CHAPTER I

Dogra State and the Nature of Modernization in Kashmir

As the turbulence of the first quarter of the twentieth century swept across India, and the demand for freedom and self-rule became a stirring revolution under the leadership of Gandhi, Kashmir too began to rise against its insensitive Dogra monarchs.\(^1\) Though, Kashmir’s were used to be ruled by the foreigners from centuries together\(^2\), however, the Dogra rule was unique in the sense that they were themselves the vassals of the another mightier power i.e. British colonialists.\(^3\) The British imperialism, although, parasitic in nature, unconsciously generated certain forces which brought about a transition from medieval to modern age in the territories directly governed by it.\(^4\) This was not however, the case with “Dogra imperialism” which was more parasitic but less progressive in nature, and it continued “the dynastic, feudal, ruler-centered and religion centered rule of the medieval ages.”\(^5\) Taking advantage of the “sale-deal of 1846”, the Dogra

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2. Kashmir lost its independence when it was conquered by the Mughals in 1586 and subsequently by the Afghans and Sikhs respectively.
3. The Dogra’s had established themselves as rulers of Jammu in the declining years of Mughal Empire, but as feudatories of the Sikh Kingdom. In 1832 Gulab Singh conquered Ladakh. Meanwhile the East India Company coveted prosperous Punjab. When hostilities broke out, Gulab Singh, true to form, betrayed his Sikh masters and allied himself secretly with the British. The Treaty of Lahore (March 9, 1846) made the Sikh state a British tributary and imposed on it an indemnity of rupees 50 crores. Since it could not pay, it ceded the territories between Beas and Indus rivers including Kashmir and Hazara. The Company, in turn, transferred these areas to Gulab Singh for rupees 1 crore. It was reduced to 75 lakhs a week later by the Treaty of Amritser, with the British occupying Kalu and Manali. Thus was the state of Jammu and Kashmir formed. For an authoritative description see, Robert A. Huttenback, *Kashmir and the British Raj 1847-1947*, Oxford University Press, Karachi.
Dogra State

rulers considered Kashmir as their purchased property and ruled over their subjects as a master rules over his slaves. High principles of governance were unknown to them and the state which they created remained personal and feudal in character. They always discriminated Kashmir considering it a conquered land and preferred Jammu, their home land. The Dogra state which perpetuated regionalism followed, however, more discriminatory policy vis-à-vis the majority community of Kashmir, i.e. Muslims, a fact which is attested by almost all the contemporary sources.

P. L. Lakhanpal summarized the communal stance of Dogra rulers by saying, "the sale-deal of 1846 put a largely populated Muslim state under the Dogra rule which had been characterized as despotical, tyrannical and sectarian".

The Dogra's deliberately propagated the policy of racial discrimination against the Muslims in particular and other non-Dogra Communities in general. Gawasha Lal Koul, though being well disposed towards Maharaja, remarks, "Maharaja Pratab Singh would say, 'don't give too much to Rajputs, use Kashmiri Pundits as much as you can and see that Muslims do not starve'".

Muslims which constituted the 80% of the total population of the state had only a nominal share in the government services, and as per the Riots Enquiry Committee Report the share of the Muslims in the state services in

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7 Bazaz, op. cit., P. 122.
8 Ibid.
9 See for instance the information left by European travelers and Officials about the valley. Recently two bathbreaking and authoritative books came to existence which exposed how state under dogra's defined its space and legitimacy on religious basis. See, Mirdu Rai, Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjectes: Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir, Permanent Black, 2004; Chitralekha Zutshi, Languages of Belonging: Islam, Religion, Identity, and the Making of Kashmir, Permanent Black, 2003.
11 Gawasha Lal Koul, Kashmir Through the Ages, p.122.
12 Censes Report of India 1, 1931, pp.73-74.
1931 was not more than 15%. Every attempt was made to keep the Muslims away from the important and influential positions. The economic policies adopted by the Dogra state ruined the largest producing community i.e. Muslims—though, non-Muslim minority was not an exception. The revenue department which was through out monopolized by the non-Muslims and which had most of its dealings with Muslim masses was the most corrupt and oppressive branch of the autocratic state machinery. The taxation scheme followed by Dogras left the working class half-fed and starving. European travelers and officials who had served in the valley during Dogra rule and who were, more conscious of the material aspect had left interesting information regarding the economic life of the people and the state policies. Lieutenant Colonel Torrens, while comparing the Dogras with the early foreign rulers of Kashmir had exposed the Dogra tyranny when he wrote, “this last state (Dogra State) was worse then the first for Gulab Singh went beyond his predecessors in the gently acts of undue taxation and extortion. They had taxed heavily, it is true, but he sucked the very life blood of the people. They had laid violent hands on a large proportion of the fruits of the earth, the profits of loom and the work of men’s hands, but he skinned the very flints to fill his coffers”. Almost all types of produce and all classes attached with production were brought under heavy taxation as had been stated by Sir Francis in the following words, “on the manufacture of shawls, parallel restriction were placed wool was taxed as it entered Kashmir; the manufacture was taxed for every workman he employed, and also at various stages of the process according to the value of fabric: Lastly there was the enormous duty of 85% ad valor am. Butchers, Bakers,
Carpenters, boatman's and even prostitutes were taxed. Poor coolies, who were engaged to carry load for travelers, had to give up half their earnings. The nature of taxation would become more oppressive and devastative for peasantry and other working classes when one considers the fact that revenue officials were highly corrupt who not only mal-treated the masses but also fattened themselves on illegal exactions known as nazrana and rasum on the Muslim peasantry. These officials in order to make their pockets bulged and to please their masters resorted to extreme kinds of inhuman torturous methods to exact as much as they could from the faminish peasantry. "At the time of collecting the land revenue, the use of nettle scourge in summer and of plunging recurrent tax payer into cold water in winter was popular methods of torture carried out against the peasants. Through, these corrupt practices and oppressive methods of the revenue department, the Muslim cultivators suffered unspeakable injustice and oppression." It is therefore, no surprise that the mere sight of an official's visit to any village caused all hell to fall upon its dwellers. It is also substantiated by Walter Lawrence, when he wrote, "the official visit, which to us officials seems so pleasant to all concerned, sends the pulse of the village up many degrees, and those are happy who dwell for away from the beaten tracks.... He has good reasons to hate and distrust them".

These oppressive economic policies of Dogra state had created deplorable economic conditions in state. The bankruptcy of the state has been nicely depicted by Lawrence in the following words: "the rich land was left uncultivated and the army was employed in forcing the villagers to plough and sow and worse still the soldiers came at the harvest time and

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19 Walter Lawrence op. cit. pp. 415.  
21 Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 5.  
22 Ibid.
when the share of the state had been seized and these men of war had helped themselves, there was very little given to the unfortunate peasants to tide over the cruel winter when the snow lies deep and temperature falls below zero". The great revenue expert of his time approved that when he started settlement of the land everything save air and water was under taxation. Even the office of the gravedigger was taxed.

It is thus, not surprising that the vitality of the people had been extremely undermined and the state witnessed successive famines, epidemics and choleras in 1877-9, 1888, 1892, 1900-1902, 1906-1907 and 1910 A. D. and an outbreak of plague in 1903-1904 A. D., which decimated the population. The famine of 1877-9 was most destructive. For the death toll from the famine had been overwhelming by any standards. Some authorities had suggested that the population of Srinagar had been reduced by half (from 127,400 to 60,000), while others had estimated a diminution by three fifths of the population of the entire valley. The famine had brought to light the inadequacy of the protection offered to Kashmiri cultivators by the agrarian arrangements of the Dogra State. Interestingly, according to reports received by Lawrence, not a Pundit died of starvation during these annihilative years for the Muslim cultivator. Yet, more surprisingly, Wazir Punnu, Pundit Prime Minister during these famine years is said to have declared that there 'was not real distress and that he wished that no Musalman might be left alive from Srinagar to Ramban (in Jammu); It justified incidents of extreme cruelty towards Muslim cultivators, including the humiliation of stripping them naked for their failure to pay revenue.
The worst was still to come in the form of Beger 28 (forced labor). In theory, though, beggar had been abolished in 1893, but in practice it persisted, particularly in remoter districts, right up to 1947, in one way or the other way. The continuance of Bagar and the suffering caused by it to the masses (particularly Muslims) is substantiated even by the Glancy Commission Report. "Complaints have been received that not unfrequently the government officials disobey the orders of his Highness and force the villagers to carry the loads of the officials to far-off places without any remuneration. As a matter of fact they exact other kinds of unpaid services from them" 29 the economic suppression deteriorated the Kashmiri masses both physically as well as intellectually and the cultural level of the valley had gone down considerably. 30

The state not only discriminated the Kashmiri masses on economic front but what proved more crucial was that it also interfered with their religious liberties, which provided fuel to the fire and provoked the Muslim masses to raise the banner of revolt against Dogra Government in 1931. Regarding the communal nature of the state Prem Nath Bazaz had mentioned: "Speaking generally and from the bourgeois point of view, the Dogra rule has been a Hindu Raj. Muslims have not been treated fairly by which I mean as fairly as the Hindus. Firstly, because contrary to all professions of treating all classes equally, it must be candidly admitted that Muslims were dealt with harshly in certain respects only because they were Muslims". 31

28 On Beger, see P. N. K. Bamzai, A History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural, from the Earlier Times to the Present Day, Delhi 1962, pp. 634–636. See also Lawrence, p. 413-414.
29 Glancy Commission Report vide Dastawezat, pp. 140-141, also the information gathered from the peasants.
30 Bazaz op. cit., p. 126.
Until 1934, for example, the slaughter of cow was a capital offence; and it continued to be forbidden under larger penalty after that date. 32 Hindus, alone, were allowed licenses to possess firearms in the vale of Kashmir; and the Muslims from the vale were carefully excluded form service in the state’s Armed Forces where the higher ranks were reserved for Dogra Rajputs. Muslim troops in the Jammu and Kashmir state forces were mainly recruited from the Sudhans of Poonch, a military clan which the Maharaja believed could be relied upon to suppress any ‘disorder’ in the valley.33

Dogra’s promulgate a law according to which if any Muslim would embrace Hinduism he was allowed to inherit property and enjoy guardianship over his children, whereas reverse was the case when any Hindu became a Muslim, he was deprived of all such rights. 34 Muslim masses were subjected to pay Marriage tax on every marriage that took place in their families.335

Dogra’s didn’t even hesitate to interfere in the administration of Muslim shrines and institutions. No care was given to the religious sensitivities of the Muslims when many Mosques and shrines were confiscated by the state and some of them were even converted into granaries and ammunition store houses. Thus we see the restoration of the confiscated religious places formed an important demand of the Muslim leaders in the Memorandum, which they submitted to Lord Reading, Governor General of India during his visit to the valley in 1924.36

32 Knight, Where Three Empires Meet, p. 115 and Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom, op. cit., p. 143, Taseer, Tarikh-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir, Vo. 1, p. 183. See also Inqlab, Lahore Oct. 12, 1930.
33 Alistair Lamb, Kashmir a Disputed Legacy, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 84.
34 Dastawaerzat, op. cit., pp. 92-93, see also Bazaz, op. cit., pp. 143-144.
36 Glancy Commission Report vide Dastawaerzat; PP. 89-90 and see also Robert Tharp, Kashmir Misgovernment, P. 38.
In political, economic and social conditions such as like these created by the Dogra Raj, it was easy for a Muslim leader to rouse the patriotic and religious sentiments of the whole community against the oppressive Dogra rule and to challenge its legitimacy to rule over its subject population majority of which was discriminated for a simple reason that they adhere a different faith. It needed, however, some educated young men with burning patriotic zeal to carry his message to the Muslim masses but there was non available in the absence of a modern education system, which development in the state only after the British intervene during the last quarter of the 19th century.

It was only after British intervention in 1880’s that the concept of ‘reformation’ was introduced in the state apparatus. On February 25, 1880, the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, wrote to the Secretary of State Lord Cranbrook: “I consider that time has come when we must decisively intervene for the rescue of a perishing population, on whose behalf we certainly contracted moral obligations and responsibilities when we handed them over to the uncontrolled rule of a power alien to them in race and creed, and representing no civilization higher than theirs”. Cranbrook agreed “that [while] we are not directly responsible but we have relations with Cashmere which would justify strong interference with their enormities and the use of a tone which ought to have its effect...We ought to have influence to have prevent the annihilation of a race whose only crime is different religion from that of the powers in authority...”. Maharaja Pratap Singh was allowed to accede to his father, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, on strictly defined conditions of internal reform. However, it was no accident that Pratap Singh became the object of colonial contumely. His reign coincided with a period of questioning to the legitimacy of colonial rule in the face of a growing

38 Ibid.
onslaught from popular nationalist sentiments in British India. A strategy for survival in an age when the ‘national idea’ and popular national movements were increasingly widespread, dynasts aspired to make themselves more ‘representative’ of their subjects.\textsuperscript{39} But the difference in the case of the Princely state of Jammu and Kashmir is that the need for ‘reformation’ for forms being voluntarily realized and produced by its rulers came from the external stimulus of a British paramount power.\textsuperscript{40} Probably, there was no such strong ‘national idea’ within. But undoubtedly, the British intervention was more motivated by her own compulsions then any ‘good’ of the people of Jammu and Kashmir State.

Ian Copland has pointed to demands increasingly made, beginning already in the 1860’s, from a British trading lobby as well as from ‘the evangelical fraternity’, for a change in the post-rebellion colonial state’s decision to preserve India’s princes. They were allegedly speaking in the interest of large numbers of Indians left beyond the pale of benign direct British rule. ‘Was it right’, they said, ‘that some of India’s people should prosper while others languished in poverty and ignorance and suffered oppression just because they happened to be subjects of a dependent Prince.’\textsuperscript{41}

In 1877 ‘some unknown Kashmiris’ had submitted a memorandum to the Viceroy. The accusations of maladministration levied in it were of gravest character the most serious charge made was that ‘in order to save the expanse of feeding his people’ the Maharaja, Ranbir Singh, had preferred to drown boat-loads of Muslims in the Wular Lake. The British Government had taken these allegations seriously enough to appoint a commission of

\textsuperscript{40} Mridu Rai, \textit{Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects}, (Permanent Black, 2004), p. 131
enquiry but Kashmir Muslims had been too frightened to come forward to provide corroborations. 42Although the Maharaja was exonerated, the outrage aroused by this advertisement of the shocking condition of the valley’s Muslims called for some measure of intervention of the colonial government. The devastating famine of 1877-9 abut which I have already made the reference, also prompted a serious reconsideration of the colonial policy of non-interference in Kashmir. The Kashmir Durbar’s attitude during the famine had demonstrated its incapacity to rise above the preferential treatment of its already Hindu subjects to the detriment of Muslim cultivators who were the greatest sufferers.

However, the final impetus for the installation of Resident in the state came after the Afghan war of 1878, which made control over the north-western boundaries of the empire more urgent than ever. 43 In 1884 the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, argued that the appointment of a Resident in Kashmir was called for both ‘by the need for assisting and supervising administrative reforms’ but also to obviate disturbance on the Afghan frontier. 44 Nevertheless, the British were not in any hast to intervene in the state affairs at least during the lifetime of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Thus, in August 1884, the Foreign Department of the Government of India instructed the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir that “so long as Maharaja Ranbir Singh is alive, the Government of India do not propose to make any change in their existing policy… (avoiding) anything which is calculated in the maharaja’s present state of health unnecessarily to disturb his mind.” 45 The death of Ranbir Singh encouraged the British to take advantage of Pratap

43 William Digby, Condemned Unheard (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1890), p. 46.
44 Latter from the Government of India to the Secretary of States for India, dated 7 April, 1884, Foreign Department (Secret E)/Pros. May 1884/nos. 354-57, National Archives of India (NAI).
45 Letter from the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, to the officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, dated 1 August 1884, vide. William Digby, p. 130.
Singh's resultant political insecurity and to impose its conditions on him for upholding the principle of primogeniture in the succession. The condition was of course one which the new maharaja would be given no opportunity to decline and the reforms indicated included the appointment of the officer on special duty as the new ‘Resident’ in Kashmir. At the same time, the Govt. of India impressed on the Maharaja “the necessity for consulting (Resident) at all times, and following .... (his) advice. Hence, Sir Olivier St. John was appointed as the first Resident with enormous powers. The powers of the Residency were further enhanced after Pratap Singh was divested by the British government of his powers to govern on 17 April 1889, after he was allegedly accused of conducting treasonable correspondence with Tsarist Russia and of plotting the assassination of the resident in Kashmir, as also of his own brothers, the Rajas Ram Singh and Ammar Singh. He was forced to abdicate his powers in favour of ‘State Council’, whose members were to be appointed by the Government of India. However, he was allowed to continue as a titular chief of the state and it was only in 1905 that he was again restored with full authority.

The appointment of a Resident in Kashmir was a necessary prelude to the implementation of wide ranging reforms in the Dogra State. These include the introduction of a modern and salaried bureaucracy manned by qualified individuals, a system of proper financial control, improvements in the judicial administration, reformation in the revenue administration, development in the Communication and the progress in modern education besides other the things. However, these reforms were not enough to change

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46 Letter from the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, dated 7 April 1884, Foreign Department (Secret E) Pros. May 1884/nos. 354-7, National Archives of India (NAI).
47 Letter for Sec. Of Government of India Dated 1 August 1884, as cited above.
48 Foreign Department (Secret E)/Pros. August 1889/nos. 162-203 National Archive of India.
49 Foreign Department notes (Secret I)/Pros. November 1905/nos. 37-40, NAI.
the feudal nature of the state, but were undoubtedly, sufficient to create a section of the society who later on spearheaded a movement to force the state to become, though reluctantly, a bit mass friendly.

Imperial interests apart, the Government of India was anxious to replace the feudal structure of the state by modern bureaucratic form of administration with this purpose in view the British Resident began to interest himself through the state council in starting and organizing all the departments dealing with different branches of administration. 50

Accordingly, the system of departmentalization was introduced with a view to bring about an integrated system of administration. 51 But there was a difficulty in making these endeavors a success. Because, according to Bazaz, ‘there were few local men with the requisite qualifications available to do the jobs and fewer schools and no colleges into state where the citizens could have been educated for the task. 52Thus, people were imported from British India particularly the Punjabis, Hindus or Englishmen recommended by the British government to men different branches of the administration. "Armies of outsiders trailed behind the offices from the plains with no more interest than to draw as much as they could, and then to depart leaving behind their kindred as successors to continue the drain; and thus was established a hierarchy in the services with the result that profits and wealth passed into the hands of the outsiders and the indigenous subjects lost enterprise and independence."53 Kashmiri Pundits, the class whose "favorite occupation" was state service, 54 was, needless to say, unhappy with this state of affairs, and soon campaigned to regain their position in Kashmir's

50 P. N. Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, P. 129.
52 P. N. Bazaz, op. cit.
53 Ibid.
bureaucracy. Strengthening his lines with the most privileged segment among his subjects and promoting their interests was particularly advisable if Pratap Sing was to counter the increased powers of the State Council and the Resident, both backed by the imperial government. Thus, in 1897, he criticized the state Council for filing the higher rungs of the state bureaucracy with 'aliens' at the expense of the natives of Kashmir (undoubtedly Pundits) and the Dogras. Later on between 1895 and 1912, when his powers were to be restored he issued some orders directing his Government that for the administrative departments “subjects of the State should be given preference.” Of course it was to secure, the social base which he was creating among the ‘influential sections’ of the society. It is pertinent to mention here that there was no reaction on the part of majority of the state's subjects i.e. Muslims against restricting the access of Kashmir's to the highest rungs of administration. Probably it was because they were kept away fro such appointments even before and thus, were lacking any hope.

The Government of India after assuming its control in the state through the Resident was keen to overhaul the financial structure of the state, after it was shocked to know in 1885 that ‘the Public treasury [of Jammu and Kashmir was] practically empty’ and more surprisingly to learn that ‘the late Maharaja (had) regularly diverted the revenue of certain districts to his private chest’ and had ‘solemnly enjoined that this money should never be used to meet the current expenditure of the state’. It was in this context that R. Logan, the accountant general of the Bombay

55 This Campaign was called the “Kashmir for Kashmiris” movement. G. H. Khan, Freedom Movement in Kashmir, (New Delhi: Light and Life, 1980), 101.
56 Letter from Mc Mohan to Talbot, dated 8 July 1897, Foreign Department (Secret E)/Pros. December 1890/nos. 183-286. NAI.
57 File No. 24 of 1891 (old English records), (Kashmir Government Records), J&K State Archives.
Presidency, was sent in 1890-2 to inquire into the Kashmir durbar’s finances. His investigations which were to be followed subsequently, exposed the financial bankruptcy of the state and disclosed that the ‘Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir had egoistically spent on themselves rather than on the state and for the public good of their subjects.’

A particular focus of Logan’s investigations had been the Dharamarth Trust’s funds. A huge amount of twenty lakhs of rupees in the name of trust was lying unutilized, which could not be appropriated for the general public spending of the state. Logan made his recommendation that Dharamarth Trust fund be included within the Public revenues of the state but placed under the special category of an ‘excluded local fund’ and any unspent balance of the fund’s revenues was to be ‘devoted to Education and Medical heads.’

Of all the measures of reform proposed by the Government of India through its different officials in Jammu and Kashmir, none was as thorough going as the land settlement operations instituted between 1889 and 1895 and overseen by the British Civil Servant Sir Walter Lawrence. The apparent sympathy with which he treated the plight of the cultivating classes of Kashmiri Muslims earned him a degree of respect in evidence to this day in Kashmir. The investigations of Lawrence and A. Wingate, who was appointed before the former to conduct a preliminary survey between 1887 and 1888, was as though a veil had suddenly been lifted and the life of the Muslims in the valley revealed as one of unmitigated oppression suffered through the years.

The main features of the settlement which Sir Walter officiated were i) the state demand was fixed for fourteen years, ii) payment in cash was substituted for payment in kind, iii) the use of force in the collection of

60 Letter from R. Longan to W. C. Cunningham, dated 26 August 1891, Foreign Department (Secret E)/Pros. March 1892/nos. 100-5, NAI.
61 Ibid.
revenue was done away with iv) beggar (forced Labour) in its more objectionable form was abolished. Occupancy rights were conferred on Zamindars in undisputed lands, vi) the status of privileged holders of land was investigated and land in excess of the sanctioned areas assessed at the ordinary rates vii) waste lands were entered as Khalisa viii) permanent but non- alienable hereditary rights were granted to those who accepted the first assessment, and all land was carefully evaluated on the basis of produce, previous collection and possibility of irrigation. The rasum and other exactions of jagirdars and big land lords were abolished and the rents and liabilities of the cultivators were defined.  

Paradoxically, with the land settlement carried out by Lawrence the position of privileged holders of land rights, primarily Hindus, became more fully entrenched in the agrarian hierarchy of Kashmir. Lawrence himself had kept the chakdars and mukarraridars in place. In theory they were turned into assamis of the villages in which their estates lay. But while admitting that there was ‘nothing in the deeds which entitle[d] them to privileged rates (of assessment)’, Lawrence applauded the state’s decision to continue the concessionary rates for a further ten years. The ten years limitation was obviously disregarded since the chakdars and mukarraridars continued to enjoy beneficial terms of access to land until as late as 1948 when there grants were finally abolished. jagir villages were not even included in Lawrence’s survey.  

The settlement was not even able to get rid of the revenue officials, who would frequently suppress the peasantry. Undoubtedly, the land settlement regarded them as mere assamis who were required to pay their

62 For a detailed study of Lawrence Settlement see Sir Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir.*  
63 Ibid. p. 426.  
65 Lawrence, op. cit., p. 239.
share of revenue. However, Lawrence and later settlement officials still depended on revenue officials to carry out the actual settlement, which required an elaborate machinery that the colonial state was not willing to spare for Kashmir thus precedent, known only to revenue officials, became the basis for settlement policy. Since all land was subject to the settlement, the official’s concocted way to prove their proprietary titles on land many were even successful in entering themselves into revenue records as proprietors of lands to which they had been specially assigned by the Maharaja in the past few decades, thus contributing to the growing class of urban land holders.

Both revenue experts Wingate and Lawrence had commented on the uniqueness of Kashmir in that "the Banuya (Hindu Moneylender) of India (was) practically unknown in Kashmir." Conditions changed, however, in the post-settlement period, with a marked increase in indebtedness. This was a direct result of Lawrence converting the payment of at least part of the revenue owed to the state form kind into cash. This baneful consequence of settlement was even attested by Maharaja Hari Singh (successor of Pratap Singh) when he promulgated the Agriculturist’s Relief Act in 1926/27 with a view to ‘freeing agriculturalists and protecting them from usurious rates of interest.’ Around this time indebtedness effected almost more than 70% of the rural population (mostly Muslims) if one believes P. N. Bazaz. Since the profitable trade of money lending was mostly dominated by Pundits and to some extent by Muslim Wani caste. It is thus, no wonder that Hindu

66 Letter from Walter Lawrence to Sir Mortimer Durand, dated 29 June 1889, Foreign Department (secret E)/Pros. Sept. 1889/nas, 204-8, NAI.
67 Chitralekha Zutshi, Languages of Belonging, (Permanent black, 2003), pp. 94-95.
68 Letter from the Assistant to the Resident, to the Chief Minister, dated 14 November 1913, old English Records (OER) File no. 162/H-13, JKA.
money lenders strongly protested against the Relief Act, through ‘protest Committee of Jammu and Kashmir and the Hindu Yuvak Sabha.\textsuperscript{72}

One more significant development which marked the period of colonial presence in Kashmir was the modernization of means of communication, which had its for reaching consequences on the socio-economic and socio-political life of Kashmir.\textsuperscript{73} The introduction of the modern system of means of communication and other services “strengthened the bonds between the Kashmir’s and people in the rest of India ..... This had for reaching effect on the shaping of the political and economic thought of the people in the valley.”\textsuperscript{74} The improvement in the communications with British India, evident from the opening of the Jhelum Valley Cart Road to wheeled traffic in 1890, which connected the Valley to the Punjab, led to an unprecedented increase in trade with Punjab. For instance, in 1891-92, the value of imports form the Punjab into Kashmir amounted to Rs.6,616,145 and exports to Punjab to Rs.6,405,088, the total value of the trade being greater then all preceding years and exceeding that of 1889-90, the next best year, by Rs.40,734.\textsuperscript{75}

Artisans were affected detrimentally by competition from machine-made goods increasingly available in the valley after the construction of the Jhelum Valley road in 1890 and the Banihal Cart Road (Connecting Srinagar with Jammu more directly) in 1922. Agriculture began to provide the only escape to the artisonal classes.\textsuperscript{76}

The education system of the state of Jammu and Kashmir underwent to dramatic shift with the deposition of Maharaja Pratap Singh from the

\textsuperscript{72} Letter from Chief Justice to Prime Minister, dated 26 November 1932, General Department, 1929, File No. 1248-5, Jammu and Kashmir Archives.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid; p. 368.
\textsuperscript{75} Walter Lawrence, \textit{The Valley of Kashmir}, p. 386.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Census of India}, 1931 (Jammu and Kashmir), p. 222.
thron in 1889 and the establishment of the British Residency and State Council to direct the affairs of the state. Education became a central component of the state's drive toward centralization and bureaucratization along with lines of British India. The first initiative to introduce modern education was made by Christian missionaries when in 1888; the Church of Scotland established its branch in Jammu where it opened two schools. It also opened one high school and few primary schools in Srinagar and two schools in Anantnag; and a high school was opened in Baramulla by another missionary society called Roman Catholic Mission. The missionary initiative was promptly responded by Kashmiri Pundits, but Muslims, due to multiplicity of factors had shown a cold shoulder in receiving the modern education. Thus, until the beginning of the twentieth century one does not find even a single Muslim boy in the Christian missionary schools. Among the many factors which were responsible for the Muslim apathy to respond modern education most prominent were their own ignorance, the conservative outlook of their religious leaders, the unsympathetic attitude of non-Muslims towards the Muslim students and the discriminatory policies of the Dogra administration.

Although the need for modern education was created by the bureaucratization of administration, the state did not however, felt any urgency to promote education among its inhabitants, since it relied on importing bureaucrats from Punjab to run its administration.
By the early twentieth century, however, the state began to present itself as the promoter of education among its subjects. School curricula in the state were reorganized along the lines of the Punjab University syllabus and affiliated to the University. The '1910-11 Note on Education' proudly proclaimed the existence of 2 colleges, 5 high schools, 172 primary schools, 8 girl's schools and one teacher's training schools in the state. At this stage state was neither willing to pursued its masses about the benefits of education and nor it had made any special provision to attract the children of under privileged sections by offering them some concessions. In response to the need for compulsory and free education suggested by Maharaja Pratap Singh, the Education Minister and the Inspector of schools rejected the suggestion by saying that the scheme was not feasible because the measure would be looked up on as 'Zoolom' (tyranny) and would, therefore, be dreaded by the uneducated parents rather then welcomed as a boon. They would also suggest that "the Hindus and the high class Mussulmans will not like to see their children learn a profession while surrounded by the other Mussulaman children, at least for some time till these come up to the standard of Hindu children or the children of high class Mussalmans." The arguments put forward against the implementation of free and compulsory primary education clearly reflects the communal and feudal nature of state bureaucracy.

The deliberate discrimination against Muslim masses was reflected clearly in the statistics of census reports of 1911 and 1921. At the beginning of 1910, there were only 15 educated Muslim males as compared to 453

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83 File No.101/P-102 of 1907 (Government Records) old English Records (J&K State Archives).
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
Hindu males per thousand of population in the Jhelum Valley. 86 By the census of 1921, this number had jumped to a mere 19 for Muslims, while going up to 508 for Hindus. 87 These figures would be more disappointing if we consider the fact that among the Muslims the benefits of education had reached only to the elite leaving the poor masses completely illiterate. 88

The apathy of the Dogra administration towards the education of Muslim masses had convinced them (Muslims) that nothing could save them except their own efforts. It was fully realized that the Government shirks its responsibility simply because of political consideration, apprehending that education would make them (the Muslims) conscious against their exploiters. 89 Supported by Muslim organizations of British India, particularly the Punjab, the Kashmiri Muslim leadership began demanding that the state play a more active role in redressing the discrepancy between the educational status of the two communities of the state. They had also established, in 1905, a school of their own under the aegis of the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam which after a few years was raised to a High School. But one single school could not solve the universal problem of their education. Besides, its activities remained confined around the city only. 90 However, the pressure generated by the Muslim leadership with the help of Punjab Muslim intelligentsia compelled the authorities to institute an office known as Special Inspector for Mohammedan Education 91 and to appoint an education Commission in May 1916, under the chairmanship of Mr. Sharp, "to investigate and advise the Durbar on educational

88 Ghulam Ahmad Khan, op. cit, p. 163.
arrangements in the state. 92 In his report Mr. Sharp admitted that the Muslims of Kashmir had been suffering from educational disabilities and that the need of hour was to improve their conditions. 93 The recommendations of Mr. Sharp were "sanctioned by His Highness but were lightly treated by his Ministers and instructions issued by him were seldom followed by those in-charge of Education Department who were invariably (non Muslim) non-Kashmiri's."94 By the nineteen twenties, notwithstanding the official apathy, the number of the Muslim students in educational institutions rose to become equal to, if not greater than the non-Muslim students, 95 thanks to the efforts of some dedicated and sincere leaders who left no stone unturned to persuade Muslims about the challenges of the times and the need to gain modern education.96 "An organization had been set up in the Punjab by those wealthy and influential Kashmiri Muslims who had left their ancient land during the times of the Sikhs to reside in different parts of India. They collected funds and granted scholarships to the poor but promising young Muslim in the valley to pursue their studies." 97 Several Muslims passed the level of secondary school and went to institutions of higher learning in British India. While in British India, these men gained more than just an education. They came in the contact with movements among Indian Muslims, such as one presented by the Aligarh Muslim University, the Khilafat Movement and felt the heat of Indian National Movement led by Gandhi. The modern education acquired in Indian

92 File No. 124/F-184 of 1915, Political Department (old English Records), J&K State Archives.
94 P. N. Bazaz, History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, p. 137.
96 Mohammad Noor-ud-Din Qari through his poems in Kashmir language left a great mark on the minds of Kashmir Muslims. For more on the role of Qari in the spread of education among Muslims see, Chitralekha Zutshi, pp. 204-207.
97 P. N. Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, p. 140.
universities made the Muslim youth conscious about their rights and power they possessed to change the character of the Government with the support of the oppressed masses. Upon returning to Kashmir infused with the fervor of new ideas and armed with academic and professional degree, these men found the Dogra state unwilling and unable to accommodate their needs.98 

The state could no longer use its old strategy of pointing to the small numbers of educated Muslims to explain away their lack of representation in government service, since Kashmiri Muslims registered the highest increase in the number of literates between 1921 and 1931 of all communities in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.99 Facing the prospect of unemployment and a seemingly rapidly disintegrating community, these highly educated discriminated youth consolidated into a leadership that would led Kashmir out of the Dogra rule. Imbued by the modern ideas, trained through exposure to plains, influenced with the prevailing system, these young men started a Reading Room at Fateh Kadel100 which turned to be a harbinger of national consciousness in Kashmir and the first platform to the new leadership to express its feelings.101

Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah, one of these highly educated young men and dissatisfied by the extremely narrow space provided to him by the Dogra state to improve his socio-economic lot, made the best use of the simmering discontent created by the feudal and communal Dogra state and nurtured by the ‘defective modernization’ which was never beneficial to common masses but richly harvested by the parasitic elite. Backed by some influential Muslim religious leaders and organizations both within and outside the state the natural firebrand orator Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah challenged the legitimacy of the Dogra regime and launched a movement to

98 Ibid. p. 141.
100 Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Aatish-i-Chinar, pp. 48-69.
101 See chapter III.
bring about the political modernization in the state by demanding legitimate rights of the masses and by pressurizing the Dogra establishment to democratize its institutions by recognizing the rights of its citizens and by making the state to change its body politics according to the needs of the time. Shaikh emerged as the most popular leader, mainly by dint of his charismatic personality, organizational ability and his dedication to voice the aspirations of the common masses.
CHAPTER II
Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah:
Early Life and Ideological Background

The Sixth son of Shaikh Mohammad Ibrahim, a pashmina merchant, Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah was born in village Soura on 5 December 1905, two weeks after the death of his father on the 17th of November 1905. Village Soura (now an urban center) is at a distance of about five miles from Srinagar towards the North and is situated on the shores of famous Anchar Lake on the road to Ganderbal. His ancestors were Muslim Converts from a Brahmin family.

Shaikh Abdullah was brought up by his widowed mother (the third wife of his father) and by his elder brother Shaikh Mohammad Maqbool, who served as a Drawing master in the Amar Singh Technical Institute, Srinagar. The environment both within and outside his home was totally uncongenial and suffocative. He was born in a joint family which was all dominated by his elder brothers who would share nothing but the ill will and hatred with Abdullah and his mother. Outside home there was poverty, misery, hunger and starvation and misadministration of Dogra Raj.

From his childhood, Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah was diligent student and never wasted his time in useless pursuits.\(^1\) He received his earlier guidance from his elder brother an F. A. pass and his pious mother, Khiar-un-Nisa. They were deeply religious and offered five time prayer and recited Quran. Abdullah’s mother had great organizational ability and was a strict disciplinarian and survived her husband by thirty years. At the age of five he was put in a local Maktab, where he received education in Arabic and

\(^1\) Mir Mohammad Niaz, Swanneh-amri-Shari-i-Kashmir, pp.20-21.
Persian under the affectionate guidance of a Sufi minded Aakhoon (teacher) Mubarak Shah. It was during this time that he learnt to recite Quran in a manner which would entrance the people (and irritate the mullahs who discovered that he was beating them at their own game). When a little older, he was sent to the Islamia Primary School run by Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam. After doing his fifth class he joined the State High School, Fateh Kadel from where he passed his Matriculation Examination in 1922.

Abdullah was a sensitive child and what he saw around him was poverty and injustice being perpetrated on the Muslim masses. When he was about twelve years old, there occurred some incidents which brought him face to face with the prevailing conditions of exploitation of the poor. "One fine morning' recalls Shaikh Abdullah, "I went to the market in my locality. I saw a person employed at the custom duty picket beating a villager mercilessly. It was winter and the poor villager had brought some ponies loaded with fire wood for sale in the city. After the payment of custom duty the villager begin to move, but the official on duty further demands the thickest pieces of the wood. He, therefore, hesitated and the man on duty began to beat him and the poor villager helplessly started crying. I went there to confirm the cause of the episode. The helpless woodcutter burst into tears and told me that after the payment of custom duty he had already given some pieces of wood free of cost to the man on duty but that did not satisfy him and he began to snatch away, the thickest pieces of his wood." The young Abdullah fired with the natural sense of justice, intervened and gave a bit of mind to the Octroi-Post official.

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2 Anjuman was founded by Molvi Gulam Rasool (Sir Syed-i-Kashmir) and it played a crucial role in the socio-religious welfare of the Kashmiri Muslims.
3 P. N. Bazaz, Kashmir Ka Gandhi, (Urdu), Srinagar. 1935, p. 4.
5 Ibid
Soon another incident followed when an official of the Food Control Department called for most respected man in the locality for giving ration tickets, it happened to be none other than Abdullah’s elder brother-Shaikh Mohammad Khalil. But no sooner did he come forward, the official slapped him. Abdullah saw his brother being humiliated and, though the official apologized, the incident left deep and indelible impression on his mind. This incident proved beyond doubt, a commonplace practice among officials to insult their subjects, even the most respectable among them. It is thus, that the Muslims of Kashmir demanded that “in case the Muslims of Kashmir are not considered fit for such appointments like Governors and Superintendents of Police and customs, an Englishman or no-local Muslim should be assigned these responsibilities.”

Shaikh Mohammad Maqabool had an ambition to make his younger brother a Doctor. As such he used the influence of his boss to obtain admission for him in a science class. It was with great difficulty and after several meetings with the Education Minister that he secured admission in the Sri Pratab College, Srinagar, the only College then in whole Kashmir province. After having passed his F. Sc. in 1924, he applied to the state government for deputation to some Medical college, outside the state as a state nominee. But his application was rejected and the seat was given to a Pundit student. Abdullah felt sad and approached various officers but all in vain. After it, he applied for admission in to B. Sc. in the Prince of Vales College, Jammu, because science had not been introduced at degree level in Srinagar, but it was refused on the ground that the seats had been already allocated. Actually one seat was vacant which was later given to the son of

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6 Ibid, p.27.
7 Memorandum submitted by the Prominent Muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading the Governor General of India, in 1924.
8 Aatish-i-Chinar, op.cit. pp. 16-17.
Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah

an officer who was not a state subject. He protested but no one came to his rescue. He was completely disgusted and had lost all the faith in the Dogra State. He was now convinced that there was no place for a Muslim in the state to improve his socio-economic lot and to go for higher education. As such he joined the B. Sc. Class in the Islamia College Lahore in 1924, with the support of some Muslim philanthropists.

His stay at the Islamia College did help in molding his political future. In the words of Shaikh Abdullah, “when I got a chance to breath in the free air of Lahore, I began to compare the life of the Punjab’s with the life of the Kashmir’s. I felt ashamed at the pitiable conditions under which the Kashmiris lived. Grief stricken, I asked myself: ‘Have we Kashmir’s any, right to live as human beings? Is there any race more captive than us?’”

The Kashmiri Muslim students studying in different Universities of India were deeply moved by the pathetic conditions of the migratory Kashmiri Muslim peasantry. Shaikh Abdullah, who was one among these sensitive students, recollects his heartrending experience:

“My stay at Lahore, for other reasons, awakened me from the slumber and made me familiar with new sprites. I saw Kashmiri Muslims in big bands leaving their beautiful land for the hard plains of Punjab in search of livelihood. These laborers had to cross on foot the snowy mountains of Mari and Banihal and had to face thousands of odds in their way .... Sometimes, while crossing the mountains, these people were perishing as a result of snow storms. These unfortunate people were dying unwept, unsung and there bodies were eaten by the vultures and other carnivorous birds and animals. Some people possessing strong

physique luckily succeeded in reaching the plains, but there they had to face numerous odds and worries. During the day they wandered through the streets in search of work some, worked as wood cutters, some as helpers to the shopkeepers, some carrying heavy loads on their backs while some of them did grinding. After doing hard work during the day, they earned very little money of which maximum was spent on their meals. They passed their nights either in any inn or mosque, where they were harassed like dumb driver cattle. Many a time I found some Kashmiris begging for meals. I felt ashamed and asked one of them, “Why are you begging? Don’t you get any work? The laborers replied “yes Sir! We definitely get it. We earn about 12 to 16 annas a day but we have to collect and save this amount because on our return we have to pay land revenue to the state, buy clothes for our children and carry some food items for our families. If we spent this money on our meals, we can not make both ends meet.”

This might had left a marked impression on the sensitive mind of Abdullah and he felt extremely humiliated. He wrote, “I was a Kashmiri and my countrymen were working as asses in the Punjab. My class fellows would occasionally leash insults and taunts on me calling me Hatoo.

During his stay at Lahore he came into contact with many Kashmiris who had migrated to Lahore either during the Sikh rule or were exiled by the Dogra regime for their reactionary behavior. For example Said-ud-Din Shawl a prominent Kashmiri was exiled for his alleged involvement in submitting a memorandum to Lord Readings in 1924 highlighting the maladministration of Dogra’s and problems faced by Kashmiri Muslims.

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13 Hatoo is a derogatory word used for the Kashmiris by the Punjabis
These Kashmiris frequently discussed the fate of their mother land and shared the miseries which they had to face in an alien land. This broadened the vision of Shaikh Abdullah regarding the Kashmir and its poor masses.

Sheikh Abdullah reached Lahore in the aftermath of the Khilafat and the Non-cooperation Movements where in lakhs of Muslims had suffered imprisonments, privations, confiscation of property, migration to Afghanistan and even death. 14 This was besides the provocative pronouncements of some Hindu nationalities like Tilak and Madan Mohan Malvia that Muslims were into a political stream of their own. 15 It was in this background and in this atmosphere that Shaikh Abdullah studied at Lahore and had his political schooling.

Abdullah’s early mentor was Iqbal, whom he had met in 1924 in Lahore, when Iqbal was at the height of his fame. 16 Iqbal had first visited Kashmir, the land of his ancestors, three years before, and had come away distressed by the miserable condition of the Muslims: “In the bitter chill of winter shivers his naked body,” he wrote, “Whose skill wraps the rich in royal shawls.” 17 Iqbal was sympathetic to Abdullah, who, like himself, came from a family of poor shawl sellers, and was one of the few Kashmiri Muslims who had managed to educate themselves up to the point where they found their way blocked by discrimination on grounds of religion, under the Maharaja. 18

The poet Iqbal who is considered to be the spiritual founder of Pakistan, and who was vocal spokesperson for the political rights of Muslims, was determinedly secular in orientation. He was among the few

15 Ibid
17 Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, Flames of Chinar, Khushwant Sing P. 3:
Muslim intellectuals who rejoiced in 1922 when Turkey abolished the Khilafat, in effect severing any relation between the state and the religion. He later declared that among the Muslim countries of the world “Turkey alone had shaken off its dogmatic slumber, and attained ……self consciousness’ through the exercise of her right to intellectual freedom”.19

Abdullah became a frequent visitor to Iqbal and it was quite natural that his political philosophy should have made such a deep impact on his mind that even in later years; he would begin his public speeches with a recitation of some of his verses.20

However, it is totally wrong to believe that his contacts with Iqbal and other prominent Muslim leaders at Lahore infected him with communal virus.21 He himself admitted that he was equally influenced by Congress leaders like Sarojni Naido also.22 Besides, Shaikh admitted later on in his Autobiography, Aatish-i-Chinar, that he was advised by Iqbal to include non-Muslims in his struggle against Dogra state.

The aftermath of Non-Cooperation and khelafat Movements saw an unprecedented political tempo in Punjab, and consequently the development of press also, which highly influenced Shaikh who belonged to a land where press culture was almost non-existing.23 He got acquainted with Indian National Movement and also different shades of opinion over it. Some of the Kashmiri migrants like Mohammad-Din-Fouq and others were expressing, though in a moderate tune, their patriotic feelings through the Punjab press which developed a patriotic feeling in Shaikh Abdullah.24

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21 B. L. Sharma, Kashmir Awakes, P. 68
22 Aatish-i-Chinar, p.41
23 Ibid
24 Ibid
He began to take interest in politics with the result that he could not attend whole heartedly to his studies. As such he failed to pass his B. Sc.\textsuperscript{25} This was the first occasion, when he had failed and as such he felt very much grief stricken. He, however, managed to complete his B. Sc. in 1927 and returned back to home.\textsuperscript{26}

He tried hard to go abroad for higher studies, but the state government never encouraged him.\textsuperscript{27} He therefore, joined the Aligarh Muslim University hoping to study science and law simultaneously, however, this combination was not allowed and he took Chemistry instead.\textsuperscript{28} He applied for a scholarship but again meted with the same fate. "Although, scholarships were available for the subjects I choose", recalls Shaikh Abdullah, "they were given only to non-Muslims. Nevertheless, I applied for the one. The Education Minister, Agha Hussein Rizvi, called me and pleaded his helplessness. When I reminded him about his duty to protect Muslims, he said, ‘I am a mouthpiece, a phonograph. My role is only to amplify the sounds. I have no voice of my own’. I looked with scorn at the man. What are you doing here then? What right do you have to hold this position? Had a Hindu discriminated against a Muslim, I may have forgiven him. But a Muslim discriminates against another Muslim! Agha Sahib looked at me dazedly but did not offer to vacate his seat, or to help me." \textsuperscript{29}

During his stay at Aligarh, Shaikh Abdullah had an opportunity to see Mahatma Gandhi, and was highly impressed by his "magnetic personality".\textsuperscript{30} He was particularly influenced by M. M. Ashraf, an eminent

\textsuperscript{25} Bazaz, Kashmir ka Gandhi, op. cit., p-8.
\textsuperscript{26} Fida Mohammad Hassanain, Freedom Struggle in Kashmir, pp.34-35
\textsuperscript{27} R. N. Kaul, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah: A Political phoenix, p.10.
\textsuperscript{28} Artish-i-Chinar, op. cit., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{29} Khuswant Singh, Flames of the Chinar, p.9.
\textsuperscript{30} Aatish-i-Chinar, P. 42.
philosopher, and other teachers who infused in him a spirit of resistance against oppression.  

In the year 1929, when Shaikh Abdullah was at Aligarh, Sir Albion Benerji stormed on the scene by exposing the 'unimaginative mind' of Dogra state. His (Basenji's) intelligent observations which he made on the 15th March, 1929, before the representatives of the Associated Press, produced a deep effect on the minds of the people of Kashmir including Shaikh Abdullah. Enthusiastically, he wrote a letter to the *Muslim Outlook* published from Lahore, in which he strongly substantiated and supported the views of Benerji and vehemently condemned those who had tried to refute the observation. Incidentally, this was the first open entry of Shaikh Abdullah in politics.

At the time of Shaikh Abdullah's stay at Aligarh political gatherings of far reaching importance were held in British India. At Lahore, for instance, Indian National Congress adopted the resolution of complete Independence (*Porna Sawraj*) under the presidency of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. This was followed by the call for Civil Disobedience. No less significant was the re-surfacing of Muslim separatism in India because of Jinnah's disapproval of 'Nehru Report' and a strong propagation of Muslim leaders including Iqbal for pan-Islamism. Shaikh Abdullah along with other Muslim students studying in different educational institutions in British India could not have remained unaffected.

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31 Ibid
32 ibid, p.44. see also P. N. Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir* p.88.
33 *Aatish-i-Chinar*, op.cit. p. 46.
34 Ibid
36 Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, PP.103-104
Thus, in the early 1930's Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah along with other friends returned back to the Valley not only with high qualifications but also fired with a revolutionary spirit for liberating their lands which was under the subjugation of more tyrannous rule than that of the British India.37

Prem Nath Bazaz while emphasizing the impact of Indian National Movement on the Kashmiri Muslim Youth remarks, "this glorious chapter in the history of the national movement in India could not have, but, produced profound effect on the minds of Kashmiri Muslim young men who where studying in the different Universities and had therefore the opportunity to witness the various phases of the movement with their own eyes".38 Fired with the spark of freedom and enthused with the emotion of nationalism a batch of young men returned to their home early in 1931. The stage was set (in Kashmir) with all paraphernalia; only the actors were needed to play their parts. Who but these educated and enthusiastic young men were best suited for the task? Of course Shaikh Abdullah proved the best.

