to help everybody, irrespective of caste and creed, for, it is argued by many Hindu devotees, true saints are, in a sense, beyond religious and caste boundaries.

The mediation of the saint, some believe, can be more efficacious through the agency of the custodian of the shrine, the *mutawalli* or *sajjada nashin*. Usually, though not always, the custodian is a lineal descendant of the saint. He is often believed to have inherited some of the powers of his saintly ancestor. This explains why in several *dargahs* people, Hindus as well as Muslims, wait upon the custodian with their requests. In one *dargah* in Jammu that I have visited on numerous occasions, most of these supplicants are Hindu women from middle-class, and presumably upper caste families. The custodian sits on a raised platform, while the supplicants sit below him. They approach him in turn and relate their problems, and he offers them solace and advice. In the case of some people who are said to be troubled by evil spirits, he runs an iron implement (*chimta*) on their heads and back while uttering a silent prayer. He tells his supplicants that he himself cannot do anything because he is simply a 'slave of God' (*rabb da banda*). They should, instead, pray to God and abstain from sin, and God might then be moved to grant them their requests or solve their problems. In case their requests are met, he says, they should come back to the shrine and offer incense and oil in honour of the saint. He jokes with his supplicants and speaks to them as something like a father-figure, which helps create a certain charisma around him as a true man of God. In line with this, he does not accept any payment, and he says that he does this work simply out of service to God. However, some other custodians are said to accept donations, a practice which has, unfortunately, led to the entire class of *sajjada nashins* being viewed by many people as corrupt and as no different, in this regard, from charlatan *babas* and *sadhus*.

All the *dargahs* of Jammu have a distinctly 'Islamic' or 'Muslim' look about them. The graves that they house are covered with green silk sheets, often with verses from the *Qu'ran* embossed on them. The structures of the buildings are also 'Islamic', with domes and minarets, and sometimes with a small mosque attached to them as well. Inside, the shrines are also often decorated with pictures of Sufi saints or of the Kaba in Mecca and the Prophet's mosque in Medina and posters that bear verses from the *Qur'an* in Arabic calligraphy. Yet, they are open to people of all communities for worship, this being in contrast to both Hindu temples as well as mosques. The ecumenical appeal of the shrines is enhanced by the fact that, although a few of the rituals are distinctly 'Islamic', most of them are not seen as being associated with one particular religion or community, being more in the nature of local traditions that are followed across community boundaries.

The stories that are told about several of the shrines in the town—their 'foundational myths', one could call them—reflect a fascinating historical process of negotiation of inter-community relations in a harmonious way. These stories are often invoked to stress the point that people of different religions should live together in peace, that God is one, that all humans, at a certain level, are basically the same, and so on. A few examples may be cited here to illustrate this point:

Dargah of *Peer* Roshan Ali Shah

The first major Sufi to come to the Jammu region is said to have been *Peer* Raushan Ali Shah, whose *dargah* is located at Gumat, near the famous Raghunath Mandir, in the heart of Jammu town. The *peer* is said to have been very tall, which explains why his grave is some 20 feet (or nine *gaz*) long, and hence the shrine's popular name of Maqbara Naugazan. Some believe the *peer* to have been one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, but, clearly, this is wrong. A more reliable claim is that he arrived in Jammu in the 13th Century, before Timur's invasion of North India. He is said to have performed many miracles, which, so it is claimed, so impressed the Hindu Raja of Jammu that he became his devotee and requested him to settle in his city. When the *peer* died, the Raja laid him to rest with full honours and had a grave constructed for him.

Dargah of *Peer* Lakhdata

The name Lakhdata literally means 'the giver of hundreds of thousands'. It could signify belief in this *peer*'s status as a giver of Sufi wisdom or as a helper to people in distress and need. The small *dargah* of *Peer* Lakhdata is located in a bazaar named after him in Jammu. The life of the *peer* is shrouded in mystery, although he is said to have been a close associate of Guru Nanak, the first guru of the Sikhs. The cult of *Peer* Lakhdata is particularly popular among the agriculturist castes of Punjab and Rajasthan, both Hindu as well as Muslim. This tradition is linked with the cult of Guga *Peer*, said to be a Rajput chieftain who converted to Islam. In some versions of the account of Guga *Peer*'s life, he and *Peer* Lakhdata are presented as one and the same person. According to local tradition, after his death, half of Guga *Peer*'s body was taken by his Muslim followers and buried according to Muslim rites, and to them he is known as Zahir *Peer*. The other half of his body was cremated by his Hindu followers, who revere him as *Peer* Lakhdata.

Dargah of Baba Budhan Ali Shah

Another noted Sufi whose shrine is located in Jammu and who is associated with Guru Nanak is Baba Budhan Ali Shah. His real name is said to have been Sayyed Shamsuddin, but he is known more popularly as Baba Budhan ('The Old Baba') because he was blessed with a very long life. Baba Budhan was born near Lahore in the village of Talwandi, the birthplace of Guru Nanak. Tradition has it that he was a very close friend of Guru Nanak, and the two would often meet to discuss spiritual matters.

Dargah of *Peer* Mitha

Peer Mitha's *dargah* is located on the banks of the river Tawi, not far from the Jammu palace. According to local tradition, the *peer* came to Jammu from Iran in 1462 during the reign of Raja Ajab Dev. It appears that *Peer* Mitha was a Isma'ili Shi'a, although today there are no Isma'ilis left in Jammu.

One day, so a version of the local legend has it, the Raja's wife fell seriously ill. The *peer* is said to have cured the queen by performing a miracle, as a result of which the king and many of his subjects became his disciples. A large section of the Bhishtis or water-carriers, considered to be a low Hindu caste, accepted him as their spiritual preceptor. Soon, the *peer*'s fame spread far and wide, and many began converting to Islam at his hands. Because of this, the *peer* was faced with stiff opposition from some Hindu priests. His most vehement opponent was Siddh Garib Nath, a Shaivite Gorakhnathi yogi. However, as the story goes, the two soon became friends and, consequently, the *peer* is said to have ceased his missionary work. The *peer* and the yogi became, so it is said, so close that they decided to settle down together in the cave where the *peer* lived. This cave is known as *Peer* Khoh or the 'Cave of the *Peer*'.

Legend has it that the yogi entered the cave and travelled all the way to Matan in Kashmir, never to return again. After he disappeared,

his disciples came to *Peer* Mitha and requested him to accept them as his followers. The *peer* declined, and told them that they should be faithful to their own guru. When this failed to satisfy them, the *peer* relented somewhat and told them that they could, if they wanted, take his title of *peer*, generally associated with Muslim mystics. That is why the cave is today called as *Peer* Khoh and the heads of the Nath yogis who reside there are known as *peers*.

A sizeable number of devotees of *Peer* Mitha today belong to the Jheer community. The Jheers identify themselves as Hindus, and although they are of low caste background (their ancestral profession consisted of drawing water and cleaning utensils for the upper castes), they now claim to be Rajputs. One branch of the Jheers, who are known as Kashps, revere *Peer* Mitha as their patron saint. It is customary for many Kashps who live in Jammu to visit the *dargah* every morning after having a bath. All their auspicious ceremonies are conducted only after paying respects at the shrine. Many Kashps are migrants or descendants of migrants from Sialkot, now in Pakistan, who fled to Jammu in the wake of the Partition riots in 1947. Several Kashps claim that they managed to flee their homes to Jammu unscathed because of the blessings of their *peer*.

