



The Kashmir Movement: An Overview from pre-Indian Independence to 1989 Insurgency

Sheeraz Ahmad Sofi

Ph.D. Scholar, Central University of Gujarat. sofisheeraz121@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Kashmir marks an important role in the world through its geographical position between India and Pakistan. After the 1947 partition, most of the Muslim regions came under the newly created state of Pakistan. The Kashmir valley is the Muslim majority state that was claimed by Pakistan as its part. But the instrument of accession made by Maharaja with India, authorizes India to control the state of Jammu and Kashmir as its integral part. Before the 1947 partition, Kashmir was a princely state in which people were fighting against the autocracy of Dogra rule. After Indian independence, Jammu and Kashmir came under the control of India. There were many Kashmiris who started a movement for self-determination in the state through the plebiscite which resulted in the mass movement for freedom in the valley. This article will focus on the historical overview of the Kashmir movement from Dogra rule to the breakdown of the uprising of the 1989 insurgency. Also, the paper will focus on what are the factors that led to the insurgency in the valley.

Keywords: Kashmir, Dogra rule, 1947 partition, 1989 Insurgency.

Introduction

The Indian Independence Act of July 1947 ended the British rule in the subcontinent, upon the termination of British Paramountcy and provided the rulers of the Princely States, the right to opt for either to join with India or Pakistan or to remain independent. The Kashmir movement was present since the independence of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. The movement of the valley is different from all other states of India as its instrument of accession¹ is not the same as that of other states of India. The movement started in the early 1930s when the people of Kashmir raised their voices against Maharaja Hari Singh on his discrimination policy towards Muslims. Most of the population were Muslims in the Kashmir valley. After the independence of India, the Kashmir secession movement continued as after 1947 it continued against Indian authority. However, the sparks of violent means in the valley were seen in the late 1980s in the form of insurgency.

Kashmir movement during Pre-1947 partition

During the Dogra rule (1846-1947), Muslims were oppressed and suppressed as the administrative and the military services were not given to them. It was the Hindus and Sikhs who enjoyed higher positions in the administration and military services. In the 1930s, Kashmir youth were influenced by the Indian national movement. They claimed the positions of Muslims in the administrative and military services as they were alienated from such posts (Korbel, 1954, pp: 17). To make the Muslims politically aware, the educated youth of the valley formed a reading room party. Lengthy discussions were held among members of the party about the Russian revolution and other revolutions of the world. They were keen to know as to how they should get their grievances redressed. All members of the party were young and inexperienced. They were anxious to secure suitable and honorable places in State services (Bazaz, 1954, pp: 148). Later, with the assistance of the religious leaders, or mullahs, they conducted political meetings in the mosques. However, to keep the Muslims aware of their rights, now did not remain under the four walls of the mosques and reading room as in 1931, the Maharaja, the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir gave his blessing to the foundation of three political parties in Kashmir. These were the Kashmiri Pandits Conference, the Hindu Sabha in Jammu, and the Sikhs Shiromani Khalsa Darbar (Korbel, 1954, pp: 17).

This showed the Maharaja's discrimination towards Muslims. Abdul Qadir came to the political scene of Kashmir during a meeting held at Khanqah-i-Mualla on 21 June 1931. He exhorted people to raise from the thralldom of passivity to fight for their rights while saying if we do not have machine guns there are enough stones and brickbats to reply. Nobody was going to follow him, but people sympathized with what he said. But Maharaja took Abdul Qadir seriously by arresting him, which caused a great stir and tension in the valley, Abdul Qadir became a legendry hero of the people overnight. On 13

¹ The instrument of Accession that was signed by Maharaja Hari Singh gave the dominion legislature powers to make laws in the state with respect to matters concerning defense, communication, and external affairs matters. There was a provision in the agreement that the state of Jammu and Kashmir would be made by the free will of the people until law and order should be restored.

July 1931 a mass protest was led by the Muslims of the valley towards the central jail against the arrest of Abdul Qadir leading to brutal firing on unarmed masses near Central Jail Srinagar resulted in the innocent killing. This was the first secessionist movement led by the Muslims of the valley which shook the eighty-three-year-old Dogra regime (Chandra, 1985). There are dozens of speeches on record which were delivered by Muslim leaders before the disturbance of 1931, in which persistent appeals were made by them to the Hindus to join the common struggle for the emancipation of their motherland, in which they were asked to fight for the achievement of fundamental rights and civil liberties. The exhortations were made to them not to tolerate this undemocratic and irresponsible rule which was grinding every section of the people living in the State (Bazaz, 1941, pp: 179).