37 M. Y. Ganai, Kashmiris Struggle for Independence, p. 73
38 Bazaz, History of Struggle for Freedom, P.141.
CHAPTER III

HARBINGAR OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS:
FROM READING ROOM PARTY TO MUSLIM CONFERENCE

By the beginning of the 1930's, as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the first batch of Kashmiri graduates from Aligarh and other centers of learning had returned to their native state, and to Srinagar in particular, where they rapidly assumed a dominant place in local political activity in collaboration, and also in competition, with the old Muslim Leadership which was headed by the two Mirwaizs. Among the young graduates who came back to the vale about this time, with high expectations, were Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah, Mirza Afzal Beg, and G M Sadiq, to mention a few men who in their various ways would dominate the internal politics of the state for many decades. These young men most of whom belonged to the middle class, desired to enter government service. But very soon they were disappointed by the shortsighted and 'communal' Dogra state. "Had those at the helm of affairs been capable of a little foresight and imagination," exclaimed Bazaz, a contemporary writer, "they would have gladly and readily provided good jobs for those young men who were the first among the Kashmir Muslims to receive higher education." Unfortunate for the Dogra State this was not done. It was after a very tough struggle that a few of the young men succeed in securing some humble positions. Among the "fortunate" few was one Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah, who though an M. Sc. became a junior teacher in a Srinagar high school on Rs.60/- P. M. It is

3 Ibid
4 Ibid., p.142.
very interesting to mention here that only a decade earlier, (1920) the Deputy Commissioner of Mirpur namely Makhan Singh was totally illiterate.  

Dissatisfied with government and disappointment caused by unemployment, these educated young men, who now formed a "middle class intelligentsia with a middle class political outlook", began to organize themselves. Since the formation of political associations were banned, they started a Reading Room in the garb of which they wanted a platform to bring all the educated youth together for devising ways and means to fight out injustice done to the Muslim community in general, and the educated Muslim youth in particular. To quote S. M. Abdullah, "The establishment of Reading Room was an excuse. The basic purpose was that under its garb we could get together an opportunity of discussing different matters that would emerge. This did happen and we had discussions on the problems of government services and the conditions, prevailing in the country. We would burst into tears while thinking over the conditions prevailing in Kashmir"  

Encouraged by the response of educated Muslims and the interest shown by the uneducated; the Reading Room was given a regular organizational shape. An election was held in which Mohammed Rajab and Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah was elected President and Secretary respectively. Mufti Jala-ud-Din, Hakim Ali, Peerzada Ahmad Shah Fazili and Hakim Ghulam Murtaza were elected to the Managing Committee.  

The Reading Room Party, as it was called enjoyed the moral and financial backing of the Kashmiri Muslim elite and its supporters include Khwaja Said-ud-Din Shawl, Molvi Abdullah Vakil, Aga Sayyid Hussain

Bazaz, op. cit., p.142. 
S. M. Abdullah, Aatish-i-Chinar, p.48. 
Ibid. see also M. Y. Saraf, Kashmir's Fight For Freedom, pp. 354-355.
Jalali, Hafiz Mohammed Ismail, Molvi Zia-ud-Din, Khwaja Assadullah Vakil to mention only a few.  

After its successful establishment and receiving an enthusiastic response form the Kashmiri Muslim youth, the members of the Reading Room began establishing contact with the Muslim news papers at Lahore. They also established contact with Sir R. P. Dutt who was editing a monthly magazine in London named “Indian State” which was exclusively devoted to the betterment of the inhabitants of the princely state. As a result of this contact, articles based on the data furnished by them began to appear in the magazine bringing home to British public opinion the pathetic condition of the state people. Fortunately, some of the stalwarts of the socio-political milieu of Indian Muslim culture became sympathizers of the organization, which strengthened its ideological and organizational basis. The first major concern of the members of the Reading Room Party was the unemployment and under-representation of Muslim community in administration. It is needless to mention here that the number of Muslim educated youngsters was increasing with every passing day, thanks to the efforts of different social reformation organizations prominent amongst whom was Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam and some Muslim individuals to persuade their fellow community to acquire modern education. (See my 1st Chapter). The young men were convinced that the government was not willing to trust the Muslims by throwing open to them the doors of administration. In the meanwhile the state announced the formation of the civil service

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11 *Aatish-i-Chinar* op. cit. p.49, see also in Saraf, op. cit. pp.354-355
12 These include, Moulan Azad, Moulan Azad Sahu, Khatib Jamia Masjid Calcutta who was considered a leading exponent of Jamal-ud-Din Afghani’s Pan-Islamic Movement etc. M. Y. Saraf, op. cit., pp. 354-355.
13 Founded by Molvi Rasool Shah, Anjuman Played an extraordinary role in socio-religious and educational welfare of the Kashmiri Muslims.
Recruitment Board in August 1930. By that time not only had the new Kashmiri Muslim educated leadership taken over, but more importantly, their demands had gone beyond education into the realm of service recruitment. According to the rules made under Recruitment Board, a candidate was entitled to apply for a higher post only if he fulfilled certain tough provisions like, a) good health certificate b) Deposit fifty rupees, c) no body above twenty years could apply d) must have a healthy family background and e) had to qualify a tough competitive examination. Clearly these rules and regulations were formulated to prevent the newly educated Muslim youth from occupying the higher authority in administration.

The Reading Room party submitted memorandums to the Regency Council headed by Mr. Wakefield and to the utter surprise of the members the government invited the members of the party for a discussion. After a good deal of deliberation a deputation of two members was selected to meet the ministers who consented to grant an interview. Accordingly, two selected members, Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah ad Mr. Abdul Aziz Fazili went to attend Cabinet invitation, on October 16, 1930. This was followed by a heated discussion between the deputationists headed by Shaikh Abdullah and a group of cabinet Ministers headed by Wakefield in which both the sides tried to prove and disprove each others point of view. Shaikh Abdullah exposed the irrationality of the rules and regulations made under

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15 Ibid
18 It is pertinent to mention that Muslims students due to poverty and lack of exposure were admitted very late in the schools as compared to non-Muslims; G.H. Khan op.cit., p.123, see also *Aatish-I-Chinar* pp. 47-48. For more about educational backwardness of Muslims, see Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar*, 1978, Srinagar, pp. 170-174.
20 *Aatish-i-Chinar*, p. 51.
22 *Aatish-i-Chinar*, p. 52.
the civil services Recruitment Board. 23 And according to a modern researcher on the subject, "the state could no longer use its old strategy of pointing to the small numbers of educated Muslims to explain away their lack of representation in government services, since; the Muslims petitioning them were products of the state educational system." 24 Shaikh Abdullah claimed that the government had instituted the board at this particular juncture to create hurdles for Kashmiri Muslim young men who were qualified and willing to join the services.25 The representatives strongly denied the argument forwarded by Mr. Wattal, a member of the cabinet that the government "have done more than enough for the Muslims. [That] previously there was no Muslim in the office of the Accountant General".26 In reply Shaikh reminded the minister that the candidate appointed in the office was not a Kashmiri but a non-state subject and "the appointment was made under some influence". 27 The meeting ended with a failure and hence, failed the government to understand the pulse of the time in order to make necessary overhauling of its administrative machinery.28 Despite the government's refusal to change the recruitment rules, the belligerence of the new leadership was evident from this representation.29 The disappointment with the Cabinet government did not, however, break the resolve of the Shaikh Abdullah and his colleges. Instead it increased their mass familiarity. In the words of P. N. Bazaz "This discouragement could have been sufficient to break bone of Muslim young men and nip the movement in the bud as it had done on many previous occasions in case of Pundit young men but the times had changed. The Muslim Young men might lack the courage to take

23 Ibid, also see G. H. Khan, op. cit. pp.123-124.
24 Zutish, op.cit. p. 208.
26 Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, Personal Diary, Oct. 6, 1930 item 5 vide G. H. Khan, op. cit. p. 124.
27 Ibid.
28 For more details see P. N. Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom; pp. 142-143.
29 Zutshi, op. cit. p. 212.
up the struggle but forces working in the country would not lead them sleep.” 30 As the subsequent events proved, Shaikh Abdullah made a good use of the socio-political forces of the time.

Now the Reading Room Party under the leadership of Shaikh Abdullah and with the help of Punjab Muslim intelligentsia and Press started a campaign against the polices of the Maharaja and for the furtherance of the national consciousness among Kashmiris in general and Kashmiri Muslims in particular. 31 It highlighted the discriminatory attitude of the state towards the Muslim Community particularly in its recruitment policy. This press campaign through Lahore Muslims Press not only enhanced the prestige of its leaders it also accelerated the pace of consciousness among the, Kashmiri Muslims.32 However, “the surcharged atmospheres prevailing in the valley,” to quote Bazaz “unbalanced the Pundit Community. They became suspicious, terror stricken and demoralized....... They now began to look up on the Maharaja as their protector and refuge; they became the defenders of the power and thus came into clash with the dynamic times."33 A stand which they (Pundits) would continue in the future politics of Kashmir also.34

The leaders of the Reading Room Party organized secret meetings in different corners of the city to shape the public opinion against Dogra Raj and to cultivate a spirit of sacrifice without which freedom would be a distant dream. 35 Shaikh Abdullah, with his oratory played a leading role in these meetings. In one of his speeches Abdullah, in an attempt to appeal to the emotions of his audience said, “I say that the only alternative to get rid of

30 P. N. Bazaz, op. cit. p. 143.
32 Ibid
33 Bazaz, op. cit. p. 144.
34 Ibid
this deplorable situation is that Muslims shall have to remain ready for any kind of sacrifice. As long as the fear of jail, torture and persecution will cultivate cowardliness among the people, there is no hope for the redressal of the problems of Kashmiri Muslims. I also say that for a test I will offer myself in the first instance and God willing, I shall be ready to face any kind of sacrifice."  

At this stage Shaikh Abdullah and his organization was backed by different Punjabi Muslim organizations, which were making enormous propaganda against the feudal State and the miserable conditions of Kashmir Muslims. Significant among these organizations were All India Kashmir Committee, which had been vocal in Kashmir Muslim affairs since the beginning of the century. Other organizations supporting the Kashmiri cause were the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam Lahore, and the Anjuman-i-Kashmiri Musalman, both of which were patronized by the Mohammad Iqbal who was by now firm believer in Pan-Islamism.

To the good fortune of Reading Room Party and the National movement in Kashmir some sensational developments took place one after another helping its leaders to mobilize masses openly which had been waiting since its inception. It was reported among other happenings, that Hindus had demolished a Mosque in Riasi in Jammu Province with the approval of the Maharaja’s government.\(^{37}\) that at another place in Jammu Muslims had been prevented from saying their prayers,\(^{38}\) that the Imam of a masque in Jammu had been stopped by the authorities from giving his sermon (khutba) before Friday Prayers.\(^{39}\) Whatever may be the interpretation of all these incidents the essential point common to all these stories is that the Muslim worship has been disrupted and the Holy Quran insulted. These

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36 *Aatish-i- Chinar*, op. cit. p. 62.
38 Ibid
39 Ibid
incidents provoked a strong resentment of Muslim community in Jammu. Protest rallies were organized under the guidance of Young Men's Muslim Association, Jammu. In Srinagar immediate reaction was sparked off after a bunch of the posters, send by Young Men's Muslim Association, which the Reading Room party got pasted through their workers, in different corners of the city. There were fiery denunciations from mosque pulpits, processions and public meetings. These incidents provided enough opportunity to the Muslim leaders to mobilize the oppressed masses. On June 8, 1931 a protest demonstration was organized at Jamia Masjid. It was at this time that Shaikh Abdullah, who was afterwards to become an undisputed leader of the people, was introduced to the audience by Molvi Mohammad Yusuf Shah, recently succeeded to the position after his uncle's death in early 1931. Abdullah appeared at this time to have been an extremely devout, and highly orthodox (Hanifite) Muslim and, as such to have won the affection and approbation of Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf Shah. Both, Mirwaiz, with his religious prestige and Abdullah with his charismatic personality and organizing ability, made a formidable team. Shaikh Abdullah made his maiden speech to a gathering of seven thousand people, after he was introduced by Mirwaiz as "My leader." He explained to them the greatness, eminence and superiority of the Holy Quran. He most effectively wove the Islamic concepts of a just society and individual rights into his organizations agenda, which appealed to Kashmiri Muslims.

40 The Kashmiri Musalman, Lahore, (Weekly), May 10, 1931. See also Abbas, Kashmirkash, op. cit.
42 Alistair Lamb, Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, op. cit. p. 89.
43 Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit., p. 68.
44 G. H. Khan, op. cit. p. 127.
45 Ibid see also Aatish-i-Chinar op. cit.
46 Lamb, op. cit., p. 91
48 Hafiz Mohammed Ismail, op. cit, June 9, 1931 item 1.
49 Aatish-i-Chinar, p. 71.
50 Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, op. cit.
precisely because social and political rights had been denied them based on their religion, a religion that emphasized justice and social equality. After the meeting, a procession led by Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah and Molvi Abdul Rahim was taken out which passed through the streets of the city. Now with every passing day Abdullah’s fame was touching the skies.

The growing popularity of Abdullah and the simmering discontent of the Muslim masses on the one hand and the anguish of non-Muslim officialdom on the other forced the government to issue a notice prohibiting the holding of public meetings within the premises of the Jamia Masjid without the prior permission of authorities. Emboldened by the mass support the leaders continued to hold public meetings in which they advised people to prepare themselves for sacrifices for the redressal of their grievances when the government failed to persuade their leaders, it let loose its reign of persecution. One of its victims was Shaikh Abdullah who was dismissed from government services. The dismissal further increased the popularity of the Abdullah as it was projected as a sought of sacrifice for the honor and dignity of Kashmiri Muslims. Now encouraged by the enormous mass support and fully backed by the Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf, who extended the Jamia Masjid as the organizational centre for his political activities, Shaikh Abdullah organized public meetings in different parts of Srinagar city which used to be attended by thousands of people. These meetings were surely spreading political consciousness among the masses.

51 Zutshi, op. cit. p. 228.
52 Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit.
53 Non-Muslim Kashmir’s who had so far dominated the government services were feeling threatened by the Muslim demands for rationalization of these services.
54 Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, op. cit., And Aatish-i-Chinar, p.71.
55 Inqilab, Lahore, July 4, 1931 and Aatish-i-Chinar, pp. 75-78.
56 Saraf, op. cit vol. 1, pp. 367-368.
57 It is evident fro the large scale participation of the masses in the Public meetings.
58 Sadat, Rozana Diary, p. 694-5.
59 Aatish-i-Chinar, p.79.
One such public meeting was called in the khanqah-i-Mohalla on 21 June 1931 to ratify the selection of Kashmir Muslim representatives who were expected to submit the grievances and demands of the community to the Maharaja at the suggestion of G. E. C. Wakefield, Political Minister "This gathering", in the words of the Shaikh, "should be considered the formal inauguration of the freedom movement of Kashmir." It was at this historical gathering that a body of the Muslim representatives was ratified.

The meeting was significant for so many things. First, the collective leadership was born with two main figures, that is Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah and Molvi Yusuf Shah, a combination of divergently outlooks, old and new; of religious conservatism and of religious liberalism, medieval obscurantism and of growing modernism. Secondly, the representative body was a reflection of unity of different sects of Muslim Community all laying stress on unity and solidarity among the Muslims. It was for the first time that people were enjoying the taste of electing their representatives to voice their legitimate grievances. And lastly, it was at this meeting that Kashmir history had to take a new turn.

In his speech, Shaikh Abdullah, asked all Muslims to join together and demand their rights. He also appealed to the Pundits to join hands with Muslims for redress of grievances as well as for independence. At the

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60 Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom, P. 145
61 As the list of representation was already formulated on June 20, 1931 at the office of Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, Hafiz Mohammad Ismail June, 20, item 1
62 The draft of demands was prepared by Reading Room Party with the help of Punjabi Ahmadiyas which shows the influence of the later on the Kashmir movement at the initial stage. Aatish-i-Chinar, p. 142.
63 Ibid. p.82.
64 The members include Khwaja Said-ud-Din Shawl, Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf Shah, Mirwaiz Atiqullah Hamadani, Aga Sayyed Hussain Jalali, Khawaja Ghulam Ahmed Ashaie, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah and Shahab-ud-Din, clearly indicating that the new leadership was born from the cross sections of the Muslim Community, (M. Y. Saraf, Vol. I p.373).
65 G. H. Khan, op. cit., p. 130.
66 Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit. p. 83.
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At the conclusion of the meeting, a well-built Pathan, about 36-40 years old, Abdul Qadeer, a butler of a European official, rose up and delivered an emotional and inspiring speech against the government. At the end of speech the fiery speaker pointed towards the Sherghri Palace of the Maharaja and shouted: "demolish this edifice of injustice, cruelty and subjugation". He was promptly arrested. This provided a fresh focus for public demonstration and protest. Huge crowds massed at his trial, till it had to be shifted to the Srinagar central Jail. On 13 July, 1931, a large crowd gathered at the gates of Jail on the day of the hearing when the sessions judge and other officials arrived, the mob became uncontrollable and some of the Muslims forced their way into the outer compound of the jail. The police stepped them, the crowd replied with stones, and authorities reciprocated with bullets. The Magistrate on duty ordered to open fire, which resulted into the cold-blooded massacre of twenty-one Muslims, and scores of demonstrators received bullet injuries.

The incidents of 13 July caused a great uproar in the whole valley including Jammu. It shocked the very foundations of the Dogra Raj. One of the unfortunate fall-outs of the incident was the occurrence of minor communal riots, which created the temporary gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims.

Chitrilehha Zutshi, one of the modern researchers on the subject, while emphasizing the multicausality of the incident had advised for not

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67 According to Fida Mohammed Hussnain, Abdul Qadeer was a disciple of Jammaludin Afgani, a foremost Muslim philosopher of the twentieth century, who had also visited Kashmir before his departure to Russia. See Fida Hussnain, "Abdul Qadeer Khan Ghazi, hero of 1931 uprising", in Greater Kashmir, July 13, 2007.

68 Ibid. pp.84-87 and Bazaz, op. cit. p.145-146.

69 Fida Hassnain, op. cit.

70 Lamb, Kashmir, op. cit., p. 89.


72 Ibid
looking the occurrence in vacuum. To her the incident was an outcome of the socio-economic and socio-political crisis in Kashmir.\(^{73}\)

Another eminent writer M. J. Akbar while highlighting the importance of the 13 July incident in Kashmir History wrote “It was a day of many firsts: the first popular street challenge to the Maharaja’s despotism; the first mass communal violence; the first instance of police firing on an unarmed crowd.” \(^{74}\)

P. N. K. Bamzai puts it, “It is from that date that the people took upon themselves the task of securing for themselves the right of democratic self rule” \(^{75}\) P. N. Bazaz, a contemporary freedom fighter and an eminent historian writes, “Historically and politically 13\(^{th}\) July 1931 was the most important day in the annals of contemporary Kashmir. From this day the struggle for independence and freedom in the most modern sense started openly” \(^{76}\) Shaikh Abdullah equaled the day with the ‘Jalwanwala Bagh Massacre’ and its importance in Indian National Movement. \(^{77}\) There maybe divergence of opinion regarding the interpretation of events and causation of the revolt of 1931, what can not be doubted, of course, is that 1931 explicitly changed the course of Kashmiri politics.

Abdullah was able to assume the mantle of sole representative of the Kashmiri Muslims soon after the events of 1931 precisely because he had the moral support of the Mirwaiz Kashmir and the structural support of the All Indian Kashmir Committee.\(^{78}\) Prominent Punjabi leaders had demonstrated interest in the grievances of their co-religionists in Kashmir as early as 1892. The All Indian Kashmir Committee formed after the 13 July incident under

\(^{73}\) Zutshi, pp. 210-226.
\(^{74}\) M. J. Akbar, Kashmir; Behind The Vale, (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2002), P.70.
\(^{76}\) Bazaz, op. cit p. 147.
\(^{77}\) Aatish-i-Chinar, pp. 88-96.
\(^{78}\) Zutish, op. cit p. 228.
the president-ship of Bashir-ud-din Mohammad Ahmad, the Khalifa of the Ahmediya community and patronized by the Kashmiri born poet and philosopher, Sir Mohammad Iqbal,⁷⁹ called for an enquiry by the government of India into the incidents of 13 July, announced the observance of 14 August as 'Kashmir Day'⁸⁰ and went so far as to suggest a review by the British parliament of the 1846 Amritser Treaty.⁸¹ Under such prompting Shaikh Abdullah refused to meet with the Maharaja on 6 August 1931, until the observance of 'Kashmir Day' on 14th of August.⁸²

At the same time, Kashmir began to emerge as the centre of politics of yet another Punjab based group known as the Majles-i-Ahrar-i-Islam. Led among others by Syed Atta-ullah Shah Bukhari, the Ahrars were composed of Anti-British urban Muslims and reformist members of the Ulema with links to the Indian National Congress.⁸³ While Jammu's Muslim cultivators had welcomed the Ahrar jathas, the Ahmadiyas and Shaikh Abdullah were locked into their own mutually supportive alliance.

In response to the call given by the Kashmir Committee, Kashmir Day was celebrated both within and outside the valley on 14th August, 1931⁸⁴ public meetings, processions, and peaceful demonstrations were the main features of the celebration in main Muslim centers of British India like Punjab Ferozpor, Delhi, Surat, Gorakhpur, Bombay, Calcutta, and Shimla.⁸⁵ Resolutions were passed in these meetings in which an enquiry was demanded to look into the grievances of Muslim Community in the Jammu

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⁷⁹ Bazaz, Inside Kashmir, pp. 141-142.
⁸⁰ Ibid
⁸¹ Tribune, 29 July 1931, P. 8.
⁸² R/1/1/2064, CRR (Political Department), From the Resident in Kashmir, dated 17 August 1931, Indian Office Library.
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and Kashmir State. The one remarkable effect of the Kashmir Day celebrations was that the events in Kashmir were projected for and wide on the entire national politics in India.

Despite the ban on political movements, the Day was celebrated in the entire State much beyond expectations. On that ‘Day’ the entire Muslim world in Kashmir observed a full day hartal. A mammoth public meeting, attended by fifty thousand people, was held at the Jamia Masjid. Among others Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah delivered a fiery speech in which he highlighted the plight of Muslim Community in Kashmir. Also, the Maharaja was warned of the consequences of the repressive policy of his Government against the Muslims.

Alarmed by the growing mass popularity of Abdullah and threatened by the mass resentment, Maharaja sought the support first of Sir Taj Bahdur Sapru and Moulana Abdul Kalam Azad and then a prominent Punjabi Muslim and friend of Prime-Minister Hari Krishan Koul, Syed Sir Mehr Nawab Ali Shah. And it was with the efforts of the latter that an accord was signed between the government and the Muslim representatives. This temporary truce, incidentally the first of the many infamous accords which Shaikh Abdullah concluded at different stages of his long political career, caused great resentment in the Muslim minds against their representatives. They were perceived as traitors and the truce was considered as the worst type of middle-class bargaining at the cost of martyr’s blood and the people’s sacrifices. This popular resentment was

86 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 It was evident by the huge mass attendance to listen him.
91 Aatish-i-Chinar, pp. 104-105.
92 Ibid.
expressed at a public meeting held at the Jamia Masjid on 28 August, 1931\textsuperscript{93} as the representatives announced the terms of the truce to the audience. The masses dubbed the representatives that they were "selfish and cared more for their own prestige and power then the interests of the poor people."\textsuperscript{94} It is important to mention here that status quests and pro-establishment elements too played an important role by disinformation movement in creating a tremendous resentment among the people.\textsuperscript{95} Shaikh Abdullah and Molvi Mohammed Yusuf Shah swore on the Quran that they would never betray the nation. In order to appease the public opinion Shaikh delivered a fiery and emotional speech. He pleaded that he held the nation dearer than his won life. He said; "the Government asked for two months to consider our demands. If during this period the government practiced deception, we shall not sit quit nor shall we let the government feel comfortable. You will see it very soon that our sacrifice for the nation will puzzle the government of Kashmir, the government of India and the entire world."\textsuperscript{96}

In the meanwhile fresh trouble arose "the government was rather slack in implementing the terms of the temporary truce and undue delay in taking action in accordance with them."\textsuperscript{97} This provided an opportunity to Shaikh to log horns with the state and regain the popular trust. Thus he made bold statements, warning the Government to abide by the terms of the truce. At the same time he cautioned the Kashmiri pundits about the danger

\textsuperscript{93} According to the terms of the truce the Muslim representatives undertook to completely stop the political agitation; would remain loyal to the Maharaja; that they would not be affected by the outside influence. The representatives expressed their gratitude to the prime minister for his magnanimity which he had exhibited in arriving at the understanding. They also pledged to observe the laws in force in the state. \textit{Middleton Report on an Inquiry into Disturbances in Kashmir} (Jammu, Ranbir Government Press, 1931), p. vii.

\textsuperscript{94} Bazaz, \textit{Inside Kashmir}, op. cit., p. 144.

\textsuperscript{95} Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit., p. 108.

\textsuperscript{96} \textit{The Alifzal}, (Qadian), December 8, 1931, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{97} Bazaz, \textit{Kashmir Ka Gandhii}, p. 145.
for their unnecessary indulgence in anti-Muslim propaganda. 98 The government took a very serious note of these warnings and used them as a pretext to arrest the leaders.

On the 21 September Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah was arrested along with Mr. Jala-ud-din (lecturer of Arabic in S. P. College) while they were making collections in the city for the annual jalsa, of Islamia High School 99 " The arrest of Shaikh Abdullah, this time," recalls Bazaz, "was entirely different from his earlier arrest because while at that time he was simply Master Abdullah, he had by now became Sher-i-Kashmir with the result that as soon as the news of his arrest became known, Muslims immediately suspended their business and huge crowds from all over the city began converging towards Jamia Masjid." 100

Shaikh Abdullah's reputation, spreading steadily since the events of July 1931, registered a leap every time he was arrested by the Kashmir durbar since jail going had become badge of honor among nationalists throughout the Indian subcontinent. According to his followers, the Shaikh, who had by now been elevated to the status of Sheri Kashmir (Lion of Kashmir), had stepped forward in 1931 to receive the cauldron of oil that was prepared by the oppressors for his community, since, "he depended on God alone for support." 101 The earlier part of the same pamphlet declared that the exalted Abdullah arrived on the scene to "lift the burden of oppression off the shoulders of Muslims." 102 The poetry composed in the early 1930's presented Abdullah as their savior, a prophet sent by God to

98 Hafiz M. Islamil, op. cit, Sept. 3 1931, item 5.
100 Bazaz, Kashmir Ka Gandhi, P. 74.
102 Mousiki Kashmiri Ka Nova Hissa, P.4, Political Department 383/Pol 10/1932, Jammu State Archives.
intervene on their behalf. A Kashmiri masnavi published in 1932 entitled *Noah's Ark or True Voice*, hailed the voice of truth and justice that had descended on Kashmir through Abdullah. In a remarkable turn-about trends, by September 1931, Abdullah’s popularity had grown to such proportions that the British were worried about the effect events in Kashmir might have on the communal situation in India, especially in Punjab. Consequently, they put pressure on the durbar to form a body that would look into and remedy the more obvious Muslims grievances. Thus, it was on 20 October 1931, that Maharaja announced the appointment of a commission of enquiry headed by Bertrand J. Glancy, a senior member of the Indian political service.

Shaikh Abdullah appeared to be everywhere and speaking for every class of Kashmiri Muslims in the months when the Commission was gathering evidence. Besides many things, two important recommendations made were to allow the formation of political parties and the publication of newspapers in the state. Maharaja accepted both of these recommendations on March 12, 1932. This annulment had two fold importances in that it recognized the legitimacy of the demand for basic political and civil liberties which the people deserved, and it implied the first major victory reaped by the Muslim subjects as a result of their revolution.

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106 Ibid.

107 B. J. Glancy, *Report of the Commission appointed under the order of His Highness, the Maharaja a Bahadur dated 12th November, 1931 to Enquire into the Grievances and Complaints* (Jammu: Rambir Govt. Press, 1933)

108 G. H. Khan, op. cit, p. 167.
Carrying forward his political advantage, and capitalizing the recommendations of the Glancy Commission (freedom of association) Abdullah set about giving his following and their demands an organizational shape. Accordingly, consultations were made with Jammu leaders\textsuperscript{109} and the leaders of the Kashmir committee who assured full cooperation in this regard.\textsuperscript{110} To give a practical shape to the idea a committee was set up which drafted a constitution of the proposed organization and decided to name it as All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference.\textsuperscript{111} The Inaugural session of the Conference was held on 14, 15 and 16 October 1932 at the historic \textit{Pathar Masjid} Srinagar under the presidentship of Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah.\textsuperscript{112} And hence forth, the organization became the sole representative of the oppressed Kashmiris, under the leadership Shaikh Abdullah, until it was converted into National Conference in 1939 to broaden its mass base, but unfortunately, the event caused the ideological polarization in the freedom movement of Kashmir. The contribution of the Muslim Conference in bringing about political modernization will be discussed in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{109} Chudhry Gulam Abbas, \textit{Kashmakash}, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{110} The All India Kashmir Committee dispatched Moulana Abdullah Rahim Dard, Molvi Ismail Ghaznavi, Sayyed Habib Shah, Editor Daily \textit{Siyasat} and Mir Zahur Ahmad to Srinagar to assist Sheikh in making necessary arrangements. Financial assistance was also made available along with a car to facilitate the moment of workers. See M. Y. Saraf Kashmir’s Fight for Freedom Vol. I, P. 482.
\textsuperscript{111} Taseer, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 246.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Alfaz}, Qadian Oct. 25, 1932.
CHAPTER IV

Role as Muslim Conference President

With the establishment of Muslim Conference, it was not only Abdullah's fame which grew rapidly, but also "his thinking began to mature at an ever faster pace."¹ He started realizing that his movement had to be given a proper shape if it is to become a successful one. Accordingly, in his first presidential address to the Conference, he besides other things, emphasized upon three important issues. Firstly, he called on Kashmiri Muslims to unite, and to end all sectarian strife.² Secondly, he was aware that the movement had to represent the whole of Kashmir and not just the Muslims in order to become a freedom struggle rather just a sectarian protest. Thus, emphasizing that Kashmiri Movement was non-communal; he went on to accuse the administration of holding communal views.³ He reminded the ordinance: "Our movement is not directed against the minorities. I assure all of my countrymen, be they Hindus or Sikhs that we shall always try to redress their grievances. But they must also respect our just rights."⁴

Thirdly, Abdullah firmly believed that socio-economic and political lot of poor Kashmiri masses could not be improved unless there is a 'qualitative structural change' within the government, if not its complete end. Thus, in a moderate tune he would say: "I also want to make it clear that we have no grievances against the person of Maharaja Bahadur. Instead,

² Presidential address delivered by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to the First Annual session of Muslim Conference on October 17, 1932, in Mirza Shafiq Hussain, ed., The Political Struggle of Kashmiri Muslims, 1931-1939: selected Documents, pp.219-29.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid.
we are faithful to him in every respect. Our demands can never be called anti-Government. In every civilized country the king always provides some rights to his subjects at his sweet will and the subjects often demand for more rights. But in spite of that their subjects are treated loyal and there is no doubt about their loyalty. The real faithfulness is that the ruler of the time should be acquainted with the aspirations and wishes of his subjects." 5 Thus, Shaikh was demanding the establishment of a responsible government in the state.

To the big misfortune of the Muslim Conference, and the freedom Movement in Kashmir, Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf Shah raised the banner of revolt against Muslim Conference in general and its moving character Shaikh Abdullah in particular, and founded a new organization Azad Muslim Conference,6 which however, because of its pro-establishment stance soon lost its popularity. 7 Besides the overshadowing and threatening popularity of the Shaikh Abdullah,8 there were several other factors, which also played a role in the Mirwaiz’s decision to separate himself from the movement. For example, Abdullah’s political orientation was becoming increasingly anti-government, despite his repeated claims of loyalty to the Maharaja, and the Merwaiz Kashmir had no intention of alienating the government and jeopardizing the traditional financial patronage enjoyed by his family.9 Also His traditional family rival, the Mirwaiz Hamadani of Shah-i-Hamadan shrine, supported Abdullah which too contribute to create a wedge between the leadership. 10 The dominating role that Ahmadiyas played immediately after the events of 1931 in Kashmir politics and their

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5 Ibid.
8 G. H. Khan, Freedom Movement in Kashmir, pp. 163-165.
whole-hearted support to create the persona of Shaikh Abdullah was another factor for Mirwaiz's decision to carve out a separate political base.\textsuperscript{11}

It is pertinent to mention here that Mirwaiz was more sympathetic towards Ahrars, archrival of Ahmadiyas. Significantly, also, the trader class who financed the Mirwaiz family's philanthropy and formed its primary basis of support, was in favour of remaining aloof from Shaikh Abdullah and the Muslim Conference, a movement that was increasingly putting forth the demands of the peasantry and laboring classes.\textsuperscript{12} It goes without saying that the 'divide and rule' policy followed by government and the role-played by some Pundits equally contributed to the decision of leadership.

This factionalism turned Muslim politics into "a battle field of politicians in which muck-racking and mud slinging were the cheap weapons."\textsuperscript{13} And thus, it gave the first below to the progress of national Movement in Kashmir, and the efforts of Shaikh Abdullah to create a united Muslim Community.

The second important thing to which Shaikh Abdullah was equally concerned was his belief that in order to ensure a successful movement, non-Muslims are to be taken into confidence. From the very inception of the Muslim Conference, Abdullah left no stone unturned to win over the non-Muslims.\textsuperscript{14} But unfortunately, the politics of the non-Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir begin as a reaction to the mass movement which the Muslims launched under the Abdullah against the economic injustice and political servility of the Dogra rule. They characterized the Muslim movement as


\textsuperscript{12} Political Department 188/P57/1934, Jammu State Archives.

\textsuperscript{13} Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, \textit{Personal Diary 1950-1970}(Manuscript unpublished) September 1, 1932, item 3.

\textsuperscript{14} It is evident from the Presidential addresses delivered by Sheikh Abdullah and the speeches which he delivered in other mass gatherings.
communal and against the non-Muslim interests. Kashmiri Pundits had received a rude shock, not so much through the events of 1931, as through the durbar's previous and subsequent "pro-Muslim" actions. Since they had believed that their pro-regime stance and their fact of being Hindu would keep their position within the state administration intact.

The worst part of the reaction was the role that Maha Sabha played in provoking the Hindu mind of India against the Muslim subjects of Kashmir whom the Hindu Maha Sabha dubbed as sheer communalists bent upon destroying the Hindu state of the Maharaja of Kashmir. It was this fear which led the leaders of the Sabha to save the Hindu cause only by undoing the freedom movement in Kashmir.16

In March, 1932 the Glancy Commission's report was published. With its publication the Kashmir Pundits got perturbed over the findings of the report. They started a vigorous agitation as a mark of protest against the report and urged the Maharaja to reconsider it.17

Abdullah was accused for using religion as a mark of identity and for provoking Muslims masses. This is true, but it needs to be understood in its proper context. The fact that Kashmir masses particularly Muslims were lacking the political consciousness, and thus, could not be provoked on economic and political grounds hence, religion was an effective instrument used by leaders to politicize them. With the progress of the decade we see Abdullah avoiding the religious mobilization and using other issues of secular in nature. Secondly, and equally important thing for using religion in political discourse was particularly because the Dogra state defined itself

16 See for instance, Moonji Papers, (New Delhi, Nehru Memorial Library Teen Murti), see also Al-Jamiat, Delhi August 20, 1931
and its right to rule solely based on its religious affiliation, and much like its counterpart in British India, categorized its subjects singularly on the basis of their religious affiliations.18

Again the allegation held a little ground if we consider the fact that pundits backed Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah against Abdullah, who was more religious in orientation than the later. However, some progressive Pundits did work within the framework of the Muslim Conference for the goal of responsible government also illustrates that the movement was not exclusivist in nature.

Notwithstanding these early challenges, within and outside the Conference, Shaikh Abdullah took lead in pressurizing the Dogra Maharaja to bring about some institutional changes in his administration - an important thing to modernize state. In response to Glancy Commission recommendations, which had, besides other things proposed that a Legislative Assembly be constituted. The government had appointed a Franchise Committee under the Chairmanship of the Chief Justice of the state Sir Barjour Dalal on 31 May 1932.19

Shaikh Abdullah in the presidential address of the first session of Muslim Conference complained of the non-fulfillment of the promises by the government and demands immediate establishment of the constituent Assembly and an increase in the powers of the proposed Assembly.20

However, disgusted with the lethargic attitude of the state to implement Glancy Commission recommendations and the slow pace of Franchise Committee’s functioning led Abdullah to call for Civil

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18 For more see C. L. Zutshi, Languages of Belonging. (Chapter IV and V)
19 Rambir, Jammu, June 5, 1932.
20 Presidential address delivered by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to the First Annual session of Muslim Conference on October 17, 1932 vides Dastavezat, pp. 225-226.
Disobedience in March 1933. Unfortunately the call was overshadowed by the sectarian clashes which were followed between the supports of the Azad Muslim Conference and Muslim Conference backed by two Mirwaiz's - Molvi Mohammad Yusuf Shah and Mirwaiz Hamdani respectively. Shaikh Abdullah delivered fiery speeches in which he criticized both the state and the pro-establishment polices of Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf Shah. On May 31, Shaikh Abdullah addressed a gathering of about 14,000 people at Khanqah-i-Mualla where he called for the removal of the Revenue Minister V. N. Mehta (who was represented by Abdullah as being mainly responsible for the Durbar’s procrastination on the Glancy Report) and condemned the "peace-disturbing attitude of Yusuf Shah". Immediately after the meeting was over, he along with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and Gulam Nabi Gilkar was taken into custody and sent to Udhampur Jail.

Abdullah’s arrest sparked off a new wave of violence and in the first half of June, 192 Muslims were jailed and 59 caned under the draconian provisions of Ordinance 19-L. Therefore, the tempo of agitating began to slow down, despite the Abdullah’s early release on 7 August. Agitation was resumed by Muslim Conference in 1934, after the working Committee suspended the constitution of Conference and appointed Choudhry Ghulam Abbas as “Dictator.” The movement’s lethargy was mirrored by its leader. For much of the time Abdullah stayed at Lahore, leaving the Civil Disobedience campaign in the hands of his lieutenants. By mid-April almost all leaders including Choudhry Abbas and excluding Shaikh

23 Resdt. To Pol. Sec., 14 June, 1933.
Muslim Conference President

Abdullah who was still in Punjab all the workers of the Conference were behind the bars.26

It will be in place to mention here that Shaikh Abdullah was not in favour of resumption of the agitation in early 1934, 27 rather he suggested that "it was time to come to an agreement with the authorities in the Kashmir State". 28 His policy of "moderation" was probably influenced by three main factors. The internal dissuasion in the Conference, Abdullah's long standing relationship with the Ahmadiyas, who were at this time not in a mood to fight against Maharaja and a budding association with the Indian National Congress29 which had just ended its Civil Disobedience Movement and wanted Shaikh to follow the suit.

However, Abdullah's new policy was not entirely thrusted up on him; it also reflected his belief that the electoral reforms foreshadowed by the Franchise Commission offered a real chance for people to better themselves by constitutional means. The Franchise Report of February 1934 envisaged a 75-seat legislative Assembly (Praja Sabha) of its sixty non-official representatives only thirty-three were to be elected, twenty-one Muslims, ten Hindus, and two Sikhs. 30 The Maharaja had the majority, not the electorate. In any case, a bare three percent of the people had been given the right to vote. Women and illiterates were completely excluded. Only those with a minimum annual income of Rs.400 were eligible for the franchise. Then, just to make doubly sure, section 3 reserved all existing legislative, executive and judicial powers in the Maharaja himself. Section 30

29 For a detailed discussion see Ian Copland, op cit.
further clarified that no measure passed by the Praja Sabha could become law without the maharaja’s consent and his discretion was beyond challenge.31

Shaikh Abdullah had no illusion about the true worth of the Assembly. Thus, on 29 January 1934, he protested, "the people of this country did not spill their blood for such a mock show.... What hopes can the people of this country have in this kind of Representative Assembly where the dead weight of the official and nominated majority will always be ready to crush the popular voice?" 32

Desirous to see the state Legislature a truly responsible institution the Abdullah pleaded for introducing various reforms:

The Assembly should have the right over all the items of the budget, except foreign affairs and personal expenditure of the Maharaja such items over which opinion of expression is forbidden should always be placed on the floor of the Assembly for discussion. The Assembly should pass all laws and regulations. Ministers should be responsible to the Assembly and the elected members of the Assembly should elect at least two ministers. Such a minister against whom Assembly would pass vote of no confidence should be treated as being expelled from the cabinet. The Maharaja would be within his rights to reject any decision taken by the Assembly. But if the Assembly would pass any bill in two successive sessions the Maharaja would kindly accept it. The permanent tillers have been given rights to vote but

31 The Jammu & Kashmir Regulation No. 1 of 1991 Samvat, Section 10, 18 and 20.
it is not clear whether they have been included in the voter list.
The laborers have not been given proper representation.33

The proposed constitutional reforms were certainly less than
Abdullah had hoped for, but he was heartened by the Report's provision for
further constitutional change and consoled by the fact that the arrangements
represented an advance on the position in all but a handful princely states.
Thus, he "advised Muslims not to lose hope and to stand for the elections." 34

It appears that the Government had conveyed to Shaikh Abdullah,
 unofficially, that in case Muslim Conference decided to contest elections,
political prisoners were to be freed through a general amnesty.35 But
unfortunately only three hours before the 11th May deadline for the
nomination of candidates, the Durbar's Inspector-General of police phoned
to say that political prisoners would not be released in time to contest the
elections-as previously promised thereby forcing the Muslim Conference to
fall back on "second-rate people". 36 Briefly, the Shaikh wondered whether
he had made the right choice- to participate in elections:

[W]hat they would willingly have conceded to S. M. Abdullah the
fire eater has been niggardly denied to S. M. Abdullah the
moderate cooperator. Against the wishes of Mr. Abbas and many
other colleagues who represent the left-wing of Muslim
Conference, I suspended the civil disobedience programme at
some personal risk. I declared co-operation with the Legislature. I
obeyed .... advice to remain aloof from the recent agitation and
did not visit Kashmir until Jail going was in practice, there ...

[Even now.... I have not addressed a public meeting. What is the

33 Ibid, P. 315.
35 Saraf, op. cit pp. 503-504.
36 Sheikh Abdullah, Aatish-i-Chinar, PP. 204-205.
result? The Kashmir government wants to squeeze me (out) by pouncing upon me...37

But of course, he had to prove that he represented the popular voice,38 he decided to participate in the elections and won nineteen out of twenty one Muslim seats. The results gave a shattering blow to the prestige of Mir Waiz Yousuf Shah, who's Azad Muslim Conference lost all its contested seats. 39 It also showed unmistakably how a man (Shaikh) totally unknown four years back had, by sheer dint of sacrifice and selfless dedication to the 'cause' of his people, shattered the influence of a family which was undisputed and supreme for over a century. 40

The newly formed Assembly held its first session on 17 October 1934 at Shargarhi in Srinagar and very soon it proved beyond any doubt that it had no powers to its disposal.41 The leader of the Muslim Conference legislative body, Main Ahmad Yar expressed dissatisfaction of his party over the Franchise Committee Report as well as the limited powers of the legislature. He expressed the will that the people of the state deserved better treatment. 42 Outside the legislature, Muslim Conference continued to build its pressure on the Government for introducing more constitutional reforms so that the aspirations of the common masses could be accommodated. For example, in its Annual sessions which were to follow, the Muslim Conference leaders demanded wider franchise, larger powers for Assembly,

37 Abdullah to Glancy, 14 May 1934, IOR, R. /1/29/1157.
39 Saraf, op. cit p. 505.
40 Ibid.
41 JKA, Praja Sabha Deliberations, October – November, 1934.
42 Ibid.
immediate establishment of the district boards, reformation in the municipal Committees and a fair treatment to all communities.43

Hence, it is clear that the foundation of Praja Sabha was not the final goal for which Shaikh Abdullah and his organization was fighting for rather it was beginning to achieve the "responsible government in the state," Although the demand for the responsible government was first made by Young Men's Muslim Association - a radical youth wing of the Conference it assumed a definite shape on March 29, 1935, when twenty-nine elected members excluding the elected representatives of Kashmiri Pundit community presented a joint memorandum to the Government, requesting it to change the constitution in such a way as to make the executive responsible to the legislature. 44The joint demand made by Muslim Conference and the Liberal Group - though conditional to the minority safeguards - was ample evidence that major problems of the Kashmiris were secular in nature.

The demand for responsible government was surely influenced by the passing of the 'Government of India Act 1935, which had guaranteed internal autonomy to the states, 45 under the Congress pressure. On May 8, 1936, 'the Responsible Government Day' was observed throughout the length and breadth of the state.46The day was featured with the organization of large public meetings, processions and other forms of demonstrations. Knowing about the benefits of co-operation with non-Muslims in the fight

43 See for instance the Presidential Addressed delivered in the Annual Session of the Conference held in 1934- and 1935. See also Dastawezat, pp. 339-340 and pp. 387-388.
45 For more about Govt. of India Act 1935 see Sumit Sarkar, Modern India 1885-1947. pp. 337-338.
for Responsible government, Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah issued an appeal to all the non-Muslims inviting them to participate in the movement for Responsible Government.\(^47\) He assured them that Muslims were “prepared to give you the same safeguards, weightage and all that is necessary in the constitution for the minorities that Indian national Congress is prepared to give to the Muslims of British India and other minority communities. Perhaps we would be more liberal. Let the dead past bury the dead ....”\(^48\)

Pundit Nehru, who later on turned to be the mentor of Abdullah to become a nationalist, also backed Shaikh Abdullah’s call when he advised Kashmiri non-Muslims that, “they should give up their narrow communal outlook and think of their own welfare in terms of the welfare of Kashmir as a whole, that is to say of the great majority of the people of Kashmir. I would advise them not to seek any special protection or wattage or reservation of seats in the state services, no special electorate or the like.... They will get far more through good will and co-operation with other communities.”\(^49\)

These appeals were not made without any effect. For at many places, notably Srinagar, Poonch, and Jammu non-Muslims too participated in the protest meetings.\(^50\) Later on some Pundit leaders enthusiastically supported the demand for Responsible Government, For instance Sardar Budh Singh wrote in 1938: “it is madness to think that the demand for Responsible Government is a religious demand. No religious body or communal organization can singly achieve it. It is a national demand and is, therefore, common to all”.\(^51\)

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\(^{47}\) Ibid.

\(^{48}\) General Secretary, States Peoples Conference, Kashmir, Bombay, pp. 13-14.

\(^{49}\) P. N. Bazaz, letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to P. N. Bazaz, July 7, 1936, Kashmir in Crucible, (New Delhi, Pamposh Publications) p. 182.

\(^{50}\) Bazaz, Inside Kashmir, op. cit p. 191.

Day was observed on 5 August 1938. The main slogan shouted everywhere was the establishment of the Azad (independent) Assembly. 52

Maharaja Hari Singh professed great surprise that his crumbs had not been considered adequate and condemned the "popular hunger as greed." 53 Although, the movement for responsible government does not achieve immediately any thing due to cold response of the state, but it was an indicator of the matured national movement and had set the tone for its next stage, which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

It will be in place to mention here, that Shaikh Abdullah used his organization not only to bring about a modern outlook in the state's body politic, but he simultaneously fought for the rights of down trodden sections of the society notably peasants and workers thus, creating a strong mass base for himself and his organization. Shaikh Abdullah fully realized the importance of education in bringing about political consciousness and healthy behavior of the masses, which is evident from his presidential address to the first annual session of the conference:

[Let us strengthen press and encourage Muslims towards education so that the number of conscious workers would increase day by day. Islam and ignorance is a divergent phenomenon... we should pay due attention to the female education (also). It is said that women had played a great role in the transformation of different societies and have changed the destinies of nations and empires.] 54

While expressing his deep anguish against the lethargic attitude of the state in the dissemination of modern education he said:

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52 P. N. Bazaz, op. cit, p. 191.
53 M. J. Akbar, Kashmir: Behind the Vale, p. 75
54 Presidential address delivered by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to the First Annual Session of Muslim Conference on Oct. 17, 1932.
"[T]he problem of educational backwardness is the most crucial problem of the nation. The progress of nations and individuals is subservient to education. In present times the spread of education is not the responsibility of the people but, as observed in the recent past, it has been the duty of the government. But the government of Kashmir has become notorious in view of its apathetic attitude towards the education of Muslim masses. For the last twenty-five years there has been greater realization among the Muslims in favour of modern education. However, there are many impediments, but the Government has never taken any step to remove them."  