Dargah of Baba Jiwan Shah

Baba Jiwan Shah was born in 1852 in the Sialkot district of Punjab in a family known for its piety. At the age of 23, on the advice of his preceptor, Chishti Sufi Saint Baqr Ali Shah, he left his village, spending 12 years in meditation and austerities at Akhnoor on the banks of the river Chenab. He then headed for Jammu, where he took up residence in a graveyard, meditating near the grave of the Sufi Sher Shah Wali for 12 years. After this, he spent the rest of his life in the region around Jammu, preaching and making disciples, who included Hindus as well as Muslims. Among these are said to have been Maharaja Pratap Singh, ruler of Jammu and Kashmir (1885–1925) and his brother Amar Singh. The king fixed a regular monthly stipend (*wazifa*) for

him and would often invite him to the royal palace. Another disciple of the Baba was a certain low caste man from the Chamar caste, who is buried in a small shrine near the *dargah* of Baba in Mohalla Jeewan Shah in the heart of Jammu town.

Dargah of Panj *Peer*

At Ramnagar, in the outskirts of Jammu town, is the shrine of the Panj *Peers*, the five Muslim saints. The Panj *Peer* cult is widespread all over northern India and Pakistan. The composition of the Panj *Peers* varies from place to place, and in some cases, it includes both Muslim as well as Hindu figures. The origin of the cult has been traced back to the Hindu cult of the five Pandava brothers, heroes of the Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*, as well as to the Shi'a Muslim tradition of revering the five members of the *ahl al-bayt*, the 'holy family' consisting of the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima, her husband Ali and their sons Hasan and Hussain.

Little is known about the history of the Panj *Peer* shrine in Jammu. Legend has it that five brothers of a Muslim family spent many years there in meditation and austerities, and then they all left to go their own ways. One day, the five *peers* appeared in a dream to the Maharaja and admonished him for sleeping with his feet pointing to their *chillah*, the place where they used to meditate. The next morning, the Maharaja ordered the spot to be excavated. An umbrella and five kettledrums were found. Believing this to be a holy place, he ordered the construction of a *dargah* there. He then appointed his royal charioteer, Alif Shah, and a Muslim woman, Khurshid Begum, as custodians of the shrine.

The popularity of the Panj *Peer* shrine, especially among the local Hindus, is believed to be a largely post-1947 phenomenon. It is said that following the Partition riots, some Hindus attempted to take over the shrine, claiming that it was actually a temple of the five Pandavas. They went so far as to forcibly install a Shiva lingam on top of the grave-like structure inside the *dargah*. However, so the story

goes, the next morning people discovered that the lingam had cracked into pieces on its own. The Hindus took this as a sign that the shrine was actually a Muslim *dargah* and so withdrew their claims.

At present, the *dargah* is looked after by a Hindu Rajput, Kuldip Singh Charak. He is the husband of a Muslim woman, Shamim Akhtar, the daughter of Khurshid Begum, the first custodian of the shrine. He took over this responsibility following Khurshid Begum's death in 1986.

II

The participation of people from different religious and caste communities in the Sufi shrines of the town helps, in its own ways, in breaking down barriers between them. Sometimes, it provides a means for people to build friendships across community boundaries. In a way it also helps challenge, or at least question, deeply-rooted social hierarchies. Thus, while ordinarily many high caste Hindus may not eat food cooked by Muslims, in the shrines they accept the sweets prepared by Muslims or so-called low caste Hindus. It is also not rare for Muslim Sufi shrine custodians who are practising Sufis themselves to accept Hindu disciples, while not asking them to renounce their own religion. In one shrine that I visited, a Punjabi Hindu is a disciple of the Muslim custodian. He regularly attends the shrine, where he dons a Muslim-style cap and sits in the courtyard to distribute sweets to the visitors as *prasad*. This he does on his own volition and has not been told to do so by his spiritual master. But he still identifies himself as a Hindu and goes to temples as well, and his Sufi preceptor does not forbid this. In this and several other cases, the categories of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim', while in a sense still valid, do not denote the radical separation, difference or conflict that, unfortunately, they often seem to.

It is important, however, not to exaggerate the ecumenical potential of the Sufi shrines. For many Muslims who attend the shrines the Sufis are seen, above all, as pious Muslim and often as missionaries

of Islam. At the same time, they also taught, so their Muslim devotees would stress, love for all creatures of God, irrespective of religion and caste, but their Islamic identity is not in doubt. Another phenomenon that must be taken into account when assessing the possible role of the shrines in promoting inter-faith dialogue and interaction is the declining influence of popular Sufism in some sections of the Muslim community. Several educated Muslims in Jammu, as elsewhere, see the cults centred on the shrines as 'un-Islamic'. The opposition to the cults of the shrines is articulated in what are presented as 'Islamic' terms. Thus, it is argued that these cults are a later development, and thus are an 'innovation' (*bid'at*) from the path of the Prophet. A tradition attributed to the Prophet is routinely cited, according to which the Prophet declared that every *bid'at* leads to hell. Hence, several practices associated with the cults of the shrines, such as singing *qawwalis* or belief in the intermediary powers of buried saints or the belief that the saints are still alive and can hear one's requests, are branded as 'un-Islamic' and as leading those who are involved in them to hell. Furthermore, these beliefs are said to be shirk or akin to polytheism, as they allegedly set up helpers in addition to God. Several of the practices and beliefs associated with the shrines (such as, for instance, offering flowers and sweets at the graves) are also branded as 'Hinduistic' (*hinduana*), and are thus condemned as 'un-Islamic'. In this form of Islamic discourse, criticism of the cults of the shrines is also associated with a critique of the shrine custodians, who are said to have a vested interest in promoting 'un-Islamic' beliefs (such as faith in the miraculous powers of the saints) in order to fleece the credulous. In turn, they come to be seen as working to promote Muslim backwardness, including political marginalization.

Opposition to the cults of the saints is one of the major focuses of some Islamic groups active in the Jammu region, as elsewhere in India. These include the Hanafi Deobandis, the Islamist Jamaat-e Islami as well as the vehemently anti-Sufi Ahl-e Hadith, all of whom have established a limited presence in Jammu in recent decades.

The Deobandis have a large madrassa in Jammu town, and the imam of the largest mosque in Jammu is also a Deobandi. Besides, there are several Deobandi mosques and madrassas elsewhere in the Jammu province. The Deobandi cause has been further facilitated by the growth of the Tablighi Jamaat, a Deobandi-inspired movement that seeks to purge Muslim society of what it sees as 'un-Islamic' accretions. The movement is said to have started working in the area from the 1970s onwards. As elsewhere, differences between Deobandis and the shrine custodians are intense.

Several *ulamas* or Islamic scholars who are attached to the shrines whom I met denounce the Deobandis as hidden fronts of the Saudi *Wahhabis* and as being 'agents' of what they call the 'enemies of Islam'. They see other Muslim groups, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Ahl-e Hadith in a similar light. Some of the *ulama* attached to the shrines identify themselves with the Barelvi school of thought, which is associated with the late 19th Century Imam Ahmad Raza Khan of the town of Bareilly, in present-day Uttar Pradesh, who ardently defended the Sufi tradition from its detractors. Others identify themselves simply as *dargah wale* or 'people of the Sufi shrines'.

In assessing the ecumenical potential of the Sufi shrines, it must also be borne in mind that for many Hindus who attend the shrines, the Sufis might be seen as pious men of God, but this does not necessarily or always translate into positive perceptions of or closer interactions with Muslims, although this sometimes does happen. It is possible for a Hindu to hold deeply-rooted negative stereotypical notions of the Muslim as the religious 'other' at the same time as he or she regularly visits a Sufi shrine. Often, this is because, for many people, the shrines are visited only in the hope of getting requests met or problems solved, and not necessarily simply out of devotion and faith or a quest for religious truth. In fact, at the shrines there is no overt discussion of religious doctrines in any great detail; these being often limited in their expression only to brief prayers, mainly silent and undertaken individually. Hence, although there is certainly an

encounter and exchange between people of different communities, as such there is very little inter-religious dialogue at the theological level at the shrines. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the vast majority of the Hindus who visit the shrines would learn little about Islam or the doctrines of the Sufis since this is hardly discussed, except perhaps in a very general way when the custodian might refer to these when talking about the need for proper ethical behaviour to people to come to him for assistance. It is likely that since Jammu is a 'communally-sensitive' town and since Muslims live here as a small minority, the custodians think it pragmatic not to overtly stress the Islamic aspect identity of the shrines for fear of being looked at with suspicion. It is pragmatic, possibly, in another way for some custodians who accept donations, because an overtly Islamic identity would possibly mean less Hindu visitors and, hence, a decline in their incomes.