To fight for fundamental rights and civil liberties, Muslims wanted to have a political organization to achieve them. It was in 1931 that the growing dissatisfaction of the Kashmiri people burst into flame. It was led by a man of twenty-five-year-old, an unemployed teacher yet unknown but he played an important part in the political history of Kashmir known as Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. Sheikh Abdullah became the main figure in the 1931 movement against the Dogra regime. He was imprisoned for his mobilization of people against the Dogra rule and was released in 1932. He continued to fight for his people's rights led him to draw the foundation of a political party (Korbel, 1954, pp: 18).

In October 1932, Sheikh Abdullah founded the Muslim Conference to achieve their demands from the Dogra rule (Bazaz, 1954, pp: 167). The main demands of the Conference were an adequate share for the Muslims in administration, freedom of the press, freedom of association, and establishment of a legislature with an elected majority. The Muslims also demanded that all invidious distinctions against them should be abolished (Bazaz, 1967, pp: 30). The first session was held in Srinagar on the 15th, 16th, and 17th October 1932. This Conference remained in existence till June 1939. Muslim conference was founded only for the struggle of the middle- and upper-class Muslims for the achievement of their rights. In 1939 the Muslim Conference was converted into the National Conference as the concept of secularism was considered because of the minority's participation (Bazaz, 1954, pp: 167).

In 1939 the name and the constitution of the Muslim conference were changed to accommodate those non-Muslims who sincerely believed in the cause of the freedom of motherland and were prepared to fight for the establishment of Responsible Government under the banner of the Conference (Bazaz, 1941, pp: 263). Sheikh Abdullah led the Quit Kashmir campaign, aimed against the Maharaja. For which he was sentenced to nine years imprisonment. But after a year in 1947, Sheikh Abdullah was released as the state was amid a revolt by the people of the Valley. Immediately after his release, Sheikh Abdullah, declared at a gathering of people at Hazaribagh, in Kashmir, on October 5, 1947: *"Our first demand is the complete transfer of power to the people in Kashmir. Representatives of the people in a democratic Kashmir will then decide whether the State should join India or Pakistan. If the forty lakhs of people living in Jammu and Kashmir are by-passed and the State declares its accession to India or Pakistan, I shall raise the banner of revolt and we face a struggle. Of course, we will naturally opt to go to that dominion where our demand for freedom receives recognition and support... We cannot desire to join those in Pakistan... In Kashmir, we want a people's Government. We want a government that will give equal rights and equal opportunities to all men-irrespective of caste and creed. The Kashmir Government will not be the government of any one community. It will be a joint government of the Hindus, the Sikhs, and the Muslims. That is what I am fighting"* (Korbel, 1954, pp: 70-71).

The instrument of Accession and the Kashmir people's reaction

The Indian Independence Act of July 1947 ended the British rule in the Indian subcontinent, upon the termination of British Paramountcy and provided the rulers of the Princely States, the right to opt for either to join with India or Pakistan or to remain independent (Lamb, 1967, pp:35). The accession of Kashmir is not of the same type as the accession of other States. It took place when the State was at risk of being overrun by tribal raiders acting under the instructions of the Government of Pakistan (Noorani, 1964, pp: 11). The problem of troop reinforcements was considered but Mountbatten urged that it would be dangerous to send in any troops unless Kashmir had first offered to accede. Moreover, accession should only be temporary, before a plebiscite. No final decision was taken on these vital questions on the 25th of October 1947, but it was agreed that V. P. Menon should fly to Srinagar at once to find out the true position there (Johnson, 1972, pp: 224). India accepted the instrument of accession as provisional accession as it will be clear from the following sentence from a letter written by Lord Mountbatten, the then Governor-General of India, to the Maharaja: "it is my Government's wish that as soon as law and order have been restored and the soil is cleared of the invader, the question of the State's accession should be settled by a reference to the people" (Noorani, 1964, pp: 11). The people of Valley passed through the betrayal of plebiscite opinion guaranteed in 1947 by Jawahar Lal Nehru, then Prime Minister of India. But when the people of the Valley demanded independence or force the Indian authority to be faithful to the promise of a plebiscite, the demand was suppressed. The betrayal of the plebiscite and the ensuing political changes suppressed the voice led to the secessionist movement in the Kashmir Valley.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, political disgruntlement with the Indian government's efforts to manipulate politics in the state grew, as successive state governments controlled by the Central government eroded Kashmir's autonomy. Pro-independence and pro-plebiscite activists were frequently jailed. However, British authorities had urged that the question of Kashmir's accession should be settled through plebiscite as soon as law and order were restored, and the invading forces had left. But the plebiscite was never held (Human Rights Watch, 1996, pp: 5).