He also took a very serious note for the non-implementation of the Sharp Commission recommendations. Desirous to see the state education system responsive to the modern challenges of the time, and an instrument to the social and economic upliftment of the masses, Shaikh Abdullah strongly pleaded for the change of syllabi, which was still showing traditionalistic features besides making agricultural education compulsory in village schools. His other demands include, increase in the number of schools and colleges, standardization of education from top to bottom, introduction of job oriented courses and special arrangements for female education.

Now it is evident from the above discussion that the movement launched by Shaikh Abdullah in 1931 was from its very beginning progressive in outlook. His demands for modernization of administrative machinery, freedom of press, platform and religion, improvement in

56 Ibid
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
education and health care all indicates matured political mentality of Shaikh Abdullah. Undoubtedly, in his formative phase he had relied much on Punjabi Muslim Organizations and Public opinion and used Islamic institutions and symbols to create a mass base and a pressure on state but it should not be counted as a lacunae since mass psyche was such that nothing except religion would have much influenced there mind. Also, with the development of political consciousness, Shaikh Abdullah too switched on to use economic and other non-religious issues to propagate his political philosophy. He also distanced himself from the Punjabi organizations once he realized that these were turning more communal and were more concerned for their own betterment and less of Kashmiri masses. This theme will be elaborated in our next chapter.

Now still question remains as what Shaikh Abdullah through this Muslim Conference achieved in his first phase of political career? To be precise, For the Kashmiri Muslims, who supported him with their time, their money, and (in some cases) their lives, it brought more freedom of religion, more openings in the public service, more reserved seats in a token legislative assembly, and in the rural areas, a marginal reduction of the tax burden. He also cut short the size of religious elite. In themselves these were pretty modest rewards. However, the movement had other, more intangible benefits not fully perceived at the time. In particular, it had an enduring effect on the consciousness and confidence of the Muslim Community. By giving the Kashmiri Muslims a taste of political power, and showing them how it could be acquired through agitation, the movement spelled eventual doom for the Dogra Raj.
CHAPTER V

Apostle of Secularism:

From Muslim Conference to National Conference

The freedom struggle launched by the Kashmiris in 1932 with the formation of the Muslim Conference and under the leadership of Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah reached to its next and very crucial stage in 1939 when the movement was reoriented to give it secular sense so that all marginalized sections of the Kashmir could be accommodated irrespective of their religious and sectarian affiliations. The secularization of the freedom movement in Kashmir at the end of 1930's should not, however, be taken as the beginning rather it was the culmination of a process which was moving on along the movement from its very inception. Like all anti colonial movements launched around the same period or before, the Kashmir movement was also launched on progressive lines to end the oppression but its progressive character was overshadowed, at least during its initial phase by the circumstances under which it was born and by the violent propaganda which was made against the movement by the Pro-establishment elements who felt threatened by the uprising. Since the vast majority of the Kashmiris were Muslims, and since the Muslims, collectively enjoyed fewer civil rights and economic opportunities than the minority Dogra's, Pundits and Sikhs,¹ and since the mosque was a customary rallying place for Muslims and one where they were relatively free from prosecution for unlawful assembly, the democratic movement which had emerged in Kashmir in 1931 had come to assume a communal and to some extent, Islamic character. This had been especially marked when some Hindus in

Srinagar, Jammu, Kotli, Seri and Mirpur were killed and at different places their property looted or destroyed.\(^2\) It was under these circumstances that state's first real political party was formed to be named as Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference.

The Kashmiri non-Muslims with the help of Hindu press in British India had left no stone unturned to project the movement launched by the Muslims as a communal one. By identifying themselves with Government,\(^3\) the uppermost in their minds was to see the forces of revolution destroyed, to protect the Hindu Raj and to safeguard their economic interests.\(^4\) The non Muslims particularly Kashmiri Pundits failed to understand the true nature of the movement which was, "aimed at the achievement of democratic rights without driving their ruler out" \(^5\) and they "played a historic role of anti-revolution to a finish" \(^6\) but with little success. They did not hesitate in criticizing the emerging leadership and to brand them self styled who wanted to establish a Muslim dictatorship in the state in which 'the Hindus could live only as Muslims or at their mercy'.\(^7\)

In their efforts non Muslims were backed by Hindu Press and some communal organizations to launch a violent campaign against the Kashmiri Muslims who were pleading for the redressal of their grievances. "There existed no press in the state other than a Hindu organ, *Ranbir*, published from Jammu. It had kept itself alive by praising the autocratic rule of the Maharaja. In addition to it, *Milap, Pratab, Tribune* and some other organs

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\(^2\) Ibid
\(^3\) According to Prem Nath Bazaz "the Government and the Hindus were inseparable and the one stood for the other." For details see P. N. Bazaz, The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, p. 153.
\(^4\) *Statesmen*, Calcutta, October 31, 1931.
\(^7\) *Statesman*, Calcutta, October 31, 1931.
published from Lahore defended the cause of the Maharaja and his Hindu subjects by favoring their fair as well as unfair measures." 88

From the very beginning of the freedom movements, the *Hindu Maha Sabha* set its forces of reaction against it. The worst part of the reaction was the role *Maha Sabha* played in provoking the Hindu mind of India against the Muslim subjects of Kashmir whom it dubbed as sheer communalists bent upon destroying the Hindu state of the Maharaja of Kashmir. 9

However, not withstanding this propaganda, the Muslim Conference particularly its leader Shaikh Abdullah made all his efforts to persuade the non-Muslims to understand the true nature of the movement launched by the Muslim subjects in the state. He was conscious that the most serious threat to the movement was not so much in political difference or personal rivalries as the communal difference between the Hindus and Muslims. Even before the launch of the Muslim Conference, Shaikh Abdullah paved the way for secularization of politics. Following the communal riots of 1931, Shaikh Abdullah, on his release from Hari Parbat Fort, expressed his deep sorrow over the happenings at some places in which some miscreants had done damage to non-Muslims. He said:

"Kashmiri Pundits are our brethren .... What we want even at the cost of our suffering is that our brethren Kashmiri Pundits should not have any reason for grievance against us". 10 Irritated by the reactionary and antagonistic attitude of the Kashmiri Pundits, he advised them that it was better for them to join the

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movement or at least refrain from opposing it by following a policy of neutrality.\textsuperscript{11}

For Shaikh Abdullah the bellicosity of the Hindus and the Muslims against each other was an index of a low social behaviour and was simply abominable.\textsuperscript{12}

After the establishment of the Muslim Conference, Shaikh Abdullah made persistent efforts to ensure a joint struggle of the Muslims and non-Muslims. He did not miss even the smallest opportunity to strive for this cherished goal. To him 'the majority can never reap the fruit of progress without taking the minority into confidence'. He further believes that 'without any mutually accepted agreement between the Hindus and the Muslims, no real work can be done.'\textsuperscript{13}

In the inaugural session of the Muslim Conference, Shaikh Abdullah publicly declared that the aim of the organization was to redress the grievances of all the communities irrespective of caste, creed and colour. He said:

"It has often been announced by us in unequivocal terms that this Kashmir movement is by no means intended to be a communal movement. It is interceded for remedying the ills from which members of all communities in the state are suffering. I wish to assure my brethren, be they Hindus or Sikhs that we wish to remove their troubles and sufferings as much as we wish to remove our own. Our country can never make any progress whatsoever unless and until all the communities living in it learn to live together with the spirit of cooperation. This can

\textsuperscript{11} Hafiz Mohammed Ismail, \textit{Personal Diary} dated Feb, Item-I, 27, 1933.
\textsuperscript{12} Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's interview with the Ranbir's correspondent: \textit{The Ranbir (Weekly)}, Jammu, dated October 1, 1932.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{The Vetesta}, Srinagar, dated January 28, 1933.
be done only when we are liberal enough to recognize the just rights of each one of us. It is then only that we can together gain freedom from all the ills. Thus, this Kashmir movement is not a communal movement at all."¹⁴

In order to translate these objectives in reality and to seek an active cooperation of the non-Muslims to form a united front against feudal despotism, the working committee of the Muslim Conference on March 7, 1933, constituted a sub-committee consisting of eleven members who had to exchange views with non-Muslims and to persuade them to participate in the movement. But unfortunately the sub-committee could not complete its task due to disturbances in 1933 and because of the suspicion and non-cooperation of the Hindu leaders.¹⁵

The failure of the sub-committee and the reluctance of the non-Muslims to repose trust on Muslim leadership, did not, however, discourage Shaikh Abdullah and he continued his efforts both within and outside the Conference to bridge the gape and to mitigate the bitterness among the Muslims and the non-Muslim communities in the state. In his presidential address at the annual session of the Muslim Conference in December 1933, he extorted all Kashmiris to come forward and support the movement:

The loss of rights is a loss to all, whether he is a Muslim or a non-Muslim. The Muslim Conference has fought for the rights of the people and there is no discrimination between a Hindu or a Muslim. I appeal to the non-Muslims that they should stand shoulder to shoulder with us so as to take part in the emancipation of the people, freedom of the nation from the

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 268.
degradation, poverty and slavery ... there is no reason why Hindus should not join their Muslim brothers on this national front.16

Shaikh Abdullah's efforts to secularize the Kashmir politics received an impetus when his call was responded by some liberal minded Kashmir Pundits like Prem Nath Bazaz. A devout socialist, Bazaz, who earlier represented Kashmiri Hindus in the Glancy Commission, made it clear that he recognized the Kashmiris Muslim movement to attain economic and political rights. Although as leader of the Sanatan Dharma Young men's Association in 1931 he had expressed his bitter resentment at the Muslim leadership and its demands on behalf of the Pundit Community, by 1933 Bazaz was writing in the Muslim Conference's official newspaper, the 'Sadaqat' in support of the martyrdom of those Muslims "who left their fathers, wives, children and every comfort of this world and sacrificed themselves on the altar of their country."17 As a firm believer of nationalism at this time, Bazaz advised his community that "It is nationalism that will save our country and our community because neither the Hindus nor the Muslims can wipe out the one or the other from the country.... It is only nationalism that will save (Hindu) families (in Kashmir)."18 Later on in a combined effort to spread secular ideas in Kashmir, Shaikh Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz began the weekly newspaper, Hamdard as a "standard-bearer of democracy and unity of all Kashmiris without any consideration of caste or creed."19 However, little support came from rest majority of Pundits.

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The efforts of Shaikh Abdullah to secularize the politics of Kashmir were hastened following his ideological and personal differences with Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf Shah, 20 which I have discussed in my proceeding chapters but more importantly, in an effort to minimize the influence of Punjabi Muslim organizations, Shaikh wanted to patch up a relation with the non-Muslims of the State. By 1933, Abdullah’s intention to separate the Conference from the increasingly acrimonious politics of Punjabi Muslims was becoming apparent. The official organs of the Muslim Conference particularly, Hamdard, roundly condemned all Punjabi Muslim “Communal” organizations for having mislead the Kashmiri movement and through its editorials advised the people that they should stay out of Punjabi politics and address their indigenous political problems themselves. 21 It will be in place to mention here that Shaikh Abdullah was at this time moving steadily in the direction of a pro-Congress politics, as will be discussed later.

In the meantime, the Maharaja accepted the proposals of the Franchise Committee that recommended an elected legislature for the state and announced the foundation of a state assembly in 1934. The assembly was to have no more than the power of interpellation, passing resolutions and discussing the budget wherein the Maharaja retained the ultimate political power because the executive was responsible to him and not to the Assembly. 22 Shaikh Abdullah recognized that the assembly was a powerless body. However, in order to prove the popularity of Muslim Conference and to propagate his nationalist feelings, he decided to contest the elections for the assembly and won all the 21 Muslim seats. 23 High hopes which were raised with the establishment of the Praja Sabha were soon shattered when

22 Ibid, pp. 202-216
23 Ibid.
people realized the powerlessness of the Assembly. Nevertheless, it served a
good purpose in so far as it brought Muslim and not Muslim members of the
assembly closer to each other, and in 1936, the entire country saw all elected
members of Jammu and Kashmir staging a joint walkout. 24 Thus, the
establishment of Praja Sabha was a step forward in popularizing the idea of
secularism as its members began to realize that most of the basic problems
were common to both. 25

As mentioned in the proceeding chapter, May 8, 1936 was announced
to be observed as Responsible Government Day and Shaikh Abdullah as
President of the Muslim Conference appealed to the Hindus and Sikhs for
support and cooperation for the movement by participating in it. The
response to this appeal was even beyond Shaikh Abdullah’s expectations.
Hindus, Sikhs and Muslim leaders addressed gatherings from the same
platform. 26 “One wonders whether they too had seen the writing on the
wall. If not they at least began to understand Shaikh Abdullah and his
political mission.” 27

Encouraged with this healthy development an organization of young
men came into existence in 1936 under the guidance of Prem Nath Bazaz
named as Kashmir Youth League. This party was formed truly on secular
grounds and it believed “in the equality of all people in the state” and held
that “there was no distinction between young men or women on the basis of
religious beliefs they professed.” 28 Activities of this kind proved conducive

24 Ibid, see also P. N. Bazaz, struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, p. 156.
26 P. N. Bazaz, op. cit, p.160 see also Tasir, Tahrik-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir, p. 344-348.
27 R. N. Koul op. cit, p. 16.
28 P. N. Bazaz, op. cit., and Taseer, op. cit.
to the growth of secular politics\textsuperscript{29} and strengthened Shaikh Abdullah's belief in secularism.

By 1937, the Muslim Conference had expanded its activities into the working class. Bakshi Gulam Mohammad and Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, two of Abdullah's most trusted lieutenants at this time, who would also one day rule Kashmir, were at the head of the first procession of workers ever taken out, and speech after speech struck the same chord: the working class movement was above any communalism, it struggled for a better life for everyone without the consideration of caste, creed or religion. \textsuperscript{30} This socialist orientation of the conference too contributed to the dissemination of the secular ideology in the state politics.

After separating himself from the influence of Punjabi Muslim organizations, Shaikh Abdullah and his organization was moving in the direction of Indian National Congress from the mid nineteen thirties (1930's), this was quite possibility because the Congress's increasingly leftist leanings on social and political issues which it was gaining under the new leadership represented by Jawaharlal Nehru. It was also around this time that Congress had started taking interest in the princely states. After the passage of the Government of India Act 1935, a resolution of the Congress working committee held between 29 July and 1 August 1935, had defined the party position on the Indian States: "The Indian National Congress recognizes that the people in the Indian states have an inherent right to Swaraj no less than the people of India. It has accordingly declared itself in favour of establishment of representative responsible government in the States and has in that behalf not only appealed to the princes to establish such responsible government in their states ... but has also pledged to the

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
states people its sympathy and support in their legitimate and peaceful struggle for the attainment of full responsible Government".\footnote{Resolution passed by the Working Committee of Indian Nation Congress on 1\textsuperscript{st} August 1935, quoted in M. J. Akbar, \textit{op. cit.}, P. 81. For more detailed see P. Sitarammaya, \textit{The National Movement of India} (Bombay, the national Information and Publication Lt.), 1950, p. 119.} This resolution provided great encouragement to leaders like Shaikh Abdullah then themselves demanding Responsible Government. Later on Congress also patronized All India States Peoples Conference to coordinate the popular movements launched in different princely states to end the feudal political system. This Conference had it’s for reaching impact in the development of Abdullah’s political ideology on secular lines.

The official mouthpiece of Muslim Conference, \textit{Hamdard}, was making enough propaganda to popularize the nationalist and secular ideas of National Congress particularly of its most popular leader after Gandhi at this time; Jawaharlal Nehru, through its articles and editorials to develop a secular political mentality in the state.\footnote{See for instance P. N. Bazaz, "A clarification of certain Misunderstandings", \textit{Hamdard}, April 11, 1936, and "The Responsibility of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs", \textit{Hamdard}, May 9, 1936.} Furthermore, these writings recognized the possibility of Kashmir as a part of independent India in the future. As Nehru’s "Advice to the youth of Kashmir" stated:

Kashmir's destiny is intertwined with that of Hindustan because if Hindustan gains independence then Kashmir will definitely ask for its share .... The fate of the 8 corer people of the princely states can not be separated from that of the people of British India. In fact, both peoples are riding in the same boat. If Kashmirirs would only recognize that their education, economy and culture were in the hands of an irresponsible government, then nothing could stop them from attaining their rights.\footnote{\textit{Hamdard}, Srinagar, June 27, 1936.}
The growing familiarity with Nehru’s ideas led Abdullah and Bazaz to extend an invitation to Nehru to visit Kashmir in 1936 in an effort to boost their attempts at establishing a joint Hindu-Muslim national front in politics. Although Nehru declined, Abdullah had the opportunity to meet him in the NWFP the following year, a meeting that so impressed Abdullah that he declared at a press conference in Amritser:

Communal tension in Kashmir is the result of propaganda by the communal leaders of Punjab. We want people of Punjab not to interfere in our internal affairs. Our next programme will be to follow the principles of the Congress party and after returning to Kashmir, I will strive to set up an organization which supports national ideology.34

True to his word, Abdullah remained pro-Congress in ideology and politics for the remainder of his political career in pre-1947 Kashmir. The much publicized ‘friendship’ between Shaikh Abdullah and Nehru, which shaped the future politics of Kashmir, was greatly motivated by the mutual interests of the two leaders.35 Abdullah needed the Indian National Congress, especially its wing organized to support the subjects of princely India, to strengthen his own organization’s hands vis-à-vis the Dogra state in the context of an impending decolonization. He also used the relationship to free himself from the influence of the Punjabi Muslim elite. In turn, Nehru whether one emphasizes his sentimental attachment to the valley of his ancestors36 or not, chose to see in Abdullah another pettiest of secular politics in his own image37 and as a foresighted politician he was mindful of Abdullah’s importance as a popular leader in the future India.38 Whatever

35 This was the friendship that had distinctly soured by 1953.
36 Sheikh Abdullah, op. cit.
37 Alastair Lamb, Kashmir: A Dispute Legacy, pp. 95-96.
38 Nehru to Krishna Kriplani, 6 Mach 1940, Nehru Papers, 41/2601.
may be the reason, Abdullah's closeness with Nehru, (which was not without a strong opposition and suspicion, both within and outside the state) contributed a lot to further strengthen Abdullah's growing secular and national political mentality.

It was under this backdrop that the sixth annual session of the Muslim Conference was held at Jammu in March 1938, with Abdullah all determined to change the course of Kashmir politics. In his presidential address to the session, Shaikh observed:

> Like us, the large majority of Hindus and Sikhs in the state have immensely suffered at the hands of the irresponsible government. They are also steeped in deep ignorance, have to pay large taxes and are in debt and starving. Establishment of responsible government is as much a necessity for them as for us. Sooner or later these people are bound to join our ranks. No amount of propaganda can keep them away form us.\(^{39}\)

While calling for a "re-christening of our organization as a non-communal political body," \(^{40}\)Abdullah emphasized that, "we must end communalism by ceasing to think in terms of Muslims and non-Muslims when discussing our political problems." \(^{41}\)

Shaikh Abdullah was conscious about the doubts and suspicion which had developed in the minds of some of his colleagues about the prospects of a united front of Hindus and Muslims when it was an established fact that State was bias towards non-Muslim communities and thus, they (non-Muslim) identifying themselves with the establishment. Clearing these doubts by projecting the movement in Kashmir as a class struggle and hence

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
non-communitarian in nature, Shaikh Abdullah went on by saying, “You complain that the Hindus belonging to the vested interests and reactionary and stand in the way of our progress. But have we not had the same experience in the case of capitalist Muslims also? It is significant as well as hopeful that in spite of many difficulties in their way some non-Muslims have co-operated with us though their number is very small. Their sincerity and moral courage make us feel their strength.”42 Thus, in order to give the movement a truly nationalist orientation and to end the communalism for ever, He emphasized that, “we must open our doors to all such Hindus and Sikhs, who like ourselves, believe in the freedom of their country from the shekels of an irresponsible rule.”43 In this effect a resolution was introduced in the same session by Molvi Mohammad Saeed44, to change the name of the Conference into the All Jammu and Kashmir Political Conference which, in other word meant to open its doors to non-Muslims by dropping the word “Muslim.” 45 The resolution was supported by Raja Mohammad Akbar Khan who in a well argued speech made an appeal to the delegates present at the session that Muslims in the state should win the hearts of the minorities and gain their confidence. He said: “in the politics we are concerned with India as a whole and our outlook should be above caste and creed consideration.”46

However, a few member of the Conference apposed the resolution by calling that it was ‘premature’ and a ‘hasty’ step. The members who opposed the resolution include, Abdul Majid Qurashi, Moulana Abdullah Siyakhvi, Shaikh Muhammad Amin and Allah Rakha Sager, members

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Moulana Masoodi became the sole ideologue of the National Conference after Prem Nath Bazaz parted ways with Abdullah in the beginning of the 1940’s. He was follower of Moulana Hessian Madni and Moulana Azad.
46 The Ranbir (Weekly), Jammu, April 13, 1938, p. 18.
mostly hailing from Jammu, where Muslims were in minority. They were apprehensive that by throwing open the Conference to non-Muslims, Muslim will loss their position and influence in the movement because of their weak educational position. They also blamed Hindus and Sikhs, 'for playing a reactionary and unpatriotic role against the Muslims." 47 Finally, they succeeded in forcing the Subjects Committee to differ the resolution and suggested that without consulting the people it was undemocratic to get the conference's name changed. 48 Shaikh Abdullah was in no hast to the change till the public opinion would be shaped in this regard. 49

This was followed by third General Election to the State Legislative Assembly on April 15, 1938. Muslim Conference won nineteen seats out of its total elected strength of twenty one seats. 50 During and after the election campaign, Shaikh Abdullah busied himself with the task of making the masses understand the true significance of nationalism. In his public addresses he promptly declared that, "communal politics does not suit the temperament of the people of this state. It can not help in removing the evils of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and, above all our slavery" 51 The public response to his call for secularism and nationalism and the exclusive success of the Muslim Conference in the elections was a sufficient guarantee to the Shaikh to go on with his programme of changing the Muslim Conference into a national body. 52

On June 28, 1938 Shaikh Abdullah himself placed a resolution before the working committee to amend the constitution of the Conference so that

47 Ibid see also, Pir Afzal Makhdoomi, op. cit.
49 Ibid.
52 G. H. Khan, op. cit.
anyone could become its member. 53 This was followed by a heated debate which lasted for almost fifty two hours. The resolution was, however, passed by a majority of fourteen against four votes, 54 and it concludes:

Whereas in the opinion of the working committee the time has now come when all the progressive force in the country should be rallied under one banner to fight for the achievement of responsible government, the working committee recommends to the General Council that in the fourth coming session of the Conference the name and the constitution of the organization be so altered and amended that all such people who desire to participate in this political struggle may easily become members of the Conference irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. 55

Again the opposing voice against the resolution came from the members hailing from Jammu. They were, however, given an option to resign in case they do not agree with the majority view, 56 which they did not and the resolution was recommend for the approval of the General Council.

The Government did not look with equanimity on these happenings, “It appears, observed Bazaz, that ‘they felt uneasy at this new trend of affairs in the politics of the state,” 57 In the meantime, the Responsible Government Day was observed on August, 5, 1938, with largely attended public meetings held all over the state and a resolution was adopted “repudiating the existing system of irresponsible Government and expressing full faith in the establishment of complete Responsible Government which alone could cure the ills of the people”. 58 The main

54 Ibid. See also P. N. Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, PP. 161-162.
55 Ibid.
57 P. N. Bazaz, Inside Kashmir, p. 194.
58 Ibid.
feature of this day was that a good number of liberal minded non-Muslims including Prem Nath Bazaz, Jai Lal Killam, Kayshep Bandhu, Shuyam Lal Saraf and Sardar Budh Singh enthusiastically participated in the mass meetings. The authorities responded by gagging prominent workers and by imposing other restrictions on their activities and it looked doubtful if the Muslim Conference would be allowed to hold its plenary session to ratify the resolution passed by the working committee in favour of the conversion of Muslim Conference in to a national organization. Thus, in the absence of a national body, the leaders of the Muslim Conference and the patriotic Hindus who were prepared to make sacrifices for the cause of Responsible Government wanted to acquaint the country and the Government with their intentions and their minimum demands. Therefore, on 29th August, the Conference issued a manifesto, the National Demand, with a view to “acquaint our countrymen” with their objective: the acquisition of elementary and basic rights of citizenship through a progressive form of government that would be responsible to the people. No religious sentimentalism or any communal interest was attached to the manifesto; it had solely economic content in it. The National Demand asked for a responsible legislature based on joint electorate with seats reserved for minorities and guaranteeing them all other safeguards, “for the protection of their legitimate linguistic, religious, cultural, political and economic rights

59 M. Y. Saraf, Kashmiris Fight for Freedom, pp. 525-526. See also Hamdard, Srinagar, August 9, 1938.
62 General Secretary, States Peoples Conference, Bombay, Kashmir, 1939, vide G. H. Khan, op. cit. Appendix.
Apostle of Secularism

according to the principles enunciated, accepted or acted upon by the Indian National Congress from time to time.”

Although progressive in nature, the National Demand was criticized by various quarters, both within and outside the state and equally by people belonging to Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The Muslims include the followers of Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf, the Ahmadiyas, the Punjabi Muslim most of the Jammu Muslims and the educated Yong Muslims who were enthusiastic to establish Muslim League in the state and to whom Shaikh Abdullah was no more than an instrument of Pundit Nehru “for establishing a branch of Indian National Congress in the state and get the Muslim Conference merged with it.” The majority of the non-Muslims opposed the National Demand on various grounds, considering it ‘unilateral’ aimed at establishing the ‘Muslim rule’ in the state. They would consider the “association of a few non-Muslims with the Muslim Conference agitation [merely] an accident and not sufficient to give the movement a national character.” The National Demand was also criticized for the reason that it was not of a truly representative character. It represented only a few individual Hindus, mostly from valley, which had already lost their representative character in their community, and had joined the moment in their personal capacity.

Responding these attacks the leaders convened a public meeting to ratify the Manifesto of National Demand at Hazratbal, Srinagar on 29 August 1938. It was called there because the Government had promulgated section 144 within the Municipal areas of Srinagar, which provided ban on public meetings. Besides Shaikh Abdullah, the huge gathering was

63 Ibid.
65 Ibid. and Pundit Shiv Narain Fotedar, “Kashmir Situation and After”, the Tribune (Lahore), December 16, 1938, pp. 7 and 14.
66 Ibid.
addressed by Prem Nath Bazaz, Moulana Masoodi, Kashup Bandhu, Jai Lal Kilam and Gulam Mohammed Sadiq. 67 The leaders decided to call another mass meeting at Pratab Park, Srinagar. But before that almost all prominent leaders were arrested and put behind the bars. Shaikh Abdullah was sentenced to six months imprisonment. 68 Many Kashmiri Pundits fought shoulder to shoulder with Muslims and suffered equally with them and in the words of Bazaz, “It was a glorious chapter in the history of the freedom Movement of Kashmir.” 69

Shaikh Abdullah was released form Muzaffarabad jail on 28 February 1939 followed by the release of other leaders also. Immediately after his release, Abdullah went on a month’s tour outside the state, which he utilized to strengthen his relationship with Indian National Congress. Congress honored Abdullah by asking him to preside over the Tripura Session of the All India States People’s Conference, which was attended, besides others, by Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbai Patel, Bholabhai Desai and Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya.70 In his presidential address, Abdullah warned the Princes against the consequences of the battle between autocracy and democracy. He again pledged to reorient his own movement according to the “basic Principles of the India National Congress.” 71 In his speeches which he delivered around this time, he not only committed himself to fight against British imperialism, 72 but he was equally critical to Muslim League for its policy of non-interference in states and its pro-stance vis-à-vis the Indian Princes.73

68 Ibid.
69 P. N. Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, PP. 162-163.
70 Hafiz Mohammad Ismail, Personal Diary, March 17, 1939, item 3.
72 The Tribune, (Lahore), April 15, 1939, p. 17.
73 Ibid.
These gestures provoked a strong reaction not only from some sections within the State, but it sowed the seeds of bitterness in the minds of the Muslim League leaders which had its far-reaching effects on the future political developments of not only the Jammu and Kashmir State but also the whole India. Reacting Shaikh Abdullah's move to affiliate himself with the Congress and his new nationalist/secular discourse, Mohammed Ali Jinnah (who had emerged by then a very important figure in British Indian politics) criticized him for putting “the ship of his community in a whirlpool”. He also cautioned him for his 'ignorance' and for 'misunderstanding' the true nature of the Congress.74 Thus seeds of the Jinnah-Abdullah rift were sown then. They merely sprouted during Jinnah’s visit to the Valley in 1944.

The Shaikh then on a tour of Punjab pleaded earnestly on April 14, 1939 as he was to in 1944:

How can we tie ourselves to you [the League]? You are the people who in a resolution in Patna threatened to create difficulty for the Congress in the affairs of the States. While we were in great stress, the Congress came to our rescue. It was the Congress witch voiced our grievances and supported us. Moulana Zaffar Ali has in a speech at Kaporthala declared that the Congress is an enemy of princes and they in the League are their friends and protectors. If that is right let me say clearly that we cannot be with these who want the present state of affairs to continue.

Will any body tell me how am I wrong, representing a majority community as I do, in trying to win the confidence of the minority community which happened to be the Hindus, the Sikhs and others in Kashmir? May I know what irreligious act am I

74 The Statesman, April 6, 1939, and Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore, April 7, 1939.
committing in trying to take the minorities with me to have self-Government for the people? Is it not absurd that what is right here becomes wrong in the case of Kashmir?"75

Within the State the most vocal section against Abdullah’s move was a group of people who distributed posters and pamphlets among the people, warning them against the turn-coat attitude of their leaders. They wanted to establish the All India Muslim League to counter Indian National Congress. They were joined in their criticism by Ahmadya’s and other young leaders like Gulam Nabi Gilkar.76 Moulvi Yousf Shah opposed Abdullah’s nationalism and charged Gopalswami Ayangar (prime minister) with the conspiracy of supporting the Congress movement in the state.77

Instead of taking some more time to create a general consensus for changing the nomenclature of the Muslim Conference, Shaikh Abdullah hastened his efforts to throw open the doors of Conference to non-Muslims. A meeting of the General Council was immediately called on April 25, 1939 to approve the resolution which was already passed by the Working Committee. While the session was on, a batch of Muslim students appeared on the scene dissuade the members of the General Council from approving the decision of Working Committee, forcing it to delay the approval till the following day. On April 26, 1939 the General Council approved the resolution and recommended amendment in the name and constitution of the Muslim Conference. It further decided “to hold a special session of the Conference.......on the 10th and 11th June 1939 at Srinagar to get the resolution approved by the representative gathering”.78

76 Ibid., pp.373-374
77 Ibid. and the Aaina (weekly), Srinagar, November 3, 1975, p.3.
78 The Tribune (Lahore), April 28, 1938, p.1.
The special session of the Muslim Conference was held at *Pather Masjid* Srinagar on 10th and 11th June 1939, under the presidency of a known leftist Khwaja Gulam Mohammed Sadiq, and was attended by 178 delegates, besides many non-Muslims and a good number of press reporters. The amended draft of the constitution of the Muslim Conference with a note from the committee of experts headed by Sadiq was placed before the General Assembly of the Conference on 10th June by Moulana Masoudi:

This special session of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, convened in connection with the changes in the name and constitution of this Conference, approves as confirmed and ratified by the General Council in its meeting held on April 27 and the resolution No.5 passed by the working committee of the Muslim Conference in its meeting held on June 28, 1939 and resolved that, in future, the name of this Conference will be the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. The special session further resolves that every adult person in the Jammu and Kashmir state, man or women can become its member irrespective of religion, caste, race and color.

He further declared that secular outlook to the politics was the only remedy to sufferings of poor masses in Kashmir:

Under changing situations, circumstances and on account of the exigencies of time, we must shed all narrow-mindedness and rise above the cheap level of communalism and struggle for the political and economic freedom. The struggle should not be fought for any community or section of a community but for all

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79 P. N. Bazaz, op. cit., pp. 163-164.
80 *Al-Islah* (weekly), Srinager, June 16, 1939, and the *Khalid-i-kashmir*, Srinager, June 21, 1939, p. 2.
poverty stricken and oppressed masses of the state. We must fight for the welfare of the peasantry and labor class. Consequently, it is necessary to show to the world that we are a progressive nation and hence convert the Muslim Conference.81

The resolution was thoroughly debated and discussed. Choudhry Gulam Abbas, who had earlier on privately raised doubts that the new movement would become a handmaid of the Indian Congress, came strongly in favor of the conversion. He declared very promptly that "the garb in the shape of the Muslim Conference has become outworn and threadbare...... Now we are in need of a nationalist guise".82 another leader Allarakha Sager, said; "nationalism is the cry of time and those who do not heed it will repent in the future".83 Interestingly, both the leaders were amongst the first who left the National Conference following its close association with the Congress and the new shape of politics in British India due to the Muslim League’s demand of separate homeland for Indian Muslims.

However, all was not smooth at this special session. There were few leaders who were not convinced by the arguments favoring the change in the constitution of the Muslim Conference. Thus, Choudhry Hamidullah opposed the resolution on the ground that the non-Muslims who formed twenty percent of the population and held ninety percent of the government services would not cooperate with the Muslims. He said: "Those (non-Muslims) who are joining our ranks do not command the confidence of their community".84 He was joined by Molvi Rafi-ud-Din and Gulam Hyder Khan, the editor of the “Naujan” in opposing any change.

81 G. M. D. Hamdani, Kashmir Kahan Se Kahan (Urdu), Srinager, p. 23.
82 P. N. Bazaz, op.cit. p. 164.
83 Ibid.
84 Al-Islah, Op.cit
Shaikh Abdullah brought the discussion to an end asking the delegates to cast their votes. Out of one seventy eight only three delegates voted against the resolution. Thus, amidst the applause and joyful slogans the president of the special session, Gulam Mohammed Sadiq announced at 1.45 in the night between 11th and 12th June, 1939 that the resolution was a landmark in the history of freedom movement in Kashmir. The passing of the resolution was spelled out the dissolution of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. In any event, without Abdullah’s consistency of approach and persuasive eloquence, the transformation of the Muslim Conference into National Conference may never have been achieved.85

It is worth to be mentioned here that there was a group of Muslims as we have seen above who did not like the move and they separated and organized themselves under different banners. In the valley, some of them like M.A. Saber, Gazi Ammanulla, Khwaja Gulam Nabi, Mirza Gulam Mohi-ud-Din, Mir Abdul Aziz Mirpuri and others organized meetings and raised the slogan of “Islam in danger”.86 They even did not hesitate to level charges of corruption on Shaikh Abdullah and dubbed him as an agent of Congress and the one who had been purchased by Hindus.87 On 15th June the central office of the National Conference was besieged by an angry mob which would certainly have sacked it but for the timely intervention of the police.88 Among the Pundits the majority of them received the change with suspicion and those who considered it a healthy development, but whose number was very small, hesitated to come forward under social pressures. Shaikh Abdullah has observed the attitude of the non-Muslims in the following words: “while on the one hand the educated Muslims did not

85 Ajit Bhattacharjea, Kashmir: The Wounded Valley, New Delhi, 1994, p. 73.
86 Fida Mohammed Hassnain, op. cit., p. 96.
87 Ibid.
appreciate our decision of conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference, on the other hand the non-Muslims showed more disdain towards us. They wedded their vested interests with the rulers and considered Kashmir a Hindu State. Their rich and educated sections dominated them. As such they were not ready to support any such movement that would militate the interests of the rulers and their own vested interests. With great difficulty a few youths of the community joined the National Conference but they faced persistent pressures from their community; and they looked at any measure that was taken by us with suspicion." 89
CHAPTER VI

Role as National Conference President

The conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference proved to be the high watermark of united nationalist fervour in Kashmir and Shaikh Abdullah’s political career reached to another important milestone. More significantly, the formation of the National Conference ushered in an era of anti-British politics in the Kashmir Valley. No longer was the Kashmir movement simply against the government of Maharaja; it had also assumed the status of an anti-imperialist movement in favour of the larger independence of Hindustan. In the first session of the Conference the leadership appreciated and accepted the intentions of the Indian National Congress’s stance against the policy of the British government towards the political aspirations of the Indian people. In his presidential address to the first session of the Conference, Shaikh Abdullah declared, “we wish unity of purpose among all the sufferers, irrespective of their creeds, for we know that the usurper will never take the side of the sufferers. All our sufferings are the result of the prevailing irresponsible government and our suffering will come to an end with the achievement of the responsible sort of administration”.¹

The session ratified what was called the National Demand, a document issued earlier by the leadership. One of the clauses read: “The election of the legislature shall be made on the basis of the joint electorates; seats should be reserved for the minorities and all safeguards and weightages should be guaranteed to them in the constitution for the protection of their linguistic, religious, cultural, political & economic rights

according to the principle enunciated, accepted or acted upon by the Indian National Congress from time to time". The main thrust of the National Demand was to force the state to introduce Responsible Government in the state. "The present system of administration", according to the National Demand, "shall be replaced by Responsible Government subject to the general control and residuary powers of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur as here in after mentioned". Undoubtedly the National Conference leadership was trying to present the Conference as an organization of downtrodden classes. For instance, its flag was red in colour with a white plough in the center, representing socialist revolution for the Kashmiri peasantry.

Meanwhile the World War II had broken out a few days earlier. A resolution was passed in which the National Conference formally endorsed the Indian National Congress's stand about the war and the policy of the British government towards political aspirations of the Indian nation.

It will be observed that the National Conference's approach towards minorities and the resolution about War drove the Conference closer to the Indian National Congress. It was for the first time when Shaikh Abdullah spoke openly in praise of the congress.

As has been mentioned in the previous chapter a section of the Muslim Conference leadership, based mainly in Jammu, had strong reservations about the move to secularize the Kashmiri politics and the growing influence of Indian National Congress in Kashmir movement. With the conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference and the

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3 Ibid
4 Rasheed Taseer, op. cit., pp 76-77.
unanimity in the approaches in the later and the National Congress some of close associates of Shaikh Abdullah, including Chudhry Abbas started showing the signs of dissatisfaction. The more the National Conference stressed secular political goals and came closer to the National Congress, the greater the differences between the secular faction and the supporters of the Muslim identity, who made no bones about their preference for the Muslim League over the Congress at the national level. Ghulam Abbas and Alla Rakh sagar, both of whom, as members had endorsed the Muslim Conference resolution that transformed it into the National Conference resigned and revived the Muslim Conference in 1904-1. There were many factors behind this move, including the fact that the National Conference did not represent Jammu Muslims very effectively and the pro Congress orientation of the organization made many of its members uncomfortable. The Shaikh Abdullah’s traditional rival, Mirwaiz Kashmir Yusuf Shah, who had been biding his time since their split in the early 1930’s extended a willing hand of support to Gulam Abbas, becoming the representative of the Muslim conference in Srinagar. The re-formed Muslim Conference received its ideological support from the Muslim League which had by now adopted the historical Pakistan demand. Chudhry Ghulam Abbas stated unambiguously that “The Kashmir Muslim Conference is a part and parcel of the all India Muslim League”. And the Muslim League did make statements that the Muslim Conference as a representative of the Muslim of the state.

No doubt initially the mass base of Muslim Conference under Chudhry Abbas remained limited and its influence remained confined among Jammu Muslims and in some parts of the Srinagar city, the organization was to become later an important factor in shaping the future

7 Khalid, Srinagar, January 12, 1943.
8 Khalid, Srinagar November 18, 1942.
course of Kashmir history. If Shaikh Abdullah's move to secularize Kashmir politics and his quest for responsible government in the state was frustrated by the early split, no less significant was the role played by the non-Muslim members of the National Conference in creating negative trends within the organization. In this regard Prem Nath Bazaz's portrait of the non-Muslim members of the Conference will not be out of place to mention here. "Nearly all new (non-Muslim) entrants worked for years in different communalist Hindu and Sikh organization and had risen to eminence by espousing the cause of obscurantism, reaction and repression. By merely joining the National Conference it was difficult for them to totally eschew their old mentality...... At best from Hindu communalists they could take a big jump and become Hindu nationalists. Above that they could not rise".9

Their only objective was, according to Bazaz, to bring the party "under the increasing influence of the Indian National Congress". In doing that they "were not prompted by any burning desire for freedom," but "prompted by the communal mentality." They wish to serve the cause of Indian Nationalism, which "despite the statements of the Congress leaders to the contrary was becoming another name of Hindu nationalism".10

The non-Muslim had raised objections against the celebration of July 13, as a national festival. Their argument was that the martyrs who had scarified their life in 1931 had done so for a Muslim cause and, as such, to celebrate their martyrdom was against the secular character of National Conference.11

Likewise, when in April 1940, on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday celebrations, the Shaikh in a speech explained the verse from the

10 Ibid
Holy Quran, saying that God has compared the Prophet of Islam with a burning candle and just as at the appearance of the sun, all stars vanish, similarly after the apostleship of the Prophet of Islam, there remained no need for any other prophet. Also, after the Holy Quran was revealed, "there remained no need for any other Divine Book".12

These speeches were made and these celebration organized by Shaikh Abdullah to regain his popularity in the Muslim community where a section of the population was disappointed with Shaikh Abdullah's new nationalist discourse and his inclination towards Indian National Congress. The non-Muslim members, forgetting the political compulsions in the background raised a storm of protest and condemned Shaikh as a "rank communalist."13

It was said that in the garb of nationalism, he still wanted to establish 'Muslim Raj'. Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, Pt. Kashyap Bandhu and Prem Nath Bazaz who had joined the National Conference were also among the persons who took leading role against the Sheik's statement.14

Later Pundit Jai Lal Kilam and Kashyap Bandhu resigned from the Conference in the wake of Nehru's visit to the valley. Bazaz remained in the Conference for sometimes and resigned in the next year. Thus Shaikh Abdullah, by converting the Muslim Conference in to the National Conference not only failed to attract a good number of non Muslims to join his organization, but his new discourse even relegated his position in his own community.

In 1940 Nehru, convinced that Abdullah was 'definitely a men who counts and will count',15 accompanied by Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan toured

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Bazaz, op. cit.
Nehru to Krishna Kripalani, 6 March 1940, Nehru Papers, 41\2601.
Kashmir amidst displays of public enthusiasm by National Conference supporters,\textsuperscript{16} and in the process helped establish Shaikh Abdullah's wider political reputation.\textsuperscript{17} Shaikh Abdullah's organization received lavish funds from Hindus, particularly Punjabi Hindu traders, to organize reception parties for Congress leaders.\textsuperscript{18}

Nehru expressed his unequivocal support for the National Conference as the sole national organization in the state in the same manner as Jinnah considered the Muslim Conference as the only representative body of the state Muslims during his 1944 visit. He attempted to recruit Kashmiris into the anti-colonial struggle being conducted by the Congress. More significantly, Nehru asked Kashmiri Pundits to abandon thoughts of minority questions and advocated joint electorates for the two communities, labeling separate electorates as the work of communalists.\textsuperscript{19}

Although the evidence is scanty, it seems probable that the Congress became, afterwards, a major source of National Conference funds.\textsuperscript{20} Pundit Nehru's visit, no doubt, brought the Indian National Congress and the National Conference very close to each other and helped to stop, for time being, the non-Muslim criticism against Shaikh Abdullah and his organization; this visit, however, backfired for the National Conference. It presented incontestable proof, if anything was needed, to Kashmiri Muslims that Shaikh Abdullah was a puppet of the Congress. The Muslim intelligentsia and diehards became fearful of the domination of Kashmir politics by the National Congress which they identified with the Hindus.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{17} Alester Lamb, \textit{Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy}, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1993, pp.95-96
\textsuperscript{18} Bazaz, \textit{Struggle for Freedom}, op. cit., p. 175.
\textsuperscript{20} See, for example, \textit{The Confidential Report to M.A Jinnah}, 20 August 1943, Indian Office records (IOR) R\textbackslash 1\textbackslash 1\textbackslash 3913.
\textsuperscript{21} Chudhry Gulam Abbas Khan, \textit{Kashmakash}, p.212.
It was in this backdrop that when the second session of the National Conference was held at Baramulla on September 28, 1940 there was not a single Muslim delegate from the Jammu until who attended except from the Mirpur district. Thus a police intelligence report in 1940 noted that “Shaikh Abdullah is losing favor amongst the Muslims because of his nationalistic activities, which the majority feels to be detrimental to their interests”.22

The government too, on its part followed a divide and rule policy to divide national movement and to pacify Hindu opinion, which had become increasingly rancorous over the past decade against the state’s so-called ‘pro-Muslim’ policies. The Maharaja’s government at the behest of its shrewd prime minister, Sir Ghopal Swami Ayangar, passed a special ordinance introducing two scripts, Devangiri and Persian, in Kashmir’s government schools23 and under the Jammu and Kashmir Arms Act of 1940 prohibited all communities except Dogra Rajputs from possessing firearms.24 These orders which were clearly issued to create a wedge among different communities created uproar throughout the state. Shaikh Abdullah, who was already under great stress due to a strong opposition against, his nationalist discourse made strong public speeches exhorting his followers to fight until the government’s orders was rescinded since it was a discriminatory move.25

The National Conference Working Committee which met in Srinagar on 28th November, 1940 condemned the moves “ill- conceived, mischievous and definitely anti national”. 26 Unfortunately all non-Muslim members

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22 Political Department E 206\1940, Jammu State Archives.
23 Political Department 29\10\1940, Jammu state Archives.
24 While the possession of the fire arms, “at the rate of the firearm for each Hind Rajput family” was legalized, the Muslim Rajput families were debarred from this privilege. See Fida Mohammad Hassnain, Freedom Struggle in Kashmir, New Delhi: Rima Publishing House, 1988, pp. 104 and 141.
25 Political Department E224\B196\1941 and Political Department E216\B182\1941, Jammu state Archives.
26 Saraf, Kashmir’s Fight for Freedom, op. cit., p.563.
including Prem Nath Bazaz opposed the official resolution which was adopted with a majority vote. Afterwards, Bazaz first resigned from the working committee on the 28 November and few months later left the National Conference.27

Meanwhile on 14th January, 1941, the National Conference organized a statewide protest day and in June 1941, the working committee of the National Conference instructed the members of the conference parliamentary party to resign from the Praja Sabha.28

The following reasons were listed by the working committee for the action it recommended:

(i) The modifications introduced by the government in the rules of procedure of the Praja Sabha which gave arbitrary powers to the Prime minister.

(ii) The introduction of the two-scripts medium in the schools; and

(iii) The special concession provided to the Hindu Rajputs by the provisions of Arms Act.

In the last week of July, the members of the National Conference parliamentary party in the Sabha submitted their resignation. The resignation of the leader of the party, Mian Ahmad Yar, was accepted forthwith. Resignations submitted by the other members were however refused on the ground that fresh elections could not be held due to the situation created by the outbreak of War.29

Despite these early problems and a mass of propaganda leveled against Shaikh Abdullah and his organization, National Conference’s claim

29 Ibid.
that it spoke for the Kashmiri people was conceded, grudgingly, even by its enemies.30

The British Resident Colonel Barton, who assuredly had no cause to look fondly on a party allied to the rebel Indian National Congress, noted in a secret report of September 1943 that:

"In the urban areas of the state, particularly in large cities such as Srinagar...... [the National Conference] undoubtedly commands greater support among the Muslim population than does the Muslim Conference. Under [its]...... programme of responsible government in the state, sympathy for national aspirations in British India, and the removal of the exploitation of the [poor by the]rich....[it] has gained adherents from all classes of Muslim society...... these adherents include extreme socialists and pseudo-communists....... urban factory workers, motor divers, tongawalas, the boatmen of Srinagar (almost all Mohammedans) as well as a not inconsiderable following amongst cultivators, particularly those in the Kashmir valley. There is little doubt that the majority of the politically minded Muslims belong to [t] his party".31

In contrast about the Muslim Conference, Barton concluded that, "its present organization and leadership compare very unfavorably with [those of] the National Conference and it is difficult to believe that it will be able to command support of the majority of the Muslims of the state until either its

30 R\1\23789, Crown Representative’s Records (CRR), Political Department, fortnightly reports on the political situation in Kashmir state for the year 1942, report for the first half of November 1942, IOL, Quoted in Mirdu Rai, Hindu Rulers Muslim Subjects; Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir, Permanent Black,2004, p.279.