Given the ways in which the histories of the Sufis associated with several of the shrines are framed and remembered, and given the fact that people from different communities visit the shrines in sizeable numbers, the *dargahs* could, it might be thought, be motivated to play a more interventionist role in promoting greater understanding between the different communities at the religious level. There are several constraints, however, in this regard. To begin with, each shrine is an independent entity and there are few formal links between them, and so they do not operate as a group. Second, the shrine custodians might appear not to wish to overtly stress the Islamic identity of the shrines in a more explicit way, for reasons mentioned earlier, which limits their own interest in inter-religious dialogue initiatives. Third, many of the custodians do not have the 'right' contacts, funds and cultural capital that might be needed to organise dialogue initiatives with religious leaders of other communities. Fourth, in some cases there is simply no interest in the issue since for some shrine custodians their primary consideration is earning a livelihood through the shrines rather than social reform or activism. There is also the simple fact of inertia, and the feeling that since Muslims are in a minority in the

town they should maintain a low profile. To add to this is the general perception that such efforts would make little or no difference at all in promoting communal harmony in the region in the absence of a political solution of the Kashmir issue.

III

Alternative Voices on Peace, Inter-community Relations and Jihad

In the course of my stay in Jammu and nearby towns, I visited a number of Sufi shrines and met with shrine custodians and *ulama* who are associated with the Barelvi school of thought, which advocates a reformed Sufism. Despite the fact that they are not engaged in any organized inter-community dialogue work, all the shrine custodians and Barelvi scholars I met insisted on the need for harmonious relations between the different communities, and bitterly critiqued the violation of human rights in India, including Kashmir, by Muslim and Hindu militants as well as the Indian armed forces. They unanimously insisted that the killing of innocent people, irrespective of religion, was a grave sin in Islam, and argued for the need for a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir issue. To kill a single innocent person, no matter what his or her religion, they pointed out, is condemned in the *Qur'an* as tantamount to the slaughter of all humankind. Hence, they stressed, those who loot, rape and kill innocent people cannot be said to be *mujahids* engaged in a legitimate jihad. Some of them claimed that numerous militants were engaged in such activities. Rather than being Islamically legitimate, they argued that such actions were *fitna*—strife, chaos or illegitimate rebellion—the very opposite of true jihad. A declaration of jihad can, they pointed out, be made only if Muslims are denied the freedom to practice their faith. Since there is no restriction on the practice of Islam in the state, they said, the conflict cannot be said to be a jihad. One of them, however, claimed that it could be considered a jihad for those militants whose families had been forced to flee Jammu for Pakistan in the Partition violence. To seek to regain

lost Muslim land through force, he argued, might also be recognized as a legitimate jihad. This, however, did not appear to be a widely expressed or shared opinion. Some also pointed out that a declaration of jihad cannot be made by just about any Muslim. Rather, a fatwa to this effect must be declared by the accepted imam or leader of the entire community. They argued that since the different militant groups have shown no effort at building unity among themselves they do not have a single imam, who alone could, in theory, might be qualified to issue such a fatwa. Even if they agree on a single imam, his fatwa would not be binding on other Muslims who did not accept him as their imam. On the whole, then, most of the Barelvi scholars and shrine custodians I met felt that the root of the conflict in Kashmir was political, rather than religious. Hence, they argued, it needed a political solution, and they bitterly critiqued the radical Islamists' claim that it was a war between Islam and 'infidelity' that would carry on till the latter had been uprooted.

The shrine custodians and Barelvi scholars I met also stressed the urgent need for better and peaceful relations between different communities, arguing that this was precisely what Islam insisted on, and for which the Sufis had devoted their lives. Some of them claimed that no major Barelvi scholar had characterized the ongoing militant movement in Kashmir as a jihad, and most of them blamed what they called *Wahhabis* (by which they meant a range of such different groups as the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Ahl-e Hadith, the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Deobandis, all of whom they regard as having strayed from 'true' Islam) for the violence. At the same time, they also denounced human rights violations by the Indian Army in Kashmir and the massacre of Muslims by Hindu terrorist groups in other parts of India. They seemed divided on their own political views, however. All but one opposed Kashmir's merger with Pakistan. Some of them thought that the only realistic solution was an independent Kashmir. Among these, some also expressed the fear that an independent Jammu and Kashmir might result in the imposition of Kashmiri hegemony on the rest of the people of the state. They also opined that, given the fact that

radical Islamist groups (whom they do not consider as representing 'true' Islam) wield the power of the gun, in an independent Jammu and Kashmir bloody civil war might break out between different groups of Muslims, each of which claims to represent normative Islam. However, several others insisted that since Muslims enjoyed religious freedom in India, and since Pakistan had allegedly been turned into a *Wahhabi* bastion, it was best for the Kashmiris to remain with India, rather than join Pakistan or be independent. At the same time, they admitted that they could not say this in public, for fear of being targeted or even physically eliminated by the militants. Yet, they added that by their appeals for peace, tolerance and love, they were, in their own ways, seeking to counter the appeal of the militant groups. While bitterly critical of the militants in Kashmir, they were equally adamant that for peace in Kashmir it was imperative that Hindu fascist groups in India also be countered, arguing that the oppression of Muslims in India by Hindu terror groups provided a powerful propaganda tool to Islamist groups in Kashmir.

Numerous custodians of Sufi shrines and Barelvi scholars whom I met in Jammu disagree with the Islamist political agenda of groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Ahl-e Hadith-inspired Lashkar-e-Taiba that insist on the centrality of an Islamic state. Although, in theory, the Barelvis and many shrine custodians do not deny the normative value of a state ruled in accordance with the *Shariah*, their focus, as in the case of most Sufis, is on individual moral reform, arguing that it is only when Muslims become 'true' Muslims in their own daily lives that an Islamic state could become a reality. That, however, is postponed into the indefinite future, since Muslims, like others, are seen as constantly faced with the temptation of the snares of the world. This explains the overwhelming concern on the part of the shrine custodians and Barelvi scholars with the 'cleansing of the self', through ritual observance, to the almost complete neglect of political affairs. As many of them see it, political power, in order to establish an Islamic state, is not to be actively sought. Rather, it is a gift that God gives to whomsoever He

wills. In the absence of an Islamic state, Muslims are believed to be capable of leading fully Islamic lives, conducting their own personal and social affairs in accordance with Islamic injunctions. This is, of course, in marked contrast to the position of groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

The opposition of numerous shrine custodians and Barelvi scholars to the 'Islamic state' agenda of groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Lashkar-e-Taiba is also inextricably related to their bitter critique of what they describe as 'Wahhabism'. The term derives from the movement launched by the 18th Century Arab puritan, Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, who bitterly critiqued what he saw as the 'corrupt' and 'un-Islamic' practices and beliefs characteristic of much of popular Islam in his own times. He denied the need to strictly follow one of the four established schools of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence. He also denounced Sufism and popular Sufi practices as 'un-Islamic'. He also opposed the popular Sufi notion of the Prophet Muhammad being almost superhuman. The Prophet, he insisted, was a mere mortal, although he was a prophet of God. In contrast to the Sufis, he believed that the Prophet was no longer alive, and that his body had turned to dust in his grave. Likewise, he was vehemently opposed to the notion that the Sufis were alive in their graves and that they could intercede with God to have people's requests met. He castigated such beliefs as akin to shirk, or associating partners with God a heinous, unforgivable crime in Islam. He suggested that Muslims who held such beliefs were no different from polytheists (*mushrikun*), and, hence, were actually not Muslim at all. Because of this, the *Wahhabis* are routinely condemned by the Sufis as 'traducers of the Prophet' (*gustakh-e-rasul*) and 'enemies of Islam' (*dushmanan-e-din*).

