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**LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH MONTHLY OF J&K**  
*A News Magazine of Kashmiri Pandit Community*

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# *Kashmir Sentinel*

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## **1 Editorial**

### *Colossal Failure*

NADIMARG was waiting to happen. There were ample signals, which the government refused to take note of. Soon after the Jehadi outfits announced the setting up of a 'Joint Command Council' the graph of the terrorist violence went up steeply. In the week that followed, the seven major incidents took a toll of 54 people killed. This included 23 security personnel and 19 civilians. The incidents in Rajouri, particularly the burning down of 37 houses of the minority community was enough warning that the ethnic cleansing of the minority groups was high on the agenda of the terrorist entrepreneurs.

Intelligence and media reports consistently referred to the rewards being announced by ISI to enact massacres. Didn't acts of stepped-up subversion and threats of massacres warrant a thorough review of the security set-up of the pockets where, despite all odds, remnants of the Pandit community were holding on? Not only the state government refused to act on the intelligence feed back, there were serious lapses on the administrative front as well. Armed with the evidence that the terrorists were upto some mischief, Nadimarg Pandits had approached District administration for beefing up the security. The cold-blooded bureaucrats had turned them away saying if nobody had harmed them during the past 13 years why should they worry then. Disheartened by the administrative apathy, the fear stricken people subsequently sought intervention of two local CPM MLA's. Even this did not help. With such a disoriented administration, how could Nadimarg have been averted.

The exiled Pandit community has also levelled charges that PDP-led government was insincere on the return of Pandits and was just creating a media-hype on the issue, which invited the terrorist back lash. The interaction of the different delegations of Pandits with the chief minister, the unprecedented supersession in promotion of Pandit employees in state education department and J&K Bank and non-inclusion of a Pandit representative in Upper House have been sighted as proof enough of PDP's endemic hostility to the aspirations of the displaced community. If the state government was sincere about the return process, why was it pursuing the return plan in a shadowy manner and avoiding a frank dialogue with the members of the Pandit community. What did PDP and the state government do by way of building political campaigns on this issue in the Kashmir valley itself?

Return of the Pandits cannot be de-linked from the larger issue of their ethnic cleansing. Attempts to do so have only invited massacres. Cross-border terrorism and indigenous factors have contributed in equal measure to the uprootment of Pandits. With Kashmir's social milieu decisively altered to the demands of communalism and Talibanisation, there was very little left that could assure security to the Kashmiri Pandit community. A serious return plan by the Valley's political leadership or the government would not avoid addressing these ground-level realities.

The Chief Minister has commented that such massacres have taken place in the past as well. Quite true. But then, aren't these repeated massacres an indictment of the destabilising politics pursued by the Valley's entire mainstream leadership vis-a-vis Pandits on the return issue? The Valley's political elite is reluctant to create conditions that can facilitate the return of the exiled community. Yet it has compulsions to enact a tokenist return for its own legitimacy. This dilemma is best reflected in its attempts to delink the return issue from the dialogue process and trivialising the issue of Pandit's genocide.

The State and the Central governments have also involved themselves in a blame game on passing the responsibility for massacres to the other side. Successive Central governments and the national political leadership have totally failed in drawing lessons from repeated massacres and evolving a doctrine for survival of minorities in the terrible situation of J&K. Centre's penchant to indulge in semantics on the issue of cross border terrorism v/s indigenous terrorism and delinking Muslim identity politics from terrorism, has only served to confer immunity to the local support structures of cross-border terrorism, with terrible costs for the nation.

The Centre's calculated disregard for the exiled Pandit community and other minority groups in the state has not sent positive signals to the international community. Only a State that cares for its patriotic people and can go to any extent to defend its value system is taken seriously.

The Deputy PM, Mr LK Advani recently confessed that Central government has not done justice to the exiled Pandit community. Mr Yashwant Sinha, the External Affairs Minister went on record saying, "Nadimarg has resulted in a fresh thinking in dealing with the terrorist menace". One can only hope that politicians live up to their commitments, for Nadimarg represents the colossal failure and the utter helplessness of the Indian state to protect its own citizenry.

## 2 Upanayana or Yugnopavit

*Yugnopavitam paramum pavitram  
prajapateyrth sahjam purastat  
ayusham agrim pratimoincha shuibrem  
yugnopavitam balam astu tejah*

**By Pushkarnath Nehru**

### 1. What is Upanayana?

*Upanayana* is one of the most important SAMASKARAS (symbolic events) in the life of the child.

In the ancient times a child was initiated into the pursuit of secular knowledge (like astronomy, mathematics, metaphysics, logic, medicine and other vedic literature) as well as into the realm of spiritual development by putting him on the task of learning and practicing such disciplines by way of his parents handing him over to a Guru for the purpose of learning and practicing them under his guidance. But eventually this institution became out of vogue due to the socio-economic changes. The Upanayan ceremony is now restricted to and revolves around the investiture of the sacred thread or the ‘*yugnopavit*’ and the teaching of *Gayatri Mantra* to the child.

By virtue of the performance of the *Upanayana* ceremony, which connotes the taking of the charge of the student by the teacher, the student is supposed to have second birth (*Dvija*) in the world of knowledge through education. This is done after staging symbolically all the previous events (Samaskaras) right from his or her birth. In the Vedic birth of the student, symbolised by wearing the “girdle” and the sacred thread, *Savitri* becomes the mother and Guru the father.

### 2. What is Yugnopavit (sacred thread) ceremony?

This initiation of a student by the teacher, entailed various functions, such as selection of Guru, auspicious time, preparation, wearing of garments, the girdle, the sacred thread (“*Yugnopavit*”), presenting of deer skin, the staff, *Savitri Mantra*, sacred fire (*agnihotra*) and alms etc. Later on when the conception of Upanayana underwent a change in the course of time, the mere initiation of the child by the teacher became a sacred lore. The original idea of initiation for education got overshadowed by the mystic significance of Upanayana which lead to the idea of second birth (*dvija*) through the *Gayatri Mantra*. The initiation, which marked the taking over of the charge of the student by the Guru, revolved around the establishment of connection between the student and *Savitri* (through the *Gayatri Mantra*) performed by the Guru and his teaching of this *mantra*.

The Upanayana in the present form is the investiture of the sacred thread (“*Yugnopavit*”) on the child which involves the initiation and symbolically staging all the said Samaskaras. The most important part of this ceremony is the wearing of the sacred thread and the accompaniment of the recitation and teaching of the *Gayatri (Savitri) Mantra* which is one prayer that is the crux of the whole vedic wisdom.

The wearer of this thread is supposed to be constantly reminded of his commitment to the secular and spiritual goals which he has set upon himself on this solemn occasion. That this life may not pass away just in unconscious striving but become a means of the expansion of our ‘being’; That it may provide a view of one’s self and the world without being in conflict with the action that comes by ; That life, even at its worst, may still provide us a source of sharing the joyousness of our existence; This is the greatest art of life, which comes, not through wanton experimentation, but through prayer and humility alone and through that the divine grace.

Abiding by the secular obligations towards his Guru, his family and the society are some of the definitive prescriptions that cannot be separated from his spiritual goals. Firstly the sacred thread has three folds which represents the trinity of existence symbolizing the three worlds; Earth, Space and the Heaven or Brahma (the unfolding of the world and this life), Vishnu (the sustenance) and Mahesh (the re-absorption). The central knot of the sacred thread and tying together of the three strands, represents



Parambrahma (the supreme expansion of consciousness) into which all the three 'tattvas' (aspects of Godhead) such as Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh merge. This knot is known as 'Brahmagranthi'. The three cords remind the wearer that he has to pay the three debts he owes to the ancient seers (*rishis*), the ancestors (*pitras*) and the *Devatas* and that his consciousness has to expand into all the three worlds. The threads are doubled at the time of marriage signifying the additional sacramental obligations towards his consort.

### 3. Gayatri Mantra (also called Savitri)

The focal point of the whole Upanayana ceremony is the recitation of the Gayatri Mantra and teaching its essence to the initiated. The *mantra* is considered to be the most sacred and according to Manu 'there is nothing more exalted than the *Gayatri*'.

*Om tat savitur varenyam*

*bhargo devasya dhimahi*

*dhiyo yo nah pracodayat*

This original 'Gayatri Mantra', which is also known as 'Savitri', is a Rigvedic hymn (RV III, 62-10) which usually is preceded by the recitation of 'Om Bhur, Bhuvah Svah' which upon translation connotes :

*Om bhur bhuvah svah*

*tat savitur varenyam*

"That splendid magnificence of *Savitre*, the Cosmic Sun, permeating the three worlds, the Earth, the Space and the Heavens is assuredly *Savitri*; the inspirer, life giver, the stimulative force"

*Bhargo devasya Dhimahi*

"May we meditate on the life giving divinity, *Savitri* assuredly is God, and therefore I meditate on his splendor".

*dhiyo Yyonha prochodayat*

"May He himself illumine our intelligence. May He himself breath it into us".

The Gayatri Mantra derives its name from the metre in which it is written, the Gayatri being a Vedic poetic metre of 24 syllables of which, as per tradition, is authored by the sage *Vishvamitra*. The *mantra* consists of three sections (PADS) having eight syllables each and have to be recited in a particular sequence. Therefore the *Gayatri Mantra* is not a magic formula nor is it merely a logical sentence. It connects in a very special way the objective and subjective aspects of reality. It is neither a mere sound nor sheer magic. Words have not only sound but also meaning which is not apparent to all those who simply hear the sound. Such living words have a power that transcends the mental plane. To acquire this energy of the word one has to grasp not only its meaning but also its message, or its vibrations, as they are sometimes called in order. Therefore the phonetic quality of the *mantra* demands that it be recited in a particular way. Faith, understanding and physical utterance as well as physical continuity (since the *mantra* is supposed to be handed down by a master) are the essential requisites. Every word links up with the source of all words. The ultimate character of the word (*Shabada Brahma*) is a fundamental concept in spirituality.

### 4. Abhid (the alms)

The alms giving (Abhid) is now a symbolic act reminiscent of ancient institution of obtaining voluntary contributions made for the sustenance of the *Guru's Ashram* in which the initiated students used to study. Presently during the Yugnopavit ceremony the act of alms giving is symbolically staged and is known as Abhid. This has now taken the complexion of "Dakshina" for the presiding *Guru*.

### 5. Relevance of Yugnopavit in the present times

The Yugnopavit ceremony used to be one of the most exalted functions in the life of a Brahmin, particularly in respect of the Kashmiri Brahmins. But due to major changes in the social and economic factors its importance in the course of time has significantly dwindled. In recent times it has lost its

vitality and sublimity. It has unfortunately now been reduced to a social “*Tamasha*” without any attempt by us to restore its former sanctity. This sacrament used to be one of the most important instruments for inculcating and imparting discipline, values of life and the principles of right conduct.

Now, in the aftermath of our exodus from Kashmir it is doubly important to try and restore the intrinsic sanctity and usefulness of this *samaskara* so that we are able to give a worthy gift unto the young. Whereas modern education with its scientific spirit and vocational training is important for our children, but at the same time cultivation of matrices of right conduct, overall personality development with humane values of life so as to develop a vibrant ethos are the very essential credentials that would enable us to face the challenges of the present world. At present our children are facing a cultural cul-de-sac which suggests a drifting and a meaningless existence.

A sense of direction is needed more than ever before. The infusion of the spirit behind the “*Yugnopavit*” ceremony which also aims to promote compassion, love, benevolence, non-violence, fraternity, self-discipline and finer human relationship etc. in addition to the urge to meditate on the resurgence of the Supreme Consciousness can act as one of the most important instruments for achieving this goal.

The intrinsic message of the *Gayatri Mantra* engulfs a wide gamut of ideals such as what the *Isha Upanishad* says:-

*Yastu sarvani bhutanyatmanayay vamu pashyeti  
sarva bhuteshu ch atmanam tato na vijugupsate  
yasiman sarvani bhutanyatmyabhdi janatah  
tatra ko moha kah shokah eikatva manupashytaha*

“He who sees all creatures in himself, himself in all creatures, does not show abhorrence to any one; knowing all beings to be ones own-self and seeing the unity of man-kind, how can there be for him delusions, sufferings and sorrows”.

### **3 Bala Devi of Balahama, Srinagar**

*Isht Devi of Dogra Rulers*

**By Virendra Bangroo**

#### **INTRODUCTION :**

Ancient Hindu Shrines in Kashmir are under constant threat of oblivion either due to neglect or destruction.

The village Balhama named after the Goddess Bala Devi is thirteen kilometers from Srinagar and is surrounded by the village Wuyan in the east, Khanmoh and Zewan in the north and Pampore in the west. The shrine of Bala Devi is connected with link roads from the National Highway IA via Sempore and Pampore town. From Sempore the Shrine is at a distance of 4 kms and from Pampore at a distance of two kilometers.

#### **BALA DEVI SHRINE :**

The shrine of Bala Devi has Jagir has thirty kanals of land attached to it. Around the shrine proper are twelve brick pillars covered with the galvanised iron sheets. The space in between the pillars is fenced with grills. This sort of renovation was undertaken in 1975. Earlier the shrine was open on all sides. Around the five sacred devdar trees in the shrine are twenty stone idols of gods and goddesses. Painted with Vermillion these are of ancient date. There is also a Shiv Linga in the Shrine.

#### **MYTHOLOGY :**

Bata Devi is mentioned in Mahakala-Samhita, Mantra Mahodadhi, Sri Lalitopakhyan and Haritayan Samhita or Tripura-Rahasya.

The three eyed Bala Devi has the moon crescent above her forehead and she has in her hands the book and beads, and the other two hands are in Abhay and Dhyana Mudra. She is of red complexion and wears red clothes. Sometimes she is depicted holding Ankus and Pasa in addition to beads and the book. She is bedecked with the necklace of gems and pearls.

The account of Sri Bala Devi is given in the 22nd chapter of Sri Lali Topakhyan which forms part of Brahmand Purana. According to this text Sri Bala Devi is said to be the daughter of Sri Lalitamaha Tripura Sundari. At the age of nine years she became terribly angry after seeing the Bandasura and his thirty sons who were marching ahead for a war. Bala Devi requested her mother Maha Bhatarika Sri Lalita Tripura Sundari to allow her to fight with the Bandasura. Permission for which was not allowed by her mother because of her tender age. On her daughter's insistence she not only gave her the permission but also one of her shields and number of her attributes. With this preparation she proceeded on a chariot towards the battle field. After an intense fight she was able to kill the thirty sons of Bandasura.

In Haritayan Samhita or Tripura-Rahasya, (Chapter 63), Bala Devi at the age of eight years is said to have fought directly with Bandasura. Knowing that her mother won't give her the permission she quietly proceeded towards the battle field on a chariot followed by Mantrani and Dandani.

Bala Devi was able to pierce the mighty forces of Bandasura with her rain of arrows and then confronted the Kutilaksh, riding on a mighty elephant, the commander of the forces of Bandasura. Bala Devi showered the arrows on the elephant and thereafter killed Kutilaksh. Bala Devi alone destroyed the army of Bandasura and then directly confronted the Asura. Instead of attacking Bala Devi, Bandasura showered flowery arrows on the Devi. Seeing this the charioteer of Devi was astonished and asked the Devi the reason for the same. Bala Devi said, "In the last incarnation Bandasura was Mahadoot of Srilakshmi and his name was Manik Shekhar. He was an ardent devotee of Bagvati Lalita Maha Tripura Sundar. Because of the curse on him he became Asura and he was told to earn salvation only by being killed by me. Knowing that I am the daughter of Sri Lalita Amba he is worshipping me." The war was destined and both began to fight. After defeating the opponents Bala Devi returned to her abode, Sripuri.

**FOLK LORE**

According to the local folk lore the original abode of Bala Devi is in the South India. It is said that the saint of the temple had a dream in which she told him to visit Kashmir where he could have her darshana. The saint along with his devotees as per the divine blessing visited the village of Balahama which was a dense forest at that time. The goddess gave darshana to the saint in a spring. In order to keep the sanctity of the shrine she directed him to plant trees around the spring. The saint planted fine saplings of Devdar trees around the spring which in the course of time grew to full size and covered the entire spring. The spring is no more visible today. The five Devdar trees are believed to be more than five thousand years old and are the principle object of veneration.

Bala Devi is the family deity of the Dogra rulers in the Valley. Dogra ruler, Pratap Singh used to walk bare foot for about a kilometer to reach this shrine as a matter of respect and devotion towards this shrine. Devotees used to worship by reciting the hymns in the praise of goddess and the milk was offered.

Every year havan was performed in the month of Magh on the day of Tikchorum. Havan was also performed on other auspicious days especially on Haar Chorum. Late Pandit Jai Lal of Balahama was priest of this temple till his death in 1993.

**MANAGEMENT OF THE SHRINE**

Till 1947 the Shrine was maintained by the Dogra regime and later it was taken over by the Dharmarth Trust. But it was not taken proper care of by the Trust authorities on the pretext that there was no income from this Shrine. The local body named Bala Devi Asthapan Committee was formed in 1973 with Pandit Niranjana Nath as President, Pandit Omkar Nath as Secretary, Pandit Prithvinath and Pandit Radha Krishan as members. The first task the committee undertook was to fence the land around the shrine to prevent encroachment. Seeing the initiative taken by the villagers the Dharmarth Trust also came into action and sanctioned one chowkidar for the shrine. The committee played a great role in renovating the temple and arranging the religious functions from time to time.

Under the present circumstances one can only hope that powers of Bala Devi will act as a shield against the forces of evil, ignorance and darkness till the dawn of a new era of peace and prosperity.

Five families are still living in the village, Pt. Niranjana Nath expired in January 1999.

## 4 First Kashmiri Chief of Air Staff

### *Air Chief Marshal Swaroop Kishna Kaul*

**By Dr. B.N. Sharga**

AIR Chief Marshal S.K. Kaul's ancestors were originally the residents of Habba Kadal area of the Srinagar district of the Kashmir valley. His ancestor Pandit Maharaj Kaul "Dattatreya" came out from the Kashmir valley in the beginning of the 19th century during the rule of Mughal Emperor Shah alam-II (1759-1806) around 1804 via Mughal route and finally settled down in Bazaar Sita Ram of Delhi. After witnessing the growing influence of the British over the administration at Delhi and lack of proper opportunities to secure a good job his son Pandit Ram Chandra Kaul then migrated to the nearby Gwalior state to try his luck there. After sometime he got the job in the Gwalior State Service. The name of his son was Pandit Sri Krishna Kaul.

Pandit Sri Krishna Kaul had his traditional education in Urdu and Persian language under the supervision of able and learned Maulvis in the Gwalior state. After completing his education he got a job in the Gwalior State Service but later on he came to Lucknow in search of a job around 1842 where his cousin (Mausera Bhai) the famous Urdu poet Pandit Day a Shanker Kaul "Naseem" was employed in the court of Nawab Amjad Ali Shah (1842-1847) as a Bakshi. He started living in Kashmiri Mohalla with "Naseem".

After some time Pandit Sri Krishna Kaul got a job in the court of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah (1847-1856) and was made a "daroga" of some department. He was popularly known as "Bhaiyyaji" among the community members in Kashmiri Mohalla. After the Mutiny of 1857 he joined the police department under the British rule and was made a Sub-Inspector at Lakhimpur Kheri. He again came back to Kashmiri Mohalla around 1875 after his retirement from the active government service. In recognition to his loyalty towards the British Crown, he was made an honorary Magistrate and then a Municipal Commissioner by the British and the title of Rai Bahadur was conferred upon him. He was also an Urdu poet of repute and used to compose his Urdu couplets under the pen name of "Takhallus", "Yes" like his father Pandit Ram Chandra Kaul who was also an Urdu poet. Pandit Sri Krishna Kaul used to take the guidance in Urdu poetry writing from his cousin "Naseem" who was an established Urdu poet at that time with a very sharp intellect. Some of the Urdu couplets composed by Pandit Sri Krishna Kaul are there in Bahar-e-Gulshane Kashmir, Vol-II which was published in 1932.

The idea about the style of Pandit Sri Krishna Kaul's poetry writing and his selection of words to express his feelings can be formed from the following Urdu couplets composed by him.

*"Tassavur jalwai yar dil mein hai,  
allah ki kudrat ka  
Ki butkhane mein aya hoon mein, mushtaq uski surat ka,  
Na dar roz jaza ka hai, no andesha kayamat ka  
Tarsa hoon uski baksheesh ko, bharosa hai inayat ka,  
Ajeeb rind behkhoob tak mein hai, dukhtare raz ki,  
Dilhi khair ho ab to hafiz uski, hurmat ka,  
Fidaye naz ho kar, mar gaya zere kadam uski,  
Ki naksho payenaz kab nishan hain meri turbat ka,  
Damgar yeh nikalte hain jo ashk garam aakhon se,  
Asar baki abhi hai sozish dil ki hararat ka."*

His son Pt. Shyam Krishna Kaul after completing his education went to Calcutta (Kolkata) and got a job in the Calcutta-Nagpur railway section of that time. He subsequently became an audit officer in the same railway division. Pt. Shyam Krishna Kaul's son Pt. Kunwar Krishna Kaul after the death of his father got the job in the same railway division with its headquarters at Calcutta. Pt. Kunwar Krishna Kaul was married with Roop Kumari who was the daughter of Pt. Triloki Nath Kaul, a leading criminal lawyer of

Bahraich and grand daughter of Pt. Baij Nath Kaul "*Chungi*" of Kashmiri Mohalla, Lucknow. He had three sons Pratap Krishna, Hari Krishna and Swaroop Krishna.