31 Quoted in Ian Copland, The Abdullah Factor; Kashmiri Muslims and the Crisis of 1947, in D.A Low, ed; Political
organization or its leadership is improved, or until some favorable political circumstances arise."32

Not only this, the same opinion was held by people inside and close to the Muslim Conference. For example Jinnah’s envoy Khurshid Ahmad returned from his fact finding tour of 1943, prior to the visit of the former, was convinced that the Muslim Conference leadership was ‘null and flaccid’. He remarked, “It is composed of people who have limited resources, limited influence with the Muslim masses; and limited inclination to undergo any serious sufferings or sacrifices for the sake of the League.... In my judgment they can be at the most be our fair weather friends”. 33

Undoubtedly this mass popularity of National Conference was due to two main factors. First and most important was the person and charisma of its president, Shaikh Abdullah. Indeed, he was ‘the only one to have a mass following’.34 His scarifies in Kashmir freedom struggle had become legendry; in certain remote areas of the Valley and his name had been seen on the leaves of trees.35 And he dominated his party and region to an extent probably unmatched by any other contemporary politician.36

Second and equally important factor was the pro-poor stand and programme of National Conference which is quiet evident from the resolutions passed in the annual sessions of the organization and the speeches made by its leaders.37

32 Ibid.
33 Secret report to Jinnah [by Khurshid Ahmad] dated 20 August 1943, IOR, R/1/1/3913. Mohammad Yousuf Saraf who joined the Muslim conference in the 1940’s, admits that it was then virtually ‘non-existent’ as a mass organization. For a detailed discussion see Saraf, Kashmir’s fight Vol.I. op.it; pp. 617-647.
34 Note by J.S.H. Shattock, Political Department, Government of India, dated 16 June 1944, IOR R/1/1/3913.
36 Ian Copland, Abdullah Factor, op. cit; p.230.
The year 1944 proved to be very crucial in the history of the National Conference as it was from this period that its ascendancy came under serious threat from its rival Muslim Conference. Two factors, one external and the other one internal were mainly responsible for this new situation. Regarding external factor the role of two main political parties of British India viz- The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League and their subsequent association with the National Conference and the Muslim Conference proved very decisive in shaping the internal mass base of the two Kashmiri organizations. The main driving force behind the revival of Muslim Conference was its putative association with the Muslim League and its vote catching scheme of Pakistan.38

Jinnah finally decided to make a political visit to the valley in 1944 breaking Muslim League’s policy of ‘laissez-faire’ towards the Indian states. The National Conference did not seek a quarrel with him. In fact, Jinnah was even accorded a reception upon his arrival, and a cordial address of welcome said; “we Kashmiri’s today receive you as a prominent Indian despite the ideological differences we have with you”.39 Shaikh Abdullah described Jinnah as “a beloved leader of the Muslims of India”.40

In response Jinnah observed; “This reception is not meant for my person; it is meant for the All India Muslim League of which I am the president. By it you have honored the Muslims of India who are organized under the Muslim League”.41

The final verdict of Jinnah came on 17 June, while addressing the Muslim Conference and Muslim students union, he declared, “With one
objective in view, you should establish one platform and one organization and rally round one banner....99 percent of the Muslim who met me are of the opinion that Muslim conference alone is the representative organization of the state Muslim”.42

Jinnah's speech divided the rank and file of the National Conference deeply. By insisting that Shaikh Abdullah accept Choudhry Gulam Abbess's leadership, unite under the banner of the Muslim Conference, and support the Muslim League, Jinnah was asking Abdullah to repudiate every principle and political goal that he had fought for. Abdullah refused to do that and gave up trying to build bridges with the Muslim League. Similarly Shaikh Abdullah's decision to ally his party openly with the Indian National Congress- an alliance made manifest by the presence of Nehru and Abdul Gaffar Khan at the party's 1945 annual session and by Abdullah's nomination to the vice-presidency of the All-India States People's Conference the following year-cost National Conference dearly by reducing its popularity among Muslims who were "perturbed by the apparent subservience of the Conference to an organization dominated by Hindus".43

It was during the same period, that Shaikh Abdullah committed a fair number of costly blunders, which further helped his opponents to emerge stronger. While Congress leaders in jail after launching Quit India movement and the Muslim League and its local ally the Muslim Conference having a free hand, Shaikh Abdullah took stock & decided to seek an accommodation with the Dogra Darbar, that would enable him to campaign effectively against the Muslim Conference. Thus in February 1943, on the pretext of the changing "International situation due to the war," Shaikh Abdullah declared that henceforth National Conference would subordinate its grievances against the administration “to the supreme desire to stand

42 Ibid.
43 Ian Copland, op. cit. p. 231.
with solidarity in these hard times by[a]… ruler who has shown deep concern for the people.” 44

The State responded this reconciliatory gesture, probably because it’s Prime Minister, Gopalswami Ayanger, a ‘strong nationalist with … leanings towards the Congress”45 felt some ideological sympathy for the National Conference and because he saw in it a chance to divide the anti-establishment movement in the state. Instead of holding by-elections to fill the seats that had been vacated by the National Conference members in the wake of the script controversy, the prime minister proposed that the candidates suggested by the National Conference could be nominated to fill the vacant seats in the Legislature. The Working Committee of the National Conference agreed readily.46

This major was criticized by the Muslim Conference.47 More than this Gopal Swami Ayanger solicited Abdullah’s advice and appointed National Conference members (but non from the Muslim Conference) to the boards responsible for issuing rice ration tickets and permits for fuel, and to the Parliamentary Committee set up in 1943 to make proposals for constitutional reforms. The National Conference members were alleged for corruption and discrimination.48

The Muslim Conference workers and its press were particularly vocal and there were large scale demonstrations both in Jammu and Srinagar against the economic policies of Derbar. It was not surprising then that rightly or wrongly, the National Conference came to be perceived as an arm

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44 The Hindustan Standard (Calcutta), 16 February 1943.
45 Resident’s ‘Appreciation of the Political Situation’ dated 9 September 1943, IOR R/1/1/3913. For more about Ayanger see, Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom, op. cit; p.181-188.
46 Ibid.
47 Rahnuna, Srinagar, November 10, 1942.
48 Bazaz, op. cit.
of the government and a defender of reaction. It is pertinent to mention here that other regional parties in British India, such as Unionist party in Punjab also faced a decline in their popularity & authority as a result of war time dislocations and for becoming part of the establishment.

Conscious of the mood of disenchantment within his party, Shaikh Abdullah turned on the revolutionary rhetoric. He advised, Mirza Afzal Beg and G.M Sadiq, two members of the Royal Commission, appointed by the Maharaja for the evolution of an organic scheme for the administration of the state, to resign from the Commission. The National Conference submitted its own comprehensive plan to the Dogra state for economic, social, political and cultural reconstruction. Drafted by a reputed communist, P.B.L Bedi, the National Conference adopted this plan, which came to be known as Naya Kashmir, or the new Kashmir Manifesto, at its September 1944 session in Srinagar as the goal of the freedom struggle in Kashmir. Shaikh Abdullah explained the background which necessitated the adoption of the programme: “When political and economic systems are in the melting pot and ideas of a New World Order are being debated, it [the Conference] too must formulate more concretely its own conception of the new Kashmir it strives to build”.

In his forward to the manifesto, Abdullah explains:

“Progress is a continuous struggle- a tempestuous struggle.... The National Conference has been fighting the battle since the inception of the freedom movement. The struggle has continued but it should have a definite programme..... This struggle, of ours is the struggle of the workers against those stone hearted exploiters who as a class of discriminators have lost the sense of humanism.... In our New Kashmir we shall build again the men

49 Ian Copland, op. cit; p.233
50 Quoted in Sisir Gupta, Kashmir, op. cit; p.55.
and women of our state who have been dwarfed for centuries of servitude and create a people worthy of our glorious motherland".51

The document was divided into two main parts: (i) the constitution of the state; and (ii) The national economic plan. In the first part, a constitution to be given by the people to themselves, envisages a single citizenship to all in habitants of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, and the Frontier regions, including the Poonch and Chennai Ilaqas (regions), irrespective of “Religion, race, nationality of birth” in all spheres, freedom of conscience and worship as well as of speech, of the press, of assembly and meetings, and of street procession. The right of association would be secured for all citizens and freedom would be guaranteed to trade unions, youth organizations, political parties, and other functions societies. Also the guaranteed would be the right to work and to subsistence-if work was not provided-right to rest, to old age security, to education. Equal rights would be granted to men and women; equality of opportunity would be ensured to children. Cheap, quick and impartial justice would be secured. By the law of the land, asylum would be provided in the State to foreign citizens prosecuted for defending the interests of the masses, for there scientific activities or for their struggle for national liberation.

As for the institutional pattern was concerned, the Plan guaranteed a National Assembly, the highest law giving body, for exercising the entire powers of the state; a Council of Ministers, responsible to the National Assembly; universal adult franchise; a High Court, elected by the National Assembly; Constitutional Status for the Ruler. A special feature of the programme was that it envisaged people’s panchayats at all levels from the district downwards for exercising powers delegated to them and such

powers would be considerable. Kashmiri, Dogri, Balti, Dardi, Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu would be accorded the status of national languages and Urdu would be the lingua franca of the state.

In the section on "Planning" New Kashmir envisaged the socialization of all instruments of production and the reorganization of property relationships. It declared that land belonged to the tiller and the land lord had no right over the land or the peasants. Since the state was agricultural country, the tiller would have the right to own a piece of land. More significantly, the tiller would gain freedom from all his debts and the rights to protection against natural calamities as well as access to all the necessities of life. The section envisaged an "Egalitarian society in which equal opportunities are provided for every member for self expression and self fulfillment and the adequate minimum of a civilized standard of life is assured to each member so as to make the achievements of this equal opportunity a reality".52

The crux of the ideology and the programme of Naya Kashmir were explained by Shaikh Abdullah in these words, "The programme of Naya Kashmir is based on democratic principles of responsible government with an elective principle applied from local panchayats right up to the national assembly. This is linked with independence of judiciary and the ultimate responsibility of the executive to the people. In economic sphere we have proceeded on the principle that a planned is the essence of the progress and without it there can be no rising of the standard of living of the masses of the state".53

Based as it was on the recognition of social reform, economic equality and political freedom as essential pre-requisites of a truly democratic society, Naya Kashmir reflected essentially the ideology of a new social

52 Ibid.
53 The Tribune, Lahore, dated May 24, 1944.
order. The economically-oriented new social order economic forces and factors were to shape the destiny of the nation.54

The extent to which National Conference would adhere to this Manifesto in Jammu and Kashmir after 1947 will be examined later. Here it is important to mention that although the Plane seems to be comprehensive, it falls short of clearing an important aspect about the future course of Kashmir. It did not delineate the status of Kashmir within the future political structure of independent India-a flaw which would later create a mess when the prospects of the partition of Indian subcontinent became a reality. The Plan seemed to assume that the state of Jammu and Kashmir would be autonomous regardless of the political entities that replaced British rule.

Strong irritation was caused among the reactionary circles by the announcement of Naya Kashmir Manifesto. They did not show their agreement with the leftist orientation given to the movement by the National Conference. The Muslim Conference, which derived its support from landed aristocracy, nobility and business families was unsurprisingly, opposed to the programme. Thus, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, predictably, labeled Naya Kashmir anti-Islamic.55

Prem Nath Bazaz, who was by now a staunch critique of Shaikh Abdullah's policies, dismissed the Manifesto as an "interesting though thoughtlessly drafted document, envisaging the establishment of a Communist State. Yet, opportunistically enough, it guaranteed the perpetuation of the alien Dogra rule in Kashmir

Similarly the Pundit community represented by the Kashmiri Yuvak Sabha voiced the fear of Muslim dominated state guaranteed in Naya

54 Ghulam Hassan Khan, Ideological Foundations of the Freedom Movement, Bhavana Prakashan, Delhi, 2000, p. 244.
55 Khalid, Srinagar, April 30, 1945
Kashmir Manifesto. The adoption of order as official language was strongly criticized by non-Muslims particularly those belonging to Jammu.

Although criticized by the Muslim Conference and some conservative sections of non-Muslims the Manifesto fired the imagination and raised the hopes of common Kashmiri even further and a slogan emerged out of the mood:

*Alyaban Hallakari, dushmanan challkari.*

(When the plough moves, it tears apart the enemy).

Besides, the Naya Kashmir did propel the Dogra regime into announcing plans for diarchy on October 2, 1945. According to this plan, two ministerial posts would be given to a Hindu and Muslim who commanded the confidence of the State Legislature. This Legislature comprised 75 members, of which the Maharaja nominated 35. Of the 40 elected members further more, Jagirdars, landlords and government pensioners chose 7, and Hindu and Sikh constituencies elect 11. While the Muslim Conference boycotted this offer, the National Conference sent its nominees to become ministers in the proposed plan of diarchy. Accordingly Mirza Afzal Beg was taken in the cabinet as Minister of Public Works.

It soon became apparent, however that there was not much that a popular minister could do in a cabinet which was unrepresentative as a whole. In the face of growing scarcities and shortage in both urban and rural areas caused by the World War II, people's discontent reaches to the boiling point.

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56 *The Tribune*, Lahore, October 15, 1945.
59 The Hindu to be appointed as Minister was Ganga Ram, who was named Home Minister by Maharaja.
60 Bazaz, op. cit., p. 220.
Through its legislators and its ministerial representative Afzal Beg, the National Conference did what it could to alert the Darbar to the hardships faced by the people; but none of this behind-the-scenes lobbying was visible, whereas Beg's Rs 1600 per month salary and official car were glaringly so.\(^{61}\)

The National Conference soon realized its mistake and set before itself the task of immediate mobilization of the people on the basis of the demand for full responsible government. In his presidential address to August 1945, Sopore annual session of the Conference, which was attended, besides others, by top Congress leaders like, Nehru, and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Shaikh Abdullah strongly pressed for representative government saying that, "this is the only type of government which can command the confidence of the people. It is lack of responsible government which is responsible for inefficiency and corruption in the administration".\(^{62}\)

The situation deteriorated considerably when the post of the State Prime Minister held so far by B.N Rau, was given on 28 June, 1945 to Ramchander kak, a local bureaucrat with authoritarian ways. The rift, growing for months, widened enough by 18 March 1946 to make the Conference representative resign from the Kashmir ministry. The state hit back by inviting the leader of the National Conference legislators Mian Ahmad Yar to shoulder the responsibility which he readily accepted,\(^{63}\) thus giving a big blow to the National Conference's scheme of things and its mass following.

All this took place while the British Cabinet Mission was in India. Its pronouncements on the return of full ruling powers to the rulers of the Princely States increased the worries of Shaikh Abdullah who was by then President of the All India State's People's Conference. The Mission stayed in

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\(^{61}\) Copland, op. cit., p.233.

\(^{62}\) Quoted in Sisir Gupta, Kashmir, op. cit., p.60-60.

\(^{63}\) Khidmat, Srinagar, April 19, 1946.
Srinagar from 19-24 April while Shaikh Abdullah was in Lahore. He, on behalf of the National Conference sent them a memorandum on 22 April which strongly denounced the Treaty of Amritser. The Memorandum stated *inter alia*:

“As [Cabinet] Mission is at moment reviewing relationship of princes with the Paramount Power with reference to treaty rights we wish to submit that for us in Kashmir reexamination of this relationship is vital matter because hundred years ago in 1846 land and people of Kashmir were sold away to servitude of Dogra House by British for seventy-five lakhs of Sikh rupees, equivalent to fifty lakhs British Indian rupees. Then Governor of Kashmir[Shaikh Immamuddin] resisted transfer, but was finally reduced to subjection with aid of British. Thus sale deed of 1846 misnamed treaty of Amritser sealed fate of Kashmiri masses. We declare to world that this sale deed confers no privileges equivalent to those claimed by states governed by treaty rights. As such case of Kashmir stands on unique footing and people of Kashmir press on Mission their unchallengeable claims to freedom on withdrawal of British power from India. We wish to declare that no sale deed, however sacrosanct, can condemn more than four million men and women to the servitude of an autocrat when the will to live under his rule is no longer there. We the people of Kashmir are determined to mould our destiny and we appeal to the members of the Cabinet Mission to recognize the justice and the strength of our cause.”

Thus, a clash with Maharaja was now inevitable. On 6 May Abdullah, speaking at the Shahi Masjid, Shaikh Abdullah denounced the

Amritser Treaty of 1846 under which Kashmir had come into the possession of the Dogras. In a series of speeches which followed, Shaikh Abdullah denounced the very foundations of the Dogra regime in the state, and borrowing a leaf from the Congress book, he called on Maharaja Hari Singh to ‘Quit Kashmir’ and transfer sovereignty to the people. “I announce it to the world,” thundered Shaikh on the 14 May, “that the descendents of Gulab Singh have no right to rule this land. We were not even asked at that time when the British sold this land to him. Now, when the British have to quit India, we tell Hari Singh to quit Kashmir. We will collect fifty lakhs by contribution & tell him to vacate this land”.65

If this was harsh then the speech of 16th May was acerbic and was addressed to the Indian Princes. This speech also revealed Abdullah’s principled secular approach:

“The rulers of Indian states who possess ¼th of India have always played traitors to the cause of Indian freedom ...... When the Indian freedom movement demands the complete withdraw of British power, logically enough the stooges of British imperialism should go and restore sovereignty to its real owners- the people. When we raise the slogan of the ‘Quit Kashmir’, we naturally visualize that the princes and Nawabs should quit all the states. I am sure this demand applies to a state like Hyderabad where the people will raise their voice, ‘Quit Hyderabad...... why are we banned entry to the army? Why is it that every day now and then we hear that a Jagir here and a Jagir there has been granted to the satellites of Dogra dynasty only in Kashmir? Why is not a Kashmiri given Jagir or land in the land of the Dogras?...... Every man, women and child

65 Quoted in Fida Mohammad Hassnain, Freedom Struggle, op. cit., p. 133.
will shout ‘Quit Kashmir’. The Kashmiri nation has expressed its will. I ask for a plebiscite on this question.” 66

Hari Singh’s response was a crackdown for which state was making preparation from 11 months that is from the vary period of diarchy itself. Shaikh Abdullah was arrested along with other leaders of the National Conference on 20th May and it was announced that they will be tried for sedition. The Prime Minister R.C Kak proudly told the press, “We have been preparing for it for 11 months and now we are ready to meet the challenge. There will be no more vacillation and no weakened policy. We shall be ruthlessly firm and we make no apology about it”.67

In the three days following Shaikh’s arrest twenty people died in police firing, hundreds, were injured, and hundreds more were arrested.68 There were large scale Hartals and demonstration in the state particularly in Srinagar, Anantnag, Pampur & Sopore.69

One of Shaikh Abdullah’s lieutenants, Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad escaped to Delhi and briefed Jawaharlal Nehru, who issued a very high pitched statement which dramatically announced; “Srinagar; almost a city of the Dead”.70 Nehru went on to promise full support to his friend; “Everyone who knows Kashmir knows also the position of Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah there. He is the Sher-i-Kashmir, beloved of the remotest valleys of Kashmir. Numerous legends and popular songs have grown around his personality…. Does anybody think we are going to desert him or his comrades in Kashmir because the Kashmir state authorities have a few guns

66 The Tribune, Lahore, dated May 26, 1946.
67 The Hindustan Times, 27 May, 1946.
68 For a detailed account ‘Quit Kashmir Movement’ see P.N Jalali, Quit India Movement: A framework, in Mohammad Yasin and Qaiyum Rafiq’s (ed), History of the Freedom Struggle in Kashmir, Light & Life Publishers, new Delhi, 1980, pp. 143-166.
at their disposal? We shall stand by the people of Kashmir and their leaders in this heavy trait they are going through". Nehru stood by the Shaikh Abdullah in 1946 and Shaikh stood by him in 1947.

By September 1946, the movement of Quit Kashmir fizzled out due to the incarceration of the Shaikh and other leaders as well as the extremely repressive measures taken by the government to suppress it. Meanwhile, the Shaikh along with some of his colleagues was put on trial for sedition in the session's court. The trial, which began on 22 July, lasted for three weeks. Jawaharlal Nehru took personal interest in making arrangements for Shaikh Abdullah's defense. Mr. Asif Ali, a barrister and member of Congress Working Committee pleaded to defend the Shaikh. Nehru decided to be personally present from 24 July, and this time he succeeded in forcing Maharaja to grant him permission.

Shaikh Abdullah made a historical statement in the court. It said; "I am not interested in a personal defense and I would not have undertaken it if I had not felt that my trial for 'Sedition' is something far more than a personal charge against me. It is, in effect, a trial of the entire population of Jammu and Kashmir.... This treatment of a people as a commodity which can be transferred for hard cash (Through the treaty of Kashmir) has all along been deeply resented by the Kashmir, whether Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. It hurts their national dignity". Due to Abdullah's trial, the infamy of 'the Sale deed' of Amritser, signed a century ago, seeped deep in the minds of Kashmiris.

On September 10, 1946, the court pronounced its judgment and Shaikh Abdullah convicted of treason, was given three and a half years

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71 Ibid.
72 Earlier, Nehru marched into J&K to meet with Abdullah in spite of the Dogra government's order that banned his entry into the state, which ultimately resulted in his arrest. Hamdard, Srinagar, May 22, 1946.
73 Quoted in M.J. Akbar, Kashmir, op. cit; p.93
rigorous imprisonment, and those of his senior colleagues who had made
their escape received terms varying from one to three years. Thus, far
from ending the Dogra rule in the state, the National Conference was left
leaderless and in disarray during the most important period of Kashmir’s
modern history.

The response to the ‘Quit Kashmir movement from in and outside
state was mixed. The political parties within state held rigidly aloof from
the movement. In May the Kisan Mazdoor Conference urged the working
classes not to take part, and on 4th June, the All-State Pundit Conference
sent a telegram to Sardar Patel denouncing ‘Shaikh Abdullah’s fascist and
communal program.’

The Pundits were not even willing to accept that Hari Singh was an
autocrat. Undoubtedly, most of the rightist non-Muslims, particularly
those living in Jammu, who would identify themselves with Dogra state,
were threatened by the call of Quit Kashmir. The Kashmiri Pundit National
Conference leaders criticized Shaikh Abdullah for not consulting the
members of the National Conference Working Committee before launching
the movement. In reality, however, they feared that Shaikh’s ‘efforts in due
course would transfer all political power into the hands of the state
Muslims’. Thus the expediency of association of pundits was exposed.

The Muslim Conference condemned the Quit Kashmir movement and
charged that the National Conference, in collusion with the Congress, was
dividing Muslims in order to perpetuate Hindu hegemony in the state.

74 Bazaz, History of Struggle for Freedom, op. cit; p.265-268. And Durga Das (ed.) Sardar
75 The Tribune, Lahore, dated May 13, 1946.
76 Hamdard, Srinagar, May 15, 1946.
77 Eastern Times, 30 may 1946, press cuttings on the Quit Kashmir Movement, Department
of Information, Srinagar.
78 Choudhry Ghulam Abbas, Kashmakash (Autobiography), Kashmir Studies Foundation,
Some of the party’s more left leaning spirits, such as Shaukat Ali, Qureshi Mohammad Yusuf, Mohammad Saraf and Ghulam Mohammad Mohidin, were overruled by Ghulam Abbas and Yousuf Shah, on Jinnah’s advice.\(^{79}\)

Apparently Jinnah thought that the Muslim Conference was too weak to mount a mass agitation and would gain more through constitutional channels. Jinnah dismissed the movement as the brain child of the “Lumpenproletriat, instigated by foreign elements.”\(^{80}\) It will be in place to mention here that interestingly enough, Muslim League press enthusiastically supported Quit Kashmir movement.\(^{81}\)

As the Darbar’s crackdown intensified over the National Conference, Chudhry Abbas in particular began to think that the policy of non-intervention- giving, as it did, the impression that the Muslim Conference was on the government’s side-might have been a mistake.\(^{82}\) Thus, in July the Muslim Conference put forwards a demand for ‘A Constitutional Assembly which would frame a democratic constitution for a new and free Kashmir’.\(^{83}\) And on August- The day set aside by the League for ‘Direct Action’ in British India- celebrated ‘Azad Kashmir Day’ with calls for a state wide Hartal. This new approach of the Muslim Conference provoked government action and shortly Choudhry Abbas was arrested and he joined in the jail to his one time friend and now the worst political rival, Shaikh Abdullah.\(^{84}\)

His arrest was followed by a clash over the leadership of the Muslim Conference among Choudhry Himidullah, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and Abdul Salam Dalal which ended any chance for the Muslim conference to fill the void left by the national conference.

\(^{79}\) Ian Copland, op. cit; p. 235.
\(^{81}\) \textit{bid.}, p. 369
\(^{82}\) Ian Copland, op. cit.
It will be of some interest to note here that Shaikh Abdullah’s main supporter the Indian National Congress alleged that Abdullah’s movement represented, ‘A marked variation in the policy of the All India States people’s Conference.’ And hence offered only a lukewarm encouragement. Acharya Kriplani, the Congress President, disapproved the movement, calling it a mischievous move. He declared that, “Unless the movement was withdrawn, there was no possibility of a compromise between the National Conference and the Kashmir government”.

Thus the Congress’s indifference not only disproves the allegation of the Muslim League and the Muslim Conference that the Quit Kashmir movement was launched at the behest of the Congress, it also indicated that the National Conference was working independently.

If this was the behaviour of the political parties, the masses by and large received the call of Quit Kashmir with some enthusiasm, thanks to the efforts of some underground leaders like Mohiuddin Karra and Bakhshi Gulam Mohammed, who organized the party carders and succeeded in popularizing the National Conference ideology. A mass of poetry was produced which helped in mobilizing the people. The famous Urdu poet Hafiz Jullandari wrote an elegy lamenting the humiliation that the “Deed of Sale” inflicted. Two of its couplets ran:

"Loot li insaan ki qismat pachattar lakh mein
Bik gayee Kashmir ki Jannat Pachatter lakh mein"

(The fate of human beings was sold for Rs. 75 lakhs/ Kashmir’s paradise was sold for Rs. 75 lakhs.)

The fiery poem ended with these ringing words:

86 Satish Vashistha, Sheikh Abdullah, Then and Now, Maulik Sahitya Prakashan, Delhi, 1968, p.40.
"Haan pachatter lakh mein

Haan pachatter lakh mein"

(Yes, for Rs. 75 lakhs/ yes, for Rs. 75 lakhs.)87

Hence it is clear that on the eve of partition, the National Conference with its socialist program remained the dominant political party in Kashmir. However it was not the only player in the political arena; it faced a strong competition from the Muslim Conference. Compared to 1942, the Muslim Conference was immeasurably stronger in Poonch and Jammu and had picked up considerable support in the Kashmir Valley among the landowning and professional classes and among students enthused with idealism about the prospect of Pakistan.88

However, the absence of any concrete future program and following the fracas between Chudhry Hamidullah and Yusuf Shah prompted Ghulam Mohammad, a business man and a strong supporter of Muslim League to predict that the Muslim Conference might be “almost written off so far [as] Kashmir is concerned.89

Interestingly enough to a large extent this was what happened at the end of first half of 1947, as most of its members who were moved by the prolonged imprisonment of its leaders and disillusioned by the factionalism within the party began to drift towards the National Conference. After Abdullah was released from goal on 29 September and the enthusiasm created by his speeches, the support to the Muslim Conference in the valley was virtually “Null and Void.”90

88 Ian Copland, op. cit., p. 236.
89 Ghulam Mohammad to Jinnah, 2 November 1946, Quaid-i-Azam Papers, file 979.
90 Notes to memo by Khan Ghulam Nabi Gilkar.
CHAPTER VII

Accession

While most of the political leaders were lying in the jail things were changing with an unprecedented speed both within and outside the state. By the end of 1946 it became very clear that the British were all determined to vacate from Indian. The statement made by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Clement Attlee, in the House of Commons and by the Secretary of State, Earl of Listowel, in the House of Lords on 3rd June, 1947 and published in India on the same day which is commonly known as the 'Partition Plan' envisaged the creation of two dominions of India and Pakistan. As regards the Princely States, the statement read, "His Majesty’s Government wish to make it clear that the decisions announced above relate only to British India and that their policy towards Indian States contained in the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 12th May, 1946 remains unchanged." The operative part of this memorandum with regards to further British policy towards the Princely States stated; "when a new fully governing or independent government or governments came into being in British India, His Majesty’s Government’s influence with these Governments will not be such as to enable them to carry out the obligations of paramountcy. Moreover, they can not contemplate that British troops would be retained in India for this purpose. Thus, as a logical sequence and in view of the desires expressed to them on behalf of the Indian States, His Majesty’s Government will cease to exercise the powers of paramountcy. This means that the right of the States which flow from their relationship to the crown will no longer exist and that all the rights surrendered by the States to the paramount power will return

to the States. Political arrangements between the States on one side and the British Crown on the other will thus be brought to an end. This void will have to be filled either by the States entering into a federal relationship with the successor government or governments in British India or failing this, entering into particular political arrangements with it or them."

With the acceptance of the statement of 3rd June, 1947 (partition plan) by the two principal parties of British India- the Congress and the Muslim League- the British Parliament passed Indian Independence Act on 18th July, 1947, which was enacted on the same date after consent by the British Crown. With regard to the States, the Act stated, "As from the appointed day (i.e. 15 August, 1947) the suzerainty of his Majesty over the Indian states lapses..."

While both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League accepted the Partition Plane they, however extended a divergent interpretation with regards to the concept pf paramountcy. The All-India Congress Committee in its meeting on 15 June 1947 declared that "the Committee does not agree with the theory of paramountcy as enunciated and interpreted by the British Government". It went on saying "the relationship between the government of Indian and the states would not be exhausted by lapse of paramountcy. The lapse does not lead to the independence of the states."4

As against this was the precise legislative interpretation made by Jinnah of the consequences of lapse of paramountcy in his 17 June statement. "Constitutionally and legally the Indian States will be independent sovereign states on the termination of paramountcy and they will be free to decide for themselves and to adopt any course they like; it is open to them to

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2 Ibid., Vol. XIII, pp. 237-38
3 Ibid.
join the Hindustan Constituent Assembly or the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, or decide to remain independent."⁵ On 30 July, this view was repeated by Jinnah more categorically. "With the lapse of paramountcy, all Indian States would automatically region their full sovereign and independent status. They are, therefore, free to join either of the two dominions or to remain independent."⁶

Shaikh Abdullah was extremely critical to the provisions made in the Cabinet Mission Plan with regard to the States which had empowered the rulers to take decision and had neglected the rights of the State's people. He suspected that British seemed determined to "perpetuate the slavery" of Stat's people, since the plan had ignored their fate. He threatened that people would "resist active encroachment on their sovereign rights".⁷ Repeating his firm belief in united India and rejecting the Muslim League's two nation theory, Shaikh Abdullah declared that: "We are convinced that the right of self determination to all the nationalities inhabiting India will eliminate the possibility of a constitutional solution on communal lines."⁸ This was to be achieved through territorial redivision of the provinces with reference to the linguistic and cultural homogeneity of the units. These would then become sovereign and the future constitution making body would be composed of representatives of all the units chosen by the unit assemblies. In this proposed federation, each of the units would have the "unfettered right to self determination."⁹ If Shaikh Abdullah was clear about the future of British India he remained undecided about the position of states after the British withdrawal. He, however, linked the freedom of States people to the freedom of people in India: "If all the major political

⁵ Cited in Sisir Gupta, Kashmir: A Study of India Pakistan Relations, Asia publishing House, New Delhi, 1966 p. 48
⁶ Ibid.
⁷ Khidmat, Srinagar, April 24, 1946
⁸ Ibid
⁹ Ibid
parties (in British India) do not agree on a constitutional solution, it leaves the people in Indian States in the clutches of their autocratic rulers. Freedom of princely India will be meaningless without the freedom of Indian India."\(^{10}\)

Undoubtedly this was not a declaration either in favor of India or Pakistan, because, to him the creation of Pakistan was in itself a "hypothetical question". Thus it was useless to "commit my people prematurely to any arrangements" since the future situation still remained unclear.\(^{11}\) He, however, kept his options open that "it will be entirely for the people of Kashmir to decide. They may either choose to remain absolutely independent or join Pakistan, or more significantly, "ask for a corridor in order to join the Government of Hindustan."\(^{12}\)

When finally British decided to divide India on communal lines Shaikh Abdullah was in Jail. He could not have been but shocked by the announcement. The reaction of the National Conference appears on 15 June 1947 in the daily newspapers through a letter written by Mrs. Abdullah, which stated: "No one has been pained more at the recent proposals (of partition) than the people of Kashmir."\(^{13}\)

While the National Conference leadership remained undecided till the eleventh hour about the future position of the State, except that it was made clear that there was no place for an autocratic and feudal political setup, declared social democracy as its goal and remained committed to secularism, its rival political party the Muslim Conference advised Maharaja to declare independence. Its acting President Choudhry Hamidullah told the Praja Sabha on 10 May that if Hari Singh conceded the principle of majority rule the Muslims would 'readily lay down their lives' for him, and on 21 May his Assembly deputy Gulam Ahmad urged the Maharaja to declare

\(^{10}\) Ibid

\(^{11}\) *Khidmat*, Srinagar, May 6, 1946.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) *Hindustan Times*, 15 June 1947.
Kashmir an independent state. Even Gulam Abbas, who claims in his autobiography *Kashmakash* to have been a consistent advocate of the State’s accession to Pakistan, is said to have smuggled a letter out from jail endorsing the Working Committee’s call for independence, and some of his subsequent actions in Pakistan— as when, in 1950, he made a ‘sporting offer’ to Abdullah to send the National Conference cadres to ‘occupy’ Azad Kashmir— lend credibility to his allegation.

When it became known that the British had actually decided to quit and that the subcontinent would be partitioned, with the two wings of Pakistan being carved out of India, the leaders of the two dominions started the process of integrating the States to their side. There followed the mingled process of coercion and persuasions by which the States signed their various instruments with the Indian Union. Leaving out to the little thorn of Junagadh, the only two states in dispute were Kashmir and Hyderabad, one with a Muslim majority population and a Hindu ruler, and other with a Hindu majority population and a Muslim ruler. The Muslim ruler of the predominantly non-Muslim population of Junagadh acceded to Pakistan but had to flee when the state was run over by the Indian Army. “Technically there was nothing to prevent a state from remaining in aloof isolation nor was there any statutory limitation on a state in the middle of India to prevent if from acceding to Pakistan. But it was clear that India could, without force, have reduced its administration to a farce.”

14 Sisir Gupta, op. cit., pp. 94-95. However, M.Y Saraf a member of the Muslim Conference and a supporter of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan makes one to believe that the approach was adopted by the Conference at the behest of Jinnah. M.Y. Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, Vol. II. 1947-1978. pp. 712-713.
17 Ibid., 40
However, by virtue of her geographical situation and size, Kashmir was the one state to which the above considerations did not necessarily apply, and which could therefore conceivably afford to adopt an original approach in the determination of future status. Unlike the state of Hyderabad, which was surrounded by the Indian territory, it stood in isolation, with Pakistan, Indian and international frontiers. In this backdrop Maharaja Hari Singh's desire to be a sovereign was a natural outcome. However, geography was not the only factor to shape the political outlook of the Maharaja. The majority of his subjects were Muslims, but to join Pakistan would mean that the substantial number of Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir might have to flee. Also, although the future rulers of Pakistan had taken the stand that it was for the princes, not the people, of the princely states to decide their future and had given personal assurances to Hari Singh, a Hindu prince's future would be uncertain in an avowedly Islamic country.

Alternatively, an accession to Indian meant the signature of the Maharaja's death warrant so far as his own power was concerned. India's leaders were pledged to secularism and this had enabled the leader of the most popular party in Jammu and Kashmir, Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah, to evolve close ties with the Indian National Congress and especially with Jawaharlal Nehru. But the stated policy of the Congress was that the people of the princely states should determine their future and Nehru, the Maharaja's arch-critic, was to be Prime Minister.

To the natural and human reactions which sought to retain power were added the more subtle persuasions of the occult, and prophecies of a renascence of Rajput power in India under Kashmir leadership were

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whispered around. In particular, Her Highness of Kashmir listened attentively to the extravagant imagination of her Swami.\textsuperscript{19}

But with all fairness Maharaja Hari Singh was more concerned to protect his autocratic monarchy. "Had there been in Kashmir in 1947 a ruler entrenched in the affections of his people with an effective undivided representative government based on popular support, a bid for independence might well have been successful."\textsuperscript{20} The Maharaja might have pulled off independence with the support of Abdullah, but this was not possible in view of the long-standing enmity between them and the feudal atmosphere of the court. He was at loggerheads with the National Conference, whose secular and pluralistic outlook and demand of his virtual abdication caused great anxiety in his mind.

Attractive as the temptations of isolated independence were, it was clear that Maharaja would receive the worst from both the newly created dominions the India and the Pakistan. Pakistan would be plotting to remove the Hindu dynasty from continuing to rule her co-religionists, while the Indian Government through Shaikh Abdullah, would be seeking his downfall as an enemy of their own neighboring progressive democracy.\textsuperscript{21}

After all Kashmir was a matter of ideology for both the leaders of India and Pakistan. In the words of Josef Korbel. "In the minds of Nehru and the Congress, Kashmir is, in miniature, another Pakistan, and if this Muslim nation can be successfully governed by India, then their philosophy of secularism is vindicated. Moreover, it would ease the tension among those forty million Muslims who still find themselves on Indian soil. But conversely, should the Muslim nation of Kashmir reject its present status...."
and by plebiscite accede on the basis of its religion to Pakistan, then religious affinities and arguments of emotion have once more triumphed."\textsuperscript{22}

But more than ideological factor Kashmir was extremely important for other reasons in Nehru's India - security was most prominent one among them. Thus Nehru explained the strategic importance of Kashmir for Indian defenses in his letter to British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, on 25 October: "Kashmir's northern frontiers, as you are aware, run in common with three countries Afghanistan, the U.S.S.R and China. Security of Kashmir, which must depend upon its internal tranquility and existence of stable Government, is \textit{vital to the security of India}, especially since part of southern boundary of Kashmir and India are common. Helping Kashmir therefore is an obligation of \textit{national interest to India}.\textsuperscript{23}(Emphasis added)

Even prior to this Nehru wrote a very lengthy Note to Mountbatten before the viceroy's visit to Srinagar (which he did shortly) in which he was more categorical about his scheme of things. In this Note Nehru not only elaborated India's claims to the State, it also stressed the need to avoid any move to push Kashmir into Pakistan, though this contradicted the assurance conveyed by Mountbatten that India would not object to Kashmir joining Pakistan. Nehru was clear that this could be done by impressing the Maharaja to remove R.C. Kak, who was known for his fascination for independence and close links with the Muslim League leaders,\textsuperscript{24} and replacing him by a democratic government headed by Shaikh Abdullah. "What happens in Kashmir, is of course of the first importance to India as a whole ....... because of the great strategic importance of that frontier state." Nehru went on, "there is no doubt that Shaikh Abdullah himself is (by) far the most outstanding leader in Kashmir .... The National Conference has

\textsuperscript{24} M.C Mahajan, \textit{Accession of Kashmir to India: the Inside Story} (Sholpur Institute of Public Affairs, 1950), p.2
stood for and still stands for Kashmir joining the Constituent Assembly of India ... If any attempt is made to push Kashmir into the Pakistan Constituent Assembly there is likely to be much trouble because the National Conference is not in favour of it and the Maharaja’s position would also become very difficult. The normal and obvious course appears to be for Kashmir to join the Constituent Assembly of India. This will satisfy both the popular demand and the Maharaja’s wishes. It is absurd to think that Pakistan would create trouble if this happens.”

Nehru was forgetting that Shaikh Abdullah’s decision to join constituent assembly if people and not rulers were allowed to decide, was for an undivided India. Since with the Congress’s nod Pakistan was to be created, Shaikh was yet to make his mind.

While Nehru’s stand remained that Kashmir should accede to India but only after Shaikh Abdullah was released, his deputy, in the Congress party, Sardar Patel wants Kashmir’s accession with the help of Maharaja and without attaching any condition for Shaikh’s release. “I fully appreciate the difficult and delicate situation in which your state has been placed,” thus wrote Patel to the Maharaja on 3 July 1947, “but as a sincere friend and well wisher of the state, I wish to assure you that the interest of Kashmir lies is joining the Indian Union and its Constituent Assembly without any delay.... In free India you cannot isolate yourself, and you must make friends with the leaders of free India who want to be friends with you.”

The Mountbatten, who was still Viceroy of British Government, visited Kashmir, from 18th to 23 June, 1947 possibly at the behest of Congress leaders, particularly Nehru, to defuse Maharaja’s idea of declaring independence and to prepare him to accede to any of the two dominions before 15th August 1947. He was also supposed to motivate Maharaja to

25 Transfer Documents, op. cit., No. 229, pp. 442-448
26 Durga Das, (ed.) Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, Navajivan Trust, Ahmadabad, pp. 32-34.
release Shaikh Abdullah, whom Nehru needed for coming political battles on Kashmir. But to Nehru’s utter dismay, Mountbatten’s “visit to Kashmir from my [Nehru’s] particular point of view was not a success and things continued as before.” The viceroy had neither succeeded in securing an assurance that Hari Singh would opt for either India or Pakistan before 15 August, nor did he secure the release of Abdullah, on which Nehru had laid so much emphasis.

For Nehru, who would “prefer” being in Kashmir then to be Prime Minister, and who was worried for Kashmir to an extent that “he practically is not sleeping at night.” “Kashmir has become a first priority” and he decided to visit Kashmir himself on 4th August, 1947 “to take up the cudgels on behalf of his friend and for the freedom of the people.” He was persuaded by Mountbatten and Sardar Patel against his intentions and instead arrangements were made for Gandhi’s visit to the state after the initial reluctance shown by the Maharaja and his Prime Minister.

The Gandhi went on his only visit to Kashmir in the first week of August. In accordance with the assurance to Mountbatten and Kak, there were no public speeches or any open political propaganda. He held prayer meetings in Srinagar which had been attended by thousands. He spend much time in the company of Begam Abdullah. And had talks with the Maharaja and his Prime Minister, Kak. Later he reported to Nehru and Patel:

28 Transfer Document, XII, op. cit., No. 249, p. 368
31 Transfer Document, XII, op. cit., p 368
32 This incidentally was not the only visit to the Maharaja by leading personalities on the Indian side on the eve of the transfer of power. There were also Kashmiri excursions by Achariya Kriplani, The then President of Congress, and the Sikh rulers of Patiala, Kapurthala and Faridkot, states which had decided to accede to India.
"During the two interviews with the Prime Minister (Kak) I told him about his unpopularity among the people... He wrote to the Maharaja... That on a sign from him he would gladly resign (while he did soon after).

I met (the Maharaja and the Maharani). Both admitted that with the lapse of British paramountcy the true paramountcy of the people of Kashmir would commence. However much they might wish to make the join to the (Indian) Union, they would have to make the choice in accordance with the wishes of the people...." Gandhi who supported the stand of the National Conference that people should be given the right to decide their future was however, optimistic that their choice will be in India's favour. He continued, "Bakhshi (Gulam Mohammad, Abdullah's deputy) was most sanguine that the result of the free vote of the people... would be in favour of Kashmir joining the (Indian) Union provided of course that Shaikh Abdullah and his co-prisoners were released, all bans removed and the present Prime Minister was not in power,"

Gandhi's final observations about the State were more interesting and revealing too; "the state had a predominantly Muslim population. But he saw that Shaikh Sahab had fired Kashmiris with local patriotism... they had one language, culture and, so far as he could see, they were one people. He could not distinguish readily between a Pundit and a Kashmiri Musalman..... common sense dictated that the will of the Kashmiris should decode the future of Kashmir and Jammu. The sooner it was done the better. How the will of the people would be decided was a fair question. He hoped the question would be decided between the two dominions, the Maharaja Sahib and the Kashmiris. If all the four could come to a joint decision, much trouble would be avoided." 

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34 Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, op. cit., pp. 357-358.
Gandhi was speaking true about the valley people at least but in Jammu the deference between the Hindus and the Muslims was more then visible by now due to communal violence in Punjab. Besides Gandhi’s assessment that Kashmir was a unique identity was an ample proof that it was as much distant from India as it was to the Dominion of Pakistan which was about to come into existence. More than that, his suggestion that there should be a quadratic dialogue to solve the Kashmir issue was never practiced till the problem became very complex. The immediate visible outcome of Mr. Gandhi’s visit was the removal of Ram Chandra Kak, who was as we saw known for his pro-independence stance, and he was replaced by General Janak Singh, a close relative of Maharaja, as the Prime Minister. Whether Gandhiji had any impact on the Maharaja’s future decision to sign the document of accession of India is unclear, what is clear is that some sections in the Kashmiri Muslims and not less the Muslim League became suspicious of Congress attempts at deciding the Kashmiri’s future.36

While these remained the objectives and strategy of the Congress till independence, the objectives of the Muslim League were not different, though its strategy was. Jinnah categorically rejected the one nation theory of India and that “India beyond all doubt possesses, a deep underlying fundamental unity”. For Jinnah, Islam and Hinduism “were not religions in the strict sense of the word but are, in fact, different and distinct social orders, and it is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can ever evolve a common nationality and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits...”37 These two uncompromisable and irrevocably opposed positions of the Congress and the Muslim League created a conflict

36 See Khidmat, Srinagar, May 6, 1947, and also Joseph Korbel, Danger in Kashmir, op. cit., 59-60
in which Kashmir became both symbol and battle ground. Since Kashmir was a Muslim dominated area, the Muslim League thought it would claim Kashmir’s accession with the dominion of Pakistan as its moral right.

Kashmir’s accession to the Jinnah’s Pakistan was also important for other reasons most important was of course, defense and economic. As general Mohammad Akbar Khan, who is said to have led the tribal invasion in Kashmir in October 1947, pointed out, “one glance at the map was enough to show that Pakistan’s military security would be seriously jeopardized if Indian troops came to be stationed along Kashmir’s western borders.... We would remain permanently exposed to a threat of such magnitude that our independence would never be a reality.” Thus for the Muslim League, keeping Kashmir away from India was an, “absolute necessity for (Pakistan’s) separate existence”.

Besides, Kashmir was also important to Pakistan’s agricultural economy. Four of the five rivers in west Pakistan (the Indus, Jehlem, Chenab, and Ravi) originated in and across the mountain reaches of Jammu and Kashmir, and the fifth (Satluj and Beas combined) flowed through Punjab, bordering Jammu and Kashmir on its southern flank.

If Kashmir was this much important for Pakistan, it is surprising to see the Muslim League and its supporter the Muslim Conference did not ask the Maharaja to accede to Pakistan until as late as July 25, 1947. On the contrary they urged him to declare independence, promising full support. It is not that Jinnah had no interest in Kashmir; he simply took it far granted that the idea of Pakistan had swept over Kashmir as it had over the rest of India. There was another equally important reason for the adaptation of this approach. Jinnah was not looking Kashmir in isolation but in the

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39 Ibid. p.10
broader policy which he adopted viz-i-viz the Indian States. If Nehru was obsessed with Kashmir, as we saw earlier, Jinnah’s obsession was for the state of Hyderabad who’s majority population was Hindu but its ruler as Muslim. Jinnah considered it politically convenient to promote the rights of rulers in the states to decide their future, as we have discussed in the earlier pages. Also Jinnah would not have been unmindful of the rift between the Maharaja and the Congress particularly its Prime Ministerial candidate, Nehru. Thus by accepting the rights of rulers, Jinnah wants to get both Hyderabad and Kashmir.

Unmindful of the happenings in British India and with the time limit for accession running out, the Maharaja remained in indecision, and finally three days before the transfer of power, Kashmir Government announced its intention of signing a standstill agreement with both Pakistan and India. On 12 August his Government sent telegrams to New Delhi and Karachi proposing standstill agreements that would assure that arrangements for trade, travel, communications and other services would continue as with British India. Pakistan which inherited most of the links, agreed but India asked for time to discuss the details and, in fact, never signed such an agreement. Joseph Korbel saw India’s reluctance as evidence that New Delhi felt certain that the state was already in the bag.\footnote{Joseph Korbel, op. cit., p. 64.} It could equally be interpreted as a single to Hari Singh that India would not accept the status quo indefinitely.