The Jamaat-e-Islami, the Ahl-e Hadith, with which the LLashkar-e-Taiba is associated, and the Deobandis, are, typically, seen in Barelvi discourse as different fronts of the *Wahhabis*, who are described as 'anti-Islamic' and as created by a range of 'anti-Islamic' enemies to destroy Islam from within. Commonly, the *Wahhabis* are

described as American or Zionist agents. It is thus hardly surprising that numerous Barelvi scholars and shrine custodians I met in Jammu were bitterly critical of the militant groups associated with one of the above mentioned Islamic organizations or movements. While they did not directly deny the importance of an Islamic state, they appeared unanimous that, given what they described as the 'anti-Islamic' ideology of the different *Wahhabi* groups, the sort of 'Islamic state' that the militant groups were seeking to establish would result in bloodshed on a hitherto unprecedented scale, and would hardly deserve to be called 'Islamic' at all. Some of them expressed the fear that if Kahmir joined Pakistan or became independent civil war might break out between the different Muslim sectarian groups, given the *Wahhabi* opposition to the deeply rooted Sufi tradition in Kashmir. Hence, several of them argued, for the Kashmiri Muslims it was better to remain in India, under a secular and democratic state, than to live under a *Wahhabi* state, even in an independent Kashmir or as part of Pakistan. They claimed that if Hindu right-wing forces were effectively countered in India and if the oppression of Muslims in India were to cease, Kashmiri Muslims might themselves prefer to live in India, they claimed. When asked how it was that the militants continued to enjoy considerable support from local Kashmiris, even from those who would not identify themselves with one or the other of what they called *Wahhabi* groups, they replied that this was because the *Wahhabis* had deliberately kept their true beliefs concealed behind the rhetoric of jihad. If at all they came to power, they said, they would 'reveal their true colours', and begin to attack the Sufis and their adherents. Hence, they suggested, it was imperative that before this could happen, ordinary Kashmiris should be made aware of the actual beliefs of the *Wahhabis*.

Linked to these complex political arguments is a bitter critique articulated by several shrine custodians and Barelvi scholars who insisted that since, by definition, the *Wahhabis* were 'anti-Islamic', the so-called jihad that they had launched showed clear signs of

being 'anti-Islamic' as well. They recounted numerous incidents of militants raping, looting and killing innocent people, and of militant leaders making a lucrative livelihood from donations from abroad in the name of jihad. They also cited instances of militants violently opposing popular Sufi-related practices and even of killing moderate leaders, some of them known for their Sufi piety. All this suggested, as one Barelvi scholar told me, that "the Islam that they follow is a fake one". Because of this, they claimed, many Kashmiri Muslims were now increasingly tired of the ongoing violence and were disillusioned with the jihadist organizations. "They yearn for peace and normalcy", I was told, "but they cannot speak out against the oppression of both the armed forces and the militants for fear of being killed."

IV

T is an Islamic scholar belonging to the Barelvi *maslak* and is the imam of a mosque near Jammu. I first met him in his simple, sparsely furnished room adjacent to the mosque, where he was surrounded by a group of Muslim peasants. "Killing an innocent Hindu just because he isn't a Muslim is certainly not a jihad," he tells me in response to my query about what he feels about the ongoing violence in Kashmir. He explains that in a legitimate Islamic jihad, non-combatant non-Muslims must not be harmed. Rather, he says, they must be protected. Yet, he laments, many of those who claim to be waging a jihad in Kashmir do not abide by this basic Islamic principle. He recounts the case of a fellow Barelvi *maulana* who made this point at a public meeting and was later threatened with death by activists from the dreaded Lashkar-e-Taiba.

T is loathe to discuss politics; "I am a religious man", he says, but he does insist that violence is not the way to solve the Kashmir issue. Rather than directly discuss Kashmiri politics, he prefers to dwell on what he believes is the correct Islamic notion of jihad. He argues that physical violence for the defence of Islam, when Islam or its adherents are under threat, is legitimate, but war for worldly advancement, for

land or for power, is not. He tells me that the conflict in Kashmir is simply over the land—both India and Pakistan want to grab it, and they are not really concerned about the people as such—and hence it is not a real jihad. He does not hesitate to condemn the excesses of both the Indian armed forces and certain Pakistan-based militant groups. He recounts cases of killings of innocents by both, describing their actions as unambiguously 'anti-Islamic'. He fears that such violence might exacerbate in the future, with rival Islamic groups, representing different sectarian formations, fighting each other. "The gun culture has become so deeply ingrained that, who knows, Kashmir might go the Pakistan or Afghanistan way, with Shi'as and Sunnis and Wahhabis training their guns on each other."

As a traditional Islamic scholar, T's interaction with the local Hindus is somewhat limited. Yet, he insists on the need for harmonious relations with the Hindus, and laments that in the course of the ongoing violence in Kashmir, Hindu-Muslim relations have drastically deteriorated. Yet, he believes that 'ordinary' Hindus and Muslims simply want to live in peace and carry on with their lives. He tells me about his experiences of living in a largely Hindu town, where there are few Muslims. In the years that he has lived not once was he targeted by the local Hindus or made to feel unsafe. "Given what has been happening in Kashmir", he says, "they might have been expected to hate me, to create trouble for me, but that wasn't the case. In fact, they treat me with respect."

H is a Muslim college student in Jammu. His family are, as he puts it, "staunch Barelvis", and he counts himself as an ardent Barelvi as well. He has not had a formal Islamic education, but through books and personal meetings with scholars associated with a particular Barelvi organization, he has received a fairly good knowledge of his faith. We talk about this Barelvi organization, and he tells me about how, in its own way, it is trying to promote peace in Kashmir. The organization has arranged numerous public meetings in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir, where Barelvi *ulama*, including many from

other parts of India, deliver lectures on various aspects of the Prophet's life and teachings. The focus of these lectures is often on social issues, particularly issues of contemporary concern. H names a number of such issues, from female infanticide and dowry to inter-communal amity and the need for peace. "We cannot directly speak out against the militants or they will kill us", he says. "So we hold out the model of the Prophet as a way to counter their propaganda."

H insists that Islam, as he sees it, and peace between the different communities are indivisible. When the Prophet was born, his mother, Amina, saw angels planting white flags, symbolizing peace, he tells me. Hence, Muslims must struggle for peace and against the misuse of religion to promote violence against innocent people. One of the meanings of 'Islam' in Arabic is peace, he notes, but adds that this does not mean a passive acceptance of things as they are, but, rather, also struggling, through morally justifiable means, for an end to all forms of oppression. This includes working for the rights of non-Muslims as well. To illustrate the point, he tells me the story of a property dispute between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. They appeared before the Prophet, who decided in favour of the latter, although the Muslim had expected that he would rule in his favour simply because he was a Muslim. "The Prophet stressed the rights of one's neighbours, and these include non-Muslims, and said that he who gives unnecessary sorrow to his neighbour would go to hell", H says gravely.