Pandit Kunwar Krishna Kaul's brother Pandit Brij Krishna Kaul "*Bekhabar*" was also a reputed Urdu poet of Kashmiri Mohalla, Lucknow. Pandit Brij Krishna Kaul did a monumental work of compiling the poetic compositions of the Kashmiri Pandit poets in the form of two volumes of "*Bahar-e-Gulshane Kashmir*". He later on migrated from Lucknow to Jaipur where he died in 1927.

Pt. Kunwar Krishna Kaul's eldest son Pratap Krishna Kaul was born in 1930. P.K. Kaul after completing his education became an I.A.S. Officer. He was posted in Lucknow as a city Magistrate around 1954. After working in various posts in the various districts of U.P. and in the secretariat at Lucknow, he ultimately become a Cabinet Secretary in the Central government around 1984. He then became India's ambassador to the United States of America in 1986. He retired from active government service in 1990. He is married with Usha who is the daughter of Pt. Krishna Narain Channa and grand daughter of Pt. Laxmi Narain Channa of Jammu.

Pt. Kunwar Krishna Kaul's second son Hari Krishna Kaul was born in 1932. He got married with Subhadra who is the daughter of Pt. Jai Narain Urga. He died quite young in July 1982 at the age of about 50 years.

Pt. Kunwar Krishna Kaul's third and the last son A.C.M. Swaroop Krishna Kaul was born on 20th December 1934 in Kashmiri Mohalla, Lucknow. He had his early schooling in Beasant College in Benaras (Varanasi) which is run by the Rishi Valley Trust of the Theosophical Society of India founded by Annie Beasant. He did his matriculation from this institution in 1949. He then joined the Government College, Allahabad and did his F.Sc. from there in 1951.

After that he joined the National Defence Academy at Kharakvasla in December 1951 and did his graduation course in military training. After passing out from N.D.A. in December 1952 he joined the Air Force Academy at Jodhpur and then did six months extensive training course in flying jet aircrafts at the jet Training Wing of the Air Force at Hakimpet in Secunderabad. He then got his commission in the Indian Air Force in December 1954 as a Pilot Officer in the Squadron No: 17 of the Air Force at Adampur.

It was only in 1954 that the Indian Air Force had its first Indian Chief when Air Marshal Subodh Mukherjee became the chief of the Air Staff. As the top ranking British officers of the Air Force left for their country lock, stock and barrel, so the junior Indian officers got quick promotions in the Air Force after the independence of the country.

During the Indo-Pak war of 1965 Air Chief Marshal S.K. Kaul was based at Pathankot. He flew mystery air craft and took a very active part in these operations. He was a part of the 28 aircraft strike formations of our Air Force which struck the Chamb-Jourian sector on 17th September 1965 and which was mainly responsible for successfully thwarting and blunting the Pakistani Armour thrust in our territory. Throughout this conflict he undertook many offensive strikes and air support missions to provide air cover to our marching troops in the Pasrur Bulge Sialkot sector of the war front. Our armed forces gave a crushing defeat to the Pakistan army in this war and moved up to the outskirts of the Lahore city. After this the government raised the rank of the Chief of the Air Staff from Air Marshal to Air Chief Marshal.

Air Chief Marshal S.K. Kaul after this war got the promotion and was made a Commanding Officer of a hunter bomber squadron at Hasimasa in the eastern sector.

India came to the rescue of "Mukti Bahni" in 1971 to provide it logistic support in their freedom struggle and at the same time to stop the massive influx of refugees from across the border into our territory.

Though actual Indo-Pak war started on 3rd December 1971 but prior to that Air Chief Marshal S.K. Kaul who was Wing Commander at that time started under taking photo reconnaissance missions over erstwhile East Pakistan since October 1971. These missions were specially carried out deep into enemy territories covering heavily defended sectors of Comilla, Sylhet and Saidpur. The photographs obtained

through these drae devil missions of the fortified enemy positions helped our armed forces to finalise their assault plans accordingly to minimise the casualty figures.

Throughout 1971 war Air Chief Marshal S.K. Kaul carried out strike missions with top precision on military targets of the enemy covering practically the whole area of the erstwhile east Pakistan. He also led some important missions such as an attack on the Dhaka Government House. This mission was a great success and ultimately forced the Pak army to surrender before our armed forces. For this gallantry, determination, professional skill and leadership of a very high order the then President of India V.V. Giri honoured him with Mahavir Chakra (M.V.C.).

His citation reads "on 4th December 1971, he again volunteered for another task to photograph the Tejgaon and Karmitola airfields. His reconnaissance flights over these two airfields in the face of the most sustained and heavy enemy ground fire, stands out as acts of heroism, extreme gallantry and devotion to duty, in addition to his reconnaissance exploits, he led the very first eight air crafts strike mission over Dhaka. In this raid his formation encountered enemy aircraft near the target areas. With exemplary leadership, he maneuvered his force in such a manner that two of the enemy aircrafts could be shot down and the other two fled away. The target thus became clear for attack and all through the war he led his squadron boldly and courageously in the face of the enemy. "

After this war A.C.M., S.K. Kaul became chief operation officer at the Pune Air Force station which is one of the major flying base of the Indian Air Force. He was then made the Wing Commander and group captain in the directorate of Air Intelligence at the Air Force headquarters at New Delhi.

After completing this important assignment A.C.M., S.K. Kaul became the Air Officer Commanding of the Air Force station at Bareilly, which is a very important Air Base of the Central Command. It houses two squadrons with highly specialized role of strategic reconnaissance and electronic warfare.

When Mrs. Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister of the country for the second time in 1980 after the fall of the Janta Party Government, she sent A.C.M., S.K. Kaul to Moscow in 1982 as the Air Attache in the Indian embassy there. He held this post upto January 1986. During this period there was an unprecedented procurement and induction of a large number of air crafts and other weapon systems from the erstwhile Soviet Union for the Indian Air Force to make it one of the best in the world. These included MiG-29, AN-32, 12-76 aircrafts and Mi-17 and Mi-26 helicopters. Apart from all this A.C.M., S.K. Kaul successfully co-ordinated the induction of Radar and Missile systems for the IAF as well. While at Moscow he was also instrumental for the co-ordination of first Indo-Soviet joint space venture very successfully in which Squadron leader Rakesh Sharma carried out his historic space journey to become the first Indian consmonaught. During this period he also arranged, the training in U.S.S.R. of a large number of Indian Air Force personnels for the newly acquired weapon systems from that country.

After his return from Moscow he was posted as the Director of Personnel (Officers) at the Air Force Headquarters at New Delhi. He was then made the senior Air Staff Officer at the South Western Air Command at Jodhpur. During this two years stint at the Jodhpur Air Base apart from conducting the routine air exercises, he reorganised the total Air Defence environment of that important region, which included the integration of the Army Radars with the Air Force for providing proper Air Defence to the Bombay high region from any strike by the enemy.

Around 1989 he was appointed as the senior air staff officer in CAC at Allahabad. He again rearranged the operational air exercises, which were conducted in this command to give it a total thrust towards the task oriented training. Under this command a large scale air borne operations involving a battalion group, paradropping and heliborne operations, dropping two company groups were organised and very successfully conducted, thus enhancing our capabilities in this field.

In February 1991 he became AOC-in-C of the Central Air Command and he remained on this post up to 30 April 1992. During this tenure he devoted his special attention towards optimization and utilization of the resources and simultaneously identifying the areas for effecting economy, both in manpower and materials by taking effective steps to curtail the unproductive expenditure. Apart from all this he also gave special attention towards the welfare of the air personnel. Under his command greater efforts were

made and due emphasis was given to improve the quality of life at all the stations of the Air Force by providing a better and healthier environment in them with improved facilities.

In order to project and identify the Air Force with our countrymen, particularly those living in the rural areas, a scheme was launched to adopt a village contiguous to the Air Force camps. For carrying out all this work and for his distinguished record of service of the most extraordinary nature the then President of India Mr. R.Venkataraman awarded him with Param Vishisht Seva Medal in 1992.

On 18th May 1992 he was appointed as the AOC-in-Chief of the Western Air Command, which is the largest and one of the most important operational command of the IAF to keep a constant vigil on the western border of our country. In order to promote closer co-operation and better integration of joint planning between the Army and the Air Force he institutionalised bi-annual conferences with both Northern and Western Command of the Army with active support of the two GOCs-in-C. These conference, helped a lot in building up a better understanding between the two wings of our armed forces, the Army and the Air Force thus paving a way for integrated joint planning for future wars.

On 31st July 1993 he was appointed by the government as the chief of the Air Staff. He retired from this post on 21 December 1995 after putting in 42 years of active service in the Indian Air Force. In November 1994, he was also appointed as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. In this capacity he gave great impetus to joint planning and co-operation in conducting any operation.

Air Chief Marshal S.K. Kaul got married on 11 December 1962 at Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh with Nita the daughter of Pt. Chand Narain Raina "Chand" of Lahore who was a reputed Urdu poet. Mrs. Nita Kaul is a very active social worker. She has contributed a lot in the field of adult education by regularly organising various adult education programmes at the places where her husband was posted from time to time. She has also worked for the institutions for the handicapped children at most of the Air Bases. She also made the Air Force Wives Welfare Association meaningful by involving a large number of wives of the Air Force personnels in various ventures and social programmes. This couple has two daughters Shivani and Devyani. The former is married with Sanjay Tikku while the latter is married with Barmali Agrawal.

Air Chief Marshal S.K Kaul is a charming personality. He was a keen sportsman during his young age. Golf and Tennis are his most favourite games. He loves reading books on various subjects and listening Indian Classical music. He is popularity known as Supp Bhai among his relatives and close friends. He is humble and highly cultured . He has over 3700 hours of accident free flying record to his credit which is a very remarkable feat indeed. He had flown various types of fighter and bombar supersonic aircrafts held out in the inventory of the Indian Air Force from the Vampires in the 1950s to the latest MiG-23, Jagaur, MiG-29, and Mirage-2000 aircrafts. After his retirement from service he settled down in the Gurgaon.



## 5 Kashmir

**By Shamim Ahmed Shamim**

THE accord that took place between Mrs. Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah in February 1975 after two years' prolonged parleys, marks a watershed in the politics, if not the history, of the state. The arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953, his imprisonment, subsequent externment, and declaring the Plebiscite Front an unlawful party had not only eroded the legitimacy of the accession but cast a shadow on the democratic institutions and the functioning of democracy in the country. Undoubtedly the use of force, repression and other unlawful practices had started in the Sheikh's regime itself in the 1951 State Assembly elections. But, after 1953, what passed under the pretence of elections in the State, and the manner in which the country's political parties and national press entered into a conspiracy of silence, accepting the suppression of justice, democracy and moral values as an unpalatable yet inevitable reality, left an indelible stigma on the fabric of Indian democracy.

I am firm in my opinion that all the experiments put to use in other parts of the country to pervert the electoral process with the help of government machinery, political repression and money power, were initially tried and tested in the laboratory of Kashmir. The repeated use of these reprehensible devices so dulled our democratic sensibility that the clamping down of internal emergency became not only possible but also acceptable, at least during the earlier phase. The facade of Assembly elections in 1951 and then bypassing the same Assembly in 1953, deposing and arresting Sheikh Abdullah, signalled the starting point of a journey which twenty two years later finally culminated in overwhelming the nation with an internal emergency.

Against such a back-drop, the Indira-Addullah accord of February 1975, was a significant step towards normalising the political process in the State; and Mrs. Gandhi quite rightly deserves kudos and credit for this act of statesmanship and farsightedness. Without conceding a single demand, she persuaded the Sheikh to accept the Chief Ministership of the State on Congress support.

Having remained in political wilderness for 22 years, Sheikh Abdullah, accepting the realities of the situation, renounced the slogan of self-determination, plebiscite and demand for restoration of the 1953 status of the state. For some time, however, he stubbornly insisted that he should be called the Prime Minister instead of the Chief Minister. Mrs. Gandhi granted it partially, allowing him to call himself Prime Minister if he so wished, but making it clear that the Centre would refer to him only as Chief Minister.

Although it is true that India's stand on Kashmir, its constitutional position and international commitments have in no way been affected or influenced by the accord, the State undoubtedly has undergone a qualitative change: a semi-balance of peace, stability and normality has entered the political scene. Notwithstanding his controversial personality, erratic politics and short-sighted perspective, Sheikh Abdullah continues to be the most charismatic figure dominating Kashmir politics, holding the centre of the stage for the last 50 years as a symbol of Kashmiri nationalism.

To cap it all, his dismissal, arrest, imprisonment, externment, in fact every insult and injustice inflicted upon him has given him a martyr's halo, making him more and more popular. Consequently, he has emerged as the most outstanding example of Kashmiri aspirations. The efforts of his successors and the Centre to keep him out of politics and power proved so counter productive that to extern or imprison him at every subsequent election in the State, became an unavoidable necessity upto 1971. The Sheikh and the Plebiscite Front made their task easier by boycotting those elections. But when he decided to participate in 1971, the State government had to impose restrictions on his entry into the State and to meet this danger the Centre had to declare the Plebiscite Front an unlawful party.

These undemocratic and high handed methods gave rise to a self-seeking, pelf-seeking class which wielded unbridled authority to do whatever it liked in the name of loyalty to the Central government and the ruling party. To deal with Sheikh Abdullah and his incendiary politics, the Centre was compelled to support these 'loyalists'. Thus, we got into a vicious circle, with little hope of extricating ourselves.

Whatever the motives and considerations that weighed with Mrs. Gandhi and the Sheikh in forging the accord, its incontrovertible end product is the possibility of breaking this vicious circle, and being released from the anomalous and monopolitical strangle-hold of the Congress on the politics of the State. The March 1977 revolution has given to these possibilities a clear and concrete shape. As a result, for the first time after Independence, the Sheikh and his party, the National Conference, have come into power, after the conduct of what were comparatively free and impartial elections. In fact, it is such an extraordinary and revolutionary change that it would have been impossible even to think of it a year earlier. This pleasant but unexpected turn to the situation must have been a surprise for even Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues.

In January 1977, before the declaration of general elections, the Sheikh held talks with Mrs Gandhi on the distribution of Assembly seats between the Congress and the National Conference on a basis of equality. The distribution of parliamentary seats had in fact been done on this very principle of fifty-fifty. Had Mrs. Gandhi won the elections, it was likely that he would have found it difficult to secure even 50% seats. But, whereas the March 1977 elections liberated the country from dynastic rule and bondage of fear, it also set free the Sheikh and his party from the shackles of political compromise and agreements.

The manner in which the Sheikh lent his unreserved and unqualified support to Mrs. Gandhi and the Emergency after having become the Chief Minister, pointedly highlights the fact that he had not accepted the realities of a changed situation resulting from a change in ideology or mental attitudes, but as the single entry-point to the place of power. For this very reason, the political accord proved the starting point of many of his compromises on principles and points of view and, right up to Mrs. Gandhi's debacle in March 1977, he continued making compromises with his avowed stands at every step. Such a climbdown, though hardly in harmony with his political stature and popular image, was an inevitable consequence of the Sheikh's political style and the background against which the accord was forged.

For Mrs. Gandhi, the accord had all the advantages. Without conceding anything she achieved all that her father failed to achieve in his life time. The process that had been set into motion with the withdrawal of the conspiracy case against the Sheikh in 1964 had been left half way through because of Nehru's death. Eleven years later his daughter led it to its logical conclusion. Jawaharlal was unhappy with Sheikh Abdullah's separatist political and pro-Pak stance. He wanted the Sheikh to accept the accession as final. The Indira-Abdullah accord represents the fulfillment of this wish. But, for Sheikh Abdullah, the agreement was no more than a charter of unfulfilled hopes and shattered dreams.

It was the outcome of his frustration and disillusionment. In spite of 22 years of imprisonment, exile and isolation from the position of power, he had seen no light emerging from anywhere. Meanwhile, a new generation had come to the fore. And this generation was free from the kind of emotional attachment which bound the elders to him. On the other hand, they held him responsible for those involved political entanglements, the complexities of which had shadowed their birth and growth. On the one hand, notwithstanding his stature and popularity, the fact of his being out of power coupled with the demands of practical politics had gradually rendered him irrelevant; on the other, the power blocks had lost interest in the Kashmir issue and the Security Council resolutions on Indo-Pak relations attracted the idle curiosity of research scholars only. Pakistan too had ceased to sustain life in a receding hope which petered out finally in 1965.

Dejected by Pakistan, the Sheikh eventually gave up the politics of non-cooperation and decided to participate in the elections in 1971. It is a pity that the State and Central governments prevented him from doing so, imposing restrictions on his re-entry into the State. This frustrated him further. The defeat of Pakistan in the Bangladesh war of 1971, shook him to the roots, delivering a crippling blow to his determination and resistance. Not only had Sheikh Abdullah refused to condemn the barbaric policies that Pakistan pursued during the early days of military intervention in Bangladesh, but in an interview published in a Hyderabad Urdu daily, he had justified the actions of General Yahya Khan and the notorious Tikka Khan.

The breakdown of the Pakistan war machine and the creation of Bangladesh now fully and finally convinced him that Pakistan could no longer keep the Kashmir issue alive. Thus, he turned to rebuild his broken bridges with Mrs. Gandhi. It must be said to the credit of Mrs. Gandhi that she seized the opportunity and encouraged the move. Had the present Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, been in her place, he would possibly have lost the opportunity by his stubborn attitude and rigid behaviour. In fact, after the creation of Bangladesh, when Sheikh Abdullah chose the path of reconciliation, giving up the posture of confrontation, Mrs. Gandhi got him installed as Chief Minister with the help of the Congress majority in the Legislature.

In spite of being a significant step towards normalising the political life of the state, fundamentally the accord was an agreement between two individuals and nothing more. It had no legal or constitutional validity. Between February 1975 and March 1977, it came to breaking point on many an occasion and the credit goes to the Sheikh that he saved it from getting snapped, albeit at the cost of his self-respect and personal pride. Precisely for this reason, the Congress Party withdrew its support to Sheikh Abdullah from the legislature and practically finished the accord after its defeat in March 1967. What followed has put a stop to the artifices and artificeries of the politics of agreements, providing an opportunity to build the state politics on more firm, lasting and purposeful foundations.

The recent changes in the politics of the State must be welcomed from this point of view. The present government and its leadership has come into existence through free elections and public confidence, instead of political agreements and personal expediency. Thus, for the first time during the last 30 years, the democratic process has been allowed a free flow along its natural course.

There is no denying that to win the Assembly elections Sheikh Abdullah had fanned feelings of communalism, internal autonomy, parochialism and regionalism. He had created such an atmosphere that quite a few political observers, while conceding the elections to have been free, refuse to accept them as fair. But, to use a biblical image, would there be any politician in the land who could pelt the first stone at him?

It is worthy to note that to ensure his success at the polls the Sheikh, instead of banking upon his sacrifice, popularity and charisma had to take recourse to such trite and tried manoeuvres which are used by ordinary professional politicians. Some say that to influence the voters and evoke their sympathy, he even prolonged his illness. Whether this is true or false no one can tell. But there is no doubt that Sheikh Abdullah staked everything to win the last elections.

It goes to the credit of the Janata Government that it allowed the freest elections to the State, for the first time since independence, thus proving to the people of Kashmir that they too have the same fundamental democratic rights which the people in the rest of the country enjoy and exercise. In particular, for the Muslims of the Valley, it was an incredible phenomenon that only two candidates of the ruling party at the Centre-the Janata Party--were returned out of the 42 seats it contested. In the past, some eighty to ninety percent candidates belonging to the ruling party used to win with 'large majorities'. From this point of view alone, the July 77 elections represent an important experiment in the politics of the State which are bound to yield good results.

While the results of the '77 Assembly elections have demonstrated in full measure, Sheikh Abdullah's impressive strength they have also set limits and exposed the shortcomings of his success and influence. For instance, it is significant that the National Conference, in spite of its secular and noncommunal cast, has emerged only as a representative party of the Muslims in the State. That explains its slender image in Jammu where it received only seven out of a total of 32 seats and its all pervasive position in the Valley where it bagged all but three of the 42 seats.

It was the direct result of communal preaching and regional stance projected by the party during electioneering. In fact, if the Janata rebels had not contested the officially fielded candidates and thus divided the vote, the National Conference would hardly have managed a seat or two in Jammu.

Another significant factor to note is that in spite of the charismatic personality of Sheikh Abdullah and the calmly thought out slogans, calculated to heartwarm sectarian feelings, the National Conference was able

to muster only 46% of the total votes polled, even though it secured 49 seats. In other words, the Sheikh won the election but lost the plebiscite. Let alone the fact that the Janata Party and its allies got a severe bashing at the hustings, it has brought stability to State politics and promoted the national cause in an extraordinary measure.

The recent political changes and developments in Jammu and Kashmir affirm that there are no shortcuts to political stability and national stability and national integrity other than the democratic ones. The traumatic experience that the country passed through during the Emergency, and the current political situation in Pakistan, emphasised its importance even more clearly. Likewise, it is certain that the democratic system cannot be sustained, much less strengthened in the rest of the country if it is suppressed in a part of it, be it Nagaland or Kashmir.