Besides this there was another last hour development at around this time with far reaching implications on future course of events. One of the decisions taken by the Boundary Commission appointed to draw a line on
the map through Punjab "on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non Muslims" and also by taking into "account other factors" (which were not defined) proved highly controversial and also crucial in determining the future of Jammu and Kashmir, which was outside its (commission's) scope. This concerned Gurdaspur district, which adjoined Jammu. The Commission divided the Muslim majority district and awarded the three eastern Tehsils to India, thus providing road access to Jammu which would not have been taken otherwise. Pakistan protested that the award was 'political' and not judicial and raised its fingers against Mountbatten and Nehru. Mountbatten's last personal report as Viceroy further strengthened the doubt of Pakistani authorities. He reported, "There are thus no states outstanding beyond Kashmir where the Maharaja has at least decided to sack his Dewan, Kak. He now talks of holding a referendum to decide whether to join Pakistan or India, provided that the Boundary Commission gave him land communications between Kashmir and India. It appears; therefore as if this great problem of the state has been satisfactorily solved within the last three weeks of British rule." Pakistan according to Alester Lamb, "felt a profound sense of betrayal. It was understandable that some of them should begin to contemplate unorthodox, and unofficial, courses of action."

As it was the strategic importance of the link demonstrated some ten weeks later. "Had the Gurdaspur district not been awarded to India," Writes

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43 Ibid. pp- 112-116. Even M.J. Akbar who supported Indian position on Accession has stated categorically, though without supporting documentation, that "during private meetings, he (Nehru) persuaded Mountbatten to leave this Gurdaspur link in India hands. M.J. Akbar Kashmir, op. cit., p.98.

44 *Transfer Documents* XII, No. 489, op. cit.

Lord Birdwood, "India certainly would never have fought a war in Kashmir."\textsuperscript{46}

In the meantime, India became independent and Pakistan came into existence on August 14-15, 1947. The Maharaja who had cherished dreams for an independent Kashmir under his own authority, entered the era of independence for all intents and purposes as the ruler of a sovereign territory, since he had not acceded to either India or Pakistan. But very soon he was to realize that without the popular support independence was impossibility. His feudal wisdom could not allow him to reconcile with the popular political parties within the state to create social acceptability for his independence plans. Things started to go awry from this point.

Between August and October, a major local revolt against the Maharaja's authority developed among Muslims in the North-western Poonch area of Jammu. This campaign which was led by Sardar Mohammad Ibrahim Khan was undoubtedly provoked by the Dogra oppression. A report on the revolt by Richard Symonds, a Quaker social worker, recalled previous accounts of the manner in which the Dogra dynasty taxed its subject: "There was tax on every hearth and every window, every cow, buffalo and sheep was taxed and even every wife. Finally, the \textit{Zaildari} tax was introduced to pay for the cost of taxation, and Dogra troops were billeted on the Poonchis to enforce collection."\textsuperscript{47} By the middle of October the revolt was receiving unofficial support from Pakistan.\textsuperscript{48} Hari Singh who claimed that elements in Pakistan Government were activity aiding this revolt,\textsuperscript{49} to which his forces responded with reprisals against the area’s Muslim population at large- but only to intensify the movement. Many of the rebels maintained that they ‘would never have joined such a rash

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{The Statesman} (Calcutta), 4 February 1948, also quoted by Korbal, op. cit, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{48} Birdwood, op. cit., p. 50.
\textsuperscript{49} White Paper on Jammu and Kashmir, op cit. and Ibid.
enterprise but for the folly of the Dogra’s who burnt whole villages where only a single family was involved in the revolt. “50

Meanwhile, the communal situation rapidly worsened in North India. Hindu refugees fleeing systematic atrocities in western Punjab and the Frontier province arrived in Jammu51, and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh or RSS (the group which forms the ideological and organizational core of India’s Hindu nationalist movement) in connivance with the Maharaja’s police seized this opportunity to massacre and expel tens of thousands of Muslims from Jammu’s eastern districts, 52 probably with the objective of changing the communal “composition of the population by converting the Muslim majority into a minority.”53 While the participants in these movements may not have planned on acceding to Pakistan, the passions unleashed by the atrocities committed by the State authorities had the immediate effect of pushing all hither to nationalist or uncommitted Muslims into the pro-Pakistan camp54 much to the anxiety of the Congress leaders particularly the prime-minister Nehru.

50 The Statesman, op. cit and also cited by Ian Copland, op. cit., pp. 244-245.
51 Sir Evan Jenkins, the Governor of Punjab in his Fortnightly Report mentioned as early as on June 29, 1946 to Viceroy Wovell: “Punjab feelings on Kashmir affairs normally follows communal rather then party lines. The Muslims mistrust and dislike Maharaja and his government, and sympathies with popular or nationalist movements within the State, the Hindus on the other hand respect the Maharaja as great Hindu prince, and are prepared to justify action on his part which they would think quit unjustifiable in British India or in a Muslim State.” Cited in Lioner Carter (ed.), Punjab Politics: 3 March-31 May 1947: At the Abyss, Manohar, New Delhi.
53 Liaquat Ali Khan to Clement Attlee, 25 November 1947, in ibid. Also The Times (London), 10 October 1947, reporting its correspondent’s allegation that “323700 Muslims” had been “systematically exterminated”. The census reports also reveal that the Muslim population of Jammu dropped (as a result of emigration, genocide and other factors) from 61 percent to 38 percent between 1941 and 1961.
54 Ian Copland, Abdullah Factor, op. cit.p. 245.
Pakistan, encouraged at the popular level, tried to put pressure on Maharaja’s administration to accede to Pakistan. In September supplies of commodities ran short in Kashmir as the Pakistan blockaded the Rawalpandi road in retaliation for alleged Kashmir Dogra raids into Sialkot. Thus there emerged a bitterness at the official level between the Government of Pakistan and the Kashmir Government, by now having series of new Prime Ministers after Maharaja had sacked (term used by Mountbatten) Pundit Kak.55

India alarmed by the raised stakes of Pakistan in Kashmir suddenly started working on different fronts.56 While Prime Minister Nehru remained adamant to his demand for Shaikh Abdullah’s release, his deputy Sardar Patel along with his other colleagues- Defense Minister Baldev Singh and his own deputy V.P. Menon- would start strengthening Maharaja’s hands and working on improving the land communication between Kashmir and India. The reasons for this urgency are contained in an alarming letter which Nehru wrote to Patel on 27 September 1947. “It is obvious to me from the many reports I have received that the situation there (in Kashmir) is a dangerous and deteriorating one. The Muslim League in the Punjab and the NWFP are making preparations to enter Kashmir in considerable numbers... I understand that the Pakistan strategy is to infiltrate into Kashmir now and to take some big action as soon as Kashmir is more or less isolated because of the coming winter .... Whether this strategy succeeds or not depends up on the forces apposed to it.” Nehru continued, “I rather doubt if the

55 Documentation about Pakistan’s economic blockade and the threats and counter threats between the two governments are carried in the White Paper, op. cit., part I, items 2 to 20.

56 Quit surprisingly, V.P Menon recalls about India’s inactive role after Independence in Kashmir, “Our hands were already full and, if truth be told, I for one had simply no time to think of Kashmir”. V.P Menon, The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1985, p. 395.
Maharaja and his state forces can meet the situation by themselves and without popular help.”

“It becomes important, therefore, that the Maharaja should make friends with the National Conference so that there might be this popular support against Pakistan.” Thus, Nehru wants Patel “to take some action in this matter to force the pace and to turn events in the right direction. We have definitely a great asset in the National Conference provide it is properly handled. It would be pity to lose this. Shaikh Abdullah had repeatedly given assurances of willing to cooperate and of being opposed to Pakistan; also to abide by my advice. I would again add time is the essence of the business and things must be done in a way so as to bring about the accession of Kashmir to the Indian Union as rapidly as possible with the cooperation of Shaikh Abdullah.”

The immediate effect of Indian persuasion was that Maharaja made his mind to free Shaikh Abdullah, more so because he saw things going out of control even within his state due to Poonch uprising and riots in Jammu as already mentioned. He sent his brother in law, Thakur Nachint Chand, to see Abdullah in Badambagh, to which he had been moved from jail, to patch up his differences with the Maharaja. Finally Shaikh Abdullah was released on September 29 after he assured Maharaja “the fullest and loyal support of myself and my organization.” Abdullah’s release has been termed as conspiracy by Pakistan and her supporters in view of the fact that the Muslim Conference leaders were not released though they were arrested

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57 Durga Das, Correspondence, I, op. cit., pp. 45-47.
for technical reasons. However, Abdullah’s pronouncements which followed surprised both India and Pakistan if they were expecting that he was in favour of Kashmiris accession to India.

At his release, The Times, reported about his complete dominance of the valley: “Shaikh Abdullah has lost none of his popularity. His recent release from prison was celebrated with huge land and water processions.” It was despite that it was “believed that he might well influence Kashmir to join India.” The report reasoned that it was because of “his demand for progressive reform.” Even Ian Copland concluded after his detailed study of political developments in Kashmir, at the time, that “clearly, the NC (National Conference was) the dominant political party in Kashmir.” It is not surprising that Shaikh Abdullah was looked by majority of the Kashmiri people as the only hope in the most testing days of their history.

Abdullah lost no time in reasserting his political creed. In his first speech at Hazooribagh on 3 October 1947, which was attended by around 100,000 people, largest in the freedom movement, he promptly began a campaign for popular government and communal harmony, which he said must have priority before deciding which dominion to join: “when I went into prison, I took a last look at undivided India. Today it has been broken in two fragments. We the people of Kashmir must now see to it that our long cherished dream of freedom, welfare and progress. No decision however is possible while we are slaves. It is, therefore, imperative to set up, without delay, a representative Government which chalks out a plan to safeguard the

61 Copland, op. cit. p. 237.
62 Korbal, op. cit.
rights and interests of the people of the state. 'Freedom before Accession' should become our resounding slogan.'"63

If these comments were tongue-in-cheek, his comments on the next day were clearer at least about the question of accession. "The problem facing the people of Jammu and Kashmir state now is whether we should join the Indian Union or Pakistan or remain independent..... Pundit Nehru is my best friend and I hold Gandhiji in great reverence. It is also a fact that the Congress helped our movement to a great extent. But in spite of all this my personal conviction will not stand in the way of taking an independent decision in favour of one or the other dominion."

While elaborating on the criteria for making such decision he said, "Our choice for joining the Indian Union or Pakistan would be based on the welfare of 40 lakhs of people living in Jammu and Kashmir. But even if we join Pakistan we will never believe in the two nation theory which is responsible for so much of poison in the country today...... I assure the Hindus and Sikhs that as long as I am alive their life and honour will be quite safe."64 These comments should have been more disturbing for Nehru than to any one else.

It will be of some interest to ask what the will of the people in the state was. Although there is no categoric answer to this complex question, still taking in view some assumptions a broader picture could be developed. There is no denying the fact that accept a few progressive individuals - Prem Nath Bazaz was the one- non-Muslim minority of the state was not in favour of Kashmir's accession with Pakistan - a few were not even in favour of India. The Muslim majority of the state was not unanimous over the issue. The majority of the Muslims in Jammu province were the Muslims Conference was enjoying some representative character (see previous

64 *Hindustan Times*, 6 October, and ibid.
chapter), were more inclined towards Pakistan particularly after the riots in the province as already mentioned. In the Kashmir Valley were Shaikh Abdullah's leadership was undisputed and his popularity touching sky, people were divided regarding the question of accession. Many National Conference followers acknowledged Abdullah as their leader 'up to Kohala'- that is locally- and Jinnah beyond. According to Fida Mohammad Hassnain, an eminent historian of the valley and a contemporary, it was a common practice for the followers of both the National Conference and the Muslim Conference and other parties in the valley to have photographs of Shaikh Abdullah, Jinnah and Allama Iqbal hang side by side on the walls of their shops and houses.65 The Valley Muslims were undoubtedly, as Showkat Hayyat Khan a staunch follower of Jinnah wrote to him on July 11, 1947 "torn between two loyalties, one to Pakistan and the other to Abdullah...... they pray for Pakistan and for the release of Abdullah in the same breath. If Abdullah fights against Pakistan it would be a very hard task for these poor people and God knows what the result is going to be." 66 Not surprisingly then the Kashmiri poet Gulam Ahmad Mahjoor Mahjoor, and the most articulate member of the National Conference, wrote a poem in October 1947 that began, "through I would like to sacrifice my life and body for India, yet my heart is in Pakistan."67 Another National Conference worker Bahar Shahabadi wrote around the same period:

'From all side I am assaulted,

The English, the Indians, the Afghans, the Pakistan.

To whom should I complain, to whom should I tell my fate?

The poem continued:

If I agree with one, the second will be angry, the third will impale me on
The sword, and the fourth and fifth strangle me.

To whom should I complain, to whom should I tell my fate? 68

It is important to mention here that after the tribal raids in Kashmir a large number of masses in valley who were earlier pro-Pakistan turned against Kashmir’s accession to that country. Thus, it is clear that people remained divided in the state regarding the question of accession. Not surprisingly then some outsider individuals and organizations too made divergent conclusions regarding the state of affairs in Kashmir. Some of them, including Congress leaders, believed that Kashmiris were predominantly pro-Indian. Nehru was sure that National Conference- ‘the most wide spread and popular’ party-would carry the State for India.69 Likewise, Major St. John, the British Political Officer in charge of Hazara district, concluded that ‘Srinagar at least’ would vote to join India.70 While General Scott, commanding officer of the Kashmir State Forces before accession found support for Pakistan to be “tepid or non-existent.”71 Indeed even the Pakistanis conceded privately that, given the superior organization of the National Conference their chances of winning an easily referendum were poor. 72

68 For full text of this poem see Zutshi, op. cit., pp. 310-311.
69 Nehru’s note of 17 June to Mountbatten as mentioned op. cit.
70 Commonwealth Relations Office Note on interview with St. John (n.d.). Indian Office Records L/PES/13/1845 B.
71 L. Grafferty Smith, HC Pakistan, to Philip Noel- Baker, Secretary for Common Wealth Relations, 9 October 1947, ibid.
72 According to Bakshi Gulam Mohammad, the Pakistan leaders would agree to referendum only if Sheikh Abdullah pledged to campaign in favour of Pakistan, Sisir Gupta Kashmir, op. cit., p. 108.
There were others who saw things very differently. The British Resident in state in his last report concluded that the bulk of the population, "if consulted, would probably favour Pakistan, especially (those living in the) Mirpur, Poonch and Muzzafarabad areas (s)."\(^{73}\) In the same way a British diplomat, H.S. Stephenson informs that unless India "rushed in" troops, Kashmir would shortly "fall like a rip plum" to the Karachi regime.\(^{74}\)

This was not all. Most of the observers were looking for third option. They believe that if given an opportunity majority of the population in the state "would prefer independence to any other solution."\(^{75}\) Shaikh Abdullah as a mass leader would not have been unmindful about the complexity of the situation and the sensitivities of the masses in the state. Thus, despite his past connections with the Congress and Abdullah's friendship with the Indian Prime Minister, it is probable he was telling the truth when he declared that "if the people decide to accede to Pakistan, I will be the first one to sign my name."\(^{76}\) A clear indication that he was not 'Frontier Nehru' indeed an English journalist who talked to Abdullah shortly after his release formed the impression that he was now in favour of Kashmir joining Pakistan.\(^{77}\) At any rate Shaikh Abdullah followed a realistic approach by initiating a protracted dialogue with both India and Pakistan.

A deputation of Punjab Muslim League reached Kashmir to hold talks with Shaikh Abdullah and other Kashmiri leaders. Its members include Main Iftikhar-ud-Din, Brigadier Habib-ur-Rehman, Dr. Mohammad Din

\(^{73}\) Copland, op. cit., p. 243.

\(^{74}\) Ibid.


\(^{77}\) Copland, op. cit., p. 241; Even G.W. Choudhary asserts, though without any evidence, that when the National Conference met in annual session in mid-August 1947 "the majority of its members were reported to have favored accession to Pakistan" L.A Sherwani (ed.), *Pakistan Resolution to Pakistan 1940-1947: a Selection of Documents*, Karachi, 1969, p. 60.
Tasir and Shaikh Sadiq Hassan, most of them of Kashmiri stock. They stressed that Shaikh Abdullah should favour Kashmiris immediate accession to Pakistan. But Shaikh was in no hurry; ‘Give us time to put out the fires and restore the peace. Our decision will affect our future generations’ was his reply. The ‘felt much disappointed’ to this reply and invited Abdullah to met Jinnah personally. Abdullah accepted the invitation and as a follow up send two of his lieutenants, G.M. Sadiq and Bakhshi Gulam Mohammad to hold talks with Pakistan authorities later Sadiq revealed about the talks on 10 December 1947, “Before the invasion, the National Conference deputed me to approach the Pakistan Government at the highest level to recognize the democratic rights of the Kashmiri people for self determination and abide by the sovereign will of a free people on the question of free association with either of the Dominions. I met Pakistan’s Prime Minister and other Ministers, but it was of no use.” Most probably because Pakistan wants the National Conference’s pledge to support her in case of any referendum.

The attempts made by the two parties to develop a rapprochement between Shaikh Abdullah and Mr. Jinnah thus, failed because, as Lord Birdwood put it, “both being men conscious of their own position and importance, neither could bring himself to make the first move.”

It is important to mention here that talks between the Pakistan official Major A.S.B. Shah (Joint secretary of the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Kashmir Government also failed around the same period. Seeing these developments Main Iftikharudin concluded that a peaceful

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78 Sheikh Abdullah, Aatish-i-Chainar, pp. 393-395.
82 Lord Birdwood, op. cit., p. 65.
settlement of the Kashmir question was unlikely and suggested that Pakistan Government should actively provide material help to the Poonch rebels in order to get Kashmir's accession.84

While talks were going on with Pakistan, Shaikh Abdullah himself went to Delhi at an invitation by Prime Minister Nehru. He was accorded a warm reception and he stayed at Nehru’s official residence. Here he again pleaded for time to consider which dominion the state should join. "In the meantime," he hoped that his friends at Delhi "could help us to attain our freedom from autocracy."85

That was Shaikh Abdullah at a moment in history when a word from him would have easily taken Kashmir into Pakistan, when Sardar Patel would have gladly allowed Kashmir to go if that would ensure easy assimilation of Hyderabad and Junagadh into India.86 So what, then, did Shaikh Abdullah really want? If one will take in to consideration the above mentioned statement of G.M. Sadiq, Abdullah's first preference was for independence, qualified, perhaps, by a form of 'free association' with India and Pakistan. Shaikh Abdullah made his preference more clear later on when he told Michael Davidson of the London Observer Foreign News service in May 1949, 'Independence would be best? 'Accession to either side can not bring peace we want to live in friendship with both the dominions'.87

Shaikh Abdullah was most clear in his 'secret' talk with the United States Ambassador Loy Henderson in Srinagar, which was reported to the State Department on September 29, 1950, in cables. Abdullah was "Vigorous in restating that in his opinion it (Kashmir) should be independent; that

overwhelming majority populations desired this independence.... Kashmir... people had language and cultural background (of) their own. There Hindus by custom and tradition widely differed from Hindus (in) India, and outlook and background; their Muslims also quite different from Muslims Pakistan. Fact was that population Kashmir homogeneous in spite of presence of Hindu minority.” He was conscious that “independent Kashmir could exist only in case it had friendship with both of India and Pakistan; in case both these countries had friendly relations with each other.”88 In the end, however Shaikh Abdullah was left with no choice: with the tribals thundering towards Srinagar, it was a case of India or death.89

At the time when Shaikh Abdullah was still busy in his dialogue with New Delhi and Karachi and was fighting for a responsible Government within the state, several thousand bellicose Pathan tribesmen from the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), led by a few former Indian National Army (INA) officers and supported with logistics and transport by the Chief Minister of that province, invaded the Kashmir valley, ostensibly to liberate their coreligionists from the ‘Hindu’ Yoke.90 The lightning speed with which tribals were proceeding towards Srinagar created panic in the state administration and among the local population particularly in the rank and file of the National Conference. It is interesting to note here that the slogan of the raiders was reported to be: “Down with the National Conference and Shaikh Abdullah.”91

89 Copland, op. cit. p. 242.
90 I have deliberately left out a detailed discussion on the tribal invasion as it is now a forgone conclusion that Pakistan Government was ‘unofficially’ involved in the exercise. For details see, Alester Lamb, Kashmir; Akbar, Kashmir; Lord Birdwood, Two Nations and Kashmir; Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins, Freedom at Midnight, Vikas Publishing House, 1997; Hodson, Great Divide and Korbel, Danger in Kashmir.
91 Secret Eighth Meeting of the Defence Committee Held at 11. a. m. on Saturday, the 25 October, 1947.
Shaikh Abdullah gave instructions for the forming of resistance squads and inter-communal bodies for the maintenance of peace in rural areas as well as the urban regions of the Valley. A National Militia was organized in Srinagar, with a four-foiled objective: to resist the tribals, to boast the moral of the people; to maintain communal peace and to defect saboteurs and fifth columnists. 92 By and large it succeeded in its objectives.

The Maharaja’s forces and administration proved no match to the tribal raiders who were by now joined by Poonch rebels and some of the state forces within a week, the tribesmen had taken Baramulla, the town that is the north-west gateway to the Valley and advanced to within 20 miles of Srinagar. In this context of confusion and chaos, panic-stricken Maharaja requested the Indian Government for military help which she had already promised prior to the tribal invasion. 93 But Mountbatten (who was by now Governor General Indian Dominion) “urged that it would be dangerous to send in any troops unless Kashmir has first offered to accede.”94 And before any such accession would be accepted it was made “clear to the Maharaja that his Government must be carried on in future according to the popular will and that Shaikh Abdullah charged with the formation of an interim government."95

The National Conference’s slogan “freedom before accession” was rendered irrelevant in view of tribal invasion and a possible military intervention by India. Thus, Shaikh Abdullah and his party decided to throw in their lot with India because as Abdullah, later put it that it would

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92 Abdullah, Aatish-i-Chinar, pp. 413-414.
93 There was a dramatic improvement in the relations between New Delhi and Dogra Government after Mehar Chand Mahajan, previously a member of Punjab Boundary Commission, who was formally appointed as Prime Minister on 15, October 1947. For further details see Durga Das, Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, Vol. I.
be preferable for Kashmir to go India than to Pakistan if a choice had to be made. "It would be disastrous for Kashmiris to be brought under control of government with medieval Koranic outlook." 96 This was a secular Kashmiri nationalist speaking. He preferred India because of its secular ideals at a time when he was the most popular leader of Kashmir and when popular opinion was against his decision to accede to India as Indra Gandhi informed Nehru on May 31, 1948.97 Nehru knew also that the Shaikh had waded through blood to shake hands with India. Thus in the instrument of accession, which was signed subsequently between the Maharaja and the Government of India. Shaikh Abdullah remained Nehru's prime concern.

The Instruments of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir was signed by Maharaja Hari Singh on 26 October 1947 and the accession was accepted by the Government of India on 27 October.98 Shaikh Abdullah provided "fullest support" to the accession and later, on 5 January, 1951 he said in the Constituent Assembly of Kashmir: "since the people's representatives themselves sought an alliance, the Government of India showed readiness to accept it". On another occasion he said, "Both the Maharaja and the people of Kashmir requested the Government of India to accept our accession." 99 And why shouldn't he throw his full weight behind the accession? He got a fear deal one can expert in the prevailing conditions when everything happened as he put it "due to the force of circumstances."100

96 Foreign Relations of the United States, op. cit.
97 Still later Patel informed Nehru that, "it appears that both the National Conference and Sheikh Sahib are losing their hold on the people of the valley and are becoming somewhat unpopular.... In such circumstances... Plebiscite is unreal." Patel to Nehru, 3 July, 1950, Durga Das, p. 317 Vol. I,
98 Aelester Lamb disagreed that the Maharaja had signed the Instrument of Accession on 26 October 1947.
100 The Testament of sheikh Abdullah, New Delhi, 1974, p. 36.
Shaikh Abdullah got three crucial points through the accession Viz, control over state administration, a provisional accession and its limited character- accession was made only over three subject i.e. defense, external affair and communications. The references in the Maharaja's letter to his desire to call upon Shaikh Abdullah to from an interim government and the expression of the Governor General's "satisfaction" at this in his letter were evidences of the conditions under which the accession was accepted.\textsuperscript{101} Not surprisingly the Maharaja made an order on October 30, 1947 appointing Shaikh Abdullah as "the head of the administration with power to deal with the emergency."

Besides by the instrument of accession, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir accepted only three subjects as mentioned above, as ones on which the dominion legislature "may make laws for the state."\textsuperscript{102} It is quit probable that a prior understanding was made between Nehru and Shaikh Abdullah to grant the state autonomy in its internal matters considering fear of the state's population, particularly its Muslims that they would be lost in the vastness of India. "I thought," Shaikh said," that if I assured the Muslims that there would be no interference from India in the internal affairs of Kashmir, they (sic) would be mollified."\textsuperscript{103} Accordingly, in October 1949, India's Constituent Assembly inserted a special provision in the India Constitution, Article 306-A extending such autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir.

While accepting the Maharaja accession, it was made clear from the outset that its finality was strictly conditional on "a reference to the people of the state," as Mountbatten put it while accepting the instrument of

\textsuperscript{101} The text of the letters exchanged between the Maharaja and Lords Mountbatten and the Instrument of Accession as set out in the \textit{Government of India's White Paper on Jammu and Kashmir 1948}, as op. cit.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{The Testament}, op. cit., pp. 40-41.
accession. Shortly afterwards Nehru declared on 2 November his government’s ‘pledge’ to ‘hold a referendum under international auspices such as the United Nations to determine whether the people wished to join India or Pakistan. For Shaikh Abdullah this provision was significant in two ways. One, it was according to his stand that people and not the Maharaja had the right to confirm the accession. And second through this provision there was an escape route if at any point Indian Government fails to fulfill their commitments.

The word ‘provisional’ occurred in most official documents of the time including the Government of India’s White Paper of 1948; at some places the word “conditional” was used. Not surprisingly on January 31, 1948 Hari Singh threatened to “withdraw the accession that I have made to the Indian Union.” Even Kashmir was not yet considered an integral part of self-conceived notions of either India or Pakistan. In November 1947, Sardar Patel (in the presence of Nehru) virtually offered to swap Kashmir for Hyderabad.

At the time of accession, neither the provisional aspect nor the concepts of a plebiscite were considered to be any problem. Shaikh Abdullah’s commitment to India was beyond question. Initially it was not

105 Pandit Nehru’s Broadcast from New Delhi on November 2, Ibid. pp. 52-54.
106 Durga Das, Sardar Patel’s Correspondence p. 162.
107 At this meeting, Liaquat Ali Khan argued that if Junagadh belonged to India because of its Hindu Majority, then Kashmir surely belonged to Pakistan. Sardar Patel replied “why do you compare Junagadh with Kashmir? Talk of Hyderabad and Kashmir and we could reach agreement,” See Choudhary Mohammad Ali, The Emergence of Pakistan, Lahore, 1998, p. 299. Patel was not alone in this view, On October 29, 1947, Officials at the U.S Embassy in Delhi had told the U.S State Department “the obvious solution is for the government leaders in Pakistan and India to agree (to the) accession of Kashmir to Pakistan and the accession of Hyderabad and Junagadh to India.” Cited in Owen Bennett Jones, Pakistan: Eye of the Storm, Yale university press, 2002, p. 69.
Jinnah but Nehru himself who made public that there was deliberate rider to the accession.\textsuperscript{108}

However, notwithstanding his public pronouncements and the initial excitement, Shaikh Abdullah soon developed second thoughts regarding the accession in the same way as Nehru abandoned the plebiscite option as early as in late 1948 but continued to remain committed to it publicly till 1954. A file in British library reveals very clearly how Abdullah's mind was working in 1948 when raiders were still in the valley. It contains a telegram from British High Commissioner in India to London (February 21, 1948) conveying details of the talks Patrick Gordon-Walker, Under Secretary of State in the Commonwealth Relations Office, had with Nehru the Day before. Nehru invited Shaikh Abdullah to join them and left. "Just before Nehru left, Shaikh Abdullah said he thought the solution was that Kashmir should accede to both dominions. He said that Kashmir's trade was with India, that India was progressive and that Nehru was an Indian. On the other hand, Kashmir's trade passed through Pakistan and a hostile Pakistan would be a constant danger. The solution was that Kashmir should have its autonomy jointly guaranteed by India and Pakistan and it would delegate its foreign policy and defence to them both jointly but would look after its own internal affairs..... I asked whether Nehru would agree to this solution he said he thought so. He had discussed it with him (emphasis mine)."\textsuperscript{109}

Most probably Shaikh Abdullah changed his mind for three reasons. Firstly, only a few days after Indian army landed in Kashmir an unfortunate incident of far-reaching consequences happened when Indian forces-who were given a rousing welcome by the National Conference workers in Kashmir- resorted indiscriminate firing during the night of 5 November,\textsuperscript{108} Jinnah rejected the offer which Mountbatten made to him in writing at Lahore on November 1, 1947, to hold plebiscite in all three disputed states, Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir. Nehru fully supported that.\textsuperscript{109} L/P&S/L3/1442, \textit{British Library, London}. 

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killing seven National Conference workers around Rambagh Bridge on Srinagar Airport road. The following morning bodies of the killed workers were recovered from the road quietly buried by the Indian troops in a trench. People were very angry and furious. Sofi Gulam Mohammad, editor Srinagar Times, an Urdu Daily from Srinagar, who was an eye witness and whose friend lost his life in the incident recalls:

"The mood of the people Changed very immediately against the Indians. These Sikhs from the Punjab, they killed Kashmiris without any provocation. The dead bodies were detected by the dogs and local people. Then there were slogans against India and in favour of Pakistan. The mood of the people changed only in a couple of days. I remember it very vividly it is a damn fact.....

They killed without provocation Kashmiri people who were guiding them. They were deputed by the National Conference to guide the Indian army, to show them the places that the invaders are."  

The aggrieved local residents disinterred the bodies of the killed and carried them in procession through the main roads of the city and they attacked Abdullah's residence holding him responsible for the incident. Abdullah was so nervous that, according to Sen, he begun to feel suspicious about the intentions of Indian leaders. The incident went largely unreported in the Indian press, though a few days later the Times of India commented about its impact:

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110 L. P. Sen puts the of killed workers to two only but he is contested by Ajit Bhattacharjea who puts the number to seven. See L. P. Sen, Slender was the Thread: Kashmir Confrontation 1947-48, Orient Longman 1969, p. 87., Ajit Bhattacharjea, Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah: Tragic Hero of Kashmir, Roli Books, New Delhi, 2008, pp. xi-xii.
112 Ibid.
“irresponsible, unruly conduct on the part of a few of the Indian soldiers does considerable harm to the common cause and military gains are merely jeopardized by political losses.”\textsuperscript{113}

Secondly, the ethnic cleansing of Muslim population in Jammu province at the behest of Maharaja Hari Singh who was allegedly backed by the Indian Home Ministry made Abdullah’s position difficult to win over his Muslim following in India’s favour. The documents in \textit{Sardar Patel’s Correspondence} (Vol. I) alone suffice to bring home this harsh reality. We find both Nehru and Shaikh Abdullah pleading with the Maharaja, on December 1, 1947, and August 5, 1948, respectively, that Muslims in the Valley needed to be won over. “If the average Muslim feels that he has no safe or secure place in the Union, then obviously he will look elsewhere,” Nehru wrote, referring politely to events in Jammu.\textsuperscript{114} The Maharaja, however, enjoyed full support from Vallabhbhai Patel. Nehru wrote to Patel pointing out bluntly how the arms meant for the government were “distributed to the RSS [Rashtriya Swamsewak Sang].”\textsuperscript{115} Shaikh Abdullah also wrote to Patel on October 7, 1948, describing how the Maharaja had presided over “the killing of Muslims all over the province” of Jammu.\textsuperscript{116}

Thirdly, though, Pakistan’s tribal raid had initially secured his support for the accession; Shaikh Abdullah began to lose his ground among his supporters in the beginning of 1948. On May 14, 1948, when raiders were still in the valley, Indra Gandhi wrote to Nehru: “they say that only Shaikh Sahib is confident of winning the plebiscite....”\textsuperscript{117} Shaikh sensed that and tried to make amends by emphasizing on the provisional nature of the accession, after playing the role of an architect and a vocal supporter of the

\textsuperscript{113} \textit{Times of India}, 10 November, 1947.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Sardar Patel’s Correspondence}, Vol. I, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 143.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., pp. 236-237.
same. He was conscious that after the landing of armies of the two dominions in the state a complete freedom was not pragmatic. Thus he tried to use provisional character of accession as an instrument of bargain to secure maximum autonomy to his state. Both he and Nehru were opposed to Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. But Nehru was opposed also to its autonomy, except in name.\textsuperscript{118} Nehru fought on both fronts and created a mess. Had he fought on one, he might have pulled it off. Shaikh Abdullah could not ignore Nehru's moves nor the growing popular alienation and his own isolation from the people. Later when he decided to follow the people's mood, he was jailed.

\textsuperscript{118} See the following chapters.
CHAPTER VIII

Reform and Reconstruction

In accordance with the wish of the Government of India, the Maharaja Hari Singh appointed Shaikh Abdullah, once his fiercest enemy, as Head of the Emergency Administration on 30th October 1947,1 to work with Mehar Chand Mahajan who was still Prime Minister of the state. There was no clear demarcation of the power between the two—Mahajan and Abdullah.2 However, Shaikh Abdullah very soon overshadowed the administration because, he derived his real power from popular support and compulsions of the political situation, where as Mahajan was backed by Maharaja, who’s own position had turned very weak after the Poonch revolt, the tribal invasion and after he signed the Instrument of Accession with India. For India Shaikh Abdullah was the key factor for winning the plebiscite, which Nehru had promised. Thus, Nehru throw his full support behind Abdullah rejecting all complaints made against him by the Maharaja, the Mahajan and not least by his own deputy Sardar Patel. He wrote to Maharaja two weeks after Kashmir had acceded to India—with “fullest” support from Abdullah—reminding him that “great changes” that had occurred in Kashmir could not be ignored “and the path of wisdom is to recognize them and adopt oneself to them”. For Nehru, who was known for his obsession for Kashmir, “the only person who can deliver the goods in Kashmir is Abdullah …… I have a high opinion of his integrity and his general balance of mind……. He may make any number of mistakes in minor matters, but I think he is likely to be

right with regard to major decisions. Thus, Shaikh Abdullah was all set to control full authority of the state administration on 5th March, 1948, when he was nominated to the office of Prime-Minister and the Emergency Council was converted into a regular Council of Ministers. Giving complete legitimacy to the Shaikh Abdullah as a popular leader Nehru claims that “the present government of Kashmir, (headed by Abdullah) was not down there from the air; they represented the popular organization (National Conference) and remained there because of their own strength and not because of legal sanctions alone. The Pakistan leadership, who was explicitly clear that Shaikh Abdullah’s collaboration with the Indians was responsible for their dramatic military reverses in October 1947, was too quick to reject claims that Shaikh Abdullah was enjoying the popular support in the state. Liaquat Ali Khan, the Pakistan Prime Minister said in late November 1947: “Shaikh Abdullah has been a paid agent of Congress for the last two decades and with the exception of some gangsters he has purchased with Congress money, he has no following among the Muslim masses. It is astonishing that Pundit Nehru should proclaim this quisling to be the acknowledged leader of the Muslims of Kashmir.

These claims from the Pakistan leadership only encouraged Shaikh Abdullah to become a vocal advocate of Kashmir’s accession to India and to curb sentiments in favour of Pakistan in his state. Also it was in this context that Shaikh Abdullah made his impassioned speech to the Security Council.

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Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 1986, vol. IV, p. 325 (Henceforth referred as SWJLN)
The new cabinet was a continuation of the emergency government, with Bakhshi Gulam Mohammad as deputy prime minister, Mirza Afzal Beg in charge of revenue, Sardar Budh Singh (from Jammu) had responsibility for health, D.M Sadiq was given development, S.L Saraf was assigned civil supplies and local-self Government G.L Dogra was responsible for finance and Pir Mohammad Khan took over education.

5 Quoted in P.N. Bazaz, Truth About Kashmir, Delhi, 1950, p.7.
of the United Nations in February 1948. Parts of the speech are worth quoting:

"When the (Pakistan) raiders came to our land, massacred thousands of people...... and almost reached gates of our summer capital, Srinagar, the result was that the civil, military and police administration failed.... In that hour of crisis, the National Conference came forward with its 10,000 volunteers... They started guarding the banks, the offices and houses of every person in the capital... I had thought all along that the world had got rid of Hitlers... but from what is happening in my poor country, I am convinced they have transmigrated their souls into Pakistan... The (plebiscite) offer (was) made by the prime minister of India when, I think, he had not the slightest need for making it, for Kashmir was in distress... I refuse to accept Pakistan as a party in the affairs of Jammu and Kashmir; I refuse this point blank... we have seen enough of Pakistan." 

Shaikh Abdullah's advocacy in favour of Kashmir's accession to India was not for nothing. For he was assured by the Congress leaders particularly by Nehru, that the internal autonomy of state will be respected. The restriction of Center's authority only to defense, communications and external affairs as was clearly mentioned in the Instruments of Accession was another attraction for Shaikh Abdullah. Even at the time of framing of Indian Constitution, Abdullah demanded that the Jammu and Kashmir state be treated as a special case and given the fullest degree of autonomy

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Shaikh Abdullah in Power

consonant with the Act of Accession. He resisted the application of even the provisions for fundamental rights, citizenship and directive principles in the Constitution of India to Kashmir, since these provisions, he was convinced, will create hurdles in the implementation of his 'New Kashmir' scheme.

Thus, Article 306-A (later to become article 370) of the Indian Constitution endorsed the special position of the state of Jammu & Kashmir and guaranteed its internal autonomy, though it was made clear that the Article was a temporary arrangements, pending final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. It affirmed that New Delhi's jurisdiction in Jammu and Kashmir would remain limited to the three categories of subjects specified in the Instruments of Accession. After India became a republic in January 1950, Article 306-A became the basis of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which asserts Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy within the Indian Union. Under Article 370's provisions, India's federal government can legislate even on the three categories of subjects within its competence only "in consultation with the Government of Jammu and Kashmir state: and on other subject in the Union list only with "the finial concurrence of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly:"

Encouraged by assurances of Indian leaders and the legal guarantees by the Indian Constitution to respect the autonomous urge of the state's people, it is no surprising then, that Shaikh Abdullah repeatedly justified his movement's decision to side with India in the ringing rhetoric of ideological and programmatic affinity. In a lengthy speech to the inaugural session of the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly in November

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12 Ibid.
Shaikh Abdullah in Power

1951, for example, he praised India's democratic and secular credentials, derived Pakistan as a feudal country without a written constitution, and dismissed full independence for Kashmir as a utopian idea. While this remained his official position and public discourse, privately Shaikh had already developed second thoughts as early as in 1948.

Although lacking any administrative experience, after taking over as the head of the state administration Shaikh Abdullah was too enthusiastic to translate his New Kashmir manifesto, first published in 1944, into practice, because, as he noted in his autobiography, "United Nations agents and their reports could not slow the tempo of events in the valley. We continued to mould our country according to our own principles and ideologies."

But far from being a unified entity, the state Abdullah inherited from the Dogra Maharaja was only half the area of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, a fact made clearer when India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire in December 1948. In fact Shaikh was too reluctant to include those areas in his state where he remained unpopular. He suggested to the members of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan in Srinagar that he saw the only solution: "that is the division of the country [read J&K]. If it is not achieved, the fighting will continue; India and Pakistan will prolong the quarrel indefinitely and our people's suffering will go on." He was suggesting division of the areas where the Muslim

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15 Nehru accepted ceasefire in December 1948, by which time Indian troops had gained the upper hand, and Muzaffarabad district and rural Poonch cold have been retaken because he knew that a substantial number of locals from Poonch, the Jhelum valley around Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, and adjoining Swat and Hunza were actively involved with the irregulars fighting the Indian army since Sheikh Abdullah's influence did not extent to these areas, Nehru was willing to sacrifice them in order to strengthen Abdullah's position SWJLN, op cit., vol. 19, p. 223.

16 Cited in Joseph Korbel, Danger in Kashmir, p. 147.
Conference was predominant. Quit ironically, in the same manner when during 1970’s, a movement was launched in Jammu and Ladakh provinces in favour of provincial autonomy posing a challenge to Abdullah’s authority, he again showed his willingness to the division of the state. His efforts to homogenize his power base by eliminating all opposition proved destructive. Kashmir continued to be divided.

As has been mentioned in the earlier chapters, the political creed of Shaikh Abdullah was from the mid 1940’s of a distinctly socialist ting, which was outlined by his organization, in its New Kashmir Manifesto, which called for what amounted to a one party Government in the state of Jammu and Kashmir dedicated to social reform along the lines pioneered by the Soviet Union. But as Sumantra Bose mentions “the manifesto was clearly based on a Jacobin concept of popular sovereignty” it tends to be in tension with liberal-democratic norms of political pluralism, accountability of those in power, and tolerance of dissent and opposition. Thus, in accordance with the set norms in the Manifesto, the Sheik Abdullah used the enormous powers, which he enjoyed to govern Kashmir as a party-state. Indeed, “the National Conference’s slogan was “one leader, one party, one programme”- meaning Abdullah, the National Conference and the 1944 Naya Kashmir agenda.

The National Conference regime ironically, suppresses all the opposition against its views in the state, no healthy opposition was allowed to grow. The state government promulgated an Ordinance entitled the ‘Enemy Agents Ordinance’ allocating for the arrest and summary trials of those suspected of pro-Pakistan leanings. Some of the political leaders who had earlier shown their reservations to bye the views of the National

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17 Alistair Lamb, op. cit., pp.185-186.
18 Sumantra Bose, op. cit., pp.26-27
19 Ibid

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Conference or had shown their inclination towards the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan were arrested or externed from the state. Political leaders like, Agra Showkat Ali, Mohammad Noorudin, Khawaja Gulam Nabi Gilkar, Mohammad Abdullah Shopyani, Khawaja Abdul Gani, Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, Jagar Nath Sathu, Khawaja Abdul Salam Yattu- the president of Kisan Mazdoor Conference and his colleagues were arrested; later on all these leaders excepting Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz and a few of his colleagues were taken to Jammu where from they were pushed into Pakistan.\textsuperscript{21} Listening to Radio Pakistan was banned in the state; and any person doubted of listening to it, was arrested along with the radio-set.\textsuperscript{22} The government also suppressed papers and periodicals that did not agree with Shaikh Abdullah, particularly in the matter of Kashmir's accession to India.\textsuperscript{23} In doing all this Shaikh Abdullah was helped by his deputy, Bakhshi Gulam Mohammad, the iron man of National Conference, who was an effective executive with little concern for democratic and legal procedures.\textsuperscript{24} The Statesman, a prominent Indian newspaper which consistently supported Shaikh Abdullah's policy, observed on 1 March, 1949: "there are signs of establishment of a police state- futile notices in restaurants forbidding political conversations when everybody talks politics; more 'public safety' prisoners than are healthy", and some eighteen months later, sir Owen Dixon observed during his mission that "the state government was exercising wide powers of arbitrary arrest."\textsuperscript{25} But the most interesting observation came from Gulam Ahmad Mahjoor, a National Conference sympathizer who was declared as the national poet of Kashmir by Shaikh Abdullah regime. He wrote satires like \textit{Poshinoolo} (O golden oriole) and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{21} Sunaulla Butt, \textit{Kashmir in Flames}, Srinagar, 1981, pp. 46-47  
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. p. 49.  
\textsuperscript{23} P.N. Bazaz, op. cit.  
\textsuperscript{24} Ajit Bhatherjea, op. cit., p. 186.  
\end{flushleft}
Shaikh Abdullah in Power

_Aazaadi_ (Freedom) in which he expressed his disapproval to the undemocratic and autocratic nature of National Conference government:

> Hawks have left your garden
> And birds are all in song;
> Now if you yourself turn a hawk,
> How futile was this change. (Poshinoolo)\(^{26}\)

In another poem he strongly showed his disgust and disapproval to the freedom which Shaikh Abdullah’s regime was helping to establish in the state:

> In western climes Freedom comes
> With a shower of light and grace,
> But dry, sterile thunder is all
> She has for our own soil.

> Freedom, being of heavenly birth,
> Can not move from door to door;
> You will find her camping in the homes
> Of a chosen few alone.\(^{27}\)

Even then some die heart pro Pakistani elements tried to organize themselves, particularly in the Valley, through different ways possible to them. They established schools visibly to impart education, but under that garb they would help themselves to promote feelings in favour of Pakistan.

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Gulam Ahmad Banka, a retired government servant, and one time an active member of those Daresghahs (schools) thus recalls: "The organizers of daresghas would enroll the children of those who were Pak sympathizers. Secret registers in which the names of members were enrolled, were maintained and donations were collected to promote the Pakistan cause. We were under constant pressure and strict government vigil. Occasionally local police officials and National Conference carders would come to observe our activities. Prominent among us were forced to remain underground for the fear of severe punishments."28 It will be of some interest to mention here that majority of people belonging to Shia Muslim community were particularly attracted towards Pakistan slogan. "Most of the Shias felt for Pakistan mainly for two reasons. First was an emotional one. The founder of Pakistan Mohammed Ali Jinnah was generally believed to be a Shia. Thus, his co-religionists in the Valley, like elsewhere in India, got attracted towards his call. Secondly, Shias were not adequately represented in National Conference led administration for different reasons which too played its crucial part."29

The administration was reduced to a hand-maid of the National Conference, and its office holders became virtually masters of public fate.30 As noted in the previous chapter, the economic blockade from Pakistan, caused an acute shortage of essentials in the state particularly, there was acute scarcity of salt, green tea, sugar and kerosene. Thus the entire distribution was kept in the hands of the National Conference office bearers. And those who were suspected for having any affiliation with the non-National Conference parties were denied these commodities.31 This

28 Interview with Gulam Ahmad Banka, retired Zonal Education Officer and resident of Gome, Tehsil Pattan.
29 Ibid. almost same views were conveyed to me by other respondents also.
30 Joseph Korbel, op. cit.
31 Sannaullah Bhatt, op. cit., p. 48.
condition has been aptly painted by the Mahjoor in the following composition.

"Noonas gauos national waanus
Thoupham gode ral Hindustanis seeth,
Zov Jan wandha Hindustanis,
Dil chum Pakistanus seeth."

(I went to a National shop to purchase salt. The shopkeeper asked me that without pledging support for accession to India, I cannot get salt. I replaced “I do not hate India, but my heart goes to Pakistan.”)

Not only did the National Conference government put Mahjoor behind bars for this poem, the poem itself cannot be located in the Indian parts of Kashmir.32

 Nonetheless, for the peasant masses in Jammu and Kashmir after 1947, the arrogance and authoritarianism of the new ruling elite-the revolutionaries of the National Conference-led movement- were compensated for by the rapid fulfillment of a key point of the Naya Kashmir program - the agrarian reform. Perhaps the three most significant goals enunciated in the Naya Kashmir, geared to the interest of the state agriculturists were the abolition of landlordism, land to the tiller, and cooperative association. The new state took its first concrete steps towards agrarian reforms in 1948 with the abolition of Jagirs, muafis and Mukararies grants,33 experts those granted to religious institutions.34 The rights of 396 Jagirs/muafis involving an annual land revenue assignment of Rs. 5,66,313

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33 Jagirs were land granted for political services rendered to the state Muafis were granted as charity to individuals, and such other bodies.
were abolished. Besides, fixed cash grants known as Mukararies (2,347 in all) to the tune of Rs. 1,77,921 per annum were also abolished.\footnote{Mirza Afzal Beg, "Land Reforms in J&K" in Mainstream Vol. XV, 1 June 1976, p. 27.} One Jagir in Jammu was 95 square miles in area and had a population of 12,000; the annual income was Rs. 40,000 from this, of which the Jagirdar took about one-third. The Jagir was taken away, and the owner, the Raja of Chanai, given a monthly allowance of Rs. 300.