H stresses the importance of personal behaviour and morality, arguing that calls for jihad and an Islamic state are meaningless if their advocates do not practise genuine spirituality themselves. "Your behaviour with others should be such that people think that it is because of Islam that you are good, not, as now, that you are bad because of Islam", he says. He critiques certain radical Islamist groups in Kashmir, whom he describes as Wahhabis and who, he says, are really political and not religious outfits, although they assume an 'Islamic' garb. "They walk in the path of money, not of Islam", he says. In the name of jihad, he laments, "they have finished us off". In contrast to

their actions, he says, the "real jihad" is to "develop a proper Islamic character and to convey the message of Islam to others". He cites the example of the widely revered Sufi saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer, as a "true *mujahid*". Through his message of love and peace, he says, scores of people were attracted to Islam. In contrast to the Khwaja, the activities of several radical Islamist outfits have only succeeded in further repelling non-Muslims from Islam, as a result of which they see Muslims as 'terrorists'. Rather than their activities being a genuine jihad, they are, he says, a 'great strife' or *fitna*, that has no legitimacy in Islam at all.

Like most other Muslims, H believes that Islam alone is the way to salvation, but, at the same time, he insists that Islamic missionary work has no room for violence. Rather, he argues that it is only through promoting love and peace that others can be receptive to the message of Islam, adding that this is precisely what the Prophet also sought to do. Non-Muslims are free to accept or reject Islam, and in no case should they be forced to do so.

H tells me that he has 'nothing to do with politics', but he believes that a solution to the issue of Kashmir must have the consent of all the various communities in the state. Perhaps, he says, joint rule by India and Pakistan for a few years is a possible solution. He thinks that many Kashmiris might prefer independence, rather than being ruled by Delhi or Islamabad, but says that this option is not without its dangers. In an independent Kashmir, he warns, there is a likelihood of civil war breaking out and sectarian violence spearheaded by Wahhabis, whom he describes, echoing the views of many other Barelvi scholars, as 'blasphemers against the Prophet' (*gustaakh-e-rasul*), accusing them of being imperialist creations in order to set Muslims against each other.

R is a practising Sufi, and is the custodian of a large *dargah* in Jammu. Like many other Barelvi scholars in Jammu, he too thinks that the Kashmir issue is political, and not religious as such.

"No religion, properly interpreted, allows for killing innocent people", R explains as I settle down on the mattress on the floor of

his room, declining a chair that he offers me. In Islam, he tells me, one is allowed to take to arms only in self-defence, when one's life or faith is under threat. Prior to the outbreak of the militant movement, the Kashmiri Muslims enjoyed freedom of both, he says and pauses, leaving me free to draw my own conclusion. "Yes, there have been human rights violations by the armed forces as well", he admits when I point this out, "but the trouble started with the militants, so it's not entirely the fault of the army."

R is decidedly opposed to the Islamists, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jamaat-e-Islami, groups whom he describes as Wahhabis. He denies that they are Islamic at all, and says that their demand for an Islamic state in Kashmir is untenable. "If Muslims demand an Islamic state in Kashmir of the sort that the Wahhabis want", he says, "how can one deny Hindu groups the same right in India?" He points out that the Wahhabis and the Hindu right-wing feed on each other, both being "thoroughly anti-religious" while claiming to be the greatest defenders of their respective faiths and communities. He also tells me that the Islamist militants in Kashmir have no concern about the grave consequences Kashmir's accession to Pakistan or becoming independent might have for the Muslims living in the rest of India, who, he says, number 14 times the Kashmiri Muslim population. It is bound to lead to a strengthening of right-wing Hindu forces, he points out, that might wreak further havoc on the Indian Muslims.

R recognizes that the actions of the militants have had a tremendously negative impact on non-Muslim perceptions of Islam and its adherents. 'Ordinary people cannot distinguish us from the Wahhabis and so they now think that all Muslims are terrorists', he says in despair. Yet, despite what he calls the relentless "un-Islamic" propaganda of Wahhabi groups, he believes that the majority of the Kashmiri Muslims continue to deeply revere the Sufis. The Wahhabis recognise this, and that is why, he claims, they do not openly reveal their beliefs or preach their views, such as their opposition to Sufism and the cults associated with their shrines. Were they to reveal their

true beliefs, he says, they would be stiffly opposed by the Kashmiri Muslims themselves.

As R sees it, the Wahhabi militants lack true piety, despite their claims of being true *mujahids*. Several of them are involved in militancy just to make money, he says. And some of them, particularly the leaders of militant groups in Pakistan, have raked in millions in the name of jihad, he assures me. "Their politics are totally against the *Qur'an* and the traditions of the Prophet. They say, no matter what happens, even if innocent people are raped or killed, we want to set up our own government. Surely, the Prophet did not act in this way!" He refers to Pakistan as an example of a failed state, despite its claims of being a model Islamic country. "You can't impose an Islamic system by force like that", he says.

It is not easy for people like him to take on the militants directly, says R. Some, including moderate Muslim leaders (he cites the late Qazi Nisar, the Mirwaiz of south Kashmir as an example), who dared to do so have even paid for this with their lives. Rather, R says, he tries to do this indirectly, by telling Muslims about the Prophet and the Sufis and their message of love and tolerance and the meaning of the 'true jihad'. "I point out that we must follow the Prophet alone in all matters, and behave as he did", he explains. "That means that we must work for love and peace. That is precisely what the Sufis, who brought Islam to Kashmir, did, and we should walk in their path."

R insists on the need for Muslim scholars to reach out to people of other communities. "We live in a multi-religious society and so must have good relations with each other. It is only through love and in a peaceful environment that we can disabuse others of the misunderstandings that they have of Islam", he says. He admits the need for organized work for promoting inter-religious harmony, noting that hardly any efforts have been made in this regard in Jammu. "Each of us seems too obsessed with our own communities that we just do not think beyond", he bemoans.

Every Thursday evening crowds mill around the *dargah* of Baba Jeewan Shah in the heart of Jammu. From their dress, most visitors seem to be Hindus, the vast majority being women. Many of them look middle-class and probably upper caste as well, although some seem from more humble families. Pilgrims stream into the shrine, which is draped with a green cloth and surrounded by a marble screen. In the courtyard, a Hindu lad wearing a Muslim-style cap, a disciple of the Muslim custodian of the shrine, distributes sweetened puffed rice, while a group of Hindu and Muslim women sit around and chat. In a small room that opens out into the courtyard, Aslam Sahib, the custodian, sits on a mattress, surrounded by a crowd of women and a few young men. They approach him in turns, explain to him their requests or problems, and he responds with a prayer and instruction.

P is a regular visitor to the shrine. She is a Punjabi Hindu, and her family migrated to Jammu from Lahore in the wake of the Partition. She teaches at a government school is also involved in a local Gandhian welfare organization. She first heard about the shrine from her aunt, and after visiting the shrine for first time, felt solace and comfort which drew her back. She visits temples as well, and argues that for her God is not restricted to only one sort of place of worship. "He is everywhere, even inside your own heart, so you don't need to go to a temple or shrine or mosque to find Him", she explains, although she continues to visit the shrine because she experiences a deep sense of peace there.

P believes that the Sufi saints incarnations (avatar) of God. She sees Baba Jiwan Shah as a powerful, yet loving, being. But more than providing access to a source of power, the *dargah* also affords her a release from the tensions of the day-to-day world. When she feels depressed, she says, she visits the *dargah*, where she pours out her woes to the buried saint. There she also seeks the advice of Aslam, the custodian, whom she regards as an 'uncle'. Aslam speaks to her as a friend, and there is nothing specifically 'Islamic' in the advice or suggestions that he provides her. "He tells me to be good, to refrain

from bad things, to lead a pure life. He never seeks to impose his religion or to denigrate other religions", she says.