Now that a normal political process has been set into motion in Kashmir, it should not be prevented from taking its logical and natural course by raising the sceptre of the threat to national solidarity, the country's interest and territorial integrity as in the past.

In view of his earlier secessionist postures, some quarters are some what apprehensive about Sheikh Abdullah's recent statements and utterances regarding the internal autonomy of the State. In my opinion, however, there is no need to read any far-reaching ambition in these public postures and statements. The fundamental fact is that he accepts Kashmir as an integral part of India, and regards Kashmir's accession as irrevocable and final.

It is well known that in spite of getting tremendous moral and material support from Pakistan during the last 22 years, the Sheikh has at no stage been in favour of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. Having now acquired power through free elections, he could have little use for Pakistan. On the contrary, he has been talking of the return of State. His demand for his inclusion in any talks that India holds with Pakistan regarding Kashmir, betrays a psychological aberration rather than any political ambition. This is the nostalgia of the fifties, when big power interests in Kashmir and debates in the United Nations and other international forums kept him in the limelight, making him an international figure.

The most interesting aspect of Kashmir's current politics is the absence of any ideological base and economic programme in the State's most organised and influential organisation, the National Conference. True that it had a socio-economic programme called 'New Kashmir' before independence. But in the present day context, the document is an historical anachronism. In the euphoria of the newly acquired power in 1975, no attempt at redefining political aims and economic goals was made, while the Plebiscite Front was rechristened the 'National Conference'. On the contrary, Sheikh Abdullah repeatedly emphasised that we should give a 'holiday' to politics for some time and get down to work.

After the imposition of Emergency, he was even more emphatic about this. But when all the equations of power and politics underwent a sea change, consequent upon the March 77 election, the National Conference leadership became keenly aware of the absence of political ideology and economic programme. To tackle this problem, Sheikh Abdullah tried to smoothen the way for an understanding with the new Central government and Janata leaders, so that under a new arrangement he continued to hold the reins of power. Fortunately for the State, the Janata leadership refused to have any such understanding and Kashmir was saved from yet one more spell of the 'politics of agreements'.

It was only when he had failed to strike this bargain that the Sheikh, raising the issue of internal autonomy and of safeguarding Article 370 during the Assembly elections, created an artificial atmosphere of confrontation between the Centre and the State, although the Foreign Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, while participating in the debate on Karan Singh's motion of adjournment against the imposition of Governor's rule in the State, had clearly stated that no change would be made in Article 370, without consulting the people of the state. Despite the fact that he too knew fully well that the Janata government had no such intentions, the Sheikh, in search of an election issue, 'invented' the spectre of danger to internal autonomy and Article 370, generating tremendous sympathy for him and support for his party.

The true nature of Sheikh Abdullah's interest and concern for the State's internal autonomy and safeguarding of Article 370 is, however, betrayed by his and his party's unconditional acceptance of the

42<sup>nd</sup> amendment during the Emergency. A committee appointed under the chairmanship of Afzal Beg, the Vice-President of the National Conference, described the amendment as 'consistent with the needs and demands of the time,' although it considerably eroded the country's federal structure and the State's internal autonomy. In terms of the amendment, if Parliament chose to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution, the State government and Sheikh Abdullah could not have knocked at the Supreme Court gates, and Sheikh Abdullah and his party, instead of protesting against it, welcomed it.

The recent Sheikh-Jyoti Basu talks and statements regarding more and more autonomy to the States should be assessed against this background. With the Sheikh, autonomy is his total politics; with Basu an important weapon to carry forward his social aims, in conformity with his political ideology. It is only to emerge as the 'defender of the faith' and make up for the absence of a politico-economic programme, that the Sheikh wants to create a sense of insecurity among the people of the State. Personally I am in favour of granting a greater measure of internal autonomy to the States, particularly in the economic field; but the manner in which Sheikh Abdullah and his successors have used it throughout to suppress the democratic rights and civic freedoms of the people, leaves much room for doubt about its concept and content.

It would not be out of place to mention the Public Safety Ordinance promulgated by the Sheikh and his government in this connection. Sheikh Abdullah's demand for internal autonomy is qualitatively different to the demand of greater powers, by the other states. The Sheikh's demand has overtones of secessionism and communalism, because he links the issue of autonomy with accession. The State comprises three units, Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The demand for internal autonomy represents, at best, the aspirations of the Kashmiri Muslims. On the contrary, the people of Jammu and Ladakh consider it as part of a plan of Kashmiri domination. Considered in this context, Sheikh Abdullah's leadership of this rightful demand of the other States is likely to prove a liability rather than an asset.

The Sheikh's advantage is that he has no political or intellectual commitment and that is why he can flit across freely and without invitation, from a Marxist Jyoti Basu, a fascist Indira Gandhi, to an orthodox Imam Syed Abdullah Bukhari. The greatest contribution of Sheikh Abdullah to the politics of the State is that he played a prominent role in secularising it. But it is an irony of history and a paradox of present times that he himself has been in the fore in creating communal and separatist feelings among the Muslims. The reason is that he has throughout made use of the religious idiom to preach secularism; so that whenever he has had to seek support of religious sentiment for personal advancement and aggrandizement, he had conveniently made religion a tool of politics, and politics a tool of religion.

At any rate, that is his political style and there is no escape from it. The tragedy is that Kashmir politics have stagnated under this style and stunted the growth of the Kashmiri people. Consequently, in this last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Kashmiris find themselves in the darkness of tribal ways of thought and reaction, prejudices and fears. The geographical conspiracy of nature of shut Kashmir up in a trap has been further strengthened by politicians by strengthening these barricades rather than breaking them down.

In this analysis, I have dwelt in detail on Sheikh Abdullah's personality and political attitudes. It was unavoidable. For, the Sheikh has been the fountain-head, centre and pivot of Kashmir politics for the last 50 years. Any objective analysis of Kashmir politics is bound to prove incomplete without an analysis of this subjective aspect of his personality. This undoubtedly sets the seal on Sheikh Abdullah as an extremely popular leader, wielding tremendous political influence; but it also points toward the mental and political backwardness of Kashmir, where persons matter more and issues and ideologies less. The fact is that politics in Kashmir has yet to be released from the strangle-hold of religiosity and ritual.

Consequently, the population, in terms of alignment and allegiance, is divided between different religious leaders, the Sheikh and Mirwaiz Farooq being the main contenders. The former uses the famous shrine of Hazratbal as his political platform and the latter the historical Jama Masjid of Srinagar as his political fortress. Taking their cue from them and encouraged by their successful manoeuvres both Shia and the Jamait-Islami leaders have joined the political game. Jamait-Islami, ironically, was encouraged by the

ruling Congress Party in its efforts to enter the political arena with a view to steal Sheikh Abdullah's thunder. That explains why the party secured 5 seats in the State Assembly in the 1972 elections.

But is it almost impossible to beat the Sheikh at his own game. The political influence of the Jamait vanished overnight when it clashed with him in the panchayat elections of 1974 and in the recent Assembly elections. The party has managed to get only one seat in the State Assembly. The Shia leaders are also busy organising their followers for political purposes and thus renewing the age-old Shia-Sunni conflict. The recent clashes between the two sects is symptomatic of the growing politicalization and exploitation of the two communities.

Among the other political parties the Janata Party, the two Congresses and Mirwaiz Farooq's Awami Action Committee deserve some mention. The Janata sapling is unlikely to strike roots in the Valley. Its constituents, Jana Sangh, BLD, Organisation Congress and Socialist Party, did not exist in the Valley; hence there was no ready-made cadre available to the Janata Party when it started functioning in the State in April 77. Sheikh Abdullah too delivered a stunning blow to it by calling it the 'Jana Sangh in a different garb'.

Finally, the utter defeat it suffered at the polls has completely disheartened those who rallied under its banner. The state of the party in the Valley can be judged from the fact that it cannot get a couple of rooms for its central office in the city of Srinagar. In other words, the party has no postal address.

As against this, in Jammu, it built up on the existent Jana Sangh base. Whereas the party has not even a central office in Srinagar, in Jammu it has several parallel offices. On account of the tug and pull between the Jana Sangh and non-Jana Sangh elements in Jammu, the party is in utter confusion which the Central leadership has yet to sort out. The increasing influence of the erstwhile Jana Sangh spells grave danger for the party's future as the minority community in the region would prefer joining the Congress or the National Conference rather than the Janata.

In the Valley, the existence of the Congress, right from the beginning has depended on the prestige of the Central government, the power and the vested interest that surround it. That explains its disintegration after its removal from the seat of power. The split at the top has staggered it further, and sizeable sections of Congress workers are switching over to the Janata and National Conference. In Jammu, the Congress though in a more stable position, has suffered considerably due to the split at the national level. The emerging position has exposed and exploded the myth of Karan Singh's popularity and influence in Jammu where the bulk of the Congress has gone with Indira Gandhi, whose faction appears stronger than the Reddy Congress. This may be partly due to the Sheikh's support and sympathy for Indira Gandhi.

Mirwaiz Farooq is essentially a religious leader but his political ambition is not unknown. During the Assembly elections in July 77, he threw his lot in with the Janata by supporting it. However, only one candidate fielded by his party, the Awami Action Committee, won. He and his party are considered to have Pak leanings. But changes in the Indo-Pak political scene have reduced his influence which is anyhow restricted to the few areas of Srinagar city alone. One of the healthier aspects of the process of normalisation of State politics since July 1977, is the complete eclipse of the secessionist elements in the Valley. Mirwaiz Farooq's support to the Janata Party (and he continues to be friendly) was a significant factor in this direction. Whatever may have been his reasons for supporting the Janata Party against Sheikh's National Conference, it clearly indicates the qualitative change in the extremist politics of Kashmir and Kashmiri leaders.

*Source:* SEMINAR, April, 1978

*\*The author, a former MP edited 'AINA' and was a talented journalist in Urdu. Recently an anthology of his writings in AINA, has been brought in two volumes END*

## 6 *We are like thoughts, you should have thought us*

**By Dileep Kumar Kaul**

Who does not know about the Scindia dynasty of Gwalior? Madhao Rao Scindia of our times, died in an air crash. In the beginning of twentieth century Maharaja Madhao Rao Scindia-I died in Paris. He had only one man by his side in whose lap he breathed his last. This man was a Kashmiri Pandit. Colonel (Sir) Kailash Nath Haksar.

There is a Kashmiri idiom 'Mecchi Noon Dyuni' i.e. to salt somebody's oil so that he is totally incapacitated. There is a technique in Agriculture called 'Bauthra technique'. This technique which enables one to make saline and barren soils fit for agriculture, is approved by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. And who invented this technique? The famous botanist Dr Kailas Nath Kaul.

These and such many other achievements of Kashmiri Pandits are given in the four volumes of the work '*Kashmiri Panditon Ke Anmol Ratna*' written by Dr B.N. Sharga. It is a collection of biographies of eighty Kashmiri Pandits who made exemplary contributions to the whole nation in general and the community in particular for about last three centuries. Dr Sharga has taken pains to research, through the history of these families, when did they migrate from Kashmir and where does their progeny live now.

This work is of utmost importance in contemporary times when the coming generations face the danger of forgetting their history and the foundations laid by their fore fathers. It is only a part of an exiled community which thinks about the self esteem and ethos of the community. Dr Sharga through this work has given a message to the coming generations that these 80 Kashmiri Pandits lived a life of activity and had a remarkable influence on Indian society but never forgot their KP identity. Yes! we are the people in whose serene and consoling laps Kings breathed their last and whose hands made barren lands of the country grow flowers and crops, and a lot more. We have no reason to feel disappointed but have to understand that there is nothing that we cannot do.

The book makes it clear that there were two centres of Kashmiri Pandit activity where KP migrants resided. One was Sitaram Bazar of Delhi and the other Kashmiri Mohalla of Lucknow. Kashmiri Pandits were scattered all over India but these were the most important places from where they made their mark. The Kashmiri Pandits are known as the people who like white collar jobs. But in these four volumes one is astonished to note that there was not even a single aspect of life in which they did not excel. KPs were poets, intellectuals, social reformers, doctors, warriors, scientists, artists and what not. One feels happy to note that the forefathers of all these eminent personalities migrated from the very familiar areas of Srinagar city and other parts of Kashmir from which the contemporary community of KPs was forced to run away.

The contribution of famous Prem Aadeb to the beginning of Indian Cinema cannot be ignored. His forefathers migrated from Kanya Kadal area of Srinagar city. The immortal Chandra Mohan Wattal of 'Pukar' fame began the star tradition in Indian cinema. But it is not mentioned that the famous role of King Akbar played by Prithvi Raj Kapoor in '*Mughal-e-Azam*' was at first given to Chandramohan, who left the world leaving the film halfway.

Do you know who was 'Kulbhushan Nath Pandit'. Yes! everybody knows Rajkumar, his dialogue delivery and acting. His forefathers had migrated from Karwani Mohalla which is near Fateh Kadal in Srinagar city.

The personalities like R.N. Kaw (the founder of RAW) and General T.N. Raina (GoC-in-C) need no introduction. The predecessors of R.N. Kaw migrated in 18<sup>th</sup> century from Zaindar Mohalla of Srinagar city and those of General Raina migrated from Habba Kadal. These personalities can be put as ideals before our children so that they feel associated with their roots and the place of origin. Eminent Kashmiri Pandit ladies are also put forward. These include Sheela Kaul, Dr Jagat Mohini and all time great saints like Lal Ded and Roop Bhawani.

Beginning the work with Lal Ded would have given a different meaning to the whole work. But an important personality like Padmawati Fotedar alias '*Nun*' has been excluded. Padmawati Fotedar, mother

of Pt. Shivrinarain Fotedar, was the first KP lady to become a teacher. She remembered the name of every girl in her classes and would rush to their homes if they would not attend the school even for a day. One very conspicuously feels the absence of Hakeem Sham Lal Bhat, the legendary practitioner of Unani medicine, who could cure the ills of those who would come disappointed from every doctor.

The social changes in KP community, which took place from time to time have also been underlined. The divide in KP community when Pt. Bishan Narain Dhar from Kashmiri Mohalla, Lucknow went to England to study law has been vividly explained. Pt. Dhar was ostracised but he fought back along with like minded KPs. But this anecdote has been repeated in many other biographies in the book. This could have been put at one place and a lot of effort and space saved. The writer, almost in every biography has given so much of his personal views about this world that one skips and comes to main biography. This could have been avoided through proper editing which would condense this work into two volumes and make it more affordable and meaningful, because such a book should be owned by all, researchers or lay men to know about a community which has suffered, struggled and excelled throughout its history. The book is in Hindi but the laxity of language shows that the writer is not used to writing in Hindi. The writer tries to end almost every biography with a verse by some insignificant poets. This also could have been avoided.

Besides, the biographies, some articles like '*Kashmiri Pandit Aur Kashmiriat*', '*Atankwad Aur Kashmiri Auratein*' '*Kashmiri Pandit Aur Homeland*' are given in the volumes. These contain very contradictory statements at some points. On P.208 Vol. 2 the writer says, "But they (KPs) could not stay at a place for much time and thus could not establish a standing to reflect their collective power" (My translation) He adds that due to globalisation everybody is facing exile at some point. Kashmiri Mohalla Lucknow and Sitaram Bazar Delhi, the power centres of KPs lost their lustre as the KPs residing there sold their houses to the members of other communities and went away. Condemning the idea of Homeland, he says that with this 'Runaway mentality' how can the idea of Homeland succeed. The writer seems to ignore the fact that demanding a homeland in itself means that we have lost our homeland and we are claiming it, so that we may have not to run away. The writer says nothing significant in these articles. The volumes, without these articles would not have been less important.

In the biography of Pt. Avtaar Krishan Wattal we find another contradiction regarding the mindset of Kashmiri Pandits, "Due to their escapist (Palayanwadi) nature, the Kashmiri Pandits believe in going here and there so that they find an adequate place to enable themselves to express their talent". (My translation). One is compelled to think that if they want to find an adequate place to express their talent how can they be escapists?

Despite all this, Dr BN Sharga, has brought about a work which inculcates a consciousness of roots in the reader. This will encourage further research on Kashmiri Pandits.

Some ideas of Kashmiri Pandit organisations and the newspapers published by KPs is also given. There was a 'Kashmiri Social Conference in Lucknow' and 'Kashmiri Pandit National Association' in Lahore. Pt. Shivrinarain 'Bahar' published an Urdu weekly 'Risala Murasali Kashmir' since 1870 for many years. Pt. Brij Lal Nehru, started the first English Daily of Rangoon in Burma. It was he who laid the foundations of resistance against the military junta which is being carried forward by Aung San Su at present. This explains how inspiring and stimulating were the KPs not only in the country but on international level also.

The book, in fact, is mainly relevant with respect to Kashmiri Pandit diaspora. The writer seems to have no understanding of the contemporary social currents, folk mindset and the literary currents which make contemporary KP community. The writer on one hand comments on history and politics and feels that he has got equal authority to comment on literary trends. This is evident from his comments on the biggest name in Kashmiri poetry i.e. Sh. Dina Nath Nadim. Nadim has been equated with Qazi Nazrul Islam and Sukant Bhattacharya of Bengal. This makes it clear that neither Nadim nor Nazrul and Sukant have been studied. Nadim's revolution is not as fiery as Nazrul, nor is his romanticism like that of the Bengali poet. His social consciousness is less like Sukant and more like Tagore who was a Bengali to his core.



Nadim was a Kashmiri to his core. He can never be understood without comprehending the tradition of Kashmiri aesthetics. He has also been equated with Nirala and Muktibodh of Hindi. A Nadim can better be compared with Nagarjuna. These comments add nothing to the stature of Nadim. On the contrary, it focuses our attention on the tragedy that how Kashmiri Pandits, all over India, attend to their language, the great tradition of the poetry and poetics that Kashmir has given to the world.

## 7 Letters

### 'Kashmiri Bitarkita Uttarahdikar'

Sir,

It is surprising to me to see an elaborate review of my book "Kashmiri Bitarkita Uttarahdikar" in Sentinel (Feb. 2003).

Please convey my gratitude to Mr. Dileep Kumar Kaul, who has gone through the book minutely. The book came in the market in January 2000 and immediately the first edition was finished. You are free to publish English translation of the book in your paper, if you are willing to do that.

I am happy to see that the spirit of the book has been correctly evaluated. From Mr Kaul's information, I come to know that there is an English book "Kashmir: A disputed Legacy". I am trying to collect the book now for my enrichment.

We, the writers, are teachers and always look forward to see the J&K in its true perspective. We feel ourselves selfish as our Bengali people raised no hue and cry for the displaced Kashmiri Pandits. Though the Bengalees have faced the same fate and have been driven out from East Pakistan and even right now from Bangladesh.

I guess that there is a Bengali knowing gentleman with you or Mr Kaul knows Bengali well. I am willing to get address of them.

—Prabhat Goswami

Retd. Principal

Distt. Bankura, West Bengal

### KS-Sentinel of Pandits

Sir,

I want to congratulate you on bringing out the centenary issue of "Kashmir Sentinel". In real terms the issue confirms the name of the journal. It is a real Sentinel of the Pandit community. It represents our ethos, our plight, our present problems and also our future aspirations. Kashmir Sentinel has broken new ground with the centenary issue, and it has become a comprehensive journal. Its articles and write ups are well researched and documented. The style of writing is lucid and all its articles are written well. Kashmir Sentinel can easily hold its own among the best fortnightly magazines of the country. I wish Kashmir Sentinel to become a habit for us on a permanent basis. The articles like "Indigenous Rishis v/s Sayyid Sufis", 'Kashmir's temple of higher Education', 'Lolab valley's Shrines and Legends', 'Social and Political view of Sadat Hassan Mantoo' were highly informative and well written. 'Observation of Holocaust Day', and encroachment of Pandit's land showed how grave atrocities have taken place and are still happening. I wish we put our petty differences aside and unite to achieve our goal which is no less than our 'Panun Kashmir'

—Pradeep Kaul Khodballi

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## 8 Sarshar: Pioneer of Urdu-Hindi Novel

**By Ravi M. Bakaya**

FIROZ MOOKERJEE, who lives in London, was born in undivided India. She graduated from Lucknow University and later got her Ph.D. from the University of London, where she worked on Ratan Nath Dar 'Sarshar' under the supervision of Ralph Russell, Emeritus Reader in Urdu. This book is a revised version of her thesis. All lovers of Urdu-Hindi literature in particular and Indian literature in general will welcome the publication of the first book on Sarshar in English. However, the importance of this book goes far beyond that. It is the first authoritative research work on the complete works of Sarshar.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a very important period in the history of Urdu, Hindi and Bengali prose. The 'father of modern Hindi', Bharatendu Harish Chandra (1850-1885), the great Bengali novelist, Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-1894), and Ratan Nath Sarshar (app. 1842-1902)— lived and worked during this period. Though Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). also started writing in this period, his better known works belong to the twentieth century.

Bankim, Bharatendu and Sarshar were each distinct in his own way. What they had in common was their pioneering work in their own literature, their familiarity with English literature, which to some extent influenced their work, and the 'didactic' character of their literary work.