In October 1948, the government amended the State Tenancy Act, 1924, providing for a maximum rental payment by a tenant was now liable to pay not more than a quarter of the produce in case of wet land and not more than a third of the produce in case of dry land in respect of tenancy holdings exceeding 12\(\frac{1}{2}\) acres, while in the case of holdings not exceeding 12\(\frac{1}{2}\) acres, the landlord was entitled to no more than half of the produce.\footnote{Land Reforms, op. cit., p.5} Also through this amendment, tenants were protected from arbitrary eviction without court procedure. Moreover, 6250 acres of Khalisa (state-owned) land were distributed free of cost to land laborers.\footnote{Ibid., p.6.} This was followed by the distressed debtor’s relief act of 1950 seeking to alleviate agrarian indebtedness and creating debt conciliation boards.\footnote{Michale Breecher, The Struggle for Kashmir, Oxford University Press, New York, 1953, p. 159.} Under this act, the debts to the tune of Rs. 290 lakhs were settled at Rs. 98 lakhs only, and 60 percent of the claims were disposed of by conciliations. Similarly immovable property worth Rs. 37 lakhs which had been mortgaged by 34,000 persons was also restituted.\footnote{\textsuperscript{32}}

On 13 July 1950 the Kashmir Government, in accordance with ‘Nay Kashmir’, introduced the most sweeping land reform in the entire subcontinent and probably most radical in any non-communist state world over. To give the programme a legal shape, the government enacted, on 17
October 1950, the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act. The Act has been described as the Magna Carta of the peasants, which "revolutionized the whole agricestic organization of the State. This legislation set a maximum limit of 22 ¾ acres on the holdings of land holdings of landowners. Proprietors could, however, retain orchards, grass farms, and fuel and fodder reserves beyond this ceiling and would have full freedom to choose which acres of their holding they would keep for these purposes. Land in excess of this amount was transferred in ownership right to the tiller without compensation to the original owner. As a result of this enactment, 9,000 and odd proprietors were expropriated from 4.5 lakh acres of land and out of this 2.3 lakhs acres were transferred in ownership right to the tillers free of all encumbrances, and the remaining land vested in the State. Between 1950 and 1952, 7090,000 landless peasants, mostly Muslims in the Valley but including 250,000 lower-caste Hindus in the Jammu region, became peasant-proprietors.

However, corruption in the administrative machinery and some loopholes in the scheme such as exemption of orchards from the ceiling limit and making no distinction between the 22.75 acres of dry or irrigated/fertile land, and other such limitations mitigated the effectiveness of the reforms in real practice. As Mir Qasim, who was actively associated in preparing the law, observed: "There were some lacunas in the land reform. We had fixed 182 Kanals for both Kashmir and Jammu; although in Jammu the land fertility was low, secondly, the landlords had been given the right to choose the area they wanted to retain. This gave a landlord the tool to extort money

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from his tenant on the threat that he would choose to keep his tenant's portion of land with him. Thirdly, there were complaints that the implementation of the land reforms had been left to the whims of the corrupt bureaucracy. It was a revolutionary program which had fallen a prey to large scale corruption.\textsuperscript{43}

Besides, the landlords taking advantage of the limitations in the law devised their own ways to mitigate some of the harsher aspects of the law. For example, the commonest way, typical also of land reforms enacted in the rest of India, to evade resumptions was by breaking up joint families, thereby entitling each adult male to the limits of 22.75 acres.\textsuperscript{44} Likewise, since the act that exempted orchards from appropriation, it paved the way for big landlords to escape the ceiling by converting cereal acreage into orchards.\textsuperscript{45} The returns form orchards, especially from apple orchards tended to be much greater than from the cultivation of food grains.\textsuperscript{46}

Also by retaining the old revenue administration to carry out the reforms, the government had ensured that corruption would be rampant. As Daniel Thorner, an agrarian historian and economist, who visited the Valley in 1953 observed: "land reforms in Kashmir has clearly done away with the Jagirs, and has weakened the position of all the great landlords. It has distinctly benefited those individuals who, at the village level, were already the more important and substantial people. It has done the least for the petty tenants and landless laborers, these two categories being the largest in the countryside."\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{43} Mir Qasim, \textit{My Life and Times}, New Delhi, 1992, p. 45
\textsuperscript{45} Nisar Ali, \textit{Agricultural Development and Income Distribution}, New Delhi, 1958, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, p. 212
However, despite these limitations, the act was a progressive measure. It gave a deathnill to the feudal set up in the state. Interestingly, Shaikh Abdullah, during his second term as head of the state (1975-82) tried to eradicate the above discussed limitations by implementing the Agrarian Reforms Act 1976. The success of the act of 1950 can be very well appreciated from the fact that out of 9.5 lakh acres of land distributed through out India till 1970, about half (i.e. 4.5 lakh acres) was distributed in Jammu and Kashmir alone.48 Denial Thorner concluded that despite some "defects in implementation, many tillers have become land owners and some land has even gone to the landless. The peasantry of the valley was not long ago fearful and submissive. No one who has spent time with Kashmiri villagers will say the same today.49 Wolf Ladjensky, another expert, observed that, “whereas virtually all land reforms in India lay stress on elimination of the Zamindari (large estates) system with compensation, or rent reduction and security of tenure (for tillers), the Kashmir reforms call for distribution of land among tenants without compensation to the erstwhile proprietors... (and) whereas land reforms enforcement in most of India is not so effective, in Kashmir enforcement is unmistakably rigorous.”50

The transformation of rural Kashmir, as a result of those “sweeping land reforms”, had far-reaching political consequences. Hundreds of thousands of newly empowered families would henceforth regard Shaikh Abdullah, seen a principle agent of this transformation, as a messiah,51 and he earned the name Bab (father) among the rural masses. These peasant masses tirelessly backed Abdullah through out his period of political wilderness.

51 Sumantra Bose, op. cit. p. 28
after his dismissal in 1953. However in parts of Jammu region the imposition of land reform catalyzed a tenacious movement of social and political reaction. The “majority of landlords and moneylenders were Hindus, and the axe naturally fell on them” and they dubbed the reforms as anti-Hindu and pro-Muslims.\textsuperscript{52} The Maharaja had also withheld his assent to the resumption of Jagirs. Even the central home Ministry under Sardar Patel took a pro-Maharaja stand in this connection. The private secretary to the Union Home Minister, in fact, wrote to Shaikh Abdullah on May 4, 1984 that resuming Jagirs without compensation was contrary to the government policy. Further it suggested that since the Jagirdars would be mostly non-Muslim, this measure would create discontent and ill-feeling against the government among the minority community.\textsuperscript{53} Only a few people know that even a socialist Nehru showed his disapproval to the radical reformation initiated by Shaikh. On 19 May, 1948 he wrote a letter to Abdullah in which he politely suggested him to make a compromise with Maharaja to ‘avoid conflict and new problems’.\textsuperscript{54} A perturbed Shaikh Abdullah, committed to implement the 'Naya Kashmir' programme, more so because in any proposed plebiscite mass support was must, wrote a letter to Sardar Patel in which he expressed his anguish over the Maharaja’s not confirming the economic measure. He said “It is my firm conviction that it was our rigid adherence to that (New Kashmir) programme that has saved us from the orgy of communalism during the last crisis.”\textsuperscript{55} ‘Land to tillers’ became a reality and Nehru was enraged. He told Shaikh that non-Muslims were the only sufferers. Abdullah denied the allegation and replied: "I lead downtrodden and oppressed; India is too big to take care of the

\textsuperscript{52} P.S. Varma, \textit{Jammu and Kashmir At the Political Crossroads}, New Delhi, 1994, p. 38
\textsuperscript{55} N. N. Riana, op. cit., p. 163
oppressors". Whatever may be the nature of criticism and political compulsions, the reforms which Abdullah initiated were progressive in nature and the one which only a person like him could have dared to introduce.

The agrarian reformation did not remain confined to the redistribution of land and the abolition of Jagir system only but other aspects of agrarian reformation were also taken care of. In order to rationalize agricultural production the government adopted such measure as were likely to assist in the extension of the area of cultivation as well as increase the productivity of the cultivated land. According to government sources, "better seeds and manure have been introduced and widely accepted by the cultivators." in the "Grow More Food" scheme that was launched in 1948, care was taken to allot waste lands to landless peasants and in some cases they were induced to take to co-operative farming. As many as 1,85,583 Kanals of cultivable waste lands were allotted during the year 1948-49 and in 1949-50, it was 49,547 Kanals. As a result of these measures, the increases in the produce of food-grains was estimated at about 2,00,000 mounds.

In order to improve the state of agriculture, an Irrigation Department was set up to tackle the problem of irrigating dry lands and consequently ten old and new canals were either restored or constructed. One of these canals, the Awantipura Canal which was completed at the cost of about Rs. 8,22,000, irrigated an area of 4,000 acres of land.

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57 Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Jammu and Kashmir (1947-1950), Department of Information, J&K government p. 4
58 Ibid
59 Ibid
60 Ibid
61 Joseph Korbel, op. cit, p. 212
Great emphasis was put on the cooperative movement, "with the object mainly of bringing the entire village life within its fold." It's main purposes were to:

1. scale down debts outstanding against members to the extent of their own repaying capacity;
2. spread out the reduced debt over a number of years;
3. take surrenders of lands and lease them back to members of the societies for cultivation;
4. finance crops,
5. encourage repayment in kind; and

In 1948 there were 222 multipurpose Cooperative Societies in the state with 25,673 members; in 1949 the figures rose to 347 and 56,499 respectively. Statistics for 1950 give the figures of 1,731 agricultural cooperatives, 386 purchase and scale cooperatives, and 378 non-agricultural credit cooperatives.63 The operational side of the scheme was not, however, as bright as the above sited stastics. In practice the cooperative movement turned into an instrument of the National Conference party politics.64 Moreover, as the government itself had to admit in the summer of 1953, the cooperatives completely collapsed because of "corruption and maladministration" of governmental officials.65

In accordance with the "Naya Kashmir", the National Conference government directly involved itself at in the development of industrial sector and the expansion of trade and commerce. The turmoil of 1947 had

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63 Joseph Korbel, op. cit, pp 215-216
64 Ibid
65 See Sisir Gupta, Kashmir: A Study in India–Pakistan Relations, New Delhi, 1966, pp. 396-397
given a big below to the timber trade in the state. The government claimed, however, to have restored the timber trade to the extent that it in 1949 it yields 5.5 million rupees to the state treasury in comparison with 2.9 million in 1947.66 Motor transport was made available at cheap rates so that the timber could be carried to the nearest new rail link at Pathankot within two or three days as compared to several months taken by floating.67 Similarly considerable government support was given to the silk industry through the importation of silkworm eggs from foreign countries, which were distributed among rearers and through three government owned silk-weaving factories.68 Other industries include manufacture of wood, sports goods, drugs and carpets.69 The government organized and subsidized the cottage industries and helped new entrepreneurs to start small scale manufacturing units.70 Among the major industries which were established during the period include Joinery Mill and a ply board factory at Pampore, a cement factory at Wuyan, and the Drug Research Laboratory in Jammu.71

All foreign trade was managed through governmental Kashmir People’s Cooperative Society, (K.P.C.S), handled by the Kashmir Industrial Arts Emporium, with depots in New Delhi, Amritsar, Bombay, Simla, Lucknow Madras and Calcutta. Nationalized bazaars were organized for trade within the country.72 There was a marked expansion of the tourism industry during the period. For example, in 1949 the total number of tourists visiting to the state was 3,746 including 3,321 Indian and 420 foreign tourists.

66 J&K, op. cit
67 Ibid
68 Ibid., and Joseph Korbal, op.cit, p 215
69 Ibid
71 Ibid., and Jammu and Kashmir, op. cit
72 Joseph Korbel, op. cit p. 216
The number rose up to 21,318 in 1953, which includes 19,319 Indians and 2,062 tourists from other countries. 73

A special care was given to the development of Public Health in the state. As a result of setting up of an Isolation Hospital, an Epidemiological Laboratory and mobile dispensaries, the mortality rate went down in the state. 74 A campaign to register T.B. affected patients was launched and as a result 10,000 were attended in 1948-49. The B.C. G. campaign was also started with the help of the International Tuberculosis Organization. 75 Besides attention was given to improve the infrastructural aspects in the hospitals with this purpose, X-ray, Electro-Therapeutic, Electro-Cardiogram and Ultra Violet Lamps apparatus has been imported to equip the hospitals in the State. 76

As a result of above discussed socio-economic reforms there was a marked improvement in the living standard of the common people in the state. Even Prem Nath Bazaz, who was by now most vocal critique of the Shaikh Abdullah's administration agrees that: "After a long period of dismal poverty and semi-starvation the Kashmir's were witnessing the dawn of a new era of prosperity which was being shared more or less by all classes and communities; there was an all-round rise in the standard of living through some sections in the cities and towns profited by it in far larger proportion than those living in the rural areas. 77

The government attached great importance to education and according to Joseph Korbel, "much has been done in this field." 78 Almost a total of 35% of annual budget was spent for the expansion of education and

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73 For more detailers see the table cited in Sisir Gupta, op. cit. p. 399
74 J&K, op. cit
75 Ibid
76 Ibid
77 P.N Bazaz, op. cit., p 48
78 Joseph Korbel, op cit., p 209
the development of educational infrastructure.\textsuperscript{79} The Jammu and Kashmir University was established in the year 1948.\textsuperscript{80} New schools were opened, some 60 of them for children from three to five. Two intermediate colleges were opened in Anantnag and Sopore and an intermediated college exclusively for girls started in Srinagar.\textsuperscript{81} This was, besides the Gandhi Memorial College established in Jammu.\textsuperscript{82}

In order to end the feudal character and traditional nature of the educational system in the state, the government introduced a new structure of educational system. Its main feature was a four year's courses for secondary education, where besides the ordinary subjects special care was given to impart scientific knowledge, with agricultural technical and industrial bias suited to the needs of the country and its industry.\textsuperscript{83} Furthermore, a "Text-book Advisory Board" was set up by the government, which selected various panels of writers for preparations of new text books in which the contents were co-related with general science, social studies and according to the "spirit of New Kashmir."\textsuperscript{84} Refresher courses were organized to indoctrinate "New teachers" in the philosophy of New Kashmir.\textsuperscript{85}

As we have seen earlier, there was a continuous divergence of opinion between the Maharaja and the Shaikh Abdullah over many issues particularly the former was apprehensive of the latter's radical views and authoritarian nature which he followed in running the state administration. In fact one plank in the platform of the National Conference during the Quit Kashmir agitation of 1946 had been the abolition of the rule of Dogra

\textsuperscript{79} Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit, p 499
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid
\textsuperscript{81} J&K, op. cit
\textsuperscript{82} Joseph Korbel op. cit
\textsuperscript{83} J&K, op. cit
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid
\textsuperscript{85} Joseph Korbel op. cit
Shaikh Abdullah in Power
dynasty; it was for this reason that Sheik Abdullah and his colleagues has
been incarcerated in that very crucial year.\textsuperscript{86} Subsequently, however,
Maharaja Hari Singh may perhaps have hoped that, given the circumstances
which had brought Shaikh Abdullah to, a more tolerant attitude towards the
Dogras might become acceptable.\textsuperscript{87} If so he was soon disillusioned. After
Shaikh Abdullah strengthened his hold over the administration he started
making preparations to get rid the Maharaja. Dissentions between the two
nearly reached breaking point by mid 1948. On 29 September, Shaikh
Abdullah held a press conference in which he criticized Hari Singh and “his
strong friends” in New Delhi, who were holding up reforms in Kashmir.
This was followed by a bitter exchange of letters between Sardar Patel,
perceived as Maharaja’s strong supporter, and Shaikh Abdullah, which
ended only after the Nehru’s intervention and culminated in the abdication
of the Maharaja his throne in favor of his son.\textsuperscript{88}

On 17 April 1949, Nehru wrote to Patel that Lt. General Carippa had
reported that the tussle between Hari Singh and Abdullah was having a bad
effect even on the army. Referring scornfully to Hari Singh’s reported
willingness to give up the Valley, he added, “If we want Jammu province by
itself and are prepared to make a present of the rest of the state to Pakistan, I
have no doubt that we could clinch the issue in a few days. \textit{The prize we are
fighting for is the valley of Kashmir}” (emphasis added). He suggested that it
will be “highly desirable that the Maharaja should take some kind of leave
and not remain in Kashmir.”\textsuperscript{89} Despite his reservations, Patel did the
needful. He summoned, the Maharaja to Delhi, apparently to attend a dinner
on 29\textsuperscript{th} April 1949. As Karan Singh recalled: “After dinner.... The Sardar told
my father gently but firmly that although Shaikh Abdullah was pressing for

\textsuperscript{86} Alistair Lamb, op. cit., p 186
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} See Durga Das, (ed.) \textit{Sardar Patel’s Correspondence}, Ahambadad, pp. 225- 245
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{SWJN}, Vol. X, op. cit., pp. 238-239
his abdication, the government of India felt that it would be sufficient if he and my mother absented themselves from the state for a few months.... I should be appointed Regent by my father to carry out his duties and responsibilities in his absence. My father... emerged from the meeting ashen faced....My mother went to her room where she flung herself on to her bed burst into tears."90 In a proclamation gazetted on 9 June 1949 the Maharaja announced his decision to leave the state for a temporary period "for reasons of health" and direct and declared that "all powers and functions, where legislative, executive or judicial which are exercisable by me in relation to the state and its government.. Shall during the period of my absence from the state be exercisable by Yuraj Shri Karan Singh Ji Bahadur."91 In reality the Maharaja was never allowed to return back to the State.

In the meantime, the Indian Constituent Assembly adopted article 370 on 17 October, 1949, through which the powers of the Indian Parliament to make laws applicable to the state of Jammu and Kashmir were limited to

1. those matters in the union list and the concurrent list which in consolation with the government of the state, are declared by the president to correspond to matters specified in the Instrument of Accession governing the accession of the state to the dominion of India as the matters with respects to which the Dominion legislature may make laws for that state; and

2. Such matters in the said Lists as with the concurrence of the government of the State, the President may by order specify.92

91 Tang, Bhat, Kaul, Kashmir's Constitutional History and Documents, New Delhi 1977, p. 547
This was broadly in accord with Abdullah’s stand, but as he was pressing for iron-clad guarantees of autonomy, he was upset that certain phrases were not in accord with the compromise he had accepted. He showed his disapproval for the Article was being described as a “temporary provision”. He felt disappointed that he and his colleagues representing Kashmir were not given a chance to speak in the Constituent Assembly and wrote to Gopalswami Ayyangar- the main architect of the article: “As I am genuinely anxious that no unpleasantly situation should arise, I would request you to see that if even now something could be done to rectify the position. In case I fail to hear from you within a reasonable time, I regret that no course is left open for us but to tender our resignation from the Constituent Assembly.” Thus from the very birth of the Article 370, suspicious and reservations remained its inseparable part.

The Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution of India on November 26, 1949 which became fully operational on 26 January 1950. On the same day the President of India made the first Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1950 under Article 370 of the Constitution which confirmed strictly the terms specified in the Instrument of Accession. This Order further specified in two different Schedules the powers of the Union and the applicability of the Constitution. It was already declared by the government of India that “it was the people of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, acting through their Constituent Assembly, who were to finally determine Constitution of the state and the jurisdiction of the Union of India.” Thus, Abdullah’s was the only State which could have its own Constitution Assembly which would determine “the further

93 Bhattacharjea, op. cit, p. 184
94 Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, Vol. 1, op. cit, pp. 306-310
95 Report of the State Autonomy Committee, op. cit, p. 26
96 Ibid., appendix IV
97 DD Basu, op. cit., p. 256
shape and affiliation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.”

As was expected, an alarmed Pakistan immediately raised the matter at the United Nations. Where the Security Council responded with a resolution, passed in late March 1951, “reminding the Government and Authorities concerned of the principle embodied in the Security Council resolutions of 21 April 1948, 3 June 1948 and 14 March 1950, and United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan resolutions of 13 August 1948 and 5 January 1949, that the final disposition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be made in accordance with the will of the people, expressed through the democratic method of a free and imperial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations”. The resolution further warned that “the convening of a Constituent Assembly as recommended by the General Council of the ‘All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference’, and any action that Assembly might attempt to take to determine the further shape and affiliation of the entire state, or any part thereof, would not constitute a disposition of the state in accordance with the above principle.”

The National Conference government under Shaikh Abdullah was not discouraged by the Security Council resolutions. In May 1951, the Yuraj Karan in the capacity of Regent issued a proclamation convoking a Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal adult franchise and secret ballot. This assembly comprised of forty three representatives from the Kashmir Valley, thirty from the Jammu region, and two from Ladakh. Twenty five additional seats were left vacant for the areas of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, making a nominal total of one hundred. The process of elections did not begin auspiciously. The authoritarian ways of the National Conference government were reflected in these elections and the

98 Joseph Korbal op. cit p. 221
99 For the text of the UN resolutions see Dasgupta, op. cit. pp. 406-407
100 Sumantra Bose, Op. cit p. 55
101 Ajit Bhattacharjeya, op. cit p. 187
manner in which these were held make a mockery of any pretence of a
democratic process and set a grim precedent for future “free and fair
elections” in Jammu and Kashmir.102

The National Conference won all the 75 seats of the Constituent
Assembly. Interestingly enough, as many seventy-three members were
returned unopposed. Not only this, the remaining two seats were also
captured by the ruling National Conference without any contest, “for the
opposition candidates either boycotted the elections or withdrew
candidature at the last moment.” Joseph Korbel provides an accurate picture
of the elections: “Forty three candidates were elected unopposed one week
before the election date, and two independent candidates withdrew under
pressure later. There was actually no balloting. In Jammu, there authorities
rejected the nomination papers of Praja Perished.... in 13 constituencies on
the pretext that they were not properly presented.....thus before the
elections date Shaikh Abdullah was assured of 58 friendly members in the
Constituent Assembly. Three days before the election. The Praja Perished
announced a boycott of the elections and accused the government of illegal
practices and official interference, wholesale rejections of Parished
nomination papers. This gave to the National Conference another 15 seats.
The last two contestants dropped out at the last moment. Before the polling
began, therefore Shaikh Abdullah’s followers were sure of the full 75
seats.103

The circumstances of formation of the Constituent Assembly revealed
that the National Conference elite wished to govern Kashmir as a party-sate,
in which they would have a monopoly on political power.104 It is true that
there was no worthwhile opposition to the National Conference in the

103 Joseph Korbal, op. cit. pp. 221-222
104 Sumantra Bose, Op. cit p. 56
Valley and its authority was running supreme, but in Jammu region, a considerable number of people were opposed to the political discourse of Shaikh Abdullah. The old Muslim Conference, of course, was no longer a force in politics because its concentration was beyond the ceasefire line and its supporters in the Indian side of the Kashmir had fled to Azad Kashmir. The Praja Perished would probably have won a few seats in the Constituent Assembly had a free election been tolerated in Jammu. It would then have functioned as a small opposition group in the Assembly. Denied institutional representation the Perished took to the streets to press its case for "full integration of Jammu and Kashmir state with the rest of India like other acceding (Princely) states and (to) safeguard the legitimate democratic rights of the people of Jammu from the communist dominated anti-Dogra government of Shaikh Abdullah.\textsuperscript{106} AS time progressed the Parished agitation had extremely disruptive consequences for the State's fragile political order.

While Shaikh Abdullah claimed on 13 September that the elections prove that the people of Kashmir wanted "one organization, one programme, one voice,"\textsuperscript{107} Pakistan's Central Minister Gurmani rejected the same as a "fraud" and "farce".\textsuperscript{108} Jawaharlal Nehru fully backed the outcome because he saw in it a possibility to reinforce the argument that Shaikh Abdullah's National Conference really did represent the will of the people of the state and to convince world opinion that the elections were a substitute for a plebiscite.\textsuperscript{109} Thus, on October 18, 1951, Nehru said that the results showed that the people "where with the National Conference and with India".

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, pp 56-57 and Alistair Lamb, op. cit. p. 192.
\textsuperscript{106} Das Gupta, op. cit, p 195
\textsuperscript{107} For the Kashmir Governments views on the elections, see \textit{Elections in Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly}, Department of Information, Srinagar.
\textsuperscript{108} Sisir Gupta op. cit, p. 366
\textsuperscript{109} Alistair Lamb, op. cit., pp. 193-194
The Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly met on October 31, 1951. This moment represented the apogee of Abdullah's political career. But it also provided a target on which his opponents could concentrate their volleys. Shaikh Abdullah set the following tasks before the Constituent Assembly for deliberation;

1. Framing a Constitution in accordance with the aspirations of the common people.
2. Confirming the measures adopted to abolish the Jagirdaris, Chakdaris and big land ownership;
3. The future of Royal dynasty;
4. Deciding about the accession.\textsuperscript{110}

In an outstanding inaugural address to the Constituent Assembly on November 5, 1951, Abdullah set the parameters on each of the above mentioned tasks. It will be in place to cite some extracts of the speech for a proper understanding of his views regarding some crucial issues regarding the nature of the future Constitution of the State. Shaikh Abdullah made it clear that it should be based up on the democratic principles of "equality, liberty and social justice" and "the rule of law should be the cornerstone of our political structure.\textsuperscript{111} He emphasized that the future constitution should reflect the philosophy of 'New Kashmir' which defines the State Constitution as "an apparatus of social organization wherein people govern through their chosen representatives and are themselves guaranteed political and civil liberties.\textsuperscript{112}

Shaikh Abdullah was more particular regarding the special autonomous relationship of the State with India; "we are proud to have our

\textsuperscript{110} Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit., p 547
\textsuperscript{111} Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly, Opening Address by the Hon'ble Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid
bonds with India, the goodwill of whose people and government is available to us in unstinted measure. The Constitution of India has treated us differently from other constituent units with the exception of the items grouped under defense, foreign affairs and communications in the Instrument of Accession we have complete freedom to frame our Constitution in the manner we like... while safeguarding our autonomy to the fullest extent so as to enable us to have the liberty to build our country according to the best traditions and genius of our people, we may also by suitable constitutional arrangements with the Union establish our right to seek comprehensive Federal cooperation.\textsuperscript{113}

With regard to the future of royal dynasty he made it clear that "the institution of monarchy is incompatible with the spirit and needs of modern times." Shaikh was not even ready to recognize Maharaja Hari Singh as the first Constitutional Head of the State, because of his incapacity to adjust himself to changed conditions and his antiquated views on vital problems.\textsuperscript{114}

Referring to the land reforms, that to him were part of the content of freedom, but which had created problems with New Delhi and had provoked the erstwhile feudal elite in the state, Abdullah seems uncompromising: "The abolition of landlordism is thus an accomplished fact and there is no going back on the decisions already taken.\textsuperscript{115}

Justifying his decision to prefer India over Pakistan in October 1947, Abdullah said, "The Indian Constitution has set before the country the goal of secular democracy based upon justice, freedom and equality for all without distinction. This is the bedrock of modern democracy. This should meet the argument that the Muslims of Kashmir cannot have security in Indian, were the large majority of the population are Hindus... The Indian

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid
Constitution has amply and finally repudiated the concept of a religious state, which is a throwback to medievalism... the national movement in our state naturally, gravitates towards those principles of secular democracy. The people here will never accept a principle which sees to favour the interests of one religion or social group against another.116

Shaikh Abdullah criticized Pakistan's claim as a Muslim state as nothing but a 'camouflage' and rejected the independence option, which he had been known to favour, as impracticable. He strongly favored the State's continuous accession with India particularly for two reasons. Firstly, "there is no danger (in India) of a revival of feudalism and autocracy". Secondly and probably more importantly," during the last four years the Government of India has never tried to interfere in our internal autonomy this experience has strengthened our confidence in them as a democratic state".117 It is important to mention here that when after sometime the Government of India tried to bring about political and administrative integration of the state with the Centre, Shaikh resisted the attempt strongly and as a bargain started emphasizing on the plebiscite.

Shaikh Abdullah was keen to get a resolution passed in the Constituent Assembly confirming the State's accession with India, but was stopped by Jawaharal Nehru. Nehru wrote to Abdullah on August 18, 1951 that, "it would be unwise for the assembly to do something right at the beginning which might bring it in conflict with the Security Council." He further advised that "no reference be made to the question of accession to India... for some time.: 118 In June 1952 Nehru told a press conference: "when the Constituent Assembly met in Kashmir for the first time I might inform you that it was its intention to pass forthwith a resolution confirming

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116 Ibid.
117 Ibid.
118 Jawaharal Nehru's letter to Sheikh Abdullah, dated August 18, 1951, cited in , SWJN, vol. 15, part II, pp. 244-245
the state’s accession to India. We asked it not to do so as not to be embarrassed before the United Nations”.

In reality both, Nehru as well as Abdullah was playing a duel game. Although publicly Shaikh was all sanguine of his state’s relation with India, privately he had expressed his doubts as early as in the late 1948. In the same manner Nehru’s regard for United Nations resolutions which stressed on a plebiscite in Kashmir was only a public homage to that. Privately he had already rejected the plebiscite option in 1948. This dual talk created a mess in 1953 which led to the dismissal of Shaikh.

For framing a suitable Constitution the Assembly appointed several sub-committees. But since constitution making was slow process, it was decided that the Constituent Assembly should covert itself into legislature of the State. The committee on Land Compensation submitted its report to the Constituent Assembly in its second session (27 March 1952), and expressed itself against the payment of any compensation and said *inter alia* in its report: “what was robbed from them immorally and what is due to them morally, for that they are being asked to pay to those who got it without morality.” While presenting the report, Mirza Afzal Beg, the Minister for Revenue, said that they had recommended no compensation, in spite of the specific provisions in the Indian Constitution in this regard, because “this part of the Constitution of India is not at all applicable to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.” By 31 March 1952 the Assembly unanimously approved the Committee’s recommendations against payment of compensation.

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119 A.G Noorani, *the Kashmir Question*, Bombay, 1964, p. 59
121 Ibid., p. 3
122 Ibid., p. 3
The second important issue which came for discussion was the future of Kashmir’s Royal dynasty. On 10 June 1952, the second day of the third session of the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly, Shaikh Abdullah presented the Interior Report of the Basic Principles Committee which sought the Assembly’s opinion on the issue of the status of the head of the state. The report stated that “the institution of monarchy is a relic of the feudal system which was based on mass exploitation of the resources... (the) system opposed to the aspirations of the people for an untrammeled democratic order.” The committee “strongly feels that the continuance of a monarchical system would be the imposition of an anachronism.” And thus it recommended that “the office of the head of the state should be based upon the elective principle and not up on the principle of heredity.” The report was discussed for three days and, on 12 June 1952, the report was adopted unanimously.

The proceeding of the Constituent Assembly created a strong reaction in Jammu. The Praja Parished led several demonstrations against Shaikh Abdullah’s government. In February 1952, after a particularly violent outburst, a curfew was imposed on Jammu town for 72 hours; the army was called in to break up the demonstration. The Parished was also joined by the Jan Sangh the leading nationalist party in Delhi, which strongly criticized the special status given to Kashmir and openly spoked in terms of ending the Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. These trends were followed with deepening concern in the Valley.

While on the one hand Shaikh Abdullah was feeling disturbed by the Jammu agitation on the other hand he was frustrated by the center’s move to

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123 For the full text of the report, see J&K Constituent Assembly Debates, 1952, Vol. III, No. II. Appendix A
124 Ibid.
125 The Hindu (Madras), 12 February, 1952
126 Ajit Bhattacharjea, op. cit. pp. 192-193
encroach the State autonomy and the pressure exerted by Nehru to finalize accession beyond any doubt. Gopalswami Ayyanger brought a plan of integration on financial matters by extending the jurisdiction of the Comptroller and Auditor General of Indian to the State of Jammu and Kashmir.\textsuperscript{127} Although in the public discourse Nehru claimed that the State Constituent Assembly was not competent to decide on accession because of its international implications, privately he would start persuading Abdullah to get the accession ratified. At a press conference in New Delhi on June 21, 1952, he disclosed: “when the constituent assembly met in Kashmir for the first time I might inform you that it was its intention to pass a resolution forthwith confirming the state’s accession to India. We asked it not to do it so as not to be embarrassed before the United Nations.”\textsuperscript{128} What he did not disclose was that his opposition in 1951 was purely tactical and that he had since altered his stand. In a note to his cabinet colleagues about the preliminary talks with Kashmiri leaders he recorded: “The point I stressed was that even before they finalized their constitution, the relationship of Kashmir to India must be fully clarified.”\textsuperscript{129} He wrote the President Rajender Prasad the same day that “in my talks with Kashmir Ministers, I told them that the first question to decide and clarify was the position of Jammu and Kashmir State vis-à-vis India.”\textsuperscript{130} Nehru obviously sought to finalize the accession and nullify the condition on plebiscite.

The pressures began to tell on Abdullah. Thus, he made several speeches criticizing the Hindu lobby in New Delhi climaxed by his famous one at Ranbir Singh Pura, on 10 April 1952. In this speech he referred the arguments for full application of the Union Constitution to the State as

\begin{itemize}
  \item SWJN, Vol. 17, p. 76.
  \item Ibid., Vol. 18, p. 403.
  \item Ibid., p. 405.
\end{itemize}
"unrealistic, children and savoring of lunacy". He expressed fears about what would happen to Kashmir after Nehru's departure and suggested that Kashmiri's think about their future, thereby questioning the finality of accession.\(^{131}\)

The speech was widely reported and caused uproar in India. On 18 April Shaikh Abdullah tried to mollify Delhi saying in a speech that there was no reason for Pakistan to be happy anything, as it had only disappointments in store.\(^{132}\) Nehru was not satisfied. He expressed his unhappiness in a latter to Abdullah on 23 April 1952: "I have felt deeply about Kashmir, because it represented to me many things and many principles. It always has been an axiom with me, quite apart from constitutional position and the like, that the people of Kashmir were basically represented by you. If you feel as you do, then the link that has bound us together necessarily weakens and I have little heart left to discuss such matters."\(^{133}\) Abdullah realized the seriousness of the situation. He made amends, using the press as the scapegoat. He complained that he had not been quoted accurately. In essence, however he was not challenging the accession he was fighting against the forces who had challenged the autonomy of the state.

The rift between the Nehru and the Shaikh Abdullah was first of its kind since the two had entered into a friendship in mid 1930's to promote the secular and social democracy in the sub-continent and it gave the first blow to the Kashmir India relations. Both were opposed to communalism and Kashmir's accession to Pakistan, but Nehru seemed opposed to the autonomous status of the Jammu and Kashmir also except is name. This

\(^{131}\) The Hindu, April 12, 1952. In another speech at Srinagar on 18 April 1952, Sheikh reiterated: "those who are raising the slogan of full application of the Indian Constitution to Kashmir are weakening the accession. They are the same people who had massacred Muslims in Jammu. The slogan is natural to cause suspicion in the minds of the Muslims of the state." Khidmat, Srinagar, 13 April 1952

\(^{132}\) Ibid

\(^{133}\) Cited in S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. II, New Delhi, p. 120.
created a mess and mutual distress. Nehru realized this and invited Abdullah to come to Delhi to end the deadlock in the constitutional relationship between the New Delhi and the state and to calm the crisis.134 Abdullah followed by sending a delegation headed by Mirza Afzal beg and including D.P Dhar and Mir Qasim, who arrived New Delhi on 17 June and immediately started negotiations with Jawaharlal Nehru. Shaikh Abdullah joined the discussion in the following month along with Bakhshi Gulam Muhammad, G.M. Sadiq and Moulana Sayeed Masoodi.135 The outcome was what is known as 'Delhi Agreement' concluded on 24 July 1952 which reiterated the provisions of article 370. The contents of the agreement were reported to Indian's Parliament by Nehru on 24 July and to Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1952.

While introducing the Agreement in the Constituent Assembly, Abdullah was explicit that his aim had been to preserve “maximum autonomy for the local organs of state power, while discharging obligations as a unit of the (Indian) Union.” At the same time he warned that “any suggestions of altering arbitrarily this basis of our relationship with India would not only constitute a breach of the sprit and letter of the constitution but it may invite serious consequences for a harmonious association of our state with India.136 The main features of the Delhi agreement as discussed by Shaikh Abdullah were the following.

1. **Residuary powers.** Residuary powers would vest in the State in the case of Kashmir, although in regard to all other states it would vest in the Union. More powers could be transferred to the Union by the people of Kashmir.

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134 Alester Lamb, op. cit.
135 Ibid.
2. **Citizenship** The residents of the state would be the citizens of India. "It was further agreed that the state legislature shall have power to define and regulate the rights and privileges of the permanent residents of the state, more especially in regard to acquisition of immovable property, appointments to services and like matters".

3. **Fundamental Rights** The decisions regarding land compensation would be protected and whether a chapter on separate fundamental rights should be included in the Kashmir Constitution would be decided.

4. **Supreme Court** The Supreme Court jurisdiction was recognized in regard to such fundamental rights as would be agreed to by the state, as also regarding disputes mentioned in article 131 of the Indian Constitution. It would be the final court of appeal. But detailed examination of this would be necessary and it was agreed that we should have time to consider it further.

5. **State Flag**. The new state flag was no rival to the national flag, but its continuance was necessary for historical and other reasons. The Union Flag would occupy the supremely distinctive place in the state.

6. **President of India** Powers to grant reprieve and commute death sentences would belong to the President of the Union.

7. **Headship of State** Following principles were agreed upon.

   (a) the head of the state shall be the person recognized by the President of the Union on the recommendations of the Legislature of the State; (b) He shall hold office during the pleasure of the President; (c) He may, by writing under his hand address to the President, resign his office; (d) he shall hold office for five years; and (e) He shall continue to hold office till his successor was elected.
8. **Financial Integration** The necessity of some financial arrangement was seen, but a detailed and objective examination was considered necessary.

8. **Emergency Powers** On the application of Article 352 of the Indian Constitution opinions differed but it was ultimately agreed upon that Central intervention in regard to internal disturbances could come only at the request or with the concurrence of the government of the State. The government of India did not press of the application of Article 365 or Article 360.\(^{137}\)

Shaikh Abdullah concluded his speech when he declared: "It is, of course, for the Constituent Assembly, which is seized of these matters, to determine the extent and scope of the State's accession to India. The Assembly may agree to continue this relationship on the present basis or extent of its scope as it might like and consider feasible and proper."\(^{138}\) The Jammu & Kashmir Constituent Assembly unanimously confirmed the agreement and there was a "predominant urge for a degree of special autonomy for Kashmir" and a "desire to associate with India".\(^{139}\)

While this was the case in the Kashmir Constituent Assembly, in the Indian Parliament the agreement was vehemently criticized by the rightist groups and by some individual parliamentarians. Dr. Syama Prasad Mukharji of the Jana Sangh, N.N. Khare of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sucheta Kriplani of PSP, were most vocal in criticizing the Delhi Agreement. Mukherji said: "Proceed in accordance with a constitutional manner, not just play with the Constitution". Khare said: "It is a voluntary abdication of the power over Kashmir by the government. It is also a sort of violation of our Constitution"; Kriplani cautioned the government and said: "We are

\(^{137}\) Ibid., see also Sisir Gupta, op. cit, p. 372

\(^{138}\) *Shaikh Abdullah's Speech of 11 August 1952*, op. cit.

\(^{139}\) Sisir Gupta, op. cit., p 374
treading on a very dangerous ground if we are going to make special concession to satisfy the Kashmir leadership.” On the other hand communist spokesman A.K Gopalan supported the Agreement in the following words: “Certainly it helps the unity of India, it helps the interests of India, it also certainly helps the people of Jammu and Kashmir not to go out of India and it is a good weapon against those who want to create confusion and disunity in the state”. In course of his reply, Jawaharlal Nehru said: “the strongest bonds that bind will not be of your armies or even of your Constitution to which so much reference has been made but bonds which are stronger than the Constitution and laws and armies-bonds that bind through love and affection and understanding. 140 Probably this was the most correct assessment.

Shaikh Abdullah was soon able to achieve something that he and his organization the National Conference had long desired: the end of the Dogra dynasty, in deed of princely rule in the State. But he had to accept a compromise engineered by Nehru. The compromise was that Karan Singh be the first Sadr-i-Riyasat to maintain a link with the past and a gesture to Jammu, much to his disliking.141 The Yuraj Karan Singh was advised by many Hindu leaders not to accept the new function.142 But Nehru managed to persuade him to take charge of the new office. In November 1952, in a meeting with Nehru, Karan Singh recalls that the former “spoke of the perplexity he was beginning to feel in dealing with Shaikh Abdullah and said that this made it all the more important that I should be on the scene.143 On 15 November 1952 Karan Singh was elected first Sadr-i-Riyasat of the

140 House of People Debates, 7 August 1952. Vol. 4, part II, cols. 5805 and 5908.,
141 Ajit Bhattacharjea, op. cit., pp. 190-191.
142 Joseph Korbel, op. cit. p. 2225
143 Karan Singh, Heir Apparent, op. cit., p. 145
state for a five years term.\textsuperscript{144} And it was in this capacity that he dismissal Abdullah from the office of Prime Minister eight months later.

The Delhi Agreement, which reaffirmed the special status of Jammu and Kashmir State and upheld its internal autonomy, and the subsequent abolition of the Dogra monarchy of the State, came as a rude shock to the anti-autonomy and pro-integration factions both within and outside the State. Joined by the Jan Sangh elsewhere in the country, the Jammu Praja Perished launches a mass campaign in Jammu on 17 November 1952, against Shaikh Abdullah and in favour of the State’s complete merger with the Indian Union. It was Parishad’s aim to secure complete and unconditional accession of the sate to the Indian Union, to get Article 370 of the Indian Constitution deleted and to get Supreme Court’s jurisdiction extended to the state in all matters. The party claimed that “our way is not with Kashmir. Shaikh is not acceptable to us we cannot tolerate Jammu and Ladakh going to the winds. We want the people to have a blind faith in Praja Parished and get ready by putting shrouds to attain our goal.\textsuperscript{145}

The Praja Parished portrayed Shaikh Abdullah and his organization as the enemy of nationalism, a sentiment conveyed by a rhythmic chant that soon spread widely.

\textit{Ek desh mein do vidhan; ek desh mein do nishan}

\textit{Ek desh mein do pradhan; nahin challenge, nahin challenge.}

(Two Constitutions, two flags, two Heads of state in one country will not be tolerated.)

\textsuperscript{144} Karan Singh was not happy with his appointment of five years term only. He wrote to Nehru on August 3 1952. “Regarding my tenure of office, as I indicated to you personally, I would much prefer, if I am to serve as instead Head of State, to do so for more then the very limited term of five years. I would be very much happier if no time limit is imposed.” SWEJN, Vol. 19. pp. 322-330.

The party further claimed that “Shaikh Abdullah wants a republic within the Indian republic- the latter to spend money for its maintenance, keep military for its defense, build roads for its transport facilities and to waste and squander money for its external relations but with no right to the citizens of India to move freely in the state... As a corollary to the rejection of the demand of one Constitution i.e. of the Indian Constitution for the whole State, Jammu and Ladakh shall be forced to cry self determination and their claim that the will of the people of Kashmir valley can not be forced on the people living outside it appears tenable.146

In its desire to end Shaikh Abdullah's rule and ensure rule the State's merger with India, Praja Parished was promptly backed by as had been noted earlier, some Hindu and Sikh nationalist organizations in India, who were craving to create a political space in Indian politics. The Jana Sangh chief Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, in league with Praja Perished, played on the threat of Muslim separatism that had led to the creation of Pakistan, overlooking the fact it was the autonomy promised to Kashmir that persuaded its Muslim majority to prefer India to Pakistan. In a letter to Shaikh Abdullah on February 13, 1953 he wrote: "consciously or unconsciously you are creating a new sovereignty for Jammu and Kashmir state. You are developing a three nation theory, the third being Kashmiris. These are dangerous symptoms."147 The top Akali Dal leaders including those from Punjab like Master Tara Singh, were more bitter. In his speech at Lucknow, Tara Singh was reported to have said: "Kashmir belonged to Pakistan. It is a Muslim state. But I claim it in lieu of the property that the refuges have left in West Pakistan.” He also pleaded that the Kashmir Muslims should be driven to Pakistan, "country to which (they) really

146 Jammu Rejects a Separate Constitution, Public Secretary, all J&K Praja Parished, Jammu, 1952, pp. 12-14
147 Nehru-Mukharjei - Abdullah Correspondence, op. cit. p. 65
belong.\textsuperscript{148} More importantly than this, Karan Singh's memoirs \textit{Heir Apparent} and \textit{Sadr-i-Riyasat} recorded his pro-Praja Parished bearings. He wanted, incredibly, to build" a new Dogra-Kashmiri rapport" by embracing the Parished. Supposedly a head of state acting on Cabinet advice, he "was also taking an active interest in the state politics". He found that "Dogra rule had in effect been replaced by Kashmiri rule".

Jawaharlal Nehru saw the Praja Perished agitation in Jammu, backed by some communal organizations in India, as part of a wave of communal passion being aroused throughout the country. He was particularly concerned because the target of the Praja Parished demonstrators went beyond Abdullah to his own policies. He repeatedly wrote to State chief ministers about the threat. On 4 December 1952 for instance, he tried to give a real picture of the situation in Jammu when he wrote "there are two aspects of these disorders in Jammu which have to be kept in mind. The far-reaching land reforms in the state have naturally not pleased some of the landlord elements and they have joined this agitation against the Government there. In this they are being helped directly by some communal elements in other parts of India....In the name of close association with India, they are acting in a manner which might well imperil that very association.\textsuperscript{149} For a man who had shown so much courage and initiative in much more serious situations, Nehru was strangely ineffective in this crisis—a crisis which his most authoritative as well as sympathetic biographer S. Gopal feels could have returned the country to the havoc of the partition violence. According to Gopal, Nehru attempted "to suppress firmly the activities of the Hindu communalists which were little short of treason, thereby giving Abdullah time to recover his nerve ... Nehru's hand, however, was weakened by the persistent inefficiency of the Home Ministry.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid. p. 47.
\textsuperscript{149} Jawaharlal Nehru, \textit{Letters to the Chief Ministers}, Vol. III (1952-1954), OUP, New Delhi 1987, pp. 192, 198 and 230
Katju [Nehru's Home Minister] was unwilling to act on his Prime Minister's suggestion [to ban the Jan Sangh and arrest the agitators]. The home Minister of India was clearly under the influence of those who wanted to see Shaikh Abdullah removed.

Shaikh Abdullah on his part appears to be looking for a compromise solution to the crisis in April 1953. He instructed the Basic Principles Committee of the Constituent Assembly to study the idea of extending autonomy to each province of the State. A plan was prepared to establish five autonomous regions. The Vale, Jammu, Gilgit, Ladakh, and a region consisting of the districts of Mirpur, Rajaouri, Poonch, and Muzaffarabad (the last two provinces were under the Pakistan controlled administration). In this multi-tired confederation, the Valley and Jammu would each have a separate legislature and a council of ministers for local affairs. Ladakh, with its sparse population, would have a lesser degree of internal autonomy exercised by an elected district council. The Committee also suggested changing name of the interim three-unit entity to "Autonomous Federated Unit of the Republic of India," terminology borrowed from the Soviet Union's model of multi-tired ethno-territorial federalism.

The compromise scheme rapidly failed to appease the sectarian Jammu and Ladakh factions and their external supporters and advisors-who where interested in nothing short of total overthrow of the autonomous regime and a settling of scores with Abdullah and company. By now the Parished agitation had affected even the minds of Muslims living in Jammu, who were unwilling to be part of Jammu province in the proposed federal scheme. For example, people in the Muslim dominated Doda district

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151 M. Akbar, India: The Siege Within, op. cit., p. 247 see also the following chapter
152 Joseph Korbal, op. cit., p. 234, and see also Sumantra Bose, op. cit., pp. 62-63
153 The Hindu (Madras), April 27 1953
154 Sumantra Bose, op. cit., p. 66
"emphasized that if they had peculiar local problems and geographically, culturally were quite different from their neighboring unit, they could not in any way be attached with the cultural unit of Jammu.155

When Shaikh Abdullah employed power to curb the Praja Parished agitation and ordered the arrests of rank and file of the organization, he was surprised to see that the imprisoned agitators were released through interventions by Central Home Ministry.156 Shyama Prasad Mukharjea tried to make capital out of the agitation. He demonstratively but illegally entered the State on 8 May 1953 where he was arrested and detained in jail in Srinagar. His death from a heart attack in detention raised a storm of indignation in India against the regime of Shaikh Abdullah.157

Thus the violent agitation for greater integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India made Shaikh Abdullah to feel insecure. He became disillusioned due to this agitational politics in and outside the state and started wavering. He had bargained hard with the Indian government to preserve the state from excessive interference by New Delhi; Kashmir, he argued, needed special guarantees for protection of its autonomy. He would not have been unaware about the mass disappointment against him in Valley-his strong base.158 He now revived his idea of an independent Kashmir, bringing it up with, among other visiting diplomats, Adlai

155 Vidya Bushan, *Evolution of Democratic Institutions in Indian Polity*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 151 Prem Nath Bazaz also corroborated this fact saying that the Muslim dominated districts of Jammu - Doda, Rajaori, and Poonch would " almost certainly refuse to be bracketed with Dogra Hindus and preferred to stay with the Valley Muslims." See his *Kashmir in Crucible*, op. cit., p 151

156 P.S Varma, op. cit, p 43

157 Sheikh Abdullah in his autobiography denied any involvement in the arrest of S.P Mukhrjei. It appears from his account that Bakhshi Gulam Mohammad, the state Home Minister and D.P. Dhar, Minister of Jails, had in collaboration with Central authorities arrested Mukhrjei to intensify the agitation against him. Interestingly, no enquiry was made regarding Mukhrjei’s sudden death after the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah which followed only after six weeks. Aatish-i-Chinar, op.cit., pp. 555-563

158 See for example President Rajender Prasad’s letter to Nehru, of 14 July, in which he intimated the latter that Sheikh Abdullah was pessimist about his prospects of winning plebiscite in India’s favour.
Shaikh Abdullah in Power

Stevenson, a US Presidential candidate. In his search for supporters for independence or near-independence, he became less condemnatory of Pakistan.