The era of 1989 Insurgency

In the late 1980s, widespread frustration among Kashmir's against their leaders and policies followed by New Delhi exploded into a full-blown secessionist movement. The rise of secessionism in Kashmir can be accredited to, economic, fundamental demographic, and political expansions in the state. Due to demographic changes and the spread of modernization and communications over the past several decades, a comparatively younger, educated, cultured, determined, and politically aware generation had appeared in Kashmir by the 1980s (Ganguly, Rajat, 2001: 310).

The immediate cause of the 1989 secessionist movement was based on three developments (I) dismissal of the National Conference government led by Farooq Abdullah in 1984 because of the defections induced by the Congress party. (II) Farooq Abdullah leader of the National Conference aligned with the Congress party. This led to disillusionment about his government among the people (Chowdhary, 2001: 160). (III) Lastly, it was the 1987 legislative elections in which a new political party, namely Muslim United Front (MUF), a newly organized coalition of political groups contested the 1987 election to fulfill their demands of economic growth and to achieve the main goal of freedom through a plebiscite by reaching out for a political platform (Tremblay, 2009: 925). They fought against the National Conference and Congress, but they failed to win the number of seats which created crises in the state and break down of Farooq's government. There was no law and order in the state (Chowdhary, 2001: 160). An armed struggle led by the Kashmiri youth under the banner of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) appeared. Most of its members were educated and enjoyed mass support from the Kashmiris. JKLF's objective was the independence of Kashmir with a secular and democratic state as it was before 1947. On the other side, the most prominent separatist group was Jamaat-i-Islami Jammu and Kashmir (JIJK) founded in 1952 advocated reformation, according to Islamic practice. The JIJK also decided to take to arms and came into existence with a separate group in the form of Hizb-ul-Mujahidin (HM). However, Jamaat-i-Islami Jammu and Kashmir with its armed wing HM differ from the objective of JKLF as they wanted accession with Pakistan (Sikand, 2001: 219). There was anger among many of the Islamic militant groups and the *Pandits* (Kashmiri Hindus) approximately 20, 0000 fled away and about 40, 0000 Indian army and paramilitary forces were deployed in the valley to control the insurgency (Ganguly, 1996: 77).

The Indian government responded to the unrest with force and coercion. In early 1990, New Delhi, acting on the advice of the Governor of Kashmir, Malhotra Jagmohan, authorized the deployment of forces from the Central Police Organizations (CPOs) and the Indian army in Kashmir. Together with the Jammu and Kashmir Police (JKP), the CPOs and the army carried out counterinsurgency operations in the valley (Ganguly, Rajat, 2001:314). Since January 1990, the state of Jammu and Kashmir became the place of a brutal conflict between Indian security forces and armed Muslim rebels demanding independence or accession to Pakistan. The prominent militant groups active in the valley were pro-independence JKLF, pro-Pakistani group H.M, Ikhwanul Muslimeen, Harkat-ul-Ansar, and Hezbollah (Ganguly, 1996: 77). The Kashmiri youth took to arms and demanded the promises related to the plebiscite of 1947 to be fulfilled.

After the insurgency foreign fighters began to arrive from Pakistan and Afghanistan to assist insurgents in the valley against India. However, Pakistan provided all help to the insurgents through material, training, intelligence, and recruitment. It has been estimated that at least ten thousand youth had gone to Pakistan to get arms training (Schofield, 2010).

The JKLF became the first rebellion organizations and was supported by Pakistan. Their motive remains only freedom and independent Kashmir. However, Pakistan created a new militant wing with the help of Jamaat-i-Islami, known as Hizbul-Mujahidin (HM), who was pro-Pakistani. With this, the freedom movement in the valley broke into two sections based on their ideology and objectives. The JKLF which stood for the sovereign, secular and democratic Kashmir advocated for the creation of an independent state. The second newly emerged rebellion organization Hizbul-Mujahidin wanted that Kashmir should become a part of Pakistan (Ganguly, 2001).