Ratan Nath Dar ('Sarshar' was his pen-name or *takhallus*) was born in 1842 in a Kashmiri Pandit family domiciled in Lucknow. His father, Baij Nath Dar, was a respected and influential citizen of Lucknow, but he died when Ratan Nath was barely four years old. The Dars lived in the neighbourhood of cultured Muslim families, and the young fatherless child learned his Urdu from the expressive and gracious speech spoken by Muslim ladies of his *mohalla*.

The Brahmins who had emigrated from Kashmir Valley in the eighteenth century 'to seek fame and fortune in the rich plains below' in Jawahar Lal Nehru's words, had settled down mainly in Delhi and the United Provinces and had adopted Urdu as their language, producing a number of distinguished Urdu writers, scholars and poets, of whom Sarshar was undoubtedly one of the greatest. Unfortunately, not much is known about his personal life and even the year of his birth and the date of his death are matters of conjecture and dispute. (Contrast this with his Hindu contemporary, Bharatendu Harish Chandra. An obituary published after his death mourns that 'his age was only 34 years, 3 months, 27 days, 17 hours, 7 minutes and 48 seconds'!)

Sarshar, after leaving school, went to Canning College, which had been established by the British in 1864, but he left without taking a degree. However, he came out of college with a knowledge of English literature which stood him in good stead during his career as a writer. He started his working life in Kheri near Lucknow as a teacher. It was in this period that he started writing articles for various Urdu newspapers and magazines, the most notable of these being *Avadh Punch*. Some of his articles were on social themes. His articles in an Urdu periodical, *Akhbar-I-Sarishta-i-Talim*, published by the Department of Public Instruction, drew the attention of the Director of the Department, who noted in his annual report that Sarshar's translations from English were the best he had seen.

In 1878 Sarshar was invited by Munshi Naval Kishore, the biggest publisher of those days, to edit *Avadh Akhbar*, which became a rival and competitor of *Avadh Punch*. Sarshar edited this paper with distinction from 1878 to 1893 and many of his writings were first printed in it. These included his voluminous novel, *Fasana Azad*, which was serialised by the paper. Naval Kishore published it later in four volumes, the first being brought out in 1880. *Fasana Azad* made Sarshar famous; while it was being serialised in *Avadh Akhbar*, it was read and enjoyed by all sections of society. This is a huge work, comprising four volumes totalling about 3000 pages. It relates the adventures of its central hero, Azad, and his inseparable companion, 'Khoji' (a humorous diminutive for Khwaja) who provides cause for endless mirth with his antics. Sarshar was undoubtedly influenced by Don Quixote in writing this story. Above all, it was Sarshar's mastery of 'the vivid, racy colloquial' language of Lucknow that made his work so popular.

This command of language is nowhere more evident than in the passages of dialogue which form so large a part of the whole work. Sarshar knew how well he could write dialogue, and he uses this talent to the full...He knew exactly the forms of speech, the special vocabulary and the characteristic style and tone appropriate to each of the wide range of characters of different classes and different areas whom he introduces in his pages. The number of characters who appear in *Fasana Azad* is enormous, yet all seem quite distinctive...

Some idea of the scope and volume of Sarshar's literary output can be gained from the following lines in Firoze Mookerjee's book:

During his editorship of *Avadh Akhbar* Sarshar wrote many articles on political, social and literary subjects. In 1887 he published a translation of Donald Mackenzie Wallace's History of Russia, a re-written version of an earlier novel, now entitled '*Jam-i-Sarshar*'. Two years later he translated Lord Dufferin's Letters from High Latitudes. In 1890 his novel, *Sair-i-Kuhsar*, appeared, followed some time before 1893 by *Kamini*. About 1893 (Saksena) he started a series of short novels under the general title of *Khim-Kada-i-Sarashar*. Included in this series were *Kururn Dhum*, *Bichhri Dulhan*, *Tufan-I-Betamizi*, *Pi Kahan*, *Hushsho* and *Rangile Siyar*. Sometime during this period he translated a political pamphlet written by Dr Hunter, a history of Egypt entitled *Shakh-i-Nabat* and a slightly abridged version of the Arabian Nights. In 1894 came *Khudai Faujdar*, an adaptation and free translation of Don Quixote.

HOWEVER, in all his work, Sarshar aimed at reforming Indian society, cleansing it of obscurantist ideas. This didactic approach was usual in the literature of those times and, indeed, it characterizes all classical literature to some extent. As he said, introducing *Fasana Azad* when he began serialising it in *Avadh Akhbar* :

Our real aim in this series is to enable the readers of *Avadh Akhbar* in the guise of humour to become fully conversant with education and culture and good taste, with correct conversational usage and the idioms appropriate to various occasions, with the atmosphere of every kind of gathering and with the manners of society as a whole..so that (knowledge of) the various states of human communities and the effect of the company one keeps and the climate of the age may bring substantial benefit to our country, so that men's minds may be illumined by the radiance of good thoughts and excellent morals, and their mentality cleansed of the darkness of corrupting ideas and the unworthy traits of the ill-bred, and upright minds may receive the frill benefits that accrue from a sane training...Our aim is that from reading these articles they may at one and the same time derive pleasure and enjoyment and amusement on the one hand, and linguistic accomplishment and lofty ideas, on the other.

Towards the end of his life, Sarshar went to live in Hyderabad, which was in those days a great centre of Urdu language and literature. According to his own account, published in *Kashmir Prakash* of March 1899:

About four years ago I went to Madras as a member of the Congress (the Madras session of the Indian National Congress was held in 1894) and from there my good fortune brought me to Hyderabad, Deccan. Prominent Hindus and Muslims welcomed me enthusiastically as did the public at large. Maharaja Kishan Parshad, the Nizam's Minister for the Army and a former Prime Minister, appointed me at a salary of Rs 200 a month to correct his poems and prose.

Sarshar spent the last few years of his life in Hyderabad as the literary mentor of Maharaja Kishan Parshad. He brought out a literary journal called *Dabdaba-i-Asafia* at the same time. A novel, *Chanchal Nar*, began to be serialised in this magazine, but was never finished. The Nizam also patronised Sarshar.

Apart from being a foremost prose writer of his days, Sarshar was also a distinguished poet. His poetic theme is love, but he has written on other subject as well. His best known poem is his *masnavi* '*Tohfa-I-Sarshar*' which he wrote to quell the outcry of orthodox Kashmiri Brahmins against the visit to England of his friend Bishan Naryan Dar, a barrister. In this long poem Sarshar makes fun of the Pandits who wanted to boycott Bishan Narayan Dar because he had dared to cross the seven-seas.

Sarshar died at the age of 55 or 56-his end being hastened by his addiction to drink. He had himself confessed:

*Peene pe jab ate hain phir bas nahin karte,  
Maikhana me sunte nahin Sarshar kiseeki.*

(Once he starts drinking, he won't stop. In the drinking house Sarshar doesn't listen to anyone).

Feroze Mookerjee appropriately devotes considerable space in her book to Lucknow of Sarshar's days, which had inspired most of his work. There is an informative chapter on the prose narrative tradition inherited by Sarshar, which he developed further, giving it a modern trend. All of his main works have been discussed by the author of the book, as also his minor novels and his role as a translator. In conclusion, Feroze Mookerjee says:

When we review the course of Sarshar's development as a writer, we see at once that the key period extends from 1878 to 1890. In the course of these twelve years as he progresses from the stage of *Fasana Azad*, a stage in which, though closely tied to the old tradition, he is grafting on to it the new modes of writing which characterise the modern novel, to the stage where in *Jam-I-Sarshar* and *Sair-I-Kohsar*, he has all but severed his ties with the old and practically completed a transition to the new. After that the trend is reversed, and already in *Kamini*, he is in many respects back behind the starting point which *Fasana Azad* represented. Yet, taken as a whole, his writing represents a great step forward in the development of Urdu prose and fiction.

Feroze Mookerjee draws pointed attention to Sarshar's striking attitude to women:

Above all, he is a champion of women's rights. More than any other Urdu writer of his time he pleaded passionately for justice to women. To illustrate the gross injustice done to them both by Hindus and Muslims, he created numerous women characters from every section of society, women who are beautiful, intelligent and possess a strength of characters which his men characters lack. Yet they are treated badly and are exploited by society.

Feroze Mookerjee rightly calls Prem Chand the true heir to Sarshar. In fact it was Prem Chand who introduced *Sarshar* to Hindi readers by producing an abridged version of *Fasana Azad* which in Hindi he called *Azad ki Katha*. This Hindi version has run since into numerous editions. It should be remembered that Prem Chand started as an Urdu writer and turned to Hindi later as it ensured greater circulation to his writings. Prem Chand acknowledges his debt

“In my writing there is more influence of *Sarshar* and *Sarat Chandra* and less of *Tagore*.”

There is a detailed and very useful bibliography appended to the book. It is interesting that such a detailed treatment of an Indian writer who died a century ago should have been facilitated by the excellent literary records-books, newspapers and periodicals-in the India House Library and the British Museum Library in London. One wonders if the author could have found all this priceless material in India. The paucity of available biographical material on *Sarshar* himself is shown by the fact that only six such titles are listed-two books each by Prem Pal Ashk and Tabassum Kashmiri and one each by Sayyad Latif Adil and Qamar Rais. Three of these six titles were published in Pakistan. It is a sad commentary on Urdu in India today that though-like Sarshar-Feroze Mookerjee had her cultural roots in Lucknow, she had to find a publisher in Pakistan for her book on this distinguished Kashmiri Pandit writer.

One fervently hopes that this excellent study will find a place in most university and college libraries in India and on the shelves of many lovers of Urdu and Hindi literature and, indeed, Indian literature in other languages. An Indian edition of Feroze Mookerjee's book is greatly to be desired, for books published in Pakistan are unfortunately not easily available in this country.

### **Lucknow and the world of Sarshar**

*Author:* Feroze Mukerjee

*Publishers:* Saad Publications Karachi, 1992

*pp.* xv+242

*Price:* Rs 150

*\*The reviewer was formerly a Professor of Russian Studies at JNU. (Courtesy: Mainstream, June 19, 1993)*

## **9 Probe Nadimarg massacre**

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WHILE some of the Kashmiri Pandit families have been persuaded not to migrate after the gory killings at Nadimarg the police have yet to achieve any major breakthrough in identifying the killers. As has happened in several cases of massacres and killings of other innocent persons as also the assassination of prominent leaders in the recent past the security authorities, which otherwise fail to prevent such strikes, blamed the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad militants for the Nadimarg massacre within hours of the incident.

On the other hand the DIG police while claiming to have achieved some breakthrough in the investigations refused to divulge the details. Even in the past the police made similar claims about all the cases of killings but eventually all such cases were closed without identifying the culprits, not to speak of bringing them to book. In most cases of such massacres no independent probes are ordered and in few cases where such inquiries are held the reports, if any, are kept closely guarded secrets and no follow-up action is taken. Such an attitude of the authorities and their failure to order independent probes and keep every thing secret about the cases only creates doubts about the official claims regarding the culprits. The chief minister has alleged that Nadimarg massacre is an attempt to derail the peace process. It is also claimed that the Nadimarg massacre was aimed at frustrating the State government's move to rehabilitate the Kashmiri Pandit migrants in the Valley in different phases. For restoring the affected people's confidence it is important that the killer are unmasked and given stern punishment. The failure to probe incidents and bring the culprits to book in the past has only increased the sense of insecurity among the people.

This has also encouraged the killers to strike again and again more brutally. In most of the cases of killings including the latest incident at Nadimarg there has been obvious lapse on the part of the security and intelligence agencies who failed to prevent such killings. To identify the killers and bring them to book as also to find out the security lapses and inefficacy of the security agencies in preventing such incidents it is necessary that a high level and impartial probe is ordered into every such case soon after the incident. While police may go ahead with routine investigations the independent and impartial inquiries can help in preventing such incidents for the future while restoring to much extent the people's faith in the administration in doing them justice. The killers must be unmasked and punished in every such case if the government is keen to prevent such incidents and go ahead with its peace process. (*Editorial Kashmir Times, Jammu*)

## 10 An emotionally turbulent fortnight

**By David Devadas**

IT has been an emotionally turbulent fortnight in Kashmir. Shock and anguish at the massacre of 24 Kashmiri Pandits overwhelmed all other sentiments but, before that, Islamic passions were rising to fever pitch over the “shock and awe” strikes against Iraq. If pan-Islamic militant groups were trying to whip that Islamic sentiment farther by hitting at non-Muslims, they miscalculated terribly. Indeed, they could not have done greater damage to their cause.

There has rarely been a more complete protest strike in recent years than the one last week against this massacre. Kashmir’s leading Imam, Mirwaiz Umar, declared that whoever had done it had grievously injured Islam.

The conflation of emotions in Kashmiri minds and hearts is sometimes very difficult for others to comprehend. On the one hand, they are deeply devoted to Islam. On the other, they warmly cherish the fusion of cultures that they call Kashmiriyat. To understand this co-existence of sentiments, one must realise that most Kashmiris see no contradiction in the subtle absorption of Hindu traditions into their practice of Islam, although these seem heretical to *Ahle-hadis* puritans. In fact, the ambivalent complexity of the Kashmiri mind or perhaps it is the Kashmiri heart-has led to confusion about what the entire militant movement is about. Such killings naturally lead people to presume that it is basically a Hindu-Muslim problem. That is a very limited understanding.

One must remember that Pandits were killed largely in two phases. The first phase lasted mainly from February to August 1990 and targeted individual Pandits or males in twos and threes. The second phase of Pandit killings has concentrated on mowing down entire families in particular villages and can be dated from January 26, 1998, when a massacre similar to this one occurred at Wandhama near Ganderbal. The first series of killings, in which about 150 Hindus were slaughtered, was often revoltingly depraved. Such brutality can only be explained in the context of the mass hysteria I wrote about in my last column. Its roots probably lie in the collective memory of Kashmiri Muslims of their gross repression over a century-and-a-half. If that is so, that season of vicious blood letting in 1990 served as a catharsis. The Kashmiri Muslim went back by autumn that year to rediscovering his composite culture. Of course, that rediscovery was facilitated by the economic spin-offs of the mass migration of Pandits that those murders caused. Muslim school teachers, university professors, consultants at the most prestigious hospitals, wannabe journalists and civil servants in every department suddenly had unexpected avenues for promotion. For, though Pandit domination of government jobs had been gradually declining for 40 years, their learning, diligence and kinship network still left them with a strong grip over several professions.

Since the Pandits who remained beyond the summer of 1990 were mainly poor peasants who lacked the tools to build a new life outside the valley, the community ceased to be economically competitive. So it was easy for Muslims to bask once more in the comforting glow of composite culture. Many Muslims continued to want independence but now wished for the remaining minorities to go with them.

By the late 1990s, the militancy had been largely taken over by *jehadi* warriors from Pakistan, churned out from the sprawling *Dawat-ul-Irshad* campus at Muridke or madarasas affiliated to the *Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam* (which also spawned the Taliban) or to Pakistan’s *Jamaat-e-Islami*. This type of warrior had no feel for Kashmir’s freedom struggle. They were steeped in doctrinaire sermons invoking Islamic resurgence on a global scale, before which national boundaries would crumble.

To these zealots, Kashmir was Islamic territory and putting its *kafir* Hindus to death would earn them a place in heaven beside the *Ghazis* of yore. They could not understand why Kashmiri Muslims got so upset at the deaths of their Hindu compatriots. It is ironic that these *jihadi* warriors killed Abdul Majid Dar, former Operational Commander of *Hizb-ul Mujahideen*, a day before they slaughtered Hindus just last week.

(Source: *The Tribune*)



## ***11 The guns were never silent***

**By Shujaat Bukhari**

THE killings in Kashmir never stopped. Over 800 people died in the cause of a free and fair election.

And those who are on the frontline say that while militant activity, in the form of major attacks, showed a decline in Kashmir - until the strike in Nadimarg - after Mufti Mohammed Sayeed took over as Chief Minister in November last, it did not mean that the militant set-up was disturbed in any way.

As the security officials put it, the militants were waiting and watching how the situation in the Valley developed after the new Government assumed power.

But elsewhere in the State, particularly the Jammu region, major attacks continued to take place. Even in Kashmir, targeted killings of individuals never stopped - the daily toll in ones and twos kept the death count mounting. But there was a fall in spectacular *fidayeen* (suicide) attacks.

The figures of fatalities in militancy-related incidents in the five months beginning November 2, 2002, seem to bolster this view of a continued high level of attrition.

The number of deaths was about 850, which included 263 civilians, 130 security and police personnel and 450 militants. And among the killed were Abdul Aziz Mir, the first member of the newly-elected Legislative Assembly from Pampore, and the former chief commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen, Abdul Majid Dar. What is noticeable and commented on is the rise in militant activity in the rural areas and in the number of foreigners involved.

Official sources confirm that in the Kashmir Valley alone, there are as many as 4,000 militants, as infiltration from across the border never stopped. Not even during the unprecedented troops mobilisation along the International Border with Pakistan, after the December 13 Parliament attack. And as always, the number will go up in summer as the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. N. C. Vij, confirmed in Srinagar recently: "It will increase after the passes open." (*Source: The Hindu*)

## ***12 What Do The Survivors Say***

Chuni Lal (60)—"When I heard a knock, I opened the door and saw some gunmen asking us to come out for searches being conducted to flush out the militants. They were wearing Army uniforms and spoke Urdu and Kashmiri. Later all of us were asked to assemble outside the police post and the indiscriminate firing started. When one of them said he (Chuni Lal) is still alive I pretended to be dead and thus survived".

Deep, son of Chuni Lal—"We had approached the Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag, on Saturday (22 March) and told him that we had some apprehensions and asked for security to be strengthened. But he refused to listen."

Bhushan Lal—"The security was insufficient. They (the police) surrendered their weapons and were nothing but lame ducks".

Som Nath—"The gunmen, dressed in army uniforms were carrying torches and introduced themselves as troops. They asked all the family members to vacate their homes and assemble near the Chinar tree in the main compound. They slapped me twice and asked me to show them other family members. We were only three people putting up in the house at that time. They took my wife outside and ordered her to join other people in the compound. My son smelt a rat and hid himself under the cot. I and my wife were asked to join the other people. But we gave them a slip and hid ourselves behind the haystack. The armed men then searched the whole house and broke open all the cupboards. They also took away cash of Rs 1.7 lakhs and other costly items before fleeing from the scene".

Phoola—"The gun men were speaking pure Kashmiri. I heard one of them call a resident of this village by name. They told us that they were army men and had to search the houses. They asked everybody to come out. I came out with my husband and daughter. But when they asked us to line up in front of the police picket, I slipped away towards the bushes. Within seconds, they started firing indiscriminately. And when they (the gunmen) left the village, I looked for my family. My husband and daughter were lying dead but my son Chandji had also escaped. He had hidden inside the house".

Mohan Lal Bhat (19)—"I was about to go to sleep when there was a knock at the door. My mother opened the door and there were three men wearing army uniforms, helmets and "bullet proof" vests. Two of them were bearded and they asked everybody to come out. One of them spoke in Kashmiri, which roused suspicion and when my father tried to resist, they dragged him out. Then they dragged out my mother, sister and uncle. I heard the commotion on the door and hid behind a tin sheet upstairs. Within fifteen minutes I heard gun shots and wails. They had left and reached near the school (a few dozen metres away) when they heard the cries of a child. I heard one of them shout to others that there is some work still to be done. Then I heard a gun shot. Later I got to know it was two year old Monu".

Sanjay Koul—"We are in a dilemma that why were our people killed so ruthlessly. We requested the authorities several times that the security was not adequate and demanded more security, but they never heard us. Now, the result is in front of us. Our families have been eliminated.

Pran Nath Bhat (38)—"We stayed back in 1990 after they (local Muslims) pleaded with us not to go, assuring us that we would be safe. But after this tragedy, they (local Muslims) want us to leave because even they don't feel safe here anymore".

Chand Kumar Bhat S/o Bansi Lal—"These people (Rashtriya Rifles men) were just 3 km away from here but took six hours to arrive after the killers left. Now they want us to stay back. How can we feel safe here? The government has said that if migrate, no aid will be given. We tell them we don't need you, we can take care of ourselves" END

## ***13 Nadimarg Massacre—Global Reactions***

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### **KS Correspondent**

George Bush, U.S. President—"The President strongly condemns the cowardly attack that left 24 innocent men, women and children dead in Shopian in J&K on March 23. The attack underscores the importance of the war on terror and strengthens our resolve to work with friends and allies to fight terrorism at home and abroad".

Robert Blackwell, U.S. Ambassador in New Delhi—"The U.S. condemns the ghastly murders of innocent men, women and children at Nadimarg village in J&K. The global war on terrorism will not be won until such atrocities end against all countries. We look forward to the terrorists being brought swiftly to justice".

Jack Straw, British Foreign Secretary—"These killings underline the need for continued action to eliminate the scourge of terrorism".

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General—"The UN Secretary General condemns in the strongest possible terms as a cowardly act of terrorism the massacre of 24 Kashmiri Hindus, including women and children, that took place near the town of Shopian in Kashmir".

French Foreign Ministry Spokesman—"France condemns the attack which took place in J&K, resulting in numerous civilian casualties and conveys its condolences to the families of the victims".