This was disturbing news for Nehru. He now felt Abdullah moving away from him and toward a course of action that was likely to end in India's losing Kashmir, and losing with its secular credentials. He was quickly to act Abdullah was dismissed in August 1953, and put in prison, where he stayed, initially without trial, for all but four months of the next eleven years. And then an old protégé of Abdullah, Bakhshi Gulam Mohammad took over as Prime Minister of Kashmir, and "did every thing Nehru wanted-constituentely integrate Kashmir into India. Promises of autonomy made earlier to Abdullah were cancelled; and fear of violence came to dictate Indian policy".

With Abdullah's dismissal, the first phase of post-1947 Kashmir came to an end. In this phase Shaikh Abdullah struggled hard to protect the autonomous character of his state-an adventure which would cost him his position of the Prime Minister. But then the question remained, that was Shaikh Abdullah really working for the independence of his state, as Nehru evidently believed? B.N. Mullik was probably near to the truth when he observed that Shaikh Abdullah was not actually planning to take the state of Jammu and Kashmir into Pakistan or trying to make it fully independent. He was looking for a semi-independent status where the Indians would protect him while he would benefit economically from the tourist industry.

159 See, for example S. Vashistha, Sheikh Abdullah: Then and Noxv, New Delhi 1968, p. 98. The meeting between Sheikh and Stevenson took place between 1 and 3 May 1953. The discussion was widely reported at the time: The Manchester Guardian reported, e.g., that Abdullah considered that the best solution for Kashmir "could be independence both from India and Pakistan."

160 S. Gopal, op. cit, p 124

161 The issue is further discussed in the next chapter

and other sources of Kashmir wealth free from interference from what he regarded as the Hindu dominated government in New Delhi.163

Shaikh Abdullah remained in office for a period of a little than seven years. This period witnessed some basic changes in the politico-economic and social setup of the State to which Abdullah was instrumental. For the first time, a Prime Minister was seen touring villages on foot or horse back; moving among the people, speaking to them in their language.164 Shaikh Abdullah abolished the hereditary monarchial rule in Kashmir and made the office of the head of state an elective one. He also gave a sever setback to the feudal system in the state by confiscating Jagirs without compensation, whatsoever, and distributed the land to the tillers. His land reforms were most radical ever followed in any not communist political setup.

During Shaikh Abdullah’s rule, the state got its first University; 35 percent of the budget was spent on education. He established a National Militia which enabled the majority of the inhabitants of the state to have military training for the first time in four centuries. Over and above everything, in Shaikh own words, “we secured a special status for Kashmir under article 370 of the Indian Constitution which entitled us to have our own constitution our own flag and our legislative assembly, under the overall sovereignty of India.”165

In one respect were Shaikh Abdullah proved unsuccessful was the democratization of the state politics. As we see in the beginning of this chapter, the absence of a political opposition which was partly ensured by Nehru166 turned Abdullah into an authoritarian ruler. Impressed by the

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163 B.N. Mullik, My Years With Nehru: Kashmir, New Delhi, 1971 p. 39
165 Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit., p 500.
166 Balraj Puri a political activist based in Jammu, met Nehru during Sheikh Abdullah's tenure and pleaded that disgruntled National Conference elements be allowed to form a democratic apposition in the valley. Nehru conceded “the theoretical soundness of
Shaikh Abdullah in Power

Soviet model, he made the party (the National Conference) inseparable from the administration; and as the aggrieved tone of his letters to Nehru shows, he interpreted all opposition to him as an attempt to undermine his personal authority. He prevented Praja Perished and others who opposed his views from participating in the polls for Constituent Assembly. In this way he denied the party to function as a small opposition group in the House. In the end Shaikh himself became a victim of undemocratic politics.

To conclude this chapter one must say that with the appointment of Shaikh Abdullah as prime minister of the state, the people particularly of the valley tasted the first dose of self rule. He derived his authority from the people and despite its authoritarian and one party basis; his tenure enjoyed a considerable popular sanction.167 His successors enjoyed a very little popularity in the state and were lacking initiative. Pankaj Mishra depicts the post-Abdullah period in the following words: “Kashmir without Shaikh Abdullah reverted to being what it was for centuries under Mughal rule: a dependency, its fate controlled by a distant great power whose representatives could do what they wished to as long as no one rocked the boar. Its political life, which had really only begun with Abdullah, came to be dominated by small men with small aims of personal empowerment and enrichment, by constant intrigues and betrayals.”168

[the] argument but maintained that India’s Kashmir policy revolved around .... Abdullah’s [That] nothing should be done to weaken him”, for according to Nehru, Kashmiri politics “revolved around personalities” and “there was no material for democracy there.” for a detailed account regarding Nehru’s role in disrupting democracy in Kashmir, see Balraj Puri, Kashmir Towards Insurgency, Delhi, 1993, p. 45-49., see also Sumantra Bose, The Challenge in Kashmir, New Delhi, 1997, p 39

167 Ibid., p 43
168 Pankaj Mishra, The Birth of a Nation, op. cit.
The Plebiscite Movement or "Tahrik-i-Rai-Shumari" which was formerly launched in 1955 is the longest political battle of Shaikh Abdullah's chequered political career and probably most important movement in post-partition Kashmir which gave birth to so many subsequent developments in the state and created a strong mass psyche which even its creator failed to eradicate at the end. The most crucial and interesting part of the story however, is that the movement was launched by a person who earlier paved the way for the State's accession to India and afterwards became its most vocal propagator also. More interestingly Sheik's movement was directed against government which was headed by none other than his 'Best friend', Jawaharlal Nehru, who had always backed Abdullah in his political struggle against Dogras. What then forced Shaikh Abdullah to take an extreme step? The answer to this question lies in understanding Shaikh Abdullah's political philosophy which subsequently came into conflict with political vision of post-partition Indian statesman- Nehru included.

In his struggle against Dogra hegemony, which lasted for almost two decades, Shaikh Abdullah remained uncompromising about the people's right of self determination. The Sopore Annual session of National Conference, Shaikh Abdullah's discourse during Quiet Kashmir movement, about which we have ready discussed in our proceeding chapters, gives us a clear idea that Shaikh Abdullah's political philosophy revolves round the principle of self determination. He came very close to the Indian National Congress in his struggle against autocracy and authoritarianism because it
too confirms that any decision concerning the future of the princely states should reflect the will of the people and not just that of rulers. The Muslim League's stand that sovereignty rested in rulers only distanced Abdullah from this organization.

So, the right of self determination remained the benchmark of Shaikh Abdullah's political philosophy. And when partition of British India on communal lines became a reality, Shaikh turned more vocal to exert this principal. He firmly opposed a unilateral act of accession by Maharaja Hari Singh and threatened that if he "acceded either to India or Pakistan without taking the wishes of people into consideration the Kashmir's would raise a banner of revolt against him".¹

He further declared that "if forty lakh people living in Kashmir are bypassed and the state declares its accession to India or Pakistan, I shall raise the banner of revolt...."² Again the Congress supported his demand and the League threw its weight behind the ruler.³

No doubt Shaikh was a Kashmiri nationalist and had ever since considered the Kashmir as a separate entity, but not separate in the larger struggle against imperialism. However, he was conscious about the fact that the idea of totally independent Kashmir was not pragmatic, considering the interests and intentions which both the dominions-India and Pakistan had shown vis-à-vis the State. Thus, he wanted to ascertain from both India and Pakistan how for they could go to special consideration to Kashmir. In his protracted dialogue with both the dominion leaders he was determined that State's internal autonomy be guaranteed and accession be limited to defense, foreign affairs and communication.⁴

¹ Khidmat, October 9, 1947.
² People's Age (Bombay), October 26, 1947.
³ See Chapter VII.
Jinnah, who visualized that "Kashmir will fall into our lap like ripe fruit", refused to give any assurance to the National Conference that Kashmir, can remain a separate entity within Pakistan. However, Congress leaders particularly Nehru, who had backed Abdullah in his struggle against Dogra regime, respected Shaikh's demand for autonomy, because his support was crucial in getting Muslim majority state acceded to Indian Dominion.

While the urgency caused by the tribal invasion forced Kashmir government and Shaikh Abdullah to ask Indian government for immediate help after signing the Instrument of Accession, however, Shaikh considered the act of accession a minor compromise in the path of attainment of his cherished goal of self-determination. Thus, speaking in an annual session of the National Conference on 24 September 1949, he stated: "Under the stress of Pakistani invasion we rushed to India and she came to our rescue. Pundit Nehru, true to the democratic convictions accepted our accession only to render us help and nobly indeed left the final decision open to the ratification by the people of Kashmir".

Also Shaikh Abdullah's confidence was boosted by the assurances he received by the Prime Minister of India from time to time and Indian government's willingness and desires to have the people of Jammu and Kashmir ratify the accession and decide the shape of state's future.

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5 Jinnah's political philosophy revolves round the concept of Muslim solidarity hence; there was no room for a separate Kashmiri personality.

6 Quoted in *Indian News Chronicle*, 25 September 1949.

7 The policy of the Indian government has been stated in the White Paper of 1948 which states: "In Kashmir, as in other similar cases, the view of the government of India has been that in the matter of disputed accession the will of the people must prevail. It was for this reason that they [government of India] accepted only on a provisional basis the offer of the Ruler to accede to India, backed though it was by the most important political organization of the state". Government of India's White Paper, 1948, Part IV, p 45. See also my chapter VII, on 'Accession'.
Nehru reiterated this pledge numerous times over the next several years at press conferences, public meetings and at international fora. In August 1952, for example, he told the Indian Parliament that he wanted "no... forced unions," and that if the people of Jammu and Kashmir decided "to part company from us they can go their way and we shall go our way".8

More importantly the Instrument of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India expressly limited the accession to three subjects: Defense, foreign affairs and communications leaving the state autonomous in its internal matters, much to the excitements of Shaikh Abdullah who was enthusiastic to carry his radical economic reform in the state according to his organization's New Kashmir manifesto. In the debates of the Shaikh Abdullah strongly demanded that the Jammu and Kashmir state be treated as a special case and given the fullest degree of autonomy consonant with the act of accession.9 Accordingly, in October 1949, India's Constituent Assembly inserted a special provision in the Indian Constitution, Article 306A, which subsequently became Article 370, extending such autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, though it was specified that this arrangement was an interim system, pending the promised plebiscite.10

Article 370 clearly stated that Indian Parliament could make subjects specified in the instrument of accession and president was given the power to authorize legislation on other matters, only with the concurrence of State Government.11

It took Shaikh very little time to discover that the special status given to the state and the economic reformation he was determined to carry on

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11 Ibid.
will be viciously thwarted by the rightist elements in both within and outside the state. A mass of propaganda campaign was launched by the Praja Parished in Jammu against Shaikh Abdullah administration and in favour of Kashmir’s complete merger with Indian union.\textsuperscript{12}

Nehru, citing the intelligence reports which he received from the state, to Sardar Patel on April 17, 1949: “Our intelligence officer reported that this Praja Parished is financed by the Maharaja.” He continued, “The Maharaja’s brother-in-law was openly carrying on a campaign against Shaikh Abdullah and his government and issuing pamphlets of this kind”. He was shocked to learn that in an intelligence report “Mention was made of the Yuraj [Karan Singh, who was soon to become Sardar-i-Riyasat] getting mixed up with this business”.\textsuperscript{13}

This propaganda campaign backed by press and rightist political parties in India accelerated with every passing day. Nehru was aware and in frustration he told a public rally in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on New Year’s day 1952: “There can be no greater vindication than this of our secular policies, our constitution, than that we have drawn the people of Kashmir towards us. But just imagine what would have happened in Kashmir of the Jan Sangh or any other communal party has been at the helm of affairs. The people of Kashmir say that they are fed up with this communalism. Why should they live in a country where the Jan Sangh and the \textit{Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh} are constantly beleaguering them? They will go elsewhere and they will not stay with us”. Indeed, “if the people of Kashmir tell us to get out, we will do so”. He further added, “Now these Hindu Communal parties like the Jan Sangh and Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh and another party called the Praja Parished in Jammu have launched an agitation against

\textsuperscript{12} See previous chapter.

\textsuperscript{13} Nehru’s letter to Patel on April 17, 1949, cited in Durga Das, (ed.) \textit{Sardar Patel’s Correspondence}, PP. 262-263.
the Shaikh Abdullah government.... At the time Shaikh Abdullah who is completely opposed to Pakistan. There is no doubt about that he is the leader of the people of Kashmir, a very great leader. If tomorrow Shaikh Abdullah wanted Kashmir to join Pakistan, neither I nor all the forces of India would be able to stop it because if the leader decides, it will happen”.

Aware as Nehru was, he however, instead of curbing the agitation started his own adventure of not only encroaching the stated autonomy but also of backtracking his commitments which he had made in favour of plebiscite. Although a plebiscite remained India’s official policy from 1947 to 1954, by late 1948 Nehru was already sceptical of its realization. The first indication came during the United Nations Council for India and Pakistan’s [UNCIP] visit to New Delhi in July 1948 when Nehru intimated that he would not be opposed to “the idea of dividing the country between India and Pakistan. 15

Besides Nehru, who endorsed earlier the idea of convening a separate Constituent Assembly to determine the future of Dogra rule and to draw up the State Constitution, was by 1952 set on reducing the autonomy to a husk. Once he withdraws the plebiscite offer his goals become closer federal integration. For instance when Shaikh Abdullah opposed the merger of state forces and the Indian army, the center rejected his demand.16

Similarly the Delhi Agreement of 1952 between Shaikh and Nehru gave the later a veto on the appointment of the Sadr-i-Riyasat, even after his
election by the state’s legislature, his continuance in office depended on the center’s whim.17

Nehru’s relations with Abdullah deteriorated when he wrote his infamous note of August 25 1952, calling Kashmiris “not what are called a virile people. They are soft and addicted to easy living”. It is a highly secret Note he wrote at Sonamarg. After a stunning confession that public pledges notwithstanding, he had decided privately in 1948 not to hold a plebiscite, he told Shaikh Abdullah to get the Constituent Assembly to ratify the accession, a demand he found difficult to accept given the Kashmiris growing dischament with the Shaikh as well as with India. Nehru wrote:

Towards the end of 1948 it seemed to me that there were only two possibilities open to us: (1) continuation of the war (with Pakistan) in a limited way; (2) some kind of settlement on the basis of then existing military situation. I have not mentioned the plebiscite; because it became clear to me then that we would never get the conditions which were necessary for a plebiscite. Neither side will give in on this vital issue, and so I ruled out the plebiscite for all practical purposes.” (emphasis mine)

Nehru continued: “we are superior to Pakistan in military and industrial power. But that superiority is not so great as to produce results quickly either by war or by fear of war. ..... as we grow in strength, and we are likely to do so, Pakistan will less and less inclined to threaten or harass us, and a time will come when, through sheer force of circumstances, it will be in a mood to accept a settlement which we consider fair, whether in Kashmir or elsewhere.” 18

17 Around the same time, Gopal Swami Ayangar attempted to extend the jurisdiction of Controller and Auditor General to the State, which was strongly resented by Abdullah. M.J. Akbar, Kashmir: Behind the Vale, New Delhi, 1991, p. 148.
18 SWJN, Volume 19, PP. 322-330.
Nehru overlooked three factors. Pakistan, the aggrieved and therefore revisionist state, would not accept a status quo established at the cost of its pride, no matter how long it continued. Secondly, Shaikh Abdullah had even in 1948 shown his grave reservations about the kind of accession Nehru had in his mind as we see previously. Nehru’s third and gravest mistake was in underestimating the assertiveness of the people, if not their relevance. Events were to prove him wrong on all three points. Yet this is the disastrous policy which had won the national acceptance and has been followed to this day.

This Note was beginning to an end and it stunned Shaikh Abdullah. He could not ignore Nehru’s moves, nor the growing popular alienation and his own isolation from the people and he decided to bow to Kashmiris opinion, not to Nehru. Even at the best of his times he had made known his reservations on accession and asserted his independence. For instance, He said at Hazratbal on April 25, 1952: “It would be better to die than to submit to the taunt that India was our bread giver”.19 He knew that he drew his power from the people and explained to Nehru that he had sought to counteract the propaganda that “we were being kept in the saddle with the help of the Indian bayonets”.20

Reacting to discontent in the Valley, provocations from Jammu, encroachment form Center and overtures of foreign powers, Shaikh Abdullah hardened his attitude and started dreaming of an independent Kashmir.21 And to make it a reality, he sought some support from USA.22 It

20 SWJN, Volume 18, P. 390.
21 See G.M Sadiq’s letter to Abdullah dated September 11, 1956, which states: “you will kindly recall that throughout this period you declared your fascination for independence of a truncated state which would more or less include only the valley of Kashmir”. Suresh k. Sharma, S.R. Sharma, (Ed.), Sheikh Abdullah and Kashmir, New Delhi, 1995, P. 159 Sates
is a matter of opinion whether it was a bargaining ploy to set aside the Delhi Agreement or indeed to settle the future of the state once and for all.

His National Conference set up a committee to consider possible solution to end the political deadlock. The committee came to the unanimous conclusion that the internal stability of the state was impossible so long as international settlement on the final affiliation of the state was not achieved. It accordingly appointed an eight member sub-committee to explore avenues of an honourable settlement. The sub-committee had several meetings. An extract from the final session of the committee’s minutes, held on June 9, 1953, reads: “As a result of the discussion held in the course of various meetings, the following proposals only emerge as possible alternatives for an honourable and peaceful solution of the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan:

a) Overall plebiscite with conditions as detailed in the minutes of the meeting dated 4-6-1953. [This apparently was a reference to Moulana Masoodi’s suggestion that the choice of independence be offered in the plebiscite.]

b) Independence of the whole state.

c) Independence of the whole state with joint control [India- Pakistan] of foreign affairs and defense; and

d) The Dixon Plan with independence for the plebiscite area [region wise disposition of the state].”

More important are the views of Bakshi Gulum Mohammed and G.M Sadiq regarding the proposals. Bakshi was emphatically of the opinion that the

23 The sub-committee’s members were: Sheikh Abdullah, Maulana Masoodi, Mirza Afzal Beg, Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad, G.M Sadiq, Sardar Bodh Singh, Pandit Girdari Lal Dogra and Shamlal Saraf.

24 Vide Sheikh-Sadiq Correspondence, August-October 1956, published by Mirdula Sarabhai New Delhi, p. 191. Sheikh Abdullah quoted the minutes in his letter of September 26, 1956. Sadiq did not counter them.
proposal (d) above should be put up as first and the only practicable, advantageous and honorable solution of the dispute. Moulana Masoodi, however, opined that the order of preference as given above should be adhered to. G M Sadiq opined: “if an agency consisting of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Soviet Russia and China could be created to supervise and conduct the plebiscite, I would suggest that we should immediately ask for an overall plebiscite. Failing this, we may ask for a supervision commission representing all the Members of Security Council for ensuring free and fair plebiscite in the state [emphasis mine].” Sadiq was close to the CPI. Both Sadiq and Bakshi were later installed as prime ministers of the state.

Significantly, Shaikh Abdullah was not acting secretly. Nehru, who had come to Kashmir when the Working Committee was in session, was informed about its deliberations. Similarly in June 1953 Moulana Azad visited Kashmir and was apprised of the proceedings. But Sadr-i-Riyasat Karan Singh, who was frustrated by the Shaikh Abdullah’s moves, was working behind the curtain. He sent a message to Nehru on June 10, 1953, through K.N. Katju; one day after the sub-committee’s meeting. “I was shocked and astounded to gather from a private meeting with Shaikh Abdullah last week that he seems to have decided to go back upon the solemn agreements which he has concluded with India and upon his clear commitments. This cannot be allowed, as it will make our position absolutely impossible and be a grave blow to our national interests and naturally to our international position also...I have requested Dr, Katju to arrange for the government of India intelligence service here to keep in close

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25 Ibid.
touch with me, as that will greatly help me in correctly appraising this unstable and most unpredictable situation".26

The proposals of Kashmir leaders and the secret messages upsets Nehru and he requested Abdullah to come to Delhi to discuss the implications of the proposals only to receive a negative response from the later.27 An angry Nehru went all along to Srinagar where he was told by Abdullah that the only way to defuse the tension was to grant "full autonomy (i.e., cancellation of the Delhi Agreement)" to the state with guarantees. Abdullah felt that 'full autonomy' within the Union was the very basis of Kashmir's accession to India in 1947 and 1949 in the discussions on Article 370 in the Constituent Assembly.28 Nehru could not sell it to India where he was struggling with the growing Hindu Right, who criticized his Kashmir policy. Thus he followed a destructive course, branding Abdullah a communalist and the promoter of disruptive tendencies. He also backed other players to isolate his friend.

In a letter to Abdullah on 28 June, 1953 which is as confusing as his Note of 25 August 1952, Nehru wrote: "My government has stood, as you have so consistently stood, for a secular democracy. I do not know what your feelings are on this subject now. But I fear the tendency in Kashmir is away from it. Unfortunately that will have its reaction in India as such tendencies in India have their reactions in Kashmir."29 Nehru was giving communal colour to a demand for autonomy. "It was a wounding letter", as A G

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29 Ibid.
Noorani put it, "to one whose secular credentials were as impeccable as his own." Shaikh candidly disagreed and in a protesting mood replied:

Muslims may rightly feel that in spite of you and many others, the ideals of secular democracy are not much in evidence in so far as Kashmiri Muslims is concerned. I derived my strength from what I supposed was an assurance that the state's accession with India would result in a fair deal to all sections of the people. But unfortunately that goal has not been achieved.

On the charge of lapses from secularism Abdullah retorted:

May I say, this is an unkind cut. Time alone will prove my faith in the principle for which I have consistently fought all these years. My idea about secular democracy is not cramped or narrow minded. I believe in justice for all sections of the people and my attitude is conditioned by realities and not by wishful thinking.

The Shaikh Abdullah also wrote:

You have spoken about guarantee. We certainly believed that the terms of the Indian Constitution provided adequate guarantee.... But I would point out to you the discrepancies that we came to notice from time to time in the attitude of the government of India in regard to this position. When Article 370 was devised, we felt assured by Sardar Patel that the Instrument of Accession would be the final basis of the Indo-Kashmir relationship. Subsequently, when the Delhi Agreement came up before the Council of States on August 5, 1952, Sheri

Gopalswami Ayyangar stated that Article 370 was not a permanent feature of Indian Constitution and ‘when the time was ripe’ the provision could be whipped off the Constitution. This clearly shows that even though assurances were given to us ....such assurances came with a good deal of mental reservation.31

In retrospect events were to prove that his fears were fully justified.

Nehru became impatient and advised Azad to guide Abdullah to change his way of thinking. He also established a close contact with Bakshi, D P Dhar and others whom Karen Singh described as “pro-Indian faction” to discredit Abdullah.32 Moulana Azad made an impassionate appeal to Abdullah for agreement. In a letter to Abdullah dated 9 July, 1953, Azad assured him that the government of India was willing to “declare that the special status of Kashmir will be made permanent and that the government of India will be bound by it without any condition”.33 But it was too late. Having tinkered with Article 370 of the constitution, Nehru belatedly offered to make it permanent. But Abdullah’s letter of July 16, 1953, to Azad recorded why he declined the offer.

“Even after the Delhi Agreement a responsible spokesmen of the government of India declared that their ultimate objective was to secure the complete merger of the state with India and that they waited for appropriate time and condition to bring that about. These statements reveal that the Delhi agreement could not provide a basis to finalise the relationship between India and Kashmir, but that it provide temporary arrangements to finalise accession. The only difference between the government of India and different

31 Ibid; p. 271.
33 Balraj Puri, op. cit., p. 119.
elements in the country [read Jan Sangh] on the issue is whether to bring about the merger of the state with India now or after some time.....I am very happy to hear from you that the government of India is willing to declare that the special position given to Kashmir will be made permanent and that the government of India will be bound by it without and condition. If such a declaration had been made at an appropriate time, it would undoubtedly have strengthened our hands and unified various organizations and public opinion in the state and even if the masses had been asked about accession, a majority of them would have come out in favour of India. But, unfortunately, that was not to be.

"The changes effected on several occasions in the relationship between India and Kashmir greatly agitated the public opinion and also weakened our hands to a great extent, although, such a declaration would be welcome, it remains to be seen if it would draw the support of different sections of people in India and parties in Kashmir. You would appreciate that without such support, this declaration would not suffice to dispel the fears that have arisen in the minds of the people of Kashmir...

"We have carefully weighted the various pros and cons and have reached certain conclusions after careful deliberation over these matters. Bakshi Sahib and Beg Sahib have been directed to convey these decisions to you. It is now up to you and your colleagues to seriously examine them and decide if they lead to fair solution of the problem. If you do not consider these proposals practicable, then you should put forth your own proposal keeping in view the importance of internal and external aspects of the matter".
Thus, Shaikh was ready to parley. He was also clear that there could be no solution without an India-Pakistan accord. But to Delhi, Shaikh had crossed all limits. A propaganda campaign was let loose. B.N. Mullik the intelligence chief spoke of a Pakistani emissary. Officialdom hinted at Adlai Stevenson in order to alienate the Left, which was pro Shaikh Abdullah. This succeeded. But the reality was; “As for Adlai Stevenson, I do not think that he is to blame in any way”, Nehru wrote to his sister Vijay Lakshmi Pundit. Recently an extremely important document came to the surface which fully expose the charges that Shaikh had maintained any secret contacts with Pakistan. It is a Note by Nehru’s Private Secretary, M O Mathai, dated September 12, 1953, addressed to Indra Gandhi. Indra Gandhi wanted to meet Shaikh Abdullah in prison and Mathai tried to dissuade her. Mathai wrote: “I do not believe that Shaikh Abdullah deliberately intended to switch on his band-wagon to Pakistan any person accusing him of that is not only doing him an injustice but is also spoiling our own cause (emphasis mine).”

Within the State, a “rift was engineer” in the National Conference leadership and in Shaikh Abdullah’s Cabinet. And finally in the early hours of 9th August 1953, Shaikh was sacked and arrested, formally by Karan Singh, “functioning in the interests of the state” and citing the reason that he had lost confidence of “the majority in the cabinet”.

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34 In 1948 the Soviet propaganda organ New Times had hailed Abdullah as the leader of “a progressive and democratic mass movement” and condemned the alleged interference of “Indian reactionaries” in Kashmir. By 1953 the same paper was calling the Kashmir Question an “internal affair” of India decrying alleged “imperialist [American led] efforts to turn the Valley in to a strategic bridgehead”. See R. K. Jain, (ed.) Soviet South Asian Relations, Vol. I: 1947-1978, Atlantic Highlands, N. J. Humanities Press, 1979, pp. 3-4.

35 SWJN, op. cit; Vol. 24, p. 388.

36 For the text of this Note, see A G Noorani, “Brought to Heel”, in Frontline, September 12, 2008, p. 83.


38 ibid.
this was but it was outrageously unconstitutional as he had neither lost the confidence of the Constituent Assembly nor the majority population in the state.39

Karan Singh’s claim that the Shaikh’s dismissal as premier and his arrest and imprisonment were decided in Srinagar is refuted by the Indian official records.40 These documents reveal that it was Nehru, not Rafi Ahmad Khidwai or anyone else, who decided deliberately on this course.41 Though later he denied his role to the President (August 9); Parliament (August 10); the Chief Ministers (August 22) and even to daughter Indira Gandhi, who was opposed to the action (August 9).42 Nehru’s action is still fresh in the minds of Kashmiris.

The unconstitutional dismissal and subsequent imprisonment of Shaikh Abdullah along with his supporters, at a time when public opinion of the majority community in the state and particularly in the valley had begun to turn against India,43 caused an eruption to the simmering volcano. The Shaikh Abdullah again became a symbol of Kashmir nationalist aspirations and relying point to the pro-freedom and pro-Pakistan sentiments in the state.

The aftermath of Shaikh’s arrest was described in the report on Kashmir by two observers of the Praja Socialist party, Sadiq Ali and Madhu Limaye, after a fortnight’s tour in September 1953: “The demonstrations that followed the dismissal and arrest of Shaikh Abdullah were serious and

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39 Mir Qasim, *My Life and Times* (autobiography), Delhi, 1992, PP. 68-70
41 A Note which Nehru wrote on 31 July, 1953 clearly indicate that Sheikh’s dismissal was pre planned and directed from Centre. It recorded, “The head of state [Dr. Karan Singh] should be informed accordingly.” Ibid, p.303. See also B.N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru: Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1971, PP. 40-42. He recalled on 31 July 1953 as Nehru saying that “there was no alternative but to remove Sheikh Abdullah and install Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad at his place”.
widespread. The new common cries were "Sher-e-Kashmir Zindabad, Pakistan Zindabad".... The police and the militia came out in full strength and did their job efficiently and fairly ruthlessly.... The hartal was complete for the first seven or eight days.... The police indulged in the violence.....The Muslim population by and large has not reconciled to the new regime. It is not in a position to create trouble but if an opportunity has for showing the discontent, it would fain do so. There is no free expression of opinion so far as this section is concerned.... Their suppression and the constant vigilance of police is, however, not a safe foundation to build on."44

"Srinagar was in total chaos." Mir Qasim recorded, Abdullah's successor Bakshi's "own house, despite the police guard, was under attack. He was nervous and wanted to step down." Abdullah's arrest had generated "a bitter sense of betrayal in Kashmir."45 If Jinnah's two-nation theory suffered its first defeat in Kashmir, Abdullah's dismissal and arrest, caused by communal propaganda against him, gave the first blow to the secular credentials of the Indian State.

People openly shouted slogans against India and in favour of Pakistan. Karan Singh, who became much bolder after August 9, wrote to Nehru that Shaikh Abdullah's wife, "his two daughters and his eldest son Farooq are playing a prominent role in these openly pro-Pakistan activities.....If they continue to act in this way the hands of the government might be forced and they may all have to be sent to join Shaikh Abdullah in Udhampur."46

45 Mir Qasim, My Life and Times, op. cit.
46 Cited in Jamaid Alam, Jammu and Kashmir (1949-64), op. cit.; It is interesting to mention here that Sheikh Abdullah married Akbar Jahan Begun in October 1933. His first child was a daughter, Khalida. Farooq is the eldest son, followed by two sons Tariq and Mustafa Kamal. Another daughter, Suraiya, is youngest child. Farooq, born in 1937, was a subversive at 16 in 1953. Suraiya, for younger, was 10 years old. Only a
Shaikh Abdullah’s arrest was followed by the process of integrating the state with Indian Union, with Bakshi only too eager to give his ‘Concurrence’. On February 6, 1954, Delhi Accord of 1952 was ratified.\textsuperscript{47} And in the same year, a Constitutional [Application to Jammu & Kashmir] Order was promulgated by the President of India, which empowered the Indian government to legislate on all matters on the Union List, not just defence, foreign affairs and communications.\textsuperscript{48}

Later on 26 January 1957, new Constitution was adopted by the “duly constituted” Kashmir government. This document took as its promise that “the state of Jammu & Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India”.\textsuperscript{49} In the next year a Constitutional Amendment was affected, whereby Jammu & Kashmir was brought under the purview of Central Administrative Services.\textsuperscript{50}

Formation of the Plebiscite Front.

Amidst the mounting pressure by some political parties and political leaders in India,\textsuperscript{51} growing discontent and alienation within the state caused by Shaikh Abdullah’s continued detention without trial, and India's international isolation over Kashmir issue, \textsuperscript{52} Mirza Afzal Beg, who was detained with Abdullah, was released from the prison by November 1954.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{47} 15 out of 75 members of the Assembly did not attend its meeting to resent the Accord and Sheikh Abdullah’s imprisonment.

\textsuperscript{48} Sumantra Bose, \textit{Challenge in Kashmir}, op. cit; p. 33.

\textsuperscript{49} A.G. Noorani, \textit{The Kashmir Question}, op. cit; p. 73.

\textsuperscript{50} Sumantra Bose, op. cit. pp. 33-34.

\textsuperscript{51} Socialist Party of India (SPI) launched a campaign against the oppressive policies of Bakshi’s government and voiced in favour of Abdullah’s release. \textit{Pakistan Times} (Lahore) 19, November 1954. Mirdula Sarabhai, a prominent lady and once a secretary to Mahatma Gandhi championed Sheikh’s cause and ensured that he has not forgotten outside the State.

\textsuperscript{52} Reporting to Nehru from the United Nations on January 13, 1957, Krishna Menon admitted: “I must mention that there is no goodwill for us on the Kashmir issue so that there should be no complaint from any of your colleagues that I dissipated the
Immediately after his release, Afzal Beg began to shape the public opinion in the State against Bakshi's government and his mergeristic policies. He worked along with other colleagues to create a separate regional party aimed at "to challenge the representative character of the Constituent Assembly, which had ratified the accession of state with India". This process finally culminated in the formation of Mahaz-i-Rai-Shumari (Plebiscite Front) on 10 August 1955.

The formation of the Plebiscite Front provided a platform to those who were strongly feeling against the centrist policies of Indian government and collaborates in the state.

Though Shaikh Abdullah was never an official member of the Front, the organization through out functioned upon his political philosophy and enjoyed his patronage. He became its mentor and ideologue and used it as a trump card.

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53 See, "Nehru: Myth & Legacy" by A.G Noorani, in Frontline, February 10, 2006


55 The Hindu, 12 August 1955.

56 Initially there were just five persons who signed the declaration for the formation of Plebiscite Front, Mirza Afzal Beg, Sofi Mohammad Akbar, Ghulam Mohammad Raid, Mohammad Amin Bhat and Ghulam Ahmad Bukhari. "Nida-i-Haq", Srinagar, 2004, P.4. Later after the formation of the Front was made public it was signed by some members of the Assembly also. Hindustan Standard, 11 August 1955.

57 Times of India reported on September 2, 1955 that Sheikh had informed members of the Front that "I will decide on coming out of jail whether to support the Front or not". However, late Ghulam Nabi Hagroo a veteran leader of the Front in an interview with the faculty members of the Department of History, Kashmir University, in the presence
In his first statement, while announcing the establishment of the organization, Mirza Afzal Beg appealed to Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan and the Security Council to assist in “the immediate holding of a free plebiscite in Kashmir and there by end agony of millions”. He strongly challenged to the State Constituent Assembly for ratifying the accession of the state with India. He said, “We challenge this view as most untenable and a gross breach of international commitments as also a glaring betrayal of the people”.

The Plebiscite Front set for itself four objectives to achieve through democratic and constitutional methods.

1. To work for creating peaceful and friendly atmosphere between India and Pakistan with an objective to solve the accession issue peacefully.

2. To work for the establishment of a democratic way of life for restoring the self-respect and self-confidence of the people in the State.

3. To work for the restoration of the rule of law to ensure social, economic and political progress in the state. And.

4. It aimed at creating communal peace among different religious groups in the state.

Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, Sofi Mohammad Akbar, Munshi Mohammad Ishaq and other leaders of the Front demonstration meritorious organizational abilities and mobilizing techniques in making the ideas of the movement to reach to gross root village level and to urban areas, through its

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Although the programme and constitution of the Front was secular in nature it failed to attract the non-Muslims to its fold. It was because of its disapproval to the finality of Accession and its pro-Pakistan stand.

At the initial phase the Front leaders mobilized masses around those issues which could easily appeal to the people. Its demand includes:

1. That the government of India should give up the policy of gaining time and create a climate to enable the people of Kashmir to exercise the right to self-determination.

2. That Shaikh Abdullah and other political prisoners in Kashmir should be released immediately.

3. That the atmosphere of coercion, terror and tyranny should be given up.

4. That an impartial commission of inquiry should be established to probe into the atrocities committed since August 9, 1953.

5. That an agency to arrange the plebiscite in the state should be inducted forthwith.

However, before any organized mass agitation could be launched, the state government initiated the process of oppression. By 23 August, 1955, the government banned its public meetings and within quick succession all top leaders of the Front were arrested, and “detained mostly without trial”.

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60 The plebiscite front was organized in a systematic manner with a hierarchy of committees comprising: 1) Basic committee. 2) Halqa committee. 3) Tehsil committee. 4) Zila committee. 5) Provincial committee. 6) General council. 7) Central committee and Executive council, ibid. P.3

61 During this phase Pakistan became an important but unofficial source of funding to the Front. Interview with G. N. Hagroo, op. cit.


63 Pakistan Times (Lahore), 24 August, 1955.
Some members who went underground started a campaign to educate masses by issuing pamphlets and highlighting the government atrocities to keep the movement alive.64 These pamphlets also criticized the government of India for backtracking its commitments to Kashmiris and the government in the state which was not enjoying the confidence of the masses.65

On the one hand Bakshi Gulam Mohammad resorted Machiavellian methods to crush his opposition in the state.66 And on the other hand a highly subsidized economy was geared to aid the process of political regimentation and to deviate people from the issues concerning political future of Kashmir. "Permits, contracts, licenses, quotes and loans were sanctioned by arbitrary discretion and mood of the state Prime Minister. Economic development was accompanied by manifold enlargement of the administrative machinery, which made the state the major employer of the educated class. The over riding consideration in recruitments and promotions in government jobs and admissions to technical and higher education was to win political support for the new ruling class".67

This 'subsidy culture' though partially helped Bakshi to establish his command over administration; Shaikh Abdullah "remained a popular hero of the valley and a symbol of Kashmiri nationalist aspirations".68 Furthermore, Shaikh's continuous detention without any trial eroded India's moral stature, in particular in the West and the Muslim countries. The Time News

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66 In order to suppress the members of the Plebiscite Front the government had raised an additional police. Dawn, (Karachi) 11 September 1956.
68 Ibid. P.131.
magazine commented: "The most obvious flaw in the shining moral armor of India’s Jawaharlal Nehru has been the case of Shaikh Abdullah".  

Nehru realized that in the absence of Abdullah, Kashmir issue can not be solved. Thus he wrote to a reluctant Karan Singh, who wants Kashmir issue be declared closed in Abdullah’s absence, on January 11, 1957; “You say that it would be desirable to keep him in detention till it is found possible to declare that the Kashmir dispute is closed. That I think is not feasible. In fact so long as Shaikh Abdullah is in prison, the dispute will not be fully closed”. He continued that “I have a very uncomfortable feeling that our position is constantly undermined by Shaikh Abdullah’s detention, both internally and aboard. I realized fully the risks involved. But one does not solve a problem or really avoid risks by running away from them. Therefore, after giving a great deal of thought to this matter, I have felt that Bakshi Gulam Mohammad should take the action [to release Shaikh Abdullah]”.  

Accordingly Abdullah was released on 8 January, 1958. His release strengthened the opposition to Bakshi government and demand for plebiscite launched by the Plebiscite Front. Nehru and other leaders soon discovered that a free Abdullah would not submit to the forced status quo. Immediately after his release Shaikh launched a very forceful campaign along with Front leaders, in favour of Kashmiri’s right to self determination. In his interviews and public speeches he strongly criticized Indian government for eroding state’s internal autonomy and making the state’s accession to India permanent and irrevocable. He refused to recognize Bakshi’s government and the decisions made by the Constituent Assembly.

70 SWJN; Vol. 31, PP. 293-294.
which had ratified the accession of the state to India.  

The reception which Shaikh Abdullah got all the way back to Srinagar after his release and the mass attendance demonstrated that he had not lost his popularity. In these public meetings people would shout slogans in favour of the right of self-determination.

\[Yeh muluk hamara hai,\]

\[Is ka faisla ham karenge.\]

[This country belongs to us, we will decide it future]

\[Rai-Shumati jaldi karoo\]

[Organize plebiscite immediately]

Also slogans were shouted against Bakshi and his allies and some observers found people shouting slogans in favour of Kashmiris accession to Pakistan. Not surprisingly, Abdullah became an official Pakistani Hero; and soon it would be the Indians who were calling him quisling. Also on his part he himself openly stated that there was a strong sentiment in Kashmir, in Pakistan’s favour—a fact which he denied to accept when he was in power. Also the Muslim masses, “especially after the events of 1953, had

\[\text{\textsuperscript{71}}\] It is important to mention that Sheikh Abdullah stated on 29 January 1958 that, “as a matter of policy, I cannot become a member of Plebiscite Front, but I will give this organization my whole hearted support”. \[\text{\textsuperscript{72}}\] Sheikh Abdullah’s press statements and extracts of public speeches are catalogued in Satish Vashistha, \textit{Sheikh Abdullah, Then and Now}, Delhi, 1968, PP. 103-116. B.N Mullik comets surely about the public receptions given to Abdullah: “He behaved as if he was king returning to his country after exile for re-installation”, \textit{My Years with Nehru: Kashmir}, op.cit; P.84. See also Sunualla Butt, \textit{Kashmir in Flames}, P.72.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{73}}\] “For the first time slogans in favour of Pakistan were fearlessly raised in public meetings and photographs of Jinnah publicly displayed”. M.Y. Saraf, \textit{Kashmir’s Fight for Freedom}, Vol. II, p. 1231 and Tej (Delhi) march 2, 1958.


\[\text{\textsuperscript{75}}\] Satish Vashistha, op. cit; P. 108.
become increasingly disillusioned with India and to that extent had turned to Pakistan".\textsuperscript{76}

He however remained adamant that India and Pakistan should jointly resolve to provide Kashmiris the right of self-determination. But he made it clear that "in the event of plebiscite in Kashmir, it would be illogical and unjust to restrict its scope only to the question of accession to India or Pakistan".\textsuperscript{77} In a press statement to the press on 17 February 1958 he concluded that "one of the most important objects underlying the entire political movement in the state has remained to secure the right of self determination for the people of the state. Expression of the will of the people through a plebiscite is the one formula which has been agreed upon by the parties concerned…. The people of the state consider the formula of plebiscite as a clear interpretation of their long cherished aspirations and as a lasting solution of the complicated problem which is facing them".\textsuperscript{78}

Shaikh Abdullah's stand over plebiscite hardened with every passing day much to the disappointment and disapproval of Indian authorities and the ruling faction of the National Conference in the state. In a fiery speech delivered on January 30, 1958, he stated that those countries which did not support Kashmiri's 'right to self-determination' were "our enemies, though they be our neighbors", while those who did so, "be they in east or west, are our friends".\textsuperscript{79}

This speech provoked authorities and it was regarded as Abdullah's indication to his followers that India should be regarded as an 'enemy' while Pakistan should be considered as a 'friend'.\textsuperscript{80} This and the other such outspoken pronouncements made by Abdullah for a plebiscite and the mass

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, see also Zamindar, 26 April 1958 and Imroz, 26 April, 1958.
\textsuperscript{77} Satish Vashistha, op. cit; p. 109.
\textsuperscript{78} Cited in Lamb, op. cit; P. 203.
\textsuperscript{79} Tej (Delhi), 2 February, 1958.
\textsuperscript{80} Satish Vashistha, op. cit., p. 110.
enthusiasm in the valley created by his firebrand oratory, alarmed Bakshi Gulam Mohammad and his advisers, notably B.N. Mullik and D.P. Dhar and they were left with no option but to arrest Abdullah and his associates on 30 April 1958. Abdullah was reported to be provoking riots and “holding secret meetings in his house in which questions of demanding a plebiscite for merging the state with Pakistan, large scale enlistment of Razakers, who could be imparted instruction in the handling of bombs and other arms, which were received from Pakistan, and making contacts with Pakistan were planned”.  

But Mir Qasim who was part of the Bakshi government, and was to become Chief Minister in the years to come, refuted these charges: “we learnt that the riots were engineered by Bakshi Sahib’s supporters to provide justification for the rearrest of Shaikh Sahib”. When he protested to Nehru against the re-arrest, he was told that the Prime Minister did not approve all of Bakshi’s actions and that he was in Hyderabad when Abdullah was put back in jail.  

Shortly after the Abdullah’s arrest, he and other leaders of the Plebiscite Front were made to face trial in what is popularly known as “Kashmir Conspiracy Case”, on the charge of conspiracy to overthrow the Jammu and Kashmir government by ‘means of criminal force’.  

Among other charges which were made against Plebiscite Front leaders and Shaikh, it was mentioned that the ‘War Council’ which had been set up after the arrest of Abdullah, in August 1953 to secure his return to

81 B.N. Mullik, op. cit. pp.84-85.  
82 Mir Qasim, My Life and Times, op. cit., pp.88-89. See also Sannaullah Butt, Kashmir in Flames, op. cit. pp. 72-75, for an interesting account about the conspiracy made by Bakshi to re-arrest Abdullah much to the disappointment of Pundit Nehru.  
83 Statement of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, in the court of Shri N.K. Hak, special magistrate Jammu, parts I p.2 vide Indian council of world Affairs, Library, New Delhi.
power after the overthrow of the state government and to achieve annexation of the state by Pakistan.84

It was stated that in order to disturb peace and tranquility, and to bring about a state of public disorder, the Council issued pamphlets, slogans and wall writings in order to generate hostile feelings against India.85

It was alleged that Mirza Afzal Beg, had secret meetings in which it was resolved to convert the hitherto underground organization called the War Council into Plebiscite Front, to carry on the conspirational activities with the difference that outwardly they were to propagate the idea of plebiscite.86

It was also mentioned that Begam Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg were at the time communicating with Pakistan and had accused them “if Pakistan rendered them aid at an early date, the conspirators would be able to overthrow the government and secure the annexation of Kashmir by Pakistan”.87 They were also alleged for receiving money from Pakistan. It was stated that the main instigation of the conspiracy was coming from Abdullah, who was well aware of these happenings, “as is apparent from the contents of many letters written by conspirators”.88

After hanging fire for four years in the magistrate’s court, the case was at last committed to the court of sessions in Jammu, on April 15, 1962. Shaikh Abdullah exposed the true nature of the trial when he observed that “there is political design behind this prosecution that is clear. The complaint is nothing but politics”.89 Instead of being called a conspirator, he should

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84 The Kashmir conspiracy case, written statement filed by Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, vide Indian council of world Affairs, Library, New Delhi, P.1
85 ibid.
86 ibid.
87 Tribune (Ambala) dated 6 April 1961.
88 Letters of Sheri Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Produced by the Prosecution in the Kashmir Conspiracy Case, the Kashmir People’s Printing Press, Srinagar (n.d).
89 Sheikh Abdullah’s Statement, op. cit.
more correctly be described as a victim of a conspiracy, said the Shaikh.\textsuperscript{90} It would, however, take six years for the government of India to admit that the Shaikh was right. “With all the power of the state behind them, with all the determination in their hearts to malign him, the Shaikh’s detractors once again were able to prove nothing. Shaikh Abdullah would leave jail once again with his head high”\textsuperscript{91}

While the trial against Shaikh and his colleagues was going on, the government of India continued the process of integrating the state with Indian Union. Some of the measures taken in this regard includes, the extension to the State of the jurisdiction of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Vide Presidential Order of 1958), of the appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court including its power to grant special leave to appeal against the decisions of Jammu and Kashmir High Court, appointment and conditions of the State High Court and review election petitions.\textsuperscript{92} These and other such measures were looked by those who were in favour of integration as a ‘welcome’ process.\textsuperscript{93}

The Union Home Minister G.V Pant said that these measures “are symbolic of the determination of the State to integrate their hopes and fortunes with those of the rest of India”.\textsuperscript{94}

After some time Prime Minister Nehru told the Lok Sabha on 27 November 1963 that the process of “gradual erosion” of Article 370 was going on, and the fresh steps would be taken in the next month or two in this direction. His statement deserves to be quoted with some length:

“It [Article 370] has been eroded, if I may use the word, and many things have been done in the last few years which have

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{90} ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{The Hindustan Times}, New Delhi, 18 May 1959.
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{The Times of India}, 23 October 1959.
\end{flushright}
made the relationship of Kashmir with the Union of India very close. There is no doubt that Kashmir is fully integrated. We feel that this process of gradual erosion of Article 370 is going on. Some fresh steps are being taken and in the next month or two they will be completed. We should allow it to go on. We do not want to take initiative in this matter and completely put an end to Article 370. The initiative, we feel, should come from the Kashmir and the people [read: stooge chief ministers elected in rigged polls]. We shall gladly agree to that. The process is continuing... Broadly speaking - I am not sure of the wording of Article 370 - we are supposed to carry out any changes in consultation with the Jammu and Kashmir government and the people there. That is one major thing.”