Various organizations supported the ideology of HM and used religion to win the hearts of people towards Pakistan (swami 2010). However, the various fundamentalist groups associated with HM did not get success in imposing the practices of Islam. The increasing popularity of JKLF regarding freedom (*Azaadi*) forced the Militant national groups to form an organization known as Kul-Jamaat-e-Hurriyat-e-Kashmir (*All Kashmir freedom front*). This group supports Islamic Kashmiri society and Unification with Pakistan (Tremblay 1996- 1997: 472). Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) became the center of various Rebellion organizations and several hundreds of fighters from other Muslim countries were recruited for the freedom struggle in Kashmir (Human rights watch 1993: 27). The armed organizations have different goals and ideologies which caused clashes between them. The pro-Pakistani armed organizations used religion and Islamic literature to gain popularity. Instead of freedom slogans, people in the mid-nineties started the slogans like *Pakistan say Rishta kya...La illa ha illala* and *yehan kya chalay ga...Nizama-i-Mustafa*, which shows that people supported the unification with Pakistan and a threat for people living in minority (Ganguly, 2001).

Syed Ali Shah Geelani, a prominent Kashmiri separatist leader claimed that in the 1987 elections the Muslim United Front was confident of winning the elections with a large majority, but they failed as it was interrupted by the Government of India, as they feared that it would lead to secessionist demand in the Valley. The rigging in the 1987 elections by the Indian Government exposed the fallacy of democracy and the workers of the MUF were arrested indiscriminately and brutal methods of the Indian army convinced the Kashmiris that the non-violent method was not enough to gain self-determination. Geelani, argues that the Indian ideology during 1987 and its brutal actions forced the majority of the Kashmiris to join the militant path as they thought it was the only solution to achieve their goal of self-determination by deciding their political future giving a rise to the 1989 insurgency to strengthen the freedom movement in the Valley (Sikand, 2010: 127).

The 1989 insurgency was followed by the 1996 legislative elections in which secessionist groups boycotted and only 40% of voters cast their vote. However, India was able to normalize the situation in the Valley through repressive methods (Tremblay, 2009: 938). The efforts taken by the central government to crush the revolutionary movement in the valley, through the policy of repression has resulted in huge human rights violations done by the Indian security forces. Representatives from Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) traveled to Kashmir to document rape and other human rights abuses and violations of international laws by Indian security forces. Since the government clampdown against revolutionaries in Kashmir began in earnest in January 1990, reports of rape by security forces were normal. Rape most often occurs during crackdowns, cordon-and-search operations during which all men are held for identification in schoolyards or parks while security personnel searches their homes. In these circumstances, the security forces regularly engage in collective punishment against the civilian population, most often by beating, thrashing, or otherwise assaulting residents, and burning their homes. Rape is used as a method of targeting women whom the security personnel alleges as being militant sympathizers; in raping women, the security forces are trying to punish and humiliate the entire community (Asia Watch & Physicians for Human Rights). However, the government

failed to remove the sentiment of *Azadi* (freedom) from the hearts of the Kashmiris (Tremblay, 2009: 938). The secession movement in the valley is still ongoing as numerous people in the valley waiting for the right to self-determination through plebiscite is not yet initiated by either of the two nations India or Pakistan.

Conclusion

Kashmir has suffered from the beginning. It was from the 1930s that the people of Kashmir were fighting for their rights like the right to self-determination. Before the 1947 partition, it was against the Dogra regime. And after Indian independence, a large area of the valley came under the control of India. There started the same movement against the Indian authority as it was against the Dogra rule. However, at the time of the accession of Maharaja with the Union of India, Jawaher Lal Nehru, then the Prime Minister of India promised that there will be a plebiscite. The plebiscite will decide the future of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The promise by the then Prime Minister of India was never happen which left the people of the valley betrayed by the Indian authority. The betrayal of the plebiscite leads the people of the valley towards the violent means of activities that appeared during the late 1980's insurgency and is going on. However, there were endeavors at bilateral levels between India and Pakistan to solve the Kashmir dispute through negotiation, and government of India is trying its best to maintain the peace in the Kashmir valley.

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