The Times, London—"The despicable massacre...is a calculated attempt to provoke a blood bath at a time when the world is preoccupied with Iraq. The attacks came after three months of relative peace, and were deliberately brutal in order to goad the Indians into retaliation. It was a crime against Kashmir's Hindu minority and a shocking reminder that Kashmir remains a flash-point in the confrontation between the subcontinent's two nuclear powers. The militants cannot be allowed to provoke a return to nuclear confrontation. Musharraf is a vital ally in US efforts to deflect Muslim criticism of the war in Iraq. But he must be held to his commitment to end the fund arming and training of terrorists in Kashmir. Pakistan's condemnation of the massacre is prompt and welcome. It must be backed with an unrelenting crackdown on those who would shoot women and children in Kashmir"

Christina Rocca, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia—"Continued terrorism like Sunday's attack threatens to provoke yet another crisis in the coming months. We look to Pakistan to do everything in its power to prevent extremist groups operating from its soil from crossing the LoC. Pakistan has taken steps to curb infiltration but we are asking the government to redouble its efforts. At the same time, we will use our good offices to continue to press both sides to take confidence building steps that will lead to a process of engagement addressing all issues that divide them (India and Pakistan) including Kashmir".

## ***14 Nadimarg Massacre—Reactions***

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Governor G.C. Saxena—"It is a crime against humanity and a barbaric act of ethnic-cleansing".

Mufti Mohd. Sayeed, Chief Minister, J&K—"It is aimed at derailing our peace process but we are committed to go ahead. This is a barbaric act. I cannot be acquitted in this but such incidents have taken place in the past as well. Situation has to be made conducive before the return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley. If protected people like us are not safe there, what can be the fate of the common man".

Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, State Congress Chief—"It was a security lapse as no proper security arrangements had been made. An inquiry should be ordered into the massacre. All the guilty officials should be taken to task. The government, run by PDP and the Congress, is talking about rehabilitating Kashmiri Pandit migrants but adequate security arrangements are missing for those who chose to stay back in the Valley for all these years".

Mr L.K. Advani, Union Home Minister—"Such acts which are perpetrated against one particular community can only be seen as ethnic-cleansing. Pakistan is not only responsible for violence in J&K but even in other parts of the country"

Mr Omar Abdullah, Former Minister of State for External Affairs—"The brutal massacre of 24 Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir should be an eye-opener for the Mufti Sayeed government in the state to shelve its ill-conceived plan of bringing the minority community back to the Valley. The State government plans to rehabilitate them in Mattan and Khirbhawani places thus leaving them an easy prey for the militants. The Chief Minister had neglected the security concerns of the minority community. Our government could have also brought them back. But we have to see whether we are in a position to provide them with cent percent security or not. While healing touch policy of the State government is well it had to see that it did not leave more deep and painful wounds on the people of J&K".

Mr M.Venkiah Naidu, BJP President—"These incidents were the handiwork of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism which are aimed at their long established agenda of ethnic-cleansing of the Kashmir valley of the heterogenous population. The Congress-PDP government in the state should immediately reassess the utility of continuing with its soft policy on terrorism. The situation in Kashmir requires a healing touch. This healing touch must heal only the victims of terror and not its perpetrators. In view of the serious situation the PDP-Congress Government will adequately respond in the national interest and review its earlier decision of disbanding the Special Operations Group (SOG). The international community must understand that Pakistan has not given up its cross border terrorism and should become aware of the evil designs of Islamabad and condemn it outright".

Prof. V.K. Malhotra senior BJP leader—"The Centre must direct the State government under Article 355 to take action against terrorism. If killings continue in state like this, there is no other alternative to imposition of Article 356 in the state".

Prof. O.P. Kohli, former BJP chief—"The spurt in terrorist activities was the direct result of the wrong policy being pursued by the State government. Terrorism cannot be curbed by showing softness to the militants but only by adopting a realistic and hard approach to them".

Mr M.Y. Tarigami (CPM), MLA—"There are no two opinions that State government should review security arrangements. The forces which say that the Pandits had migrated to Jammu for a picnic must see the realities. Even now some voices would be raised to mislead the public that the killings were executed by army".

Mr Harshdev Singh, Education Minister—"No civilised society can tolerate it How long we depend on U.S. certificate of great restrain".

Dr Mehboob Beg (NC) MLC—"There were lapses and loopholes in the security arrangements. The government examine that whether it should have given a premature statement on the Pandits return to the Valley."

Mr Jugal Kishore (BJP) MLA—"Militancy has got a boost under new government while police and security forces were demoralised. If the government couldn't provide security cover to the Pandits putting up in the Valley, how it would take other Kashmiri migrants to the Valley? The government should not have disbanded SoG".

Mr Mohd. Khalil Naik (CPM) MLA—"The Kashmiri Pandits had approached me for security cover. I had sounded the concerned officers but no action was taken to provide them with the security cover. The state government should take strong action against the officers"

Mr Ajay Sadhotra (NC) MLA—A wave of insecurity was prevailing among the people in view of a series of militancy related incidents in the state. If the state government continued with its present policies, they day is not far when the militancy would spread to Jammu and then it would be difficult to contain it. Government should enhance ex-gratia compensation to Rs 5 lakh at par with the compensation given to the dependents of army jawans".

CPM, Polit Bureau—"This inhuman act has been deliberately done to spoil the chances of restoring peace and allowing the minority community to live peacefully in the Valley. Reports that police posted in Nadimarg village did not take action to protect the families which were targeted demand a proper inquiry into their role and prompt action".

Shabana Azami and others—"We condemn the ghastly killings of defenceless people in the strongest possible terms. The cowards behind the latest outrage are unlikely to identify themselves but the massacre is a desperate bid to communalise the Kashmir issue to sabotage any efforts towards ensuring the return of Kashmiri Pandits to their homes. We demand a thorough investigation into security lapses that turned the vulnerable Kashmiri Pandits into easy targets of mass murderers who pretend to be serving lofty causes. Our hearts go out to the survivors of the carnage in particular and Kashmiri Pandit community in general, the overwhelming majority of whom have been condemned to live the life of refugees in their own country because of Pakistan-aided terrorism in the Valley"

Mr Muzaffar Hussain Beg, Finance Minister—"Nadimarg carnage is a deep stab wound in the chest of Kashmir psyche. The repeat of such gruesome incidents will only reopen the old wounds. I wonder how would be the next bloody chapter of the state's bleeding history scripted".

Mr Shyam Khosla, veteran Journalists—"The Pulwama massacre of 24 Kashmiri Hindus is a part of Pakistan's evil conspiracy to complete the "unfinished task" of ethnic-cleansing of the Valley...No one seems to be concerned about the misery and plight of Kashmiri Hindus. They are the forgotten community...Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's much publicised plans to resettle Kashmiri Hindus in the Valley is meaningless as his police force didn't fire a single shot at the mercenaries as they went about killing innocent women and children. While any movement back to the Valley is out of question at this juncture, what appears imminent is yet another wave of migration from the Valley...Release of a large number of suspected terrorists and disbanding of Special Operations Group have sent wrong signals".

Mr Maninderjit Singh Bitta, President, All India Anti-Terrorist Front—"Congress should withdraw support to the Mufti government in J&K. Governor's rule must also be imposed on that state and KPS Gill should be made the Governor. This kind of steps are essential for controlling militancy in Kashmir".

Acharya Giriraj Kishore (VHP)—"Nadimarg massacre is not only a blot for the state government but also the central government. The Centre should take stern steps to protect the innocent people from falling prey to the guns of terrorists. The Centre should immediately declare J&K as a disturbed state and dismiss the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed-led PDP-Congress government. The healing touch policy of the PDP-Cong government is responsible for the spurt in terrorist incidents in J&K".

Jammu Mukti Morcha—"The incidents like Nadimarg have highlighted one harsh fact that state government has failed to ensure their security. The only viable alternative to rehabilitate Kashmiri Pandits is to carve an area out of the Valley which will be administered by the Central government and state government having no role to play. Because of the Mufti Sayeed led government's soft policy towards militancy there has been a spurt in the militancy in the state. Negotiations is no solution for militancy

particularly when it is sponsored and supported by external forces. The militancy in J&K will not be brought under control unless security forces are given free hand to tackle the situation".

Mr Bal Thackeray, Shiv Sena Chief—"The attack on Kashmiri Pandits, recent spate of blasts in Mumbai and the Akshardam incident are examples of Islamic terrorism. We all have to be together and not talk in terms of Marathi, Gujarati or Bengali...but as Hindus. And we will all have to fight Islamic terrorism. The country is passing through a critical phase. We are like orphans and we have no clear leader".

Mr Kuldeep Raina, General Secretary Panun Kashmir—"It is surprising that despite tall claims to rehabilitate Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley the government failed to protect the one who were putting up there. Our organisation had already warned that the situation in the Valley was not conducive. The coalition government's policies are not in favour of Kashmiri Pandits".

Dr Praveen Bhai Togadia, VHP International General Secretary—"The militants have repeated Godhra in Pulwama district of J&K by mowing down 24 Kashmiri Pandits. The public faith in the system is waning in view of the rising number of attacks on the Hindus and their property in J&K and outside over the years. The soft state policy against the ultras and their patrons from across the border could lead to outbreak of another civil war. The watering down of the drive against militants by disbanding SOG of the state police and withdrawing cases against terrorists as part of the 'healing touch' policy has resulted in escalation of killings of Hindus in the state in recent months".

## ***15 Secularism Through Hostaging Hindus***

**By Dr. Ajay Chrungoo**

THE political approach of the establishment on the return of Kashmiri Hindus needs to be properly analysed and understood. The vicious selectivity and duplicity of political class on the issue of return of Kashmiri Hindus is glaringly evident and yet rarely acknowledged.

### **Aftermath Responses**

Let us just ponder over the responses of the state government in the aftermath of the Nadimarg. The Chief Minister stated on April 2 that, "going by the mood of the people of Kashmir against such heinous crimes our coalition government will accelerate the process of normalisation...This would be our response to the situation and a message that such an incident has no public support." Chief Minister had a few days earlier said, "People of Jammu and Kashmir have always kept the flag of secularism high and it is deep rooted in our land". Such statements were also articulated by various shades of Muslim political establishment. They build the basic assumption that the acts of violence against the Hindu minority in Kashmir valley and elsewhere in the state have no social sanction.

This assumption, however, falls flat on its face when we see the basic argument of the Mufti government and those who advocate an unconditional dialogue with the terrorist regimes. In the words of Chief Minister "every problem has a genesis. I have come to the conclusion that militants are like fish. People's support to them is like water. Take water out and the fish will suffocate and perish".

The government seeks to confine massacres of Hindus as isolated events without public support and yet in the same breath advocates dialogue with terrorist regimes on the premise that public support has to be weaned away from them. This attitude serves a crucial purpose. Muslim political class wants a comprehensive acknowledgment and engagement on separatism without addressing the issues of communalization of Kashmiri Social milieu and its militarisation.

To supplement the same approach another argument is often put forward that the violence against minorities in the state is conducted by the foreign mercenaries. This position does not correlate entirely with the facts as the local involvement in all major gruesome massacres in Kashmir and Jammu has been always decisive. However, if we examine the proposition closely, it will lead us to a different conclusion. It is possible that pockets of local terrorism can operate without a significant societal sanction. Local terrorists need minimum societal involvement to accomplish their deed. However, the foreign terrorists always require adequate societal connivance to be effective. They need hiding places, guides and enough confidence that they will not be betrayed by the locals.

Another crucial aspect of the government response after a gruesome tragedy has been enacted by the terrorists is the usual refrain that these acts are an outcome of frustration. So when violence spilled over into Jammu in a big way we would quite often hear that this was a result of success against the terrorists in Kashmir valley, an act of desperation etc. The argument that Nadimarg massacre was to 'derail' the peace process which the present government has unleashed emanates from the same approach. This approach ultimately delinks the terrorist violence from the continuity of the terrorist campaign. This campaign is not reactionary at all. It has its own military momentum. The approach also seeks to camouflage the reach and sway of terrorist operatives in the state. Nadimarg massacre is one prominent event in a sequence of events in recent times which declare the renewed phase of terrorist violence after a tactical phase of relatively low terrorist activity.

The 'derailing of peace' argument needs to be assessed from another angle as well. The government assertion that its policies of healing touch and good governance have gone a long way in eroding the public support for terrorism, should have made it extremely cautious on the issue of return. The Hindu pockets of presence in Kashmir were the natural targets of terrorist assertion. Was the local administration sensitised to the need for extra vigil and sensitivity to the security demands of minorities in Valley? Did the government hold special sessions of counselling with its administrative set up for the same?

There are other questions also which need to be answered. What were the assessments of the state government with regard to security needs of local minority population? Did it take seriously reports of induction of *fidayeen* into state which the local press highlighted prominently from time to time? Was it aware of the fact that thousands of terrorists were being mobilised across the border and have been relentlessly trying to cross into India and if so did it ever at any point review its stand on return of Pandits? Did it ever relate its security doctrines including dismantling of SOG with the release of pressure on LeT and Jaish-e-Mohammad in Pakistan around the same time? And last but not the least did it ever review the security situation in the state with relation to developments in Iraq?

### **Understanding the callousness**

It is more than intriguing why the number of police personnel posted near minority pockets was reduced to less than half in the aftermath of elections? That both the local administration and police took the apprehensions as well as reports of Hindu minority lightly speaks for the sensitivity of the administration in responding to Mufti's experiment of return of Hindus. Did it ever dawn upon the government that the apparently successful conduct of elections had increased the vulnerability of soft targets to terrorist act?

Far from being an act of isolated callousness the attitude of the local administration should be seen in continuity. Same callousness and insensitivity has been observed before the gruesome tragedies that befell upon Hindus in Wandhama and Sangrampora. The delegation of Kashmiri Pandit leaders met DC Budgam in the presence of SSP Budgam after the Sangrampora massacre. They enquired from the DC Budgam about the type of measures taken by the local administration to meet the challenge of return of Pandits as was being trumpeted almost daily by the then Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah. Before the DC Budgam would find words to answer the query, the SSP Budgam intervened and said that no meeting had taken place in the Valley to specially discuss the programme of return of Pandits. He said that in fact they had been trying to bring around sixty odd Pandit families in the area to come and live in one place.

Return programme which was conducted now was not done very differently. A hype was created through almost daily statements by those at the helm. Displaced Pandits were ready to go. They had given written undertakings. Displaced Hindus from Mattan and Tulamula are ready to move. Government will rebuild their houses and they will be offered employment incentives back home. Subsequently the changes in the return plan came to the fore. The returning Pandits will not go to their original homes but will be accommodated in specially built quarters in Tulamula and Mattan to provide for better security. Local *Maulvis* had given their consent and people were ready to welcome them.

As the violence in the state picked up all over, the government started to back track. But before it could do so the Nadimarg massacre happened. And all through while these public expositions were being made, the government complemented the hype by proclamations that since government is committed to return plan therefore press should not publicize it much. Such statements added an element of mystery to the return plan and kept it in focus more intensely than otherwise.

One glaring fact stares upon any keen observer of the "return plans" over a period of time. This fact is that proclamations about return are basically a Political Posture which Muslim establishment wants to sustain. The underlying content of this political posture needs to be understood. But before we do it let us try to determine the broad features of the 'return formula' as advocated by the present government and compare it with previous such proposals if any.

### **Content of 'Return Plan'**

The newspapers reported extensively on the content of return formula. "Sayed in a bid to bring Kashmiri Pandits back to Kashmir valley in a phased manner has embarked upon a new plan. He who has already announced that Kashmiri Pandits would be brought in a phased manner and would be settled in Tulamula and Mattan areas of Kashmir valley has been cautiously building bridges with such Kashmiri Pandit organisations who are not hard-liners.... He has already set up a committee under Deputy Chief Minister Mangat Ram Sharma and Financial Commissioner Planning Department Vijay Bakaya and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kashmir K.Rajendra as its members. As per reports they have already undertaken



projects of constructing and rebuilding of infrastructure in Mattan and Tulamulla areas to accommodate of 2000-5000 families". (*HT March 1*).

These detailed expositions in the press were not a figment of imagination or speculation of an individual journalist. The broadest spectrum of reporting in media corroborated the existence of such a plan. Chief Minister himself gave vent to his understanding on the issue in various public functions and Conversations. The Governor's address also contained references to the return plan. PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti while speaking at the Institute of Strategic Studies where the author was present, gave a detailed account on the return plan. Kashmiri Pandits would be invited to Valley. The government is targeting those Pandits who are really in need and are living in camps and not those who are well settled. Mufti Sayed also made it clear, that "jobs will be provided to displaced youth only in Kashmir valley. He said that multi storied residential blocks are under construction at Mattan and the previous proposal to shift the displaced people in single storied houses has been abandoned".

The return plan of the present government was different from that of the previous government in one respect. Farooq Abdullah, just before Sangrampora massacre, actually started his 'return' programme on a coercive note. He threatened the displaced employees with the eventuality of losing their jobs in case they refuse to return. Mufti desisted from issuing such threats. However all other features of his plan were no different from his predecessor.

This 'return programme' addressed the rehabilitation issue in a phased manner. It targeted primarily the village population particularly the desperate ones. The plan envisaged a selective and symbolic return. The government meticulously avoided addressing the issue of displacement and religious cleansing in its entirety. The issue of alienation of Kashmiri Hindus from the Muslim mainstream is not a concern at all. In fact the issue has to be stubbornly suppressed. Kashmiri Hindu concerns about the communalization and militarisation of social milieu of Kashmir Muslims are irrelevant. The reach and sway of Pan Islamic imperatives over Kashmiri population has to be consistently underplayed in the context of Pandit return.

The most peculiar aspect of the 'return plan' of this government as well as its predecessor has been to trivialise genocide of Kashmiri Hindus. A surreptitious campaign of disinformation continues to project that the Kashmiri Hindus left Kashmir more in search for greener pastures and less because of terrorist thrust. They have built houses outside and are economically well off. Why will they choose to return.

The present government is more vocal and abrasive about these postulates. The local daily reported Mufti Mohammad Sayed in the following words, "regretting that some Kashmiri Pandits especially in towns and 'cities' have disposed of their properties Mufti termed it as an unwise step on their part. This has not been done by those Pandits who belong to the villages he said adding that houses of minorities are still existing in villages-No doubt these houses are in a dilapidated condition, this is an indication that they want to return to their houses."

The previous government cosmetically enacted a Prevention of Distress Sales Act at least acknowledging the link between the economic distress to which Kashmiri Hindus were subjected to their sale of properties in Kashmir valley. This government alludes that selling of the property by sections of Kashmiri Hindus is an indication of their lack of commitment to return. Previous government promised jobs to unemployed displaced youth on the condition of undertaking that they will be employed if they return, never to fulfil it. This government brazenly declares, that, "...it is ceased of the problem being faced by the community but he (Mufti) is unable to provide them jobs outside Kashmir...community youth will be absorbed in government services provided they return to the Valley."

Reading these comments with the comments which chief minister made on April 1 we can get a better understanding of the mindset. "Mufti Sayed made... important announcements. First of course was the PDP lead coalition government's decision not to encourage migration of Kashmiri Pandits from any part of the Valley. Second, the state government won't give incentives to those who migrate, incentives will be given to those who stay back in the Valley...!"

The present government clearly states that it has not any intention of fulfilling any responsibility to ameliorate the plight of those who in the eventuality of serious threat might get displaced. The approach aims to present a scenario of 'between devil and the deep sea' to those who still are in Valley.

The assertion has also a dangerous allusion that taking care of displaced population in exile is in fact an encouragement for displacement. It reflects the basic character of thinking of Muslims establishment on religious cleansing. This establishment has always delinked the genocidal attrition of Hindus of Kashmir from their displacement as well as ideological imperatives of Muslim separatism.

### **The necessity of Return Posture**

Why should the political class maintain and sustain a posture on return of Kashmiri Hindus. There are two most dominant streaks of thought in Kashmir on the issue of displacement. One is the radical Pan Islamist view. This considers religious cleansing in Kashmir as the important achievement of their violent campaign. That the Kashmiri society has been transformed into a Muslim monolith in a secular democratic nation state of India is a major achievement which the return will undermine. Another dominant view is that of the subversive class. They advocate constant engagement with Indian establishment and democratic dispensation to keep control over the levers of power. They visualize return only in symbolic terms as it helps in achieving crucial objectives for so-called freedom movement. Symbolic return delegitimises the argument of displaced Kashmiri Hindus that they are victims of a movement which is driven by theocratic imperatives. And symbolic return is the best way to camouflage Muslim communalism to further strengthen its subversive machinations within a liberal Indian milieu. The 'symbolic return' manoeuvre can also be sold both to secularists as well as Hindu protagonists in the name of keeping the semblance of secular or Hindu presence in Valley.

The result of this approach builds a vicious situation of attrition for Kashmiri Hindus. In exile they are to be kept in pathetic state. The economic deprivation of displaced Hindus ensures the coercive powers of state to effect their symbolic return. In Kashmir the Hindu pockets have to live in a condition of total servitude to Muslim communalism.

The rising attrition levels on displaced Hindus in Jammu and elsewhere as well as those Hindus living in Kashmir are alarming. It should have long back ensured their alienation from Indian mainstream as well. But Kashmiri Hindus know that the attack on them is to break the civilisational continuity of India in Kashmir which they have upheld for seven hundred years. Kashmiri Hindus have already proved alienation theorists wrong.