P identifies herself as a Hindu, but is critical of Hindu groups that preach hatred for other communities. "There is no difference between the RSS and the Jamaat-e-Islami", she says. "Both preach hatred and intolerance." As she sees it, one need not restrict oneself exclusively to the religion one is born in. "There is no harm at all in taking good things from other religions as well", she explains. And, for this, she says, *dargahs* provide the ideal platform. She points out that it is only in *dargahs* that people of different communities gather together to worship. She speaks about the several Muslim friends she has made whom she first met at the *dargah* of Baba Jiwan Shah. She also refers to the practice of 'high' caste Hindus, Dalits and Muslims eating together in the *langar* or the *dargah*'s community kitchen. "It's such a wonderful feeling—us worshipping together in the shrine", she says, contrasting this with the deeply held negative stereotypes that many Hindus and Muslims share of each other.

Her husband, P tells me, is a staunch BJP supporter. In his younger days he also used to attend the RSS *shakha*. They keep squabbling, she says, about politics. Yet, she says, whenever he comes to pick her up from the *dargah* he also goes inside to pay his respects to Baba Jeewan Shah. "True men of God have no religion or caste", she opines as I try to figure out her husband's rather inexplicable behaviour.

A is a Muslim school teacher from a village near Kishtwar, in the mountainous Doda district. I met him one afternoon at a tea stall outside the Jami'a mosque in the largely Muslim locality of Mohalla Khatikan in Jammu. He looked plainly tired and harried as he sipped his tea and read out a newspaper story about the killing of a young man in Doda. Apparently, the youth had been kidnapped by a group of militants belonging to the dreaded Deobandi Harkat ul-Mujahideen, who kept him with them for a month. He was then killed by them because he had opposed the marriage of his relative with a Harkat militant.

"We simply cannot do anything because we are poor people", says A with an immense sigh. "On the one hand the army terrorizes us, and on the other hand the militants. We can't afford to speak up against either of the two."

It is not just the Hindus who were being targeted by the militants, he explains. In fact, most of those killed in his area, by both the militants and the army, are Muslims. "And that means", he declares emphatically, "that this is not a jihad at all." "In a true jihad", he says, "innocents cannot be targeted, women cannot be raped, you cannot steal other's money or property, but this is precisely what is happening."

A's father is said to have been a practising Sufi, and A has inherited from him a passionate commitment to the Sufi way. This explains his strident opposition to the Islamist militants. "I used to firmly support the cause of Kashmiri independence", he tells me, "but seeing what these so-called *mujahids* have done, murdering and looting in God's name, I have come to the firm conclusion that it is best for us to be with India." "If ever Kashmir becomes independent or joins Pakistan we will descend into civil war", he warns. Denouncing Islamist radicals, he argues, "They claim to be working for an Islamic state, but that's all hot air. We've seen what their agenda is from their actions." And this includes what he sees as the Islamists' fierce hostility to Sufism, or what A defines as 'true' Islam. "Although the militants don't openly say so for fear of losing public support, we know that they see Sufism as un-Islamic and regard us as little better than polytheists. How can we trust or support such people?", he asks.

As a devout Muslim, A sees as his primary task the mission of *tabligh* or communicating the message of Islam to others. That, he says, was the Prophet's mission in life, not the capture of political power. The best and most effective way to convey Islam to others, he says, is through one's own character. "If people see how noble and kind you are because you are a good Muslim, they would automatically be attracted to the faith", he argues. He sees the militants as not

only having no interest whatsoever in *tabligh* and, in fact, as actually working to defeat all possibilities for attracting others to Islam. "The militants have created such a hatred in the minds of the Hindus here about Islam that no Hindu would at all be interested in, leave alone attracted to, Islam", he rues. He refers to Islamist ideologues and militant activists as endlessly proclaiming that Islam has the answer to all the ills of humankind, but then hurriedly adds that obviously no Hindu would ever accept this claim since the militants themselves refuse to act according to Islamic principles. "The Hindus answer, and rightly so, that all these wonderful things about Islam should first be practised by the militants themselves, and only then would they care to lend an ear to their propaganda", he says.

Z is a Shi'a Muslim and works in a government department in Jammu. He tells me about the small Shi'a community in the town, which comprises of some 40-odd families. Most of them are Kashmiris and Ladakhis, there being very few local Shi'as. Most Shi'as in Jammu and Kashmir, Z says, think that remaining with India is the best option for them. If Kashmir joins Pakistan, they feel, the Kashmiri Shi'as are bound to be targeted by militant Islamist groups, as is the case in Pakistan today. "In Pakistan, Shi'as worshipping in mosques and *imambaras* are gunned down in cold blood", Z tells me. "Radical Deobandi and other such groups there are even calling for them to be declared as non-Muslims like the Ahmadis." He says, "On the other hand, no such thing happens in India, where Shi'as have complete freedom of religion."

I ask him if the recent massacre of Muslims in Gujarat does not disprove his point. "In Gujarat", he replies, "Muslims were killed indiscriminately, and these included Shi'as and Sunnis. But in Pakistan, Shi'as are being singled out for attack, which, in a sense, is probably worse from the Shi'a point of view."

No religion, Z argues, gives permission to oppress others, but that is precisely what some Islamists are doing in Kashmir and the RSS is doing in the rest of India. The conflict in Kashmir, therefore, is

not a jihad but simply instigated by politicians and 'pseudo-religious' leaders to promote their own gains. For this they deliberately give a 'wrong' interpretation of the Islamic concept of jihad. According to the Shi'a faith, Z explains, jihad can only be declared by a leading Shi'a scholar (*maraja* or *mujtahid*). No Shi'a mujtahid, he adds, has so far blessed the struggle in Kashmir as a jihad. Shi'as in Kashmir fear to speak out against the militants for fear of being killed. Yet, Z says thoughtfully, if the Wahhabis are not countered they might unleash a wave of killings against the Shi'as if Kashmir joins Pakistan or becomes independent, as the Taliban did when it captured Afghanistan or as some radical groups in Pakistan are presently doing. He tells me of how the Shi'as have for long been oppressed in Saudi Arabia by the Wahhabi 'ulama, who consider them as heretics.

Z says that Shi'a-Sunni relations in Kashmir have historically been tension-ridden but are now generally peaceful, although suspicions remain. He refers to several hardliner Islamist outfits that are vehemently anti-Shi'a. He singles out, in particular, what he calls as the Wahhabis, groups, funded, so he claims, by the Saudis, who preach anti-Shi'a hatred. This propaganda may not have been as successful as was intended, he says, but ordinary Sunnis in many places are said to continue to hold virulently anti-Shi'a views. "Many Sunnis, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, believe that Shi'as spit into the food that they offer Sunnis and pronounce ritual curses, because of which Sunnis refuse to eat their food. The intention in spreading such baseless rumours is probably to ensure that ordinary Sunnis do not befriend Shi'as."

Anti-Shi'a propaganda has, Z says, not impacted much on Sunni-Shi'a relations in Jammu, and there have been no violent clashes between them so far. However, in the course of the last several years, primarily as a result of the growing Deobandi, and to a lesser extent, Ahl-i Hadith, influence among the Sunnis of Jammu, Sunni attendance at Shi'a *majalis* (religious gatherings) and *azadari* (mourning rituals commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussain)

has markedly declined. The Deobandis and the Ahl-e Hadith (in contrast to the Barelvis) castigate these practices as 'un-Islamic'. Z hastens to add, however, that the local Sunnis and Shi'as both wish to ensure peaceful relations in Jammu, and suggests the need for the *ulama* and other leaders of both communities to work together to combat sectarian hatred. He admits that little has been done on this front, however, although he does mention to efforts of a certain Barelvi organization headed by Haji Abdul Majid, a local community leader that organizes a public meeting every year to mark the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, grandson of the Prophet. This annual 'Shahid-e-Azam Conference', organized in the month of Muharram, is attended by Shi'a and Barelvi *ulama* from Jammu and Kashmir and other states, who travel around the Jammu province addressing lectures devoted to the Imam's life and teachings.