The battle cry of Kashmiri Hindus is not through gun. But because of their assertion that they will not legitimise Muslim communalism. Indian State seeks to salvage secularism in Kashmir through mere symbolism which is vicious. Indian state has created a situation where Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir have to compromise with Muslim Communalism. They have to be a hostage. Kashmiri Hindus reject the secular governance through hostaging of Hindus. They will continue to struggle to correct the content of secularism in the state.

*\*The author is the Chairman of Panun Kashmir*

## ***16 Turf war Decimates Hizb leadership***

### **KS Correspondent**

JAMMU, Apr 7: In the ongoing turf war between two warring factions of the terrorist outfit, Hizbul Mujahideen, the situation took a dramatic turn with the elimination of Abdul Majid Dar, former operations chief of the Hizb, by ISI.

Dar had parted ways with Syed Salahuddin, the Hizb Supremo, in 2000 after the latter backed out from the earlier decision to hold onto the ceasefire. Majid Dar had got disillusioned with ISI and Pakistani leadership. He returned to Kashmir in 2000 and was staying mostly in Srinagar. The two factions continued to battle for supremacy. In the polarized separatist leadership, Dar was seen closer to what has come to be called the moderate group.

On August 3, 2000, a high level team of GoI officials, headed by Kamal Pande, the then Union Home Secretary, visited Srinagar. Dar and his group met them at Nehru Guest House. This group included his deputy Masood, aide Farooq Mircha and Riyaz Rasool. Masood was killed by SOG in 2001, Mircha was eliminated by security forces, while Riyaz Rasool disappeared mysteriously.

Dar was among the first five Kashmiri terrorists to had audience with Zia-ul-Haque in 1986. In 1989, at Baba Rishi, he had floated a terrorist outfit, Ansar-ul-Islam. A college drop-out, Majid Dar functioned as PRO of the Jamaat Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani. In 1990, Dar founded Tehreek-e-Jehad-e-Islami (TJI) which merged with Master Ahsan, Dar's Hizbul Mujahideen in 1991. In the outfit's hierarchy, Dar ranked third.

Following killing of two associates of Salahuddin in Pattan and Kupwara, Majid Dar was expelled from the outfit, on May 4, 2002 and Saiful-Islam took over as the new "chief commander of operations" for Hizb. Salahuddin also expelled four top Hizb leaders, aligned to Dar. The ongoing conflict in the Hizb helped security forces to eliminate scores of top Hizb activists, affiliated to Salahuddin. In retaliation Salahuddin and other Jehadi outfits liquidated many loyalists of Dar. In most cases entire families were liquidated brutally. During recent assembly elections, Dar's group is reported to have helped PDP.

Majid Dar was no saint. A rabidly fundamentalist, he played a key role in fundamentalist indoctrination of Kashmiri youth and subsequently recruitment, launching and training of Hizb's terrorists. He manned the training camps of Hizb in Pakistan and had direct access to Pervez Musharraf. His problems with ISI started, when ISI officials misbehaved with his wife.

In November last, Dar's cadres staged revolt against Salahuddin group in Haripur, Kotli, Mirpur, Tarbela, in PoK. To counter Salahuddin, Dar also, patched with another outfit 'Muslim Jehadi Force'. Majid Dar was to go to PoK to join his supporters in Tarbela camp. He had come to meet his family members, when a group of four terrorists eliminated him on March 23 in Sopore. A little known outfit, 'Al-Nasreen' claimed responsibility for his killing.

His funeral was attended by less than a thousand people. Fazal Haq Qureshi, was the only separatist leader to turn up at his funeral. All Party Hurriyat Conference didn't issue even a statement. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Bilal Lone expressed sorrow in their individual capacity. Shabir Shah, another separatist leader, castigated the separatist leadership for their silence on killing of Dar.

The killing of Dar led to the formal split in Hizb in PoK on March 27. Nearly two hundred supporters of Dar walked away from the parent outfit to launch their own organization. Ahmed Yasin was appointed as the new chief of this faction. Dar's supporters later staged a demonstration in Muzaffarabad and accused Salahuddin for orchestrating the killing.

Reports reaching from Pakistan say the two factions were preparing to have a bloody showdown. On April 1, Pakistan police swooped down to take 14 terrorists into custody. These reports further add that ISI is desperate to stop Dar's supporters from crossing over to Valley.

Exactly ten days later, in a dramatic manner, security forces notched a major success by eliminating Ghulam Hassan Khan alias Saiful Islam, the chief of Hizb in Valley in an encounter at Pahroo, Nowgam

Chowk. In a hi-tech operation, by scanning frequency of his satellite phone, security forces were able to identify his location. For security forces, revolt by Dar group and the demoralization in Hizb ranks, following the killing of its chief Saiful Islam provides a new opportunity, to put the heat back on the terrorist outfits.

## **17 Iraq War**

**By Dr. M.K. Teng**

If Saddam Hussain had realised that the world was governed by the law laid down by the strong, he could not have survived because of the mere fact that his state was a part of a Muslim international. He would have perhaps come to terms with the Americans a decade earlier. Then the international system was, what it had been devised into in the post second world war era with diplomacy settling down to a high tight bipolar contest between the only polar powers which dominated the world then. Cold War was an era of ideological conflict and in that process, cold war, witnessed a phenomenal rise of a new ideological state or ~~in-it~~ state movement, that of the pan-Islamic internationalism which claimed commitment to the consolidation of a third polar power structure which underlined the theological imperatives of Islam. Saddam was no doubt, a creation of the same phenomenon. The Americans built up pan-Islamic internationalism into a subsidiary front to contain communism much the same way as they propped the Muslim militia which turned into the Taliban and helped Pakistan to assume a tactical strength, which poses threat today to the whole complex of the Asian nations spread to north and south of the Himalayas.

In the post Qasim era of the history of Iraq, Saddam Hussain cleaned the communist elements in Iraq on the holding of the then American regime, for Iraq was crucial to the bipolar balance of power in the Middle East where after the Balkans, the western powers, maintained the greatest vigil. The Bathists among whom Saddam grew, were no friends of the com.. Saddam used the return to power in Iraq 1968 to rise to power himself.

With the end of the cold war, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the rise of the Muslims to the status of a world power, assumed a more aggressive posture. The ideological commitment to Islamic internationalism found a new political expression. The Islamic Revolution, which claimed the unification of the Islamic world on the basis of the theological imperatives of Islam, which the Muslim claimed, they had the divine sanction to enforce not only in the Islamic countries, but also in countries where Muslims were supposedly not governed in accordance with the religion's sanction of Islam. The Islamic Jihad in Afghanistan which had, been shaped by the political processes of the Cold War, assumed fresh international dimensions and overtook the Balkans, the western republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union, and the Muslim states of South and South-East Asia as well as the northern states of India by storm. In Balkans the old state system broke down completely.

However, as the fast disintegrating bipolar international power-structure settled down to a unipolar power structure the rise of the Muslims to the status of world power lost its reason as well as logic. The Muslim international recognised the contours of conflict between the unipolar power-structure and the Muslim international earlier than the Americans did. Saddam headed the first campaign against the unipolar power structure when he attacked Kuwait. Taliban launched in the second campaign against the unipolar power structure, when they struck the United States on September 11. While the Americans wiped out the Taliban, Saddam Hussain earned a reprieve for almost a decade. In fact, the war against Saddam began the same day, the American armour poured into Afghanistan. Only the turning of the strike varied.

The American invasion of Iraq has ideological dimension. It symbolises the process of the delegitimation of the Islamic Jihad, which formed a part of the American offensive against communism during the Cold War era.

Americans and the British have the right to choose their instruments and options, so long they have the will and the power to enforce them. That is the inexorable law of the history of the international relations. No opinion in the world can question the right of the Muslim international to establish its hegemony over the world. And no opinion in the world can question the right of the United States to establish its hegemony in a unipolar world. United Nations was always what it has turned out to be during the cold war, an instrument of bipolar balance of power and after the cold war an instrument of the unipolar balance of power. It was not in any way, different from the league of nations, which was an instrument of a multi-nation balance of power.

The Indian foreign office must shed off its negationist, self-effective and passive diplomacy. During the cold war, its neutralism cost it heavily. The west handed over half of the territory of its northern state of Kashmir to Pakistan. The communist China cut off the most strategic part of its frontier in the north. Indian foreign office must recognise that it is involved in a life and death struggle with the Islamic international. The Indian foreign office must also realise that the American war against the Islamic international is not fought for India or in the Indian national interest. The Indian foreign office must also recognise that China, will always try to balance itself in between the America centered unipolar world and Islamic international, to serve its own national interests. China has its own interests in the Himalayas and the Indian ocean, more than it has in Soviet Central Asia. Iraq is the ground, where India can make a new beginning in its diplomacy.

## ***18 Mayawati counters charges of Kashmiri Politicians***

### **KS Correspondent**

JAMMU, Mar 31: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati categorically rejected the J&K government's claim that the three Kashmiri students arrested under POTA by her government were innocent. She told press persons in Jammu today, "the Kashmiri students were arrested on the basis of substantial evidence and facts received against them by my administration". The UP chief minister said the arrests were justified. She asserted, "whatever my administration did was done legally and on the basis of proofs. Even in future, such cases and elements in UP would be dealt with harshly." Earlier she had refused to meet Mehbooba Mufti in Lucknow, when the latter had come to persuade UP government to adopt a soft policy against the arrested students.

Ms Mayawati went on to criticize Mufti government for releasing militants and political prisoners and for withdrawing POTA. She said, "I don't agree with these policies of J&K government. Militants should be dealt with severe force and I think that would be in the favour of national interest". She appreciated campaign launched by her police against anti-national elements.

Reacting to the allegations of Kashmiri politicians on the students issue, the UP Chief Minister replied, "this is purely a malicious campaign against UP government. Those who have leveled such allegations were not aware of the realities. Arrests were made only after getting authentic proof. She added, "I have directed the state police officials to launch an effective campaign against anti-national elements without fear or prejudice, irrespective of their caste, creed or religion. A terrorist neither belongs to any religion nor to any community. He should be dealt with severely rather than adopting soft approach towards him".

Similar views were expressed earlier when Mr Narinder Kashyap, senior BSP leader and member of UP Upper House visited Jammu on March 21. He strongly refuted the allegations that UP police has been harassing the innocent Kashmiri students studying in different colleges and universities of the state. He asserted, "UP police has specific information and proofs regarding involvement of some Kashmiri students in anti-national activities." Following these inputs police conducted raids at various places and arrested three Kashmiri students, he added. He said "Arrests of Kashmiri youth were made neither as a conspiracy nor to harass a particular section" and made it amply clear that it was purely a matter related to the anti-national activities.

### **Jaish activist killed :**

It may be recalled that on March 10, Special Task Force of UP had arrested Ejaz Hussain Jan of Baramulla and Mehraj Hassan of Kupwara from Muzaffar Nagar Bus Stand. The STF claimed the two Kashmiri students were activists of dread terrorist outfit, Jaish-e-Mohammed who were planning disruptive activities in Delhi. Anti-terrorist law POTA was slapped on these arrested youth. One more Kashmiri youth was arrested from Ghaziabad. The two, STF said, were working for Manzur Dar, area commander of Jaish-e-Mohammed in Baramulla. Their interrogation led the police to Dar's "attempts to set up bases in Hapur and Shamli in western UP, where other Jaish militants could come and stay". The Parliament building, India Gate, Mumbai Stock Exchange and busy market places elsewhere were, as per STF, on the hit list of Dar.

Following a tip of that Dar would be meeting an associate near bus stop at Noida, the STF laid a trap for him. The accomplice of Dar, Mohammad Aslam was already waiting at bus stop. The five teams of STF and local police confronted the duo and asked them to prove their identification. They started to flee on the motorcycle and engaged police in an encounter. The police retaliated and Dar was hit. The other terrorist managed to escape. The police had been on Dar's trail for the last four months.

The interrogation of the two students revealed that at Ghazi Baba's instruction, Dar was giving final touches to subversive attacks in Delhi and Mumbai. Dar had met students in Shamli in September 2002 and had also paid Rs 34,000 to Ejaz. One of the students was in Muzaffar Nagar since 1996, while the other came in 1998 to RK Degree College, Shamli. Subsequent to interrogation of Ejaz Hasan and Mehraj Hassan, STF arrested two more Kashmiri youths, Sajad and Ittafakuz, students of RK postgraduate

college in Simbhwali, Ghaziabad. The police recovered maps and diaries from these students. Five cartridges and 8.5 kg of RDX were also recovered from them.

Following startling revelations, the district administration took a number of precautionary steps. These included mandatory character verification for Kashmiri students who opted to take houses on rent. Police have identified nearly 250 Kashmiri students studying in 11 schools and colleges of the Meerut and Saharanpur region. Among these, the activities of 30 students are said to be suspect.

**Politicisation:**

The J&K government and Kashmiri political leaders reacted by raising allegations of harassment of Kashmiri students. The Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said it was a matter of concern if they would continue to face harassment. The J&K Resident Commissioner in New Delhi also took up the matter with Divisional Commissioners of Meerut and Saharanpur. Mehbooba Mufti, PDP leader said, "As a Kashmiri, it is our duty to protect our youth. Being a Kashmiri does not mean that one is a militant". Mr Omar Abdullah, NC leader and MP sought immediate intervention of Mr. L.K. Advani. In a statement he said, "I seek the help of your office to end the discrimination against Kashmiri students. The message to the Valley is not good and this could snowball into a major controversy, if not checked immediately. Any wrong move can lead the entire nation into a problem". Omar demanded handing over the case to the state government saying the state police would be in a better position to find their antecedents and verify whether they had any such alleged links. Intriguingly, the Valley's media had been trying to give a communal slant to the issue and even planting reports that the state police had no report of involvement of the arrested students in subversive activities.

Subsequently Ms Mehbooba Mufti met the students in Muzaffar Nagar. The UP Chief Minister refused to meet her. She later called on Deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani. On March 23, Meerut District Judge PN Rai sent three students to judicial custody for two months.

In a related development, a Mumbai court sentenced four Kashmiris, belonging to terrorist outfit, Hizbul Mujahideen to life imprisonment on the charges of planning to carry out attacks in Mumbai. The local media in Valley in this case also has been planting stories to prove the innocence of the convicted terrorists. Politicisation of security matters has only served to benefit the terrorist mentors sitting across the border.



## 19 Rising Terrorist Violence

### *Tight Rope Walking For Mufti*

#### **KS Correspondent**

JAMMU, Apr 8: Rising terrorist violence and growing factionalism among coalition partners are threatening to undermine the stability of the five-month old PDP-led State government. Until the beginning of the last month, everything appeared to be going on smoothly.

When the present government assumed reins of power in November last, there was tacit endorsement, both at the state and the national level. The rampant misgovernance had created a situation of hopelessness. The resulting political vacuum in Kashmir valley was filled by PDP. It had canvassed on the plank of disbanding SOG, non-implementation of POTA, release of detainees and a 'healing touch policy' in handling terrorism. Dialogue with separatists was a part of this agenda.

#### **SOG Disbanding:**

Right from the beginning, the NDA government and the security forces harboured serious reservations on these security-related issues, particularly on the disbanding of SOG. Experts and the senior officials joined the issue. Even the State Governor, Girish Chander Saxena hoped that the new government would not take a hasty decision on this issue.

Experts said dismantling the Special Operations Group was easy considering the limited personnel involved but warned that its after-effects could be too hot to handle. India's supercop, KPS Gill observed, "It will send dangerous signals and will be a recipe for disaster. The SOG is an anti-terrorist force, whereas a police station is meant for multifarious activities. If the SOG is merged with the local police, which works on the principle of minimum force, it will weaken the anti-terrorist operations. The government must decide on its priorities. It will only increase militancy".

The SOG was directly or indirectly involved in 80 percent of anti-terrorist operations in the state. It was the weakness of the local police in tackling terrorism that led to the creation of the SOG. Mr Gurbachan Jagat, the former DGP, J&K Police, under whose tenure SOG notched up major successes commented, "the SOG is a combination of the Army's muscle and intelligence gathered by the local set-up. By dismantling it the government would not only deprive itself of credible operational intelligence but also put a lot of lives in danger. Instead of launching inquiries and merging the SOG with the local set-up, the government should make it accountable". The Home Ministry officials too concurred with this view and suggested that the new government at the most could rename the SOG but warned that the core group dealing with the terrorists cannot be done away with".

With the available expert opinion, Congress-I, a partner in the coalition government was initially reluctant to back the controversial security decisions of PDP government. The centre too, to consolidate the gains of a credible election in J&K, went extra mile to accommodate PDP's main demand to hold dialogue with separatists and other sections. A former Union Home Secretary, Mr NN Vohra was entrusted this task.

The new government went ahead with its agenda. It released 85 detainees, put POTA implementation on hold and also went slow in seeking conviction against terrorists. There were also complaints from the security forces that they were not getting full support from the new dispensation in combating terrorism. The centre kept under wraps all these complaints, as it did not want to sent wrong signals.

On February 25, soon after the elections to the four state assemblies were over, the state government announced that SOG, the elite counter-insurgency force of state police has been merged with J&K Police. SP operations were re-designated as Additional SPs. It also ordered that in future all the new operations would be planned and executed under supervision of DSPs.

SOG had been raised in 1994. During the past nine years it had killed more than a thousand terrorists. This belt force had lost nearly four hundred of its men in the process. In 2002 alone SOG lost 91 officers and other ranks, while fighting militants.

On March 11, the state Chief Minister declared that those SOG personnel who had committed acts of omission would face stern action. In this context, he disclosed 49 complaints had been filed against 53 officers, while 25 officials were terminated.

**Terrorist Violence:**

For a while, PDP government felt lull in the terrorist violence was a vindication of its "healing touch" policy. Centre also did not interfere. With the launching of the "Joint Command Council" by nine Jehadi outfits recently, ISI unfolded its gameplan. Pakistan began exploiting US vulnerability, to up the ante in Kashmir. Musharraf wanted to convey to the domestic Jehadi audience at home that cross-border terrorism was still a live issue so far as Kashmir was concerned. He has also been telling Jihadis that closer co-operation with US on Iraq and other issues was in Pakistan's interests so as to continue cross-border terrorism in Kashmir. Intelligence reports warned the state government that the 'Joint Command Council' had asked terrorists to engineer sustained violence and target the minority community through massacres.

In the stepped-up violence, these were attacks on telephone exchanges in Srinagar and Anantnag. A suicide attack on Poonch town claimed the life of a DSP. The house of BSP legislator in Vijaypur was attacked through grenades. There was a spate of bomb explosions and burning of houses of the minority community in Rajouri to force the ethnic-cleansing of the minority community. In Panhad, Rajouri, the terrorists chopped off noses of seven civilians and are forcing young girls of the area to marry the terrorists. In many cases the terrorists, have wiped out brutally the families of informers.

In Ind, Gool, nearly two hundred terrorists, belonging to four Jehadi outfits, overpowered the police post and ran away with the arms and ammunition. Subsequently, there was attack on Kashmiri Pandits in Nadimarg.

**Criticism**

The stepped-up violence and the inefficient handling by the state government has drawn sharp criticism from its opponents. A few days before Nadimarg massacre, the state BJP delegation had met the Governor and submitted a memorandum. It said, "the terrorists have become so bold that they are attacking the police posts and other vital installations and killing police personnel and others dealing with law and order and burning houses of minority community in the area like Rajouri and the state government is releasing the terrorists in the state". The delegation also alleged that it was the policy of the state government to create a Kashmir-like situation in the Jammu region.

Former Union Minister Omar Abdullah blamed disbanding of SOG for the massacre at Nadimarg and increase in terrorist violence. He said the SOG was the main source of information about the militant activities and its disbanding had created loop-holes in the security system in the state. He also berated Mufti government for bungling the issue of return of Pandits. He said, "you cannot bring any Kashmiri migrant here by force or against his or her will. You have to completely wipe out terrorism to give them a feel of security so that they return on their own. Yesterday's massacre is a clear message to migrants that the situation is not conducive for their return".

The criticism of the opposition on government's handling of the security aspect is not entirely misplaced. In Nadimarg as well as Ind the government took not pre-emptive measures despite enough warnings. The deployment of police at both places reflected extremely casual approach. In Ind, only a fortnight back, the police had killed top Hizb activist of the area. There were reports that terrorists would retaliate. The State CID had officially conveyed to the police higher-ups that the attack in the area was expected anytime. The vital post was headed by a selection grade constable who too was sleeping at the time of the attack. He had locked the ammunition room and kept the keys with himself.

An alarming development seen in recent acts of violence is that the police personnel have, remained either passive or simply connived with the terrorists. In Ind as well as Nadimarg, the ill-trained, inadequate police force surrendered themselves along with ammunition, without firing even a single shot. A policeman was recently caught in the border town of Rajouri. He was accused of hurling a grenade on people in the main bazaar.

**Centre's Role**

The Central government is alarmed over the role of police and poor management of police posts in the terrorist-infested areas of the state. There are also reports that 3500 highly-trained Jihadis were waiting on the borders to cross into J&K. It has decided to constitute a special group, headed by a special secretary in Home Ministry, to recommend effective strategies against terrorism in J&K. The Centre has also asked the J&K Chief Minister, to put on hold the meeting of the screening committee for release of detainees.

The recent measures have created lot of friction between the Central government and the State Government. Though the Chief Minister has assured the Centre that he will inform Centre before taking a final decision on any vital security related issue, he asserted that the State government had sovereign authority to decide release of detainees. The Centre is also irked that non-implementation of POTA has relaxed action against hawala operators linked with terrorism. The state government has said it will come out with a financial law of its own to tackle this menace.

On the security issue, the State Government has been forced to do tight-rope walking. If terrorist violence increases and the government deals inadequately with it, the Central intervention will increase. Even Congress-I will also not like to be seen backing a policy, that is seen as detrimental to the national interests. Pressure from PDP's other partners will also increase. There has apparently been about a 20 percent drop in the number of militants killed in previous two months compared to the same period last year. The impact of disbanding of SOG's is being felt now.

**Political Dissidence**

Political dissidence has marred the stability of the coalition. Panthers Party has been locked in a bitter conflict with Congress, to project itself as the real representative voice of Jammu. It recently moved three bills in the state assembly to embarrass the PDP and the Congress. CPM and a group of nine MLAs have also formed a group, PDF, headed by Mr MY Tarigami. PDF has been resenting the role of Panthers Party. This group, which maintains close links with the opposition NC, has its own ambitions. It wants to emerge as a strong regional party counter to PDP. The two ministers of this group, Hakim Yasin and Mr Gh. Mohiudin Sofi have declared that they are going to float a new regional party soon. The group has also been in touch with other political groups like ANC of GM Shah and People's Conference of late Ghani Lone. Members of PDF recently asserted that they would stay with the coalition only as long as the things run smooth.

The exiled Pandit community is annoyed with the chief minister and the state government, over Nadimarg massacre and alleged indifference to its problems. This alongwith other problems on the security front and factional tussles in the coalition, has forced the state chief minister to do a tight-rope walking END

## **20 Nadimarg Massacre**

### *Terrorists target Kashmiri Pandits once again*

#### **KS Correspondent**

JAMMU, Apr 8: On March 23 Nadimarg entered as yet another chapter in the history of genocide of Kashmiri Pandits. In a brutal display of savagery, the merchants of terror, waging Jehadic war moved down 24 Kashmiri Hindus, including 11 women and two children. Nadimarg, a village 7 kms from Bijbehara, the home town of the State Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, showed to the whole world how hollow were the claims of the State Government that situation was ripe for the journey back home. Government's so called return plan has only paved the way for yet another exodus by those who had braved the selective killings and massacres, of their co-religionists during the past thirteen years.

Nadimarg, a picturesque village is located 1½ kms away from Zainapore, the historic town founded by the benevolent king, Zain-ul-Abdin, in the fifteenth century. The Pandits had named the king as 'Bata Shah', (protector of Pandits) because of the protection he provided to them, after he called them back from exile and hiding. Today the town stands witness to intolerance. A small stream demarcates the Pandit locality from the Muslim mohalla. In 1990, the village had 51 families. Presently there were only eleven families with 52 members. These families belonged to the downtrodden section of the Pandit community. Their survival depended on either class IV jobs or meagre land they possessed. Some of these families would supplement their meagre income by doing side jobs. At the time of the massacre, sixteen members of this community had been out to some neighbouring village tolerance.

In the chapter of intolerance, being scripted by the religious warriors, nearly fifteen hundred members of the minority, community have been killed in 80 massacres in J&K. For Kashmiri Pandits, Nadimarg massacre is fifth one, since the 'popular' govt took reins of power in 1996. Terrorists have attacked Pandits through massacre in these districts--Budgam (March 20, Sangrampora), Srinagar 25/26 Jan., Wandhama), Anantnag (Jan 20-Telwani, Aug. 2002 Sirigufwara). The main motive behind these massacres is to terrorise the minorities and force them to migrate. For the last three years the incidents involving attacks on minorities and their religious places have been occurring with regular frequency. Incidentally, the Kashmiri Pandit exodus started in 1990, when the present Chief Minister was Union Home Minister.

#### **March 23:**

Equewitnesses, who survived the carnage said a group of 4-7, heavily armed terrorists, dressed in army uniform, descended on Nadimarg hamlet at around 10.30 PM, when the victims were going to sleep. They first went to the police picket, set up to safeguard Pandit population of the village. Presently, nine policemen had been posted here, while twenty constables had been withdrawn before the assembly elections. These nine cops were supposed to look after the protection of 55 families in a radius of 15-20 km.

At the time of the attack only five cops were present. These poorly motivated policemen meekly surrendered their weapons, four SLRs, three 303 Rifles, one carbine and the lone wireless set to the terrorists and escaped from the scene. Knowing the identity of police cops, the terrorists did not touch police. The cops even did not go to report the massacre to the nearby Zainpore police station.

The terrorists, after looting arms and ammunition of the policemen, went to knock at the doors of Kashmiri Pandit houses. They commanded them to assemble in the compound near the picket under a Chinar tree. Those who did not comply with orders had their doors broken open. Terrorists, in fact, beat some people, who were reluctant to come out.

Phoola, who lost her husband and daughter told reporters, "The terrorists were calling the people by name. After identifying them they took them to the compound. They told us they were armymen, and had to search the houses. They asked everybody to come out". While driving the residents out, the terrorists looted cash and snatched away gold and ornaments from women. This had not been the style of terrorists in previous massacres.

When the terrorists knocked at Phoola's house, she and her daughter pushed Chand Ji, her son into a *chimney*, before opening the door Phoola herself slipped away from the line and hid in the bushes, just metres from the massacre site.

Soom Nath, a government servant had retired recently. He had brought his gratuity money and other pensionary benefits to home and kept these in the cupboard. He said terrorists were carrying torches and introduced themselves as troops. They asked all the family members to vacate their homes and assemble near the Chinar tree in the main compound, he added. Soom Nath was slapped twice and asked to show other family members. His wife was taken outside and was asked to join other Pandits under the Chinar tree. Soom Nath's son smelt a rat and hid himself under the cot. He and his wife gave slip to the terrorists and hid themselves behind the haystack. Though Chuni Lal's family was lucky to escape, the terrorists looted away his cash of Rs 1.7 lakhs and other costly items before fleeing from the scene.

After collecting the Pandits under the Chinar tree, the terrorists began looting Pandit houses. The looted goods were put in a matador. The Pandits thought, possibly the intention of the terrorists was to loot them and their lives would be spared. But soon after the matador was despatched, the terrorists opened fire in discriminately upon the hapless Pandits, killing 24 people. Chuni Lal, who had been hit in the thigh fell down and found himself in a pile of dead bodies. As guns fell silent, the gunmen came to check for any living. In a pool of blood, Chuni Lal held his breath and feigned death.

The killers had left and reached near the school, a few dozen metres away, when they heard the cries of a child. Mohan Lal Bhat recalled, "I heard one of them shout to others that there is some work still to be done. Then I heard a gun shot. Later I got to know it was Monu". Bullets had made sieve of his chest. Devki (75), w/o Jiya Lal was dragged upto carnage site and her pleas of mercy were turned down. Gunwati, a 90-year old paralytic lady asked the killers to kill her too. A terrorist told her in Kashmiri that there was no need to kill a dead person. A 23 year old handicapped girl, who could not walk because of her disability was dragged out, and shot dead.

Most of the victims were found with bullet holes in the face. Survivors said many of the people were killed in cold blood from point blank range. Almost all the bodies were found with gun shot wounds in their heads.

Ramesh Koul, who lost his father, took great risk to reach Zainapora police station at 1.00 AM. The police cops told him they can go to Nadimarg only after they receive orders from above. Zainpura police party reached Nadimarg at 4 AM, while senior officials and security forces' commanders reached the carnage site only in the morning. Even the chief minister was informed by DGP only at 6.30 AM.

In the carnage, the whole family of Bansi Lal (59), his wife Bindri (55), daughter Girja (35), daughter Princy (20) and son Rakesh was wiped out. Suraj had gone to sleep after celebrating his third birthday. His grandfather Dwarka Nath had come on the occasion with presents from Fatehpur village. Dwarka Nath lost his both daughters and two grandsons. Only a three month infant who had been sleeping escaped the eyes of the killers. There were 12 survivors, who managed to hide in darkness.

A day after the massacre, it was a horrifying scene in the village. Blood and body parts were littered everywhere. At the carnage site, shoes, blankets and lantern were scattered. A correspondent of a leading English daily wrote, "once a prosperous village, Nadimarg today presented a look of war ravaged hamlet. The difference was that instead of helmets of soldiers, the boots and the caps of the innocent civilians were scattered everywhere. The killers had dumped the bodies on the spot as if they wanted vultures to eat them. It was a scene that could even send a cold-hearted person to a virtual shock. A large row of bodies, wrapped in a shroud, with blood making its way out of the thin white coffin".

The cremation was delayed by the administration for the arrival of the chief minister. But no politician or official of the administration stayed back for cremation. As the bodies were being lined up for funeral, an old Pandit who could not walk, wept bitterly at the verandah of his house and said, "I have not lost just my family. I feel my roots have ditched me. I will never belong to Kashmir again".

**Advani's Visit:**

Nearly two hundred Pandits from Nadimarg and other neighbouring villages assembled to give hostile reception to the Deputy Prime Minister, LK Advani. They were inconsolable and accused Mufti government for not providing security despite requests made to government. The people shouted slogans against Mr Advani and Mr Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and attacked 'healing touch policy'. The chief minister had to face serious embarrassment, when Pandits named officials who were responsible for security lapse. The protestors shouted, "we want migration...*J&K Police Hai Hai. Healing Touch Hai Hai*". DGP and senior police officials were hooted down. A lone survivor of a family, wiped out in the carnage, Mohan Lal alias Vicky, was so emotional that he shouted at Mr Advani and Mufti Sayeed that he too must "be shot dead". He asked them, "what for I have to live now, kill me, please, kill me". Chandji, who survived miraculously asked Mr Advani what they had given to the Pandit community except for "death and destruction".

In a remorseful mood, Advani consoled the relatives of the victims, saying, "I must admit we have not done justice to you". They asked him if government could not protect eight thousand Pandits left in the Valley, how could it talk of return of more than two lakh displaced members of the community. When the Pandits demanded dismissal of Mufti government, he told them the NDA government would use Article 356 only in extreme cases.

**Security Lapse :**

Why did Nadimarg massacre took place? Where were the lapses? Mr MM Khajuria a former DPG of the state said, "The terrorists normally leave the Pandits staying back in the Valley alone. In fact, they are considered a 'war asset' by their foreign masters. Pawns in the hands of the merchants of terror, these Pandits were handy for strategic butchering as and when required. Such massacres have broadly followed a set pattern".

The former DPG also points his finger at the state government for its casual approach. He observed, "...the plan for securing return of Pandit migrants to Kashmir failed to address the basic and crucial requirement of a sturdy and fool proof security cover for those already there...The omission to conduct a comprehensive and realistic appraisal of the ground reality while planning the 'Go Home Project' for the migrants and put in place necessary security cover has not only made the Nadimarg tragedy possible but also exposed the mighty Indian state to ridicule...In view of the overall security environment, the threat perception, the known modus-operandi of the enemy, and their established capability to mount such operations something much more than establishment of symbolic police pickets needed to be done".

Survivors of the carnage put the whole blame on the administration. The women folk had observed suspicious movement a week prior to the attack. A few days before, a milkman had told Pandits to be careful. Chuni Lal said, "we had some fears about our safety for the past two days. We went to meet DC Anantnag on 22nd and had asked for additional security. The DC ignored our plea...they came only after our fears came to true". The Pandits had also met DC Pulwama, Ms Naseema Lankar but to no help. They approached two local MLAs of CPM and also alerted their brethren in Jammu. A delegation of Panun Kashmir had met the State Governor and Mr ID Swami. On 21st, two days before the massacre, Panun Kashmir held a press conference and tried to impress upon the state government that its decision was ill-conceived and could create problems for Pandits. On the day of the massacre, a Pandit of a neighbouring village had to visit Nadimarg for distributing marriage cards. He was advised by his Muslim friend not to stay in the village that night and return home. How could all these inputs be not in the knowledge of the police intelligence. Even the SHO Zainapora had described Nadimarg as hypersensitive. A fortnight back there was a attack on Telephone Exchange at Zainapora.

The survivors have also alleged that the terrorists were in connivance with some cops, deployed at the police picket. They added that the terrorists picked up and chose men and women from the inhabited houses only and did not enter the inhabited ones. According to these Pandits a few of the militants were Kashmiris. A delegation of Kashmiri Pandit Sabha which visited Nadimarg did not rule out the involvement of some locals from the neighbouring village, Yaripora. The particular village has remained

a stronghold of Jamaat Islami. A few Pandit families, which migrated from other villages said new vested interests have emerged in Valley and they have been trying to throw them out of the Valley.

Justice (retd.) Ghulam Ahmed Kuchay, in his capacity as head of State Human Rights Commission, had probed Wandhama massacre. He had stated in his six page report that Wandhama massacre may be taken as a warning note and proper measures needed to be initiated to prevent such incidents. He told the media, "I had given a detailed account of things and recommended measures. But none of these were implemented".

The Pandit community and the NC President, Omar Abdullah have also accused the chief minister of bungling the return issue. They have charged that he had been building media-hype on the issue, without taking ground reality into account. In a veiled criticism of state government's plan, Deputy Prime Minister had told Rajya Sabha on March 12, "The yardstick for their return will be safety. The Kashmiri migrants are still not convinced about their safety in the Valley. Nobody will be pushed anywhere. " Referring to the state government's plan, he added that unless they (migrants) are convinced the plan will not succeed. Taking part in the discussion, Dr Farooq Abdullah warned that Pandits would not be safe in the Valley. He added, "I do not think conditions are conducive enough for these people to go back. The government's plans to set up two colonies would not solve the problem. The government had to provide security to them. The former chief minister warned, "they will become a target of the Al-Qaida and other movements. The fallout of any attack would be felt in other places of the country".

In the wake of Nadimarg massacre, nearly two hundred members of 32 families of Pandit community have migrated from such places like Kangan, Magam, Karan Nagar, Sathu, Kulgam, Sirhama etc. The government fears if Nadimarg survivors are allowed to go, Pandits in other villages will follow suit.

'The massacre dented its (State Government's) image and the migration would deepen the dent'. The district administration, whose negligence led to massacre, had brought Nadimarg survivors back from Barsoo, when they were on way to Jammu. Presently survivors are living as 'captives' in Nadimarg. This has further eroded the image and credibility of PDP-led government. Nadimarg Pandits told mediapersons, "we have been held hostages in the village as no member of the community from rest of the Valley is allowed to see us nor are we allowed to go out". Meanwhile Pandits in other parts of the Valley are feeling apprehensive about their safety and have demand a CBI or judicial probe in all aspects of massacre. They have also demanded strong action against guilty officials. The state government too is in a fix how to provide fool-proof security to 271 hamlets of Kashmir Pandits.

Return of Pandits is a national issue. Its use for partisan ends can only be detrimental to their ultimate return.

### **Victims of Nadimarg massacre, 23-3-03**

1. Bansilal (70), S/o Daya Ram
2. Rajni (22) D/o Bansilal
3. Lok Nath (40) S/o Kanth Ram
4. Radhakrishnan (60) S/o Kanth Ram
5. Pradhiman Krishan (25) S/o Radhakrishnan
6. Geeta (40) W/o Radha Krishan
7. Ramesh Pandit
8. Lassa Koul (70) S/o Govind Ram
9. Triloki Nath (55) F/o Manohar Nath Pandit
10. Sangeeta (30) W/o Manohar Nath Pandit
11. Suraj Kumar (3) S/o Manohar Nath Pandit
12. Suman (Julie) (30), W/o Satish Kumar Pandit

13. Monu Raj (2) S/o Satish Kumar
14. Chand Rani (40) W/o Chuni Lal
15. Jiya Lal Bhat (80)
16. Devki (75) W/o Jiya Lal Bhat
17. Sushma (26) D/o Jiya Lal
18. Avtar Krishan (55) S/o Jiya Lal
19. Girja Kumari (23) D/o Bansil Lal
20. Princy (27) D/o Bansil Lal
21. Rakesh Kumar (22) S/o Jiya Lal
22. Bansil Lal (50) S/o Jiya Lal
23. Umat Kumar (20) S/o Avtar Krishan
24. Ashajee (Bindri) 40) W/o Bansil Lal

Injured: Chuni Lal

Survivors of Carnage:

1. Mohan Lal Bhat
2. Ramesh Koul
3. Chuni Lal and his son (4) Deep
5. Phoola Devi
6. Gunwati
7. Som Nath (8) his wife and (9) his son
10. 3 month old child of Satish Kumar
11. Sanjay Koul
12. Manohar Nath Pandit
13. Pran Nath Bhat
14. Rohit
15. Bhushan Lal

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*Kashmiri Pandits staying in Valley at the time of Nadimarg massacre*

Total No. of Families : 1535      Number of People : 7823      No. of Localities : 271

	District					
	Srinagar	Budgam	Baramulla	Kupwara	Anantnag	Pulwama
No. of Families:	557	112	313	16	419	118
No. of People :	2228	425	1404	64	1859	1543



## **21 Letters**

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### **J&K needs collective efforts**

Sir,

I have read with interest the interview with Mr Rafiq Sadiq I had the good fortune of coming into contact with late Sadiq Sahib. I met him once or twice before he became the Chief Minister and once when he was Chief Minister. In view of immense respect he commanded because of his uprightness and his views, I felt proud of my acquaintance with him.

The interview should help your readers to form correct views regarding what has come to be known as the Kashmir problem though one may not agree with everything said by Mr Rafiq.

I am generally at one with views expressed by Mr Rafiq about the plight of Pandits of Kashmir forced out of their State as refugees. I have had the opportunity to see the conditions in at least one of the camps in which many Pandit families had been lodged. These were extremely bad and even shocking. It is in their interest as well as in the interest of Kashmir and of India as a whole that they go back. However, I agree with Mr Rafiq that conditions have to be created for that.

It is also true that plight of Kashmiri Pandits has not attracted that much attention as it should have by the rest of the country. In this connection, there is a highly controversial demand which Mr Rafiq has not discussed i.e. the demand for a Union Territory for Pandits in the Kashmir valley.

My own view is that this is not a correct demand. Firstly, it will not be conducive to the type of harmony and unity between all Kashmiris-Muslims as well as Kashmir Pandits, which is needed and which is desired by all sensible people. Secondly, it may give rise to similar demands by the Muslim minority in U.P., Bihar and some other states. And this will not be good for India's unity-in-diversity. All demands for administrative units based on religion cannot but weaken secularism as well as India's unity-in-diversity. Kashmiri Pandits too should not dream of the very dominant positions they once held when the state was ruled by an autocratic Hindu Maharaja and when Muslims were overwhelming poverty-stricken and extremely backward in the matter of education. Of course. Pandits must be treated justly and have a place in Kashmir society which they deserve. Neither the Kashmiri Pandits nor the Muslim Kashmiris must suffer any injustice.

True, whole system has collapsed. Let us all work to build a new system based on justice, fairplay and abolition of oppression and exploitation, with all citizens being free to profess any religion and worship according to the same, with followers of every religion respecting the religious feelings of all and with the state of J&K as well as Indian state as a whole having no official religion.

—**Satya Pal Dang**

Ekta Bhawan, Chheharta (Amritsar).

## 22 Kashmir: Vajpayee regime continues to look to US for approval

**By Sumer Kaul**

AS I write this, more than two weeks after the slaughter of Kashmiri Pandits in Nadimarg, forget about nabbing the cold-blooded murderers, the various central and state agencies on the job have not been able to establish even the identity and affiliation of the terrorists. Another few days and Nadimarg will become just another entry in the macabre chronicle of killings in Kashmir, as did an exactly similar massacre in Wandhama five years ago, as have all such killings before and since then.

Even as we mourn, albeit only fleetingly, the gruesome midnight murder of 24 innocent men, women, children and infants of Nadimarg, we no longer seem to realise, much less really care, that the Pakistan-sponsored bloodbath in Kashmir has gone on for fourteen long years, and that in this colossal and continuing human tragedy no other community has suffered so much for so long and yet evoked so little concern as the Kashmiri Pandits.

Going back in their origin to before the advent of Buddhism and Christianity, not to speak of Islam, they survived the sword of ruthless invaders and proselytizers over the last two millennia, only to lose it all in the span of a decade. Hundreds of them have been killed by terrorists and of those who fled for their lives, hundreds have died and are dying prematurely due to penury and the inhuman conditions in the "migrant camps" in which they have been forced to live all these years. Those who did not join the mass exodus because they were too poor or too trusting are getting killed routinely, often in ones and twos, sometimes as entire families and clusters, as in Wandhama and Nadimarg.

Never mind the silence of the otherwise fiery self-appointed *thekedars* of "the Hindu Samaj", where are the 'human rightists' and 'secularists' of our metros and media who beat their breasts over all kinds of issues and non-issues elsewhere in the country? Why are they silent over what is happening to fellow-Indians and particularly the minorities in Kashmir?

Never mind even this fashionably selective bunch of vocalists, what are the people at the helm doing, people who are duty bound and indeed pledged (and themselves heavily protected) to protect the people? They have proved to be past masters in mouthing inane rhetoric and feigning tough postures, but in terms of actually taking strong and meaningful measures it has been a dismal story of woolly thinking, perennial dithering and embarrassing timidity.