N runs a small store in a town in the Jammu district. He has been an acquaintance of mine for several years now. Each time I travel from Jammu to Srinagar or Doda, I make it a point to stop in his town and look him up. It is not that I am fond of him at all. To be frank, he repels me with his smug over-confidence, but I find his views interesting in a way. After all, he is an ardent supporter of the Jamaat-e-Islami, and it is not often that one can befriend a hard-core Jamaati.

"I've heard that the government is deliberately promoting the Qadiani sect in Kashmir", N tells me almost as soon as I enter his shop. Before I can react, he hurriedly adds, "I've also heard that Israeli soldiers are going around villages in Kashmir at night dressed as ghosts to scare people." I think he's joking, but he is dead serious. "Yes", he seeks to assure me, "this is what I heard, that the government of India has employed these Jewish agents to frighten our people".

N then launches into a loud, aggressive harangue against the Indian government, the Americans, the Jews and other such 'enemies of Islam' as he calls them. A small crowd gathers in the shop to listen to his speech. He asks me what brings me to his town this time, and I tell him that I want to meet a certain man, who is said to be a Sufi of sorts.

"Oh, that man!" N exclaims with disdain. Probably since the man in question is widely respected, N changes his tone somewhat and says, "You can buy all other groups with money and sweet talk but there's only one group that can never be bought". Predictably, the one group he is referring to is his very own Jamaat-e-Islami.

"The Jamaat", N boasts, "can never waver from the path of Islam." "You will not find such dedicated servants of Islam in any other group", he asserts. Several other groups that call themselves Muslim, he says, are actually 'creations' of the 'Jews' and other such 'enemies of Islam' or else work, knowingly or unwittingly, to serve their interests. These, according to him, include the Barelvis, the Shi'as and the Ahmadis. The Shi'as, he alleges, abuse the companions of the Prophet; the Barelvis supported the British Raj; and the Ahmadis were propped up by the British to divide the Muslims and to destroy the spirit of jihad.

I tell N about the research project I am working on, on peace and religion in Jammu and Kashmir. "All this is useless", he tells me flatly. "True peace and justice can only be established if India accepts the *Qur'an* as its constitution and if its rulers become Muslim". He offers Saudi Arabia as a model for India to emulate. His father, he says, once visited Saudi Arabia, and came back with stories of 'true Islamic justice' strictly followed there. He saw, for instance, a thief's hand being chopped off, much to the glee of the large crowd gathered to witness the spectacle. N tells me that India should follow the example of Umar, the second Sunni Caliph, who, when he heard that his own son had committed a crime, ordered that he should be flogged with 70 stripes. When after the 30th whipping his son died, Umar ordered that the remaining 40 stripes be inflicted on his grave. In the 'true' Islamic dispensation that he dreams of, N tells me that Muslims who refuse to say their prayers shall be treated as apostates and shall be killed, and if a man, even if driven by hunger and poverty, steals food his hand shall be chopped off. I express my alarm, but N defends himself by saying that in the ideal Islamic state that he aspires for, the state would provide for the basic needs of all its citizens through the

public treasury (*ba'it ul-mal*), and, that, therefore, only a habitual or congenital criminal would ever resort to robbery. "It is not like in your India where criminals roam freely", he says with evident disgust.

Not a single Muslim state in the world, I tell N, is the sort of Islamic utopia that he hungers for, not even Pakistan, which I know he passionately supports. '"Let Pakistan go to hell", he answers. "Every Muslim, no matter where he or she lives, should work to establish an Islamic state, the system of the Prophet (*nizam-e-mustafa*)." Islam, he tells me, has come to 'conquer the world' (*ghalib hone ke liye*), not to be dominated (*maghlub*) by other ideologies or religions. This is why, he says, the 'enemies of Islam' (here he specifically names the Jews, Christians and Hindus) are 'mortally afraid' of Islam and have been consistently 'conspiring' to eliminate it. It is because of this, he says, that Muslims all over the world are being cruelly oppressed.

I venture to ask him if his claim is true how is it he can speak so freely in his town, which has only a very small Muslim population, almost all its inhabitants being Hindus. It is with great difficulty that I repress the urge to tell him that if he spoke so assertively in many Muslim countries he could be sure that he would have been marched off at once to the gallows.

N tells me that Muslims in Kashmir and in India must struggle to establish a state on the model of that of the Prophet in Medina more than 1,400 years ago. For this purpose, they must also engage in missionary work among the Hindus, to bring them to Islam, because, he claims, Islam is the only way to salvation in this world and the world after death. I tell him that his aggressive ways and his championing of violence is surely no way to convince others of the claims that he makes on behalf of Islam. The *Qu'ran*, I point out, tells Muslims that they should preach their faith with 'gentle words'. N, however, rudely cuts me short and blurts, "Islam tells us that it is our duty to speak the truth boldly before others even if it hurts them."

I decide that I must have my say now. I simply cannot let N go on. I tell him that if he thinks missionary work is a principle duty

incumbent upon all Muslims, the seemingly most vocal champions of Islam in Kashmir, the Islamist militants, seem to have completely forgotten this task. Surely, I say, the killings of innocent people by the militants would only further repel people from Islam rather than attract them towards it. But before I can complete my sentence, N retorts, "Nowhere in Kashmir have the militants killed any innocent people. You have been fed on wrong propaganda in the newspapers spread by the enemies of Islam."

When I say that he is talking arrant nonsense he relents somewhat and says, "It may be that one or two people have disguised themselves as militants and killed others to settle personal scores but they are not true militants."

The conversation is, of course, getting nowhere, and I decide to leave. N grabs my hand and gives it a firm shake. "I pray to Allah that the next time we meet, you will have the *Qur'an* in this hand of yours and you will be a brave soldier of Islam", he says with a supercilious smile.

I do not conceal my anger, but I bid him farewell.

As I walk down from N's shop I am followed by a group of cheerful school boys who have witnessed my heated encounter with N. "Uncleji", one of them, a Muslim lad, tells me, "Please do not mind what that man said. He is notorious for being a stupid loud-mouth". Another boy, who also happens to be a Muslim, chirps in, "Yes, he is a little mad."

I cannot suppress my laughter and the children join me in shrieking out in delight.

As these diverse voices so strikingly suggest, Islam, like any other religion, can be understood and interpreted in a variety of ways, often mutually opposed. They point to the obvious, although often overlooked, fact of the fractured and fiercely contested nature of Islamic discourse. The notion of there being a singular, monolithic understanding of Islam, so deeply cherished by radical Islamists and their opponents alike, is, therefore, obviously misleading. The

Muslim monolith is a mythical creation. Different Muslim groups offer different understandings of normative Islam, which, in turn, can go along with different political agendas which are sought to be legitimized as 'Islamic'. This diversity of opinion offers room for promoting alternative ways of imagining inter-community relations in 'Islamic' terms.

The voices highlighted here point to the theological resources contained within a broadly defined 'Islamic' paradigm that can be used to critique the exclusivist and hostile notions of the non-Muslim 'other' that are so deeply ingrained in Islamist discourse, and which are routinely employed by those who see themselves engaged in what they describe as a jihad in Kashmir. Even the belief, held by many people highlighted here, that Islam represents the absolute truth, can be used to counter the arguments of the radical Islamists. Thus, for instance, the stress on the need for peaceful missionary work, and the belief that violence in the name of jihad would gravely hamper the prospects for *tabligh*, only further alienating Hindus from Islam, is a powerful critique of what the radical Islamists consider as a jihad.

These alternative voices that, in their own ways, critique both the radical Islamists as well as right-wing Hindu groups, cry out to be heard. They can serve as crucial resources in countering the appeals of both Islamist as well as Hindutva extremists and in developing alternative ways of conceiving of inter-community relations in Jammu and Kashmir. In turn, highlighting and promoting such voices could, in its own limited way, help promote efforts to bring about a peaceful solution to the Kashmir conflict, one that does justice to all the various communities inhabiting the state.

11

Religion and Identity Politics of Sikhs of Kashmir

Ravinder Jit Kaur

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is a land of many ethnic and religious groups. These ethnic religious and social groups reflect diversity in an otherwise culturally and religiously homogeneous Valley. It is interesting to see, as to how, despite the predominant presence of the Kashmiri Muslims, the miniscule religious and cultural minorities have been able to maintain their distinctive characteristics. There evolved a pluralist culture rather than a monoculture mainly due to the close interaction of people belonging to different religions, cultures and languages. They shared secular and sacred spaces and respected and observed differences. Over a long period of time, a way of life evolved with more or less clearly defined social norms that governed the inter-community relations. Boundaries existed but seldom did differences get translated into antagonism. It was only during the last few years that one could see some kind of tension vis-à-vis the minorities. To begin with, it was the mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley and in the later period, it was the massacre of the Sikhs in Chattisinghpora which reflected such tension in Kashmir. These events brought focus on the issue of inter-community relations in the context of the sharpened political identity of Kashmiri Muslims.

I

Ethnicity may be defined as the tendency of human beings to associate with one another around shared religion, sect, language, cultural traditions, and belief in common ancestry and a host of other particularistic characteristics. The feeling of belonging together (sharing common symbols and a structure of discourse) is usually multidimensional, constituted by more than one so-called objective characteristic. Ethnic identity can, therefore, usually be rather pliable, facilitating adjustment to varying situations and contexts. It necessarily involves feelings of solidarity and loyalty towards fellow members, and, by that token, of detachment and indifference if not hostility towards others. Very often, ethnicity derives from some real or felt sense of deprivation and denial.

The Sikh community in Kashmir defines itself as a distinct ethnic identity with visible distinction on the basis of religion, language and scripture of its own. It forms a very miniscule minority and its members are spread over various parts of the Valley. There is no clear narrative of their history in Kashmir and varied accounts exist as to how they established themselves in the Valley. Generally, it is said that they came into Kashmir with the lieutenants of Maharaja Ranjit Singh but there are some who state that Sikhs are local natives. They were Punjabi Brahmins who were already living here and they embraced Sikhism during the visit of Guru Nanak Devji to the Valley. According to Max Arthur Macauliffe[1], Guru Nanak made many converts in Kashmir and thereafter went into the Himalayas. GT Vigne, who visited Kashmir in 1835, states that the Sikhs came to Kashmir in the service of Raja Sukhjewan, a Hindu of Shikarpur who was sent as governor of Kashmir by Timur Shah of Kabul about AD 1775. There are others who have taken a position that there were Sikhs in Kashmir during the time of Guru Har Gobind Sahibji and this would show that Sikh religion existed in Kashmir as far back as the time of Jahangir. Some of the old Gurudwaras in the area also point to this theory.[2]

In spite of repression against them by the Mughals, the Sikhs were able to preserve their community and their faith. The British annexation of Punjab in 1849 eventually resulted in certain reform movements within Sikhism. Most of these reform movements emphasized the pristine glory of Sikhism and its purification from the slowly creeping corrupt influence of Brahminical ritualism. As far as politicization and strengthening of community consciousness among the Sikhs is concerned, the major role was played first by the Singh Sabha and their apex body Chief Khalsa Dewan and Akali Dal.[3] The socio-religious movement in Jammu and Kashmir was an offshoot of the socio-religious movement in the rest of the country and formed an inseparable part of the same. It represented the nascent urge to change the prevailing social and religious frame in preparation for a political change. The Singh Sabha Movement[4] and its activities had a much wider appeal to the Sikh masses and consequently made a far greater impact.

It will not be irrelevant to point out that the Sikhs in the state of Jammu and Kashmir were a small minority and like the other communities were equally distressed. They too were denied opportunities of education and employment in the government. They were mainly occupied with agriculture and only a few were in the employment of the state services. However, they were also affected by the spread of education in the state and changes taking place in the rest of India in the course of time.

It was in this context that one can see the role of various socio-religious organization. Organizations which helped in crystallization of Sikh identity included Chief Khalsa Dewan, Khalsa Youngman's Association, Sikh Sahaik Sabha and Gobind Sabhas.[5] The aim and objectives of these organizations were to promote the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social and economic welfare of the Sikhs. These organizations demanded that Sikhs be given employment according to their claims and rights in all the different departments like military, revenue, judicial, forest, medical, police and public works etc. They

also demanded facilities for developing their language and preserving their way of life.

The overall economic and social position of the Sikhs in Kashmir was quite poor. The highest posts the Sikhs occupied were those of Patwaris or Munshis, which shows that the Sikh community in Kashmir was backward in every respect. However, in spite of poverty and lack of facilities, the Sikh community was trying hard to improve its socio-economic status and acquire education.[6]

Politico-religious Organizations of Sikhs

It is interesting to recall that the Akali Dal emerged as the vanguard of a movement to protect the religious interests of the Sikh community. In 1920, the Sikhs constituted a committee (Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee) for the management of their religious shrines and to wrest the control of these shrines from the hold of corrupt *Mahants*. The Akali Dal was formed as a 'semi-military corps of volunteers to raise and train men for action in taking over Gurudwaras from recalcitrant Mahants'.[7] Akali bands provided the dynamic element of the reform movement in those tumultuous days to the extent that it became Akali movement. The Akali movement was indirectly responsible for the political awakening in the princely states after the settlement of disputes over the Gurudwaras. The Akalis from the states began to agitate against the autocratic misuse of power by the Maharajas.

From 1921 onwards, the Sikh community of the state of Jammu and Kashmir began to manifest its sympathy with the Akali movement, which had a definite effect on the minds of the Sikhs. At the time of the Nankana tragedy[8], great sorrow and indignation was expressed by the Sikhs in Kashmir. They attributed the action of the Maharaja in prohibiting the ingress of outside Akalis into the state to the influence of the Resident and blamed the British officials in the Punjab as being responsible for tragedy.[9] In 1922, Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary was made the occasion for diatribes against the oppression

for the Sikhs in British India.[10] Repression and economic distress quickened the pace of Sikh agitation.[11]

With the rising of Akali movement in the Punjab, the Sikh community of Kashmir equally participated in the movement. In 1923, Nabha agitation was started and a new *morcha* or movement at Jaito was launched. Batches of passive resisters began arriving every day at Jaito in Punjab. The government tried its best to weaken and stop the Nabha agitation. The Akali Dal was declared illegal and many Akali leaders were arrested. But the official measure had a reverse effect and the agitation became a mass movement in real sense of the term. Jathas started arriving from all parts of Punjab. The members of the Gurudwara in Baramulla district of Kashmir received a letter from the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC) Amritsar, asking them to keep about 1,000 Sikhs ready at Baramulla, so that they could be called whenever required. Tara Singh and Dedar Singh of Amritsar were working zealously to accomplish this end.[12] On 9 September 1923, a huge procession carrying black flags was taken out in Srinagar city and the processionists were all barefoot. The women were singing the following poem en route *Na Zulum kamanvi ve papiya eh Raj sada Nahin Rehna*" (Oh sinner! Don't earn repression; your rule won't survive for ever). Later on, a deputation of some prominent leaders[13] waited on the Maharaja and expressed their indignation on the arrest and conviction of Sikhs.

It is worth mentioning here that though the movements conducted separately by the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to reform themselves were ultimately to pave the way for a political awakening in the state; it was the very small community of Sikhs of Kashmir which had taken the lead. The suffering and sacrifices of the Sikhs in the Gurudwara Reform Movement had a serious impact on the Sikh masses. However, the state government seems to have become an active party ranged totally against the Akali agitation. By the end of November 1924, most of the Akali leaders were either expelled from the state or taken prisoner.