Look at their reaction to the latest terrorist outrage. The prime minister calls a special meeting of his Cabinet. And what does this meeting do? Warn Pakistan of retribution? Send more forces to Kashmir, or at least untie the hands of those already there? Order and ensure proper security in minority areas and pockets? No, they do none of this. They simply issue a statement condemning the massacre, and go home. Except the "iron man".

Predictability enough, he makes the customary dash to the scene of the carnage. There, according to reports, while assuring the survivors of all help if they wish to quit the Valley he advises them against doing so because their departure would fulfil the Pakistani gameplan of cleansing Kashmir of its religious minorities. Remarkable insight, this, except that with the forced exit ten years ago of more than 95 percent of Kashmiri Pandits, this diabolical objective has already been more or less achieved. But the Home Minister wants the 9000-odd Pandits still there to stay put and defeat the terrorist design!

As an earnest of his own efforts towards that end, on his return Mr Advani summons a meeting of senior babus of his ministry, some military and intelligence officers and the (outgoing!) Governor and the (new) chief minister of Kashmir. The meeting decides to set up a special group to "study" the security situation in the state and submit a report urgently, that is, in three months! By then presumably the Big Bosses in Washington should have wrapped up their own terror and killing game in Iraq and thus be free to tell us what to do or rather what we should continue not to do in Kashmir and especially against the military-mullah regime in Pakistan which may demonstrably be the fountainhead of subcontinental terrorism but which they have embraced as a "staunch ally" in their phony war against "terrorism anywhere and everywhere"!

So much for the concern and response of our “nationalist” national government. But what about the brand new state government of Mufti Mohammad Syed? Has Nadimarg altered his innocent views (to put it no differently) on how to deal with Jehadi terror and terrorists? Will he undo his hasty decision to disband the Special Operations Group which was doing no mean job of tracking down the Pakistani terrorists and their local agents? Will he review his plan to release jailed militants and secessionists and thereby stop sending wrong signals, even if unwittingly, to their godfathers across the border? Will he provide adequate security to the minorities? Will he ensure that the villages and urban pockets where they live will be guarded by policemen who don't run away at the first sight of approaching terrorists? To my knowledge the Mufti didn't say any of this. What he did say, according to newspaper reports, is that the Nadimarg massacre was aimed at discrediting his healing touch policy but he would continue to pursue it.

So, no matter what, it is going to be business as usual in this much-bloodied state. Like their predecessors since the late eighties, neither the old kneelers at the Centre nor the new healers in the state seem overly bothered about the continuing violence and bloodshed, much less about the ethnic cleansing, in Kashmir and the consequent destruction of its age-old democratic profile and social ethos, not to speak of the grave danger all this poses to the secular fabric and territorial integrity of the country.

Much as the Vajpayee government may celebrate its survival in office (for five years in three installments), the people who elected it with great expectations and over whom they rule so smugly are silently seething at the way it has ceded the sovereignty of thinking and decision-making on national issues and interests to extra-territorial powers, principally to the almighty in Washington, particularly on Kashmir and Pakistan.

Despite the string of disaster and humiliations as a result of this subservience, despite the proven treachery of the Americans, despite a series of rebuffs and admonitions (witness their latest arrogant warning to us not to do anything against their protege in Islamabad, and this within days of the Nadimarg massacre!), the Vajpayee regime continues to look to the superbully for help, advice and approval. How many more debacles in Kashmir, how many more deaths of Indian soldiers, how many more Nadimargs before self-respect, sense and reality down on our leaders?

*\*The author is a veteran journalist, based in Delhi. His writings on contemporary Kashmir have drawn wide appreciation.*

## 23 *Kashmir Sentinel's centenary issue released*

### KS Correspondent

JAMMU, Feb 23: The centenary issue of *Kashmir Sentinel*, a prominent local monthly journal, was released in a simple yet impressive function, held here today at Jammu Club.

The issue was released by Prof. Hari Om, State BJP Spokesperson and Mr. Shyam Koul, a Veteran Journalist. Mentioning the momentousness of '*Kashmir Sentinel*', Prof Hari Om spoke about its uniqueness. He told the audience this journal had a particular that standing in the field of Journalism. He added that it covers all aspects of history of India as well as J&K. "It provides me exact picture about Kashmir affairs. I normally preserve important clippings of news papers. But so far as Sentinel is concerned, I preserve the whole copy," observed Prof. Hari Om. He cautioned the audience not to take Sentinel as simply the mouth-piece of Pandit community. This journal covers all aspects of Kashmir problem, he added. He assured that the efforts of sentinel will not go in vain.

Prof. Hari Om said, "Sentinel is the protection shield of Indian culture and it is serving the nation with a broad vision. I am emotionally attached to the Kashmir Sentinel because from time to time sentinel keeps us in touch with our past."

Mr Shyam Koul, recalled with pride his association with *Kashmir Sentinel* as its founder-editor. He said that it is a great moment for a journal as it has survived on limited resources and enjoys a highly committed readership. About the role of Sentinel it is the good way to tell the world about our plight, miseries and disinformation. He recalled the occasion when the first issue was released in the presence of a huge gathering.

Prof. M.K. Teng said *Kashmir Sentinel* represents Indian and Kashmiri civilization, where as the national papers were the ideologies of western liberation. Dr Teng strongly rejected the contention, frequently displayed on Television, *Kafiley Bastey Gey Aur, Hindustan Banta Gaya* (Carvans went on settling down and Hindustan was formed). "It means that before settling of the caravans, Hindustan was not existing. Such types of slogans are creating illusion among the masses," he added.

Mr Omkar Nath Trisal, veteran Congressman and senior community leader observed, "our target is separate homeland and *Kashmir Sentinel* is a weapon in our hands to fight the forces inimical to Pandit community interests".

Dr. Ajay Chrungoo, Chairman Panun Kashmir on the occasion said the publication of 100th issue is not a big achievement to talk about but the circumstances under which the Sentinel completed its 100th issue is creditable and no less than a triumph. He said that he wanted to know for how long the Central government was going to ignore the displaced Pandit community as it is not coming out with any solution. Dr. Ajay warned that if Congress keeps appeasing the Muslims for their support, a day will come when Congress will lose its identity.

Dr. S.S. Toshkhani, a noted poet and scholar on Kashmir's cultural tradition described *Kashmir Sentinel* as a unique journal. He observed that in his view no paper of this standard has been ever brought out by Kashmiri Pandit community. He said the uniqueness of *Kashmir Sentinel* lay in its refusal to engage in personal publicity of Panun Kashmir leaders. Dr Toshkhani said that the papers writings reflected continuity and added that it was a tremendous effort by people associated with it. Capt. SK Tickoo praised the efforts to keep *Kashmir Sentinel* going.

Prof. M.L. Koul, an eminent scholar lauded the efforts of *Kashmir Sentinel* in countering disinformation. He came down heavily on Prem Nath Bhat Memorial Trust for applauding people like Balraj Puri and said that these were the people who engaged in malicious disinformation on Pandits' ethnic-cleansing. Prof. Koul commented such negative tendencies in the community need to be exposed.

Mr. Shailendra Aima, Editor *Kashmir Sentinel*, Dr Shakti Bhan, chairman Panun Kashmir Foundation and the noted Gynecologist and Mr. Kuldeep Raina, General Secretary Panun Kashmir also spoke on the occasion. They impressed upon the audience the need to create a fund for the survival of the paper.

## ***24 Panun Kashmir exposes the return game-plan***

### **KS Correspondent**

JAMMU, Mar 21: At a press conference here today, Panun Kashmir, a frontline organisation of Kashmiri Pandits charged that Mufti government was communal and its policies were biased towards the Kashmiri Pandits. Mr Kuldeep Raina, General Secretary of the organisation, described the proposed settlements at Tulmulla and Mattan as concentration camps. He asked the government "to prove its credentials before shifting the community to two concentration camps in the Valley".

PK leader made a scathing attack on government's policies, which he alleged have only fuelled violence. He said the chief minister should clarify whether he has established any channel with terrorists on the basis of which he was shifting the displaced people to two camps in the Valley. The government should also let the people know the credentials of the Moulvi on whose assurance the chief minister has initiated this step, he added.

Mr Kuldeep Raina said there were conflicting statements regarding the terrorist violence in Kashmir. While the government claims the terrorist violence has come down, the intelligence reports were contrary to it. He quoted Dr Farooq Abdullah, who had said that Al Qaeda elements in Valley could attack Pandits once they moved to the Valley. Raina wanted to know what confidence-building measures Mufti government has initiated for Pandit community. He suggested that before talking of return plan, the state government should take measures to improve the living condition of Pandits, still holding on in Kashmir.

Panun Kashmir leader quoted chapter and verse to show how the present state government has beaten all records in working against the Pandit community. He said the state education department has ignored nearly 150 Pandit teachers in promotions which were made recently; the seniority criteria was not followed for the first time in past thirty years.

Contesting the chief minister's claim that Kashmiri Pandits have given in writing that they wanted to return to their homes and hearths, the PK leader wanted to know the names of such people. He, however, maintained that the government's attempt to bribe the disgruntled elements would not solve the problem of exodus. He called government's return plan a conspiracy to destabilise Pandits. He declared Kashmiri Hindus will not be a party to any venture that seeks to camouflage communalism, adding "we would participate in all national efforts to fight the subversive war being waged against the nation and Hindus but would never submit or contribute to it".

Fearing that in the given scenario any attempt for their return is fraught with danger, Mr Raina said, all such efforts in a myopic framework would only result in a "bloody pre-emptive backlash".

Commenting upon the history of migration, Dr MK Teng, chairman Advisory committee suggested that the restoration of Kashmiri Pandits in the state could only be done by the method of reversal of genocide. He alleged that the state government was just pretending to tell the union government about the onward process to restore peace in the J&K. Making a strong dig at the state government, Dr MK Teng said it has shifted emphasis from crushing terrorism to Kashmir issue. He added that the coalition government was attempting to tell the people of India that the process of democratization and building secular society were irrelevant to restoration of peace in the state. Prof. Teng observed that this government was giving an impression that like the elections in 1977, the last year elections were conducted freely and in a fair manner and the process of democracy has started in the state and hence the Indian government should move further to open negotiations with terrorist regime.

Mr ON Trisal, President ASKPSC made a scathing attack on Hurriyat Conference and opposed any dialogue with it. He said this conglomerate's hands were soaked in the blood of Kashmiri Pandits. He blamed it for introducing gun culture in the Valley. Mr Trisal blamed state government for outrightly ignoring the Pandit community in employment and added that out of four lakh state government employees, Pandit community's share was hardly five thousand.

Mr ON Trisal said the government was soft on terrorism and lacks the political will to fight it. He while rejecting the return formula, declared that the community would not budge an inch from its demand of

"Homeland" where there will be free flow of Indian constitution. He said it was strange that GOI and state government should give recognition to murderers of democracy and peace in the Valley.

The PK leaders also presented the memorandum they had submitted to the Governor of the State on March 15 to the press. In this, they had urged upon the Governor to stop efforts to separate the genocide of Kashmiri Hindus from the overall crisis in the state and also to advise state government to desist from all such efforts that trivialise the genocide of Kashmiri Hindus. They also talked in detail about the horrible living conditions in migrant camps and the increased incidence of ailments due to it.

## ***25 Those Who Left Us***

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Feb 10: A policeman injured yesterday in Pak firing in Balakote sector succumbed to his injuries taking death toll to three while heavy firing was again reported in Nowshera sector. A terrorist hideout was busted in Banihal area and arms and ammunition were recovered there.

Feb 11: Three terrorists and a cop were killed in Kashmir valley while two terrorists were killed in Doda district.

Feb 12: Terrorists killed three civilians in Gool, Udampur while a terrorist, a jawan and a woman were killed in Rajouri district. Two HM terrorists were killed and two securitymen injured in an encounter in Tral; a constable was killed and four others injured when their vehicle was blasted by terrorists.

Feb 13: Terrorists kidnapped five civilians from Bonkoot, Bandipore and slaughtered two of them on the occasion of Id. Terrorists also kidnapped a civilian from Qamerwari, Srinagar while forces arrested a person undergoing treatment after being injured in a blast in Tral. 170 families migrated from Kalal, Nowshera amidst continued Pak firing.

Feb 14: Terrorists killed one more civilian kidnapped from Bandipore, snatched five SLRs from JKAP policemen guarding a bridge in Langet, Kupwara and looted seven lakh rupees from a bank manager in Kokernag while a terrorist was killed in Kashmir valley. A civilian was killed and two others injured in a blast in Arnia.

Feb 15: Three terrorists and a jawan were killed in an encounter in Ghambir Muglian, Manjakote while four persons including two policemen were injured elsewhere in Poonch and Rajouri districts. Terrorists gunned down a civilian in Pulwama while the terrorist killed in Sopore turned to be "KPF" chief commander.

Feb 16: Terrorists gunned down a contractor and a conductor in Kashmir valley.

Feb 17: An ITBP Sub-Inspector was killed and another jawan injured in an IED blast on Jammu-Srinagar Highway near Bijbehara. A young girl was killed in Banihal. Two porters were killed in Pak firing in Sabjan sub-sector.

Feb 18,19,20,21: No terrorism related incident was reported.

Feb 22: Seven persons including four terrorists and a jawan were killed and two LeT terrorists arrested in Kashmir valley.

Feb 23: Seven mercenaries were gunned down and two reportedly escaped in Mendhar sector. Terrorists killed a civilian in Doda and two VDC members in Rajouri district.

Feb 24: Two terrorists were killed in Kashmir valley.

Feb 25: Four people were killed and three injured as youths grapple with terrorists at Rai Schot, Rajouri. Four terrorists were killed in Gool. A terrorist was killed in Tral and a civilian in Punzgam.

Feb 26: Terrorists kidnapped and later killed a civilian in Punzgam.

Feb 27: Three accused in Rajiv Nagar, Jammu massacre were granted bail.

Feb 28: District Commander HuM was killed in Gandoh, Doda and two terrorists were arrested in Banihal area.

Mar 1: Terrorists shot dead a civilian in Poonch and shot at a PDP activist in Pulwama.

Mar 2: Two infiltrating terrorists were killed in Mendhar sector while terrorists burnt 17 seasonal huts in Gool and a house of a civilian in Poonch.

Mar 3: No terrorism related incident was reported.

Mar 4: Four terrorists were killed at Lari, Doda. Eight people including four civilians were killed in Kashmir valley; four terrorists were reportedly buried alive.

Mar 5: Three terrorists and a civilian were killed and three of a family injured and three rifles of VDC members snatched in different incident in Poonch and Rajouri districts. Three terrorists were killed and a major and two civilians injured in Baramulla.

Mar 6: Two terrorists were killed in Ashmuqam while people protested killing of two civilians in Kawachak, Kreeri. JSC clears release of 24 prisoners.

Mar 7: No terrorism related incident was reported.

Mar 8: Two civilians were killed and five jawans injured and a civilian were killed and five jawans injured and a civilian Devi Dass kidnapped and taken to Pakistan in Jammu region. A woman injured in a terrorists' act in Yaripora succumbed while three cops were injured in a misfere.

Mar 9: A terrorist was killed in Telwani, Anantnag. A civilian was beaten to death and two others injured by terrorists at Godyog, Rajouri.

Mar 10: Terrorists killed three civilians and a soldier in Kashmir valley. Two Kashmiri terrorists were held in Delhi.

Mar 11: Three HUII terrorists killed in Doda. A trader was killed and nine others injured in a blast in City Chowk while another bomb was defused in a matador.

Mar 12: Security forces eliminated four terrorists in Jammu region while death toll in Rajouri blast was raised to two. A terrorist was killed and another injured while terrorists attacked a Telephone Exchange in Kashmir valley.

Mar 13: Two people were killed and 33 others were injured in yet another blast in Rajouri. A civilian was killed and another injured by terrorists in Doda district. Terrorists killed four civilians while four army jawans were killed in Pak firing in Poonch district.

Mar 14: A DySP, a cop, three civilians and a *fidayeen* were killed as *fidayeen* attacked a Moharum procession in Poonch town. Five terrorists and a civilian were killed and 200 kg RDX recovered in Doda district. Six terrorists and an NC activist were killed and a PDP activist injured while two bodies were fished out in Kashmir valley.

Mar 15: Two terrorists, who were involved in an attack on a Sumo, were killed and two civilians were injured in an encounter in Surankote while death toll in *fidayeen* attack in Poonch yesterday reached to seven with succumbing of one more injured. A terrorist surrendered while a blast failed to cause any harm in Kashmir valley.

Mar 16: In a daring attack terrorists killed 11, including seven policemen injured nine others and kidnapped seven people including four policemen in Ind (Gool) in Udhampur district. Terrorists also looted 28 rifles and other weaponry and torched police post, PHE building and eight other houses. Two terrorists were killed in Doda.

Mar 17: Six terrorists were killed in Doda. Terrorists killed two kidnapped policemen while two escaped in Ind, Gool. Six terrorists, a jawan, two SPOs and a civilian were killed in Kashmir valley.

Mar 18-19: A terrorist and a civilian were killed and two civilians injured in terrorism related incidents in Kashmir valley. A terrorist funding racket was busted by BSF by recovering 24 lakhs of rupees from two arrested persons in Kashmir valley. Terrorist beat a civilian to death to Mangota, Thannamandi and damaged a bridge in Surankote. An Army Subedar was killed in Pak shelling in Poonch sector.

Mar 20: Two terrorists, a jawan and an SPO were killed and two cops injured in Jammu region. A PDP leader, two civilians were killed and two others injured in Kashmir valley.

Mar 21: Two terrorist and two BSF jawan were killed and four BSF jawans injured in an encounter at Pindi Jamola, Rajouri. A terrorist surrendered in Mahore. Two terrorists were killed and four others surrendered in Kashmir valley.



Mar 22: Terrorists killed an SPO's sister and injured the SPO and his mother in Surankote. Three civilians were killed in South Kashmir while four civilians were killed and two others injured in Pak shelling in Karnah sector.

Mar 23: HM's Comdr Majid Dar was gunned down in Sopore and two terrorists were gunned down by forces in South Kashmir. Six terrorists including two reportedly involved in attack on Police Post Ind were among eight people killed in Jammu region. Three people were killed and four others injured in Pak shelling in Nowshera sector.

Mar 24: Terrorists gunned down 24 Kashmiri Pandits at Nadimarg in South Kashmir. Two terrorists were killed near LoC in Keri sector.

Mar 25: Three army men including a captain and a woman were killed and three members of a family injured in Jammu region. A complete bandh was observed and demonstrations held even as L.K. Advani and Sonia Gandhi visited carnage site Nadimarg.

Mar 26: One person was killed and six others injured in an explosion in an oil tanker outside Bharat Petroleum Depot near Narwal, Jammu. A BSF jawan and a VDC member were injured in an encounter in Hassa Gali, Reasi. Terrorists gunned down a civilian while forces busted two terrorist hideouts in Kashmir valley.

Mar 27: An army major, a jawan and three terrorists were killed and two jawans and a terrorist injured in an encounter in Doda district. Terrorists shot dead a young girl in Banihal while a captain was injured in a demining operation. Terrorists gunned down three civilians including a couple in Kashmir valley which observed a bandh against American attack on Iraq.

Mar 28: Terrorists gunned down a father-son duo in Surankote and chopped off noses of six civilians in Darhal area while forces gunned down a mercenary in Surankote area. Katra police recovered huge cache of RDX and ammunition in Katra and Kulgam and busted a plot to blast Jawahar Tunnel.

Mar 29: Forces gunned down three JeM terrorists in Kishtwar while terrorists blasted a bridge near Rajouri. Security forces gunned down three terrorists in Kashmir valley.

Mar 30: A civilian was killed and two others injured in a blast in Surankote; terrorists kidnapped two civilians from Nowshera and attacked residence of MP Jammu Talib Hussain at Fatehpur, Rajouri. Terrorists gunned down a civilian at Zaingam, Budgam and an IED was defused in Baramulla.

Mar 31: Two terrorists, a PDP activist and an Ikhwani were killed in Kashmir valley. Seven terrorists and an SPO were killed in Doda. A terrorist was killed and eight IRP jawans injured in different incidents in Poonch-Rajouri while terrorists made an unsuccessful attempt to blast Dundak bridge.

Apr 1: Four terrorists and three civilians including a Congress activist were killed in Kashmir valley where 13 civilians were injured in a grenade attack in Anantnag.

Apr 2: HM's operational chief Saiful Islam was eliminated near Nowgam, Budgam. A woman was killed and another injured in Beerwah, Budgam while 18 people including 15 civilians were injured in a grenade blast in Shopian. Six mercenaries and a local terrorist were killed in Poonch-Rajouri.

Apr 3: Terrorists gunned down three members of a family at Dolipora, Handwara. Three terrorists including HUJI district chief and an army Subedar were killed in Poonch.

Apr 4: Missing Doordarshan engineer Rajinder Singh Bali's body was fished-out from Jehlum in Uri, terrorists strangled to death a civilian in Sallar, Pahalgam while a mentally deranged person was killed in Handwara by mistake. Two HM terrorists were arrested in Delhi and arms were seized from a Kashmir youth in UP.

# *Kashmir Sentinel*

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