This was Nehru’s style-verbal homage to principle to cover up its violation in practice.

These pronouncements and the integrationist measures provoked adverse reactions among the people and the secessionist camp within the state. The underground leaders of the Plebicite Front warned that if moves for “total integration of the state with Bharat” were implemented, “it would set the state ablaze and cause unprecedented bloodshed”. They called the ruling National Conference as “traitors”.

Around the same period the infamous elections of 1962 were held for the State Assembly in which the official National Conference headed by Bakhshi, ‘won’ 97 percent of seats. The ruling party’s candidates were returned unopposed in 34 seats in the valley and a nominal contestant was

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96 The Dawn, Karachi, 26 May 1959; quoted by Balraj Puri, op. cit; P. 154.
mostly confined to Jammu.\textsuperscript{97} "Kashmiri’s democratic aspirations" remarks Sumantra Bose, "were thus callously sacrificed at the altar of the ‘nation’ to which Kashmiri’s were expected to be loyal".\textsuperscript{98} In fact, Bakhshi who was widely identified as “Delhi’s man” was not blamed as much as the Central Government for the political system created by his regime: an undemocratic, highly coercive, and centralized state apparatus with a thoroughly corrupt administration that ruthlessly crushed all political dissent.\textsuperscript{99}

The mass discontent against the center’s integration policies and coercive measures of the state government to suppress the dissent erupted like a volcano in the chilly winters of 1964. The theft of the Prophet Mohammad’s (P.B.U.H) Holy hair (Moe-i-Muqqadas) from the Hazratbal shrine on 26 December 1964 sent a wave of deep indignation not only in the state but in the whole subcontinent.\textsuperscript{100} The rumors went round that the Bakshi family was responsible for the theft of the holy relic. Though winter was at its harshest, crowds from all over the valley gathered in Srinagar and their antipathy snowballed into protests against the center’s local regimes.\textsuperscript{101} Within days there emerged the Holy Relic Action Committee under the guidance of Mohammad Syed Masoodi and under the presidency of Molvi Farooq.\textsuperscript{102} By 30 December, 1963, the Committee assumed an unmistakable political complexion, as it officially took up the demand for the release of Shaikh Abdullah,\textsuperscript{103} holding of plebiscite,\textsuperscript{104} and appointment of a commission of inquiry consisting of Pakistan and other Muslim

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{97} Nehru is said to have told Bakshi that: “In fact, it would strengthened your position much more if you lost a few seats to bonafide opponents”. S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, OUP, New Delhi, Vol. II, P. 262.
  \item \textsuperscript{98} Sannaullah Butt, op.cit; p.85-98.
  \item \textsuperscript{99} Navnita Chadha Behera, Demystifying Kashmir, Pearson Longman, 2006, p.41.
  \item \textsuperscript{100} Sannaullah Butt, op.cit. pp. 85-98.
  \item \textsuperscript{101} R.N. Koui, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah: A Political Phoenix, New Delhi, 1985. P. 85.
  \item \textsuperscript{102} The Action Committee comprises all separatist political groups including members of the Plebiscite Front, Political Conference, Jammaat-i-Islami and it was the “Action committee” which was virtually ruling the city. B.N Mullik
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Peer Ghiyasuddin, Understanding the Kashmir Insurgency, Delhi, 1992. p. 36.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} M.Y. Saraf, op.cit; 1239.
\end{itemize}
countries to enquire into the theft of Holy relic—undoubtedly echoing the mass sentiments. The Action Committee galvanized and electrified the ordinary masses who felt insecure within the fabric of Indian secularism.

Although the holy relic was mysteriously recovered on 4 January 1964, the demand for self-determination continued with more accelerated vigor and without any fair. The Action Committee passed a resolution on March 5, 1964, stating that the party would strive to achieve the objective of ‘self determination’, which was ratified on March 17, 1964, “by 2,000,000 people”.

The violence and political activity to which the loss of the Hazratbal relic had given rise alarmed the government of India. “Not only could it be argues that India had failed to win the hearts and minds of the Kashmiris”, says Alistair Lamb, “but also it looked as if this failure could produce a Hindu-Muslim crisis within India”. Nehru was forced to reconsider his Kashmir policy. As a consequence Shamsudin was sacked as the Prime Minister and Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq was installed in his place.

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105 Ibid.
106 Peer Ghivasudin, op. cit; P. 36
107 On 4 January 1964, B.N. Mullik announced that the relic had been replaced in what he described as “an intelligence operation never to be disclosed”. After public protests a special deedar (viewing) was held on 3 February by a group of fourteen respected clerics who found the Holy relic as genuine. Mullik, op.it; P. 142 and Sunaullah butt, op.it;
109 Alastair Lamb, op. cit’ p. 207; Nehru was particularly alarmed by the communal violence of Calcutta as a direct consequence of Holy relic agitation.
110 In a Cabinet meeting Nehru stated that “if even after fifteen years of association Kashmir still remained in such an unstable state that on a simple issue like the Moe-e-Muqaddas the people could be so provoked as to rise in defense of the government, then….. a new approach [is] to be made and a radical change in our thinking about Kashmir [is needed]”. Cited in Y.D Gundevia, The Testament of Sheikh Abdullah, New Delhi, 1974, p. 122.
111 Early in 1963 Bakshi was forced to resign by the Kamraj Plan (enabling several inconvenient leaders to be persuaded to quit office) and according to Balraj Puri for showing his reluctance to the integrationist policies of the centre. He however, succeeded in pushing his nominee Shamsudin to replace him.
Further more since Shaikh Abdullah remained an important political force, it was first necessary to reach an accord with him.\textsuperscript{112}

But for Home Ministry, the Shaikh was still a great danger to the nation. At a meeting, noted Gundevia (who was present during the meeting), an impassionate Nehru simply lost his temper at a bureaucrat conveying such doubts and said furiously, "if a damned thing can't be proved in four years and in six years, there's obviously nothing to be proved".\textsuperscript{113}

On 5 April 1964, acting on Nehru's direct instructions, bypassing the Home Ministry in Delhi, the Prime Minister of Kashmir G.M Sadiq announced that case against Shaikh Abdullah was withdrawn immediately "in the best interests of the state."\textsuperscript{114} He was released unconditionally from jail on 8 April, 1964 and he made yet another triumphant journey home to Srinagar, lionized all the way back in every village all along the rout.\textsuperscript{115}

Shaikh was as determined as ever over his two point program—that the Kashmiri's should be given the right to self determination and that any lasting solution to end Kashmir problem should involve all the three parties, India, Pakistan and Kashmiris. In a lengthy statement to the press on April 12, 1964, he said, "Since our release from jail, we have tried to take stock of things and assess facts in relation to Kashmir problem, its repercussions.... We have come to the inescapable conclusion that all efforts and energies should be concentrated on bringing about an amicable solution of this problem as to ensure lasting friendship and amity between the two

\textsuperscript{112} Nehru felt that "Sheikh Abdullah had a strong hold on the people of Kashmir and, in the changed circumstances; no political settlement in the valley could be thought of without bringing him in." Y.D Gundevia, op. cit;
\textsuperscript{113} ibid. op.cit;
\textsuperscript{114} Satish Vashisth, \textit{Sheikh Abdullah: Then and Now}, op. cit; p. 117.
\textsuperscript{115} Y.D. Gundevia, op. cit; P. 122.
neighbors. Such a solution should of course, reflect the will of the people of the state and satisfy their aspirations".  

His show of mass support and his public pronouncements in favour of plebiscite created panicky among the rightist elements both within and outside the Indian Parliament. On April 12, Mr. M.C. Chagla, the Union Education Minister, said at Patna that the "law will take its own course if Shaikh Abdullah does not maintain his loyalty to the Constitution of India and the country". Shaikh Abdullah was quick to remind the Minister the very day that the Indian Constitution recognized the provisional character of Kashmir's accession.

Amidst these mixed reactions, Shaikh arrived in New Delhi on April 29, 1964 for talks with Prime Minister Nehru. During his stay in the Prime Minister's house, he held long talks with Nehru and other Indian leaders. Pundit Nehru, who was broken by the Indo-China war of 1962 and alarmed by the holy relic agitation "offered to reverse the integration process".

But Shaikh Abdullah was by now convinced that without an active involvement of Pakistan, a long lasting peace could not be established. He was allowed to visit Pakistan with a formula of India-Pakistan-Kashmir confederation.

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116 Cited in Satish Vashisth, op. cit; P.120.
117 *The Times of India*, 14 April, 1964.
119 Later in his biography Abdullah recalls "Panditji expressed his deep anguish and sorrow at the past incidents. I also became very emotional and told him that I was glad to have convinced him that I was not disloyal to him personally or to India", *Aatish-i-Chinar*, PP.772-773.
120 Other individuals with whom Sheikh had conversation includes, Home Minister G.L.Nanda, Sarvodaya leader Acharya Vinobha Bhava and with Swantantra leader C.Rajagopalachari.
121 Balraj Puri, op.it; 155.
122 Ibid; from the accounts of Y.G Gundevia, it seems that the idea of confederation was given by Raja Gopalachari and was acceptable to Nehru. But M.J. Akbar citing *Washington Post* recalls Nehru as saying that "confederation remains our ultimate goal", M.J. Akbar, op. cit; P.259.
Abdullah made his only visit to Pakistan on 24 May 1964 and was given a "tumulus welcome" there, thanks to the image created by India projecting Shaikh Abdullah as a pro-Pakistan conspirator. In his talks with President Ayub Khan the later out rightly rejected the idea of a confederation and described it as a barely camouflaged attempt to merge Pakistan once again into India.\textsuperscript{123}

Shaikh however, influenced Ayub Khan to visit New Delhi and to discuss many proposals regarding Kashmir problem. But the proposed visit could not materialize due to the sudden death of Nehru on May 27, 1964 forcing Abdullah to cut short his visit. Nehru's death ended a "glorious chapter" of Indian history.\textsuperscript{124} And with it the prospects of any settlement faded away.

Thus Abdullah's much publicized release from prison and his very high profile visit to Pakistan, could not improve the volatile political situation in the valley. Now Abdullah and his other colleagues felt the need to reactivate the Plebiscite Front which was overshadowed by the Action Committee headed by Mirwaiz Farooq. It was considered imperative to curtail the influence to Mirwaiz and he was asked "to limit his activities to religious affairs".\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{123} Ayub Khan recalled in his biography about the proposal: "when Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg came to Pakistan in 1964, they had brought the absurd proposal of a confederation between India, Pakistan and Kashmir. I told him plainly we should have nothing to do with it. It was curious that whereas we were seeking the salvation of Kashmiris, they had been forced to mention an idea which, if pursued, would lead to, our enslavement. It was clear that this was what Mr. Nehru had told them to say to us......" See \textit{Friends not Masters}, Oxford University Press, 1967, p.128. when this book was published Sheikh wrote a letter to Ayub Khan on 1 September, 1967, rejecting that the proposal was made at the behest of Nehru, cited in \textit{Aatish-i-Chinar}, op. cit; p.781.

\textsuperscript{124} ibid; p. 791.

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{The Patriot}, New Delhi, 16 June, 1964.
This was followed by a split in the Action Committee into two factions, one represented by the Plebiscite Front which represented the policy of Shaikh Abdullah and the other the Awami Action Committee, who were vocally against Shaikh Abdullah and represented the ideology of Mirwaiz Farooq, who openly interpreted the right of self-determination as accession to Pakistan.\[127\]

In fact within Plebiscite Front patronized by Abdullah, there were different schools of thought whose approaches to the right of self determination differed from each other. The moderate faction represented by Moulana Syed Masoodi wanted to act as a bridge between the leaders of the Plebiscite Front and liberal political stalwarts of India. They were of the view that aspiration of the Kashmiri people should be accommodated within the social, political and constitutional ambit of India.\[128\]

The hardliner faction led by Sofi Akbar and Munshi Mohammad Ishaq were of the view that no compromise should be made with the Indian government and the struggle should continue till the right of self determination was attained.\[129\] This internal factionalism was to play an important role in the coming years to shape the nature of the plebiscite movement in Kashmir.

The first annual convocation of all Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front was held at Sopore between 14 and 16 November 1964.\[130\] This three
day open show proved a grand success and convinced the leaders of the Front and its observers, both within and outside the state, that the party was most popular political organization in the state with near about 7 lakh basic members\textsuperscript{131} and 1500 delegates\textsuperscript{132} representing different areas of the state. The session saw a clear dominance of the hardliners, who not only succeeded in rejecting the proposal moved by moderates to enable Front to participate in the coming elections in the state\textsuperscript{133} but it managed to pass a resolution to debar those associated with the government and semi-government institutions from becoming members of the Front\textsuperscript{134}.

There was however, a collective feeling that the party should have a written constitution that would also be its political manifesto\textsuperscript{135} It was also felt necessary, that to catch public imagination, the party should also adopt a flag that should symbolically represent its basic and fundamental purpose\textsuperscript{136}.

On the one hand the plebiscite movement was getting momentum and the ideology of the Front was percolating deep into the Kashmiri mass psyche and on the other hand unmindful of these developments the central government, after the death of Nehru was all set to reverse the latter’s process of reconciliation and pursued its policy of integration with ever accelerated speed, though not without state prime Ministers approval. In

\textsuperscript{131} Mahaz, Srinagar, 10 October, 1964. P.5
\textsuperscript{132} Hindustan Times, 17 November, 1964.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} The party subsequently adopted a rectangular flag, with green colour for $\frac{2}{3}$ of its length representing Muslims of the state and saffron for $\frac{1}{3}$ of its length representing the non-Muslim. In the middle there were three motifs a green chinar leaf at top symbolizing Kashmir, a pair of clasped hands below it symbolizing friendship between India and Pakistan and a crescent at the bottom. The flag was adopted first time on 5 December, 1964, coinciding Abdullah’s birthday. Indian Express, 11 December, 1964. The format of the flag clearly indicated that the front was now convinced that an effective mass mobilization is possible only by mixing religion with politics, a change which became more visible after the holy relic agitation.
1964-65 Articles 356 and 357 of the Indian constitution, which respectively empowers the central government to dismiss elected provincial governments and to assume all the legislative functions of the latter were made applicable to Jammu and Kashmir. Some voices were raised by some liberal individuals in Indian politics against this policy but, undeterred by this the government in a bid to bring Kashmir's political integration; the ruling National Conference was dissolved and replaced by the Congress.

This last step removed the only pro-Indian platform and left the people with little alternative but to join one of the two remaining camps: The Plebiscite Front (which considered Kashmir's accession to India temporary) or the Congress (widely perceived as an "outsider" or "New Delhi agent")

These ill-conceived policies of eroding the state autonomy provoked a storm of public protests in the valley. The Muslims in the state developed "innumerable fears and suspicions about their future if they continue to remain with India".

Abdullah and his fellowmen were so much disgusted with these developments that he openly used religion to arouse the masses in the state—a practice which he had discarded in 1938. In his speeches he spoke of "the interests of the Muslim nation" and described the steps taken by the centre, "as threat to the entity of Kashmiri Muslims". He gave a call for

137 Sumantra Bose, op.cit; p.34.
138 Representing the liberal public opinion in India Jay Prakash Narayan cautioned against "inculcable harm" being done by the Kashmir policy of the government of India. He concluded that "the disadvantages of the present policy far outweigh the advantages". Balraj Puri, op.cit; p. 157.
139 Prem Nath Bazaz, Kashmir in Crucible, 2005 edition, Pp.81-82. Sometime later the State Legislature adopted a bill amending the State Constitution rechristening the Sadr-i-Riyasat as governor and the state Prime Minister as chief Minister, thus bringing Kashmir in this respect in line with other states.
140 Ibid; p.85.
141 Times of India, 22 February, 1965.
142 Shabnam Qayoom, Kashmir Ka Siyari Inqilab, Srinagar 1981, P.190
complete social boycott [Tarki-Mowalat] of those Muslims who became members of the Congress\textsuperscript{143} and said: "Those who refuse to join the boycott would be traitors".\textsuperscript{144}

There was a tremendous response to this call and "marriages, religious functions and funerals of Muslim Congressmen were not attended by many people in the Valley".\textsuperscript{145} These developments gave a tremendous boost to the plebiscite movement in the state.

It was in this atmosphere that Shaikh Abdullah along with his wife and Plebiscite Front leader Mirza Afzal Beg preceded on a foreign tour, including pilgrimage to holy Mecca on 5 February 1965.\textsuperscript{146} He used this opportunity to highlight Kashmir issue on international forum and gained a fear amount of success.\textsuperscript{147}

His activities aboard particularly his meeting with Chinese Premier, Chu-En-Lai in Algeria, who invited him to China, were interpreted in New Delhi as the worst transgression committed by Abdullah. There was uproar in parliament and he was instructed to return immediately to India on pain of forfeiture of his passport. He dutifully flew back to New Delhi but was detained at the airport for another three years incarceration.\textsuperscript{148}

The detention of Shaikh Abdullah again caused a storm of mass protests and violence in the valley with authorities again reciprocating by its two point policy-repression and erosion. Balraj Puri who visited the valley on 26 May 1965 observed, "the repression that was let loose was neither

\textsuperscript{143} The Pakistan Times, Lahore, 17 January 1965.
\textsuperscript{144} The Hamdard, Srinagar, 17 January 1965.
\textsuperscript{145} Balraj Puri, op. cit; p. 156.
\textsuperscript{146} Incidentally, all of them described their nationality in their passport applications, Kashmiri Muslim.
\textsuperscript{147} Through out his foreign tour, Abdullah availed the hospitality of Pakistan missions and he managed to gain sympathy of China, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Islamic countries for his demand of right to self determination for Kashmir, See Satish Vasistha, op. cit; PP.135-136.
always necessary nor discriminate..... In lower ranks of the administration and police, there does seem to be excessive enthusiasm for repression".149 To add fuel to the fire, “a firm decision” was taken at the highest level to apply gradually all the Articles of the Indian constitution to Jammu and Kashmir to bring it at par with the rest of the states in the country”.150

The Plebiscite Front and other separatist leaders replied these actions by launching joint non-violent civil disobedience movement for the demands of self determination, release of political detunes and final solution of Kashmir problem.151

Amidst this surcharged political atmosphere Pakistan enthusiastically dispatched armed infiltrator in the state to provoke an armed mass revolt against India in August through what is know as Operation Gibraltar.152

The infiltration time table was drawn up so as to hit Srinagar on 9 August, the anniversary of Abdullah’s first arrest, when protest meetings were usually held.153 But the infiltrators were not given a positive support because of the internal differences in the Plebiscite Front leadership.154 Thus, Pakistan again failed to achieve its objective particularly because as was admitted by general Musa, commander-in-Chief of Pakistan army”, the Muslim population there [in the valley], although by and large willing to help were unable to cooperate with us fully”.155

149  Balraj Puri, op. cit; pp.158-159.
152  Ibid; P.94.
153  Ajit Bhattacharjea, op. cit; p. 227.
154  Munshi Mohammad Ishaq, the president of the Front at the time of infiltration is said to have revealed later on that, “best opportunity of our freedom has been lost. No body listened to my advice and every body for the sake of individual security, sabotaged the plan”. Further he said, “Pakistanis had talked with us and I had personally agreed with their plan....we had been entrusted with the responsibility of seeking public support for this action”. He later resigned from the president ship of the Front. Sannaullah Butt, op. cit; pp.109-110.
However the chaotic political atmosphere gave rise to an extremist movement of the young generation who were by 1967 all determined to start an armed struggle to achieve their objective—right to self determination, with the backing of Pakistani intelligence agencies.\footnote{156} With the end of Indo-Pak war of 1965-66, some of India’s liberal political leaders and intellectuals again begin to exert that without the co-operation of Shaikh Abdullah, who was still the undisputed leader of the state; no solution of Kashmir dispute was possible.\footnote{157}

The efforts of Jayprakash Narayan, C. Rajagopalachari and other and the threat of growing extremism in Kashmir valley influenced a very confident Indra Gandhi (now India’s Prime Minister after Shashtri died after signing the Tashkant declaration) to release Shaikh Abdullah on 2 January 1968 from his last detention. But now Abdullah was lacking “earlier fire and zeal”.\footnote{158}

Although he still insisted on the right of self-determination for Kashmir, but he phrased it generally; it was “an inherent right of all people”. He however, stated that “free elections” were not enough to satisfy him.\footnote{159} At the same time he had “round of talk with the central leadership. This was probably under the influence of his liberal friends in India\footnote{160} and the defeat of Pakistan in 1965 war, after which she desisted from official intervention in Kashmir affairs for some time.\footnote{161}

\footnote{156} The extremist youth organized themselves under Al-Fatah. Times of India, reported on 19 January 1971 that, “Al-Fatah had links through a student group with top leaders of the outlawed Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front”.

\footnote{157} See Jay Prakash Narayan’s confidential letter of June 23, 1966 to the Prime Minister of India, as cited in Brahmanand, (ed.), Nation Building in India, New Delhi(n.d) PP.290-298.

\footnote{158} Bhattacharjea, op. cit; 229.

\footnote{159} Ibid.

\footnote{160} Manzoor Fazili, Kashmir Plebiscite, Srinagar, 1988, p.6.

\footnote{161} According to the Pakistan White Paper of 1977, the Pakistan authorities “disinterested themselves” in the Kashmir issue between 1966 to 1971.
He was now looking for parleys with the government within the Indian Constitutional frame work. In fact some moderate members of the Plebiscite Front too voiced against following an “unrealistic and unproductive political stance”.¹⁶²

Shaikh Abdullah organized an All Party Convention in October 1968, to seek a solution of the Kashmir issue. It was attended by 260 delegated hailing from all parts of the state.¹⁶³ The convention was inaugurated by Jayprakash Narayan, who pleaded for autonomy to Kashmir within the Indian constitution and strongly voiced against considering Pakistan a party in the dispute.¹⁶⁴ Though Abdullah reacted angrily to this suggestion on the spot, later he made soundings to find out the outer limits of this frame work.¹⁶⁵

The 8 day convention ended with a unanimous view of the delegates that only a solution “acceptable to the people of the state, keeping in view the interests of all regions can alone resolve the dispute”.¹⁶⁶

While on the one hand Shaikh was giving an impression that he was ready for a dialogue with centre on the other hand in his public speeches he was still emphasizing about the right of self determination.

Indira Gandhi dissolved Parliament in December 1970 and called for fresh elections in March 1971. Abdullah decided to contest the elections and advised Plebiscite Front to follow the suit.¹⁶⁷ The move and the changing political outlook were criticized by the hardliners in the Front. Munshi Mohammad Ishaq blamed that leaders were deviating from the basic ideals. He was dubbed by Abdullah and Afzal Beg as “betray and dishonest” and

¹⁶⁴ ibid.
¹⁶⁵ Balraj Puri, op. cit; p.176.
¹⁶⁶ ibid.
¹⁶⁷ Aatish-i-Chinar, p.823.
was thrown out of the Front. The people too in the Valley received this decision with general dismay and suspicion.

However before Plebiscite Front could begin its preparations, it was declared unlawful and Shaikh and Afzal Beg were served orders in Delhi prohibiting them from entering Jammu and Kashmir. This was followed by a crackdown of the Front leaders and sympathizers in the state. These measures to curb the Plebiscite Front were motivated by a number of considerations. Firstly, there was Indian government’s fear that “if the Assembly led by the Shaikh were to pronounce on independence, where would India’s case [about Kashmir] rest, morally?” Secondly, as Mir Qasim confessed in his autobiography, My Life and Times, that had the Front participated in the assembly elections, its victory would have been a forgone conclusion and with it the Congress Party would have been written off in the Valley. Thirdly, and more significantly, the ban on the Front was used to force Shaikh Abdullah to come to terms with New Delhi. “The Central government deliberately made the Jammat-i-Islami party, which was not a measure political force in the state, to win five seats in the Assembly to give Shaikh the impression that his absence in the constitutional politics would provide other parties a chance to fill the vacuum.” This worked and Shaikh hastily proceeded for a compromise with New Delhi.

The 1971 Indo-Pak War which finally led to the creation of Bangladesh brought about a dramatic change in the political climate of

168 Sunaullah Butt, op. cit; p.141-142.
169 ibid.
170 Aatish-i-Chinar, P. 824.
171 ibid.
173 Mir Qasim, op. cit., p. 132.
174 This information was given to me by Dr Sheikh Showket of the Department of Law, Kashmir University, on the basis of his interaction with Prem Nath Bazaz.
Jammu and Kashmir. The complete defeat of Pakistan in the war demoralized the rank and file of the Plebiscite Front and other separatist leaders in the state.175

Many members of the Front seeing the prospects of the plebiscite movement diminishing resigned to retire from the active politics,176 Whereas some others believed that the only course open to them “was to sincerely declare their fidelity to the country” and to consider the “limits set by [Indian Constitution] as unassailable frontiers and move accordingly”.177

Shaikh Abdullah too may have calculated that after India’s decisive victory in the Bangladesh war, his bargaining power was weaker then ever. Though he continued to speak in favour of Kashmiri’s right to self determination in public meetings178 but in his official discourse he would accept the reality that reconciliation with New Delhi was the best option to follow. The best that seemed available was to secure as much autonomy as possible. Thus came the statement, first of its kind since Abdullah had lost power in 1953. This was in February 1972, from Afzal Beg the president of the Plebiscite Front: “There was no dispute about the accession of J&K state with India. The dispute was only with regard to quantum of accession”.179

This was followed by the Abdullah’s own disclosure on 8 March in his interview with London Times. “There is no quarrel with the government of India over accession; it is over the structure of internal autonomy. One must not forget that it was we who brought Kashmir into India; otherwise

175 Times of India, 17 October 1971; G.M.Karra announced that “an accession is final”. The leaders from the Plebiscite Front and the Awami-Action Committee joined the District Citizen’s Defense Councils. Front leaders such as Syed Mubarak Shah, Ghulam Rasool Kochak and Mohammad Yaqub Beg openly denounced Pakistan. Link, New Delhi, January, 1972, p.21.
176 Times of India op. cit.
177 Motherland, New Delhi, 12 September, 1971.
178 Speaking that “Future of Jammu and Kashmir still remains to be decided...... Final arbiters of the destiny of the state are its people, and not India or Pakistan”. Cited in M.J. Akbar, Kashmir: Behind the Vale, P.185.
179 Ajit Bhatiacharjea, op. cit; p. 234.
Kashmir could never have become part of India". Later in his autobiography he said: "Our readiness to come to the negotiating table did not imply a change in our objectives but the change in our strategy". The reality was opposite to it. As he himself revealed "I assured my Indian friends that we had no differences with them over accession. We only wanted Article 370 to be maintained in its original form".\(^\text{180}\)

A reluctant Indira Gandhi too showed her willingness for dialogue with Abdullah to "deinternationalize Kashmir issue". But she made it abundantly clear that it was not possible to restore pre-1953 position of India's constitutional relationship with Kashmir. She told Parliament later that, "Shaikh Abdullah was very anxious that, to start with the constitutional relationship between the state and the centre would be as it was in 1953 when he was in power. It was explained to him that the clock could not be put back in this manner".\(^\text{181}\)

As it goes, Abdullah accepted the *status quo* at the cost of everything he stood for by accepting the now concluded Delhi Agreement, of 1974 signed by his deputy Afzal Beg. This was only a shadow of first Delhi Agreement of 1952, which Abdullah rejected to uphold a separate personality of his state and to protect the right to self determination of the people. In the period extended over two decades Shaikh Abdullah preached that people should be given the right to determine their own future and received enormous support of the silent majority of the state. He taught them to resist against every such attempt which endangers Kashmir's autonomy- political or otherwise. In the process he created a mentality which was never ready to accept any forced status quo. They did for a time being in 1974-75 when Shaikh Abdullah signed an accord with Delhi, which reaffirmed, virtually without modification (see next chapter), the terms of

\(^{180}\) *Aatish -i-Chinar*, pp. 835, and 837.

\(^{181}\) Prem Nath Bazaz, op. cit., P.24.
Kashmir’s incorporation into the Indian republic since 1953. In 1989, the people took to arms to alter the status quo; with Pakistan’s help.
CHAPTER X
Kashmir Accord 1975

The Kashmir Accord of 1975 was the culmination of the process of reconciliation between Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah and the Government of India which begins around 1968 after the former's last release from the prison. This Accord marks an end of two decade long political battle of Shaikh Abdullah to achieve the right of self determination for his people and the right of permanent autonomous status for Jammu and Kashmir state to maintain its separate personality. The period also witnessed an unprecedented political mobilization in the state, and silent majority getting politicized.

The process of reconciliation between New Delhi and Shaikh Abdullah had begin, as we have seen in the previous chapter, after the latter's release in 1968, but it was only after the Bangladesh War of 1971 that the process was converted into a serious dialogue for a permanent settlement. As early as 1972, Abdullah and his deputy and the Plebiscite Front chief Mirza Afzal Beg, through their press statements and private discourse started showing signs of flexibility in their stand and the willingness to reach to an understanding with central authorities, since they were enough conscious to realize that after 1971 crisis their bargaining capacity was at its low. Meanwhile after its defeat, Pakistan had come to a peace agreement with India. In the post-war Simla Treaty (1972), a demoralized, dismembered Pakistan had finally conceded that Kashmir was a 'Bilateral' (as opposed to an 'international') dispute. It was in this

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1 On 2 July 1972, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi agreed that "in Jammu & Kashmir, the Line of Control resulting from the ceasefire of 17 December 1971 shall be respected by both sides without prejudice to the recognized position of either side" (emphasis
backdrop that an aged and weary Shaikh Abdullah finally renounced the self-determination platform and in an interview with *London Times* on March 8, 1972, he pleaded for a solution of the problem within the framework of the constitution of India.

The Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reciprocated when she told parliament on 24 March that she “welcomed the change in the thinking of the plebiscite leaders because they have expressed their willingness to accept the finality of the Kashmir accession”. This was followed by meeting of Shaikh Abdullah with Indira Gandhi in New Delhi in June 1972, and another with Swaran Singh, Union Defense Minister.

After his return to the state, Shaikh declared on 23 June, 1972, at Hazratbal, that he had given Mirza Afzal Beg “Full authority to discuss with any representative of Mrs. Gandhi a greater autonomy formula for state”. He told his followers “not to look towards Pakistan or any other power” to help them in “their struggle to attain a respectable place in the world”. On 25 June, there were anti-Shaikh demonstrations in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir condemning his ‘surrender’ to India. The person Mrs. Gandhi chose as her negotiator was the clean, soft spoken man of few words, G. Parthasarathi.

Thus, a formal protracted dialogue between the two representatives began to jointly explore the areas “with all sincerity for reestablishment of relations [between center and lexical interpretations of Article 370 and its mine].” Bhutto used the language of this accord after 1975 to revive Pakistani claim over Kashmir which left most of the observers to conclude that what Indra Gandhi had won on the battle ground was lost on the negotiation table.

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5 Ibid., p.271.
implications"\textsuperscript{6} which lasted for a period of about three years and finally came to the conclusion with the signing of an agreement on 13 November, 1974 which became famous as Kashmir Accord.\textsuperscript{7}

It appears that Shaikh Abdullah was willing to resume office and stop pressing for plebiscite if the pre 1953 constitutional position of his state was restored.\textsuperscript{8} And the Article 370 of Indian Constitution made permanent as a guarantee to protect the internal autonomy of the state, from any future erosion.\textsuperscript{9}

He further demanded that since the extension of Union laws to Jammu and Kashmir during the last 19 years had been made through unrepresentative channels in violation of the sprit of Article 370 of the constitution,\textsuperscript{10} these enactments should be declared void. Other demands which Shaikh Abdullah and his representative Afzal Beg pushed for acceptance as appears from the correspondence between the concerning parties and the statement made by Indira Gandhi in the Parliament on 24 February 1975 includes:–

i) Transfer of provisions relating to fundamental rights to the State Constitution;

ii) Removal of the supervision and control of Election Commission of India over election to the State Legislature;

iii) Modification of article 356, to require State Government’s concurrence before imposing President’s rule in the state;

\textsuperscript{7} Alastair Lamb, Kashmir; A Disputed Legacy, Karachi; 1993, p.306.
\textsuperscript{8} ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Sunaulla Butt, Kashmir in Flames, Srinagar, 1981, p.172. A statement which appears in Times of India and other dailies on 10 December, 1972 quotes Abdullah saying that a settlement should be made where in the “defense, foreign affairs and communications would remain with the centre and the state would be given freedom to shape it's own house in accordance with its own desires.”
\textsuperscript{10} Patriot, 29 June 1972.
iv) The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in relation to the state should be curtailed.

v) The State Governor and the Chief Minister be designated as pre-1964 nomenclatures of Sadr-i-Riyasat and Wazir-i-Azam, respectively, to uphold the residuary sovereignty of the state.\textsuperscript{11}

Shaikh Abdullah also explored the scheme which he had already advanced in 1970 for what amounted to a kind of federal structure for the state of Jammu and Kashmir.\textsuperscript{12} Further he stated that, “A new and truly representative Assembly to be brought into being in the state after dissolving the existing one that body alone should decide which of laws made applicable to the state after 1953 should be retained”.\textsuperscript{13}

Shaikh Abdullah was conscious of his weak position at the negotiation table with the centre; hence, he did not found himself in a position to press the above mentioned demands as a pre-condition to many settlements. And when Indira Gandhi made it clear that the clock could not be turned back-her favorite phrase- Abdullah was too weak to resist it.\textsuperscript{14}


\textsuperscript{12} The Sheikh convened a convention of representatives of Jammu and Ladakh in 1974 to seek their cooperation on the basis of five-tier internal constitutional set-up evolved by J&K state people’s convention in 1970 which envisaged regional autonomy and further devolution of political power to lower levels. Balraj Puri, \textit{Jammu and Kashmir: Triumph and Tragedy of Indian Federalism}, New Delhi, 1981, p.183, and Lamb, op. cit;

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Hindustan Times}, 14 September, 1974. It is important to mention that in the State Assembly elections of 1972, Plebiscite Front intended to contest, but was declared unlawful by the government and its leaders were arrested under Preventive Detention Act. Later Mir Qasim, whose Congress party ‘won’ a decisive majority revealed in his autobiography that the Plebiscite Front had "reduced the [official] National Conference to ...... a non-entity in Kashmir’s politics." “If the elections were free and fair,” he added, “the victory of the Front was a forgone conclusion.” Mir Qasim, My Life and Times, New Delhi, 1992, pp.106 and 132.

\textsuperscript{14} Ajit Bhattacharjea, op. cit., 235.
If Abdullah believed that abandoning plebiscite would mean gaining what he wanted in terms of autonomy, he was soon disillusioned. His demands were unacceptable to the centre for a variety of reasons; most of these were justified to protect the national interests than any submission to the reality. Thus, conceding these demands would mean a tacit admission that the administration of the State since 1953 was not legal, and that the elections held in the state were not fair, and the Assembly therefore, was not the true representative body of the people. Consequently, every action of the assembly after 1953, including the ratification of the Accession in 1956, was invalid.\footnote{G.R Najar, Kashmir Accord 1975: A Political Analysis, Srinagar, 1988, p. 35.}

Another apprehension was that “To concede that all the post-1953 developments in Kashmir were without the sanction of the people of Kashmir and that all the elections in the state since then were rigged would be a splendid vindication of Pakistan’s stand in the U.N position over Kashmir.\footnote{Tribune, Chandigarh, 21 September, 1974.} Thus it will weaken India’s international position. Further, at the national level, it was simply not possible to allow the Assembly to sit in judgment over all the laws enacted since 1953, for such a proposition would have set a bad precedent which might be exploited in future by extremist elements, for instance, in Tamil Nadu or Nagaland”.\footnote{Amrit Bazaar Patrika, Calcutta, 28 September 1974.}

While on the one hand Shaikh Abdullah was disappointed by center’s inability to concede his demand of guaranteed internal autonomy for J&K State, on the other hand he came under severe criticism in the state for drifting away from his stand of self-determination through plebiscite. Throughout the period when talks were on with New Delhi, there were

\footnotesize{15} G.R Najar, Kashmir Accord 1975: A Political Analysis, Srinagar, 1988, p. 35.
\footnotesize{16} Tribune, Chandigarh, 21 September, 1974.
\footnotesize{17} Amrit Bazaar Patrika, Calcutta, 28 September 1974.
those in the state who were not at all happy about what seemed to be in prospect.\textsuperscript{18}

Mirwaiz Muhammad Farooq was particularly distressed by what seemed to be an impending settlement of the future of the state of Jammu & Kashmir by his rival Shaikh Abdullah such as to preclude forever the prospect of anything like a free plebiscite.\textsuperscript{19} He ridiculed Shaikh for changing his stand and for declaring Kashmir's accession with India as final.\textsuperscript{20} He considered that Shaikh Abdullah had sold out to India in general and Indira Gandhi in particular.\textsuperscript{21}

Abdullah's followers, on their part too, last no time in declaring Mirwaiz as a 'Pakistan agent'. This was followed by clashes between the followers of the Plebiscite Front and the Awami Action Committee on 13 July, 1974, the day when the 1931 martyrs were commemorated.\textsuperscript{22}

The Shaikh Abdullah sensing the mood of the people in the state, visited different areas from time to time and through a series of speeches tried to neutralize the influence of those who were not happy with his policy of rapprochement with New Delhi. In an emotional speech in March 1947, at Hazratbal on a Friday congregation he said: "During last two and a half months various rumors and stories against me are being circulated here, but people should not believe these stories. I assure you, here at this holy place that I have never bargained your interests and not left you and I shall remain firm on my determination in future too. I shall stand by the promise; I have given to you, till I am alive. My 42 year's political life is before you. In

\textsuperscript{18} Alastair Lamb, op. cit; pp. 306-307.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} In his interview with Motherland, Moulvi Farooq said: "How can he [Abdullah] change his opinion and declare that the state's accession to India is final? The plebiscite Front, the party which the Sheikh leads, had been raising the voice for plebiscite during all these years and now they have announced their final verdict on the accession as if they are de-fact and de-jure leaders of the state." Motherland, New Delhi, 28 December 1974.
\textsuperscript{21} Alester Lamb. Op. cit;
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
normalizing the relations between India and Pakistan and in some settlement lies our interest. New Delhi had suggested me to change the name of the Plebiscite Front but I made it clear to them that it was not possible to change the name because plebiscite was its aim”. 23

Similarly, while addressing Front workers at Mujahid Manzil, on April 4, 1974, he reminded that, the “Restoration of 1953 could be the basis for talks between me and New Delhi. I have repeatedly assured you that whatever results come out of these talks it will be placed before you. You will be competent to take a decision on the results of the talks whether to accept it or to reject it”.24 To be fair this was never done when the Accord was concluded.

It is unfair if we blame people for showing their disapproval to the dialogue process for they were educated by Shaikh Abdullah and by the organization to which he was political ideologue-Plebiscite Front-for more than two decades to fight for the right of self-determination to be exercised through a free plebiscite. He had raised their expectations to the highest level by championing their cause without any compromise. And now when due to a sudden turn of events in 1971, Shaikh was making a rapprochement and had stated at the very outset that the accession with India was final, this came as a rude shock to the people who found it difficult to reconcile with the changing circumstances. Thus Shaikh like a political strategist would adopt a public posture demanding that government of India should restore the 1953 position of the state.25

24 Ibid.
25 Amrit Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, provided a correct analysis about Sheikh Abdullah’s public pronouncements on 9th September, 1973: “What the Sheikh says in the public does not reflect his real attitude he has taken at the negotiations [with Delhi]. Political compulsions perhaps leave no better alternative to the Sheikh than the public posture of the kind he has chosen to take. It is well known that the Sheikh’s current negotiations….. have not been favorably viewed by the pro-Pakistani elements [read
Since now it was evident to Abdullah and his comrades that any compromise made with New Delhi, would not be unopposed in the state, they quiet unmistakingly, created such slogans through which people could be prepared to accept the outcome of the negotiations, which Shaikh was aware, would not be according to the promises he had made with them. One such slogan which was shouted quiet frequently in the public gatherings arranged by the Plebiscite Front was:

*Raj Kari Taj Kari Bab Kari Low Low,*

*Aal Kari Wangan Kari Bab Kari Low Low.*

Meanwhile negotiations continued between New Delhi and Shaikh Abdullah and his friends, absorbing all shocks of criticism and public anger. At one point when Shaikh Abdullah was under severe criticism from different quarters in the state, and thus demanded that the constitutional position of the state as it existed before 1953, be restored, created a deadlock in the talks.\(^{26}\) It was only due to the efforts of D.P Dhar, Mir Qasim and P.N Haksar, that Indira Gandhi was persuaded about that, "Abdullah’s acceptance of Kashmir’s accession to India as final should form the basis of a dialogue with him and a way out should be formed to accommodate his viewpoint regarding the internal autonomy of the state".\(^{27}\) Under such influences, the government of India realized his [Abdullah’s] difficulties and therefore, reciprocated by recognizing the need to accommodate his viewpoints to the extent that was possible and desirable.\(^{28}\)

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\(^{25}\) Awami Action Committee in Kashmir. Presumably the Sheikh’s public posture is intended to neutralize these elements.”

26 G. R Najar, op. cit; p.49.


28 G. R Najar, op.cit; p. 50.
Thus, after a long period of ups and downs, the negotiations between Mirza Afzal Beg and G. Parthasarathi concluded on 13 November 1974,\(^{29}\)

Its contents were formally accepted by Abdullah on 12 February 1975\(^ {30}\) and were presented before the Indian Parliament by Mrs. Indira Gandhi on 24 February 1975, as the "Kashmir Accord".\(^ {31}\)

The negotiated terms of the Accord are as under:

i) The state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is a constituent unit of the union of India, shall, in its relations with the Union, continue to be governed by Article 370 of the constitution of India.

ii) The residuary powers of legislation shall remain with the state; however, parliament will continue to have power to make laws relating to the prevention of activities directed towards disclaiming, questioning or disrupting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India or bringing about secession of a part of the territory of India from the Union or causing insult to the Indian National Flag, the Indian National Anthem and the Constitution.

iii) Where any provision of the constitution of India had been applied to the state of Jammu and Kashmir with adaptations and modifications, such adaptations and modifications can be altered or replaced by an order of the President under Article 370, each individual proposed in this behalf being considered on its merits; but provisions of the constitution of India already applied to the state of Jammu and Kashmir without adaptation or modification are unalterable.

iv) With a view to assuring freedom to the state of Jammu and Kashmir to have its own legislature on matters like welfare measures, cultural

\(^{29}\) Times of India, 14 November, 1974.

\(^{30}\) Indian Express, New Delhi, 13 February 1975.

\(^{31}\) Statesman, New Delhi, 25 February 1975.
matters, social security, personal law, and procedural laws, in a manner suited to the special conditions in the state, it is agreed that the state government can review the laws made by Parliament or extended to the state after 1953 on any matter relatable to the Concurrent List and may decide which of them, in its opinion, needs amendment or repeal. Thereafter, appropriate steps may be taken under Article 254 of the Constitution of India. The grant of President's assent to such legislation would be sympathetically considered. The same approach would be adopted in regard to the laws to be made by Parliament in future under the proviso to clause 2 of that Article; the state government shall be consulted regarding the application of any such law to the state and the views of the State Government shall receive the fullest consideration.

v) As an arrangement reciprocal to what has been provided under Article 368, a suitable modification of that Article as applied to the state should be made by Presidential Order to the effect that no law made by the legislature of the State of Jammu and Kashmir relating to any of the under mentioned matters shall take effect unless the bill, having been reserved for the consideration of the President, receives his assent; the matters are;

(a) The appointment, powers, functions, duties, privileges and immunities of the Government; and

(b) The following matters relating to Elections, namely, the superintendence, direction and control of elections by the Election Commission of India, eligibility for inclusion in the electoral rolls without discrimination, adult suffrage, and composition of the legislature council, being matters specified in sections 138,139,140 and 50 of the constitution of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
vi) No agreement was possible on the question of nomenclature of the Governor and Chief Minister and the matter is therefore remitted to the Principals.32

On 25 February, 1975, Mrs. Indira Gandhi in her statement told the Lok Sabha that during the course of negotiations “Mirza Afzal Beg pressed for the transfer of provisions relating to Fundamental Rights to the State Constitution, the removal of the supervision and control of the Election Commission of India over elections to the state legislature, and the modification of Article 356 to require the state Government’s concurrence before imposing Presidents Rule to the state. It was not found possible to agree to any of these proposals”.33 She appreciated Shaikh Abdullah that despite his strong views on these issues he accepted the agreed conclusions of the Accord.34

In the Accord, Shaikh Abdullah did not achieve his ambition for a return to the exact position as it had been prior to his dismissal in August 1953,35 rather it marked a substantial compromise on the part of Abdullah and his ratification to the accession of Jammu and Kashmir state to India as final, along with much else which India had decided for the state since 1953.37 The Accord was as Ajit Bhattacharjea put it, “wordy and full of assurances, but in effect the clock stated where it was”.38 To Balraj Puri, the Accord “was not on [Abdullah’s] terms but on those of Mrs. Gandhi which his representative Afzal Beg had signed”.39

32 G.R. Najar, op. cit; pp.50-53.
33 P. N. Bazaz, op. cit; p.245.
34 Ibid.
35 Alistair Lamb, op. cit; p.307.
36 Balraj Puri, op. cit; p.184.
37 Alistair Lamb, op. cit.
38 Ajit Bhattacharjea, op. cit.
39 Balraj Puri, op. cit; p.185.
The Shaikh did express the view, in his letter to Mrs. Indira Gandhi on 11 February 1975, that “The constitutional relationship between the centre and the state should be what it was in 1953,” but only to learn that “The clock cannot be put back and we have to take note of the realities of the situation.”

The first clause which was the key provision of the Accord confirms “Jammu and Kashmir a Constituent unit of the Union on India” and approved that the state “shall continue to be governed under Article 370” of the Indian Constitution. In reality however, between 1954 and the mid 1970’s, 28 constitutional orders “Integrating” the State with India had been issued from Delhi, and 262 Union laws had been made applicable in the Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, Article 370 was retained; so were the changes made after 1953, to reduce Kashmir’s autonomy.

The second clause confirms residuary powers of the state legislature on the one hand, but on the other hand it was made clear that the Parliament will continue to make laws to prevent activities against the integrity of the Indian Union, or insult to the National Flag or National Anthem and the Constitution. In other words any act on the part of the State Legislative Assembly which could possibly be construed to imply a progression of the state towards independence, could be over ruled by the Union Parliament, a qualification which took away a great deal of remaining strength from Article 370.

The third and the fourth clause of the Accord while reaffirmed the status quo, it however, gave the provincial government the authority to “review” laws on the concurrent list extended to Jammu and Kashmir after

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41 Ibid.
43 Alistair Lamb, op. cit.
1953, and "decide" which of those might 'need amendment or repeal'. "Even this was probably no more than a token gesture", because the promised review of Parliament's laws or any laws or regulations extended to the state after 1953 never took place. These provisions curtailed the powers of the State Assembly in specified matters of importance, including elections, the appointment of governors and terms of office and functions were reduced to legislate on "welfare measures, cultural matters, social security and personal law".

Through the fifth clause of the Accord the centre retained the powers to appoint Governors and take over the governance of the State under Article 356, with drastic consequences a decade later. Even symbolic political concessions such as changing the title governor to Sadr-i-Riyasat and Chief Minister to Wazir-i-Azam were not granted since there was no agreement over this issue. Thus, the "quantum of autonomy", about which much publicized negotiations were made, was reduced for less than what was offered to the State from time to time since 1953 till 1972, when formal talks were initiated. While Shaikh Abdullah considered the Accord, "The first step towards restoration of [the] pre-1953 constitutional position of the state", the Indian Prime Minister opines that "It provided scope for further application of the Indian Constitution to the State".

What Abdullah then got in return to his acceptance of the status quo and his confirmation of the terms of Kashmir's incorporation into the Indian Union since 1953, was technically outside the purview of the agreement, but very much part of it. During the talks that led to Accord, the negotiators mainly concerned themselves in sorting out the constitutional issues.

46 *Statesman*, New Delhi, 5 March 1975.
47 Balraj Puri, op. cit; p.187.
However, the political issues also figured in these discussions, and the most important political issues discussed and subsequently agreed upon by the parties were:

a. That the Plebiscite Front will be dissolved; and

b. The Congress party though in a majority in the State Legislature will surrender power in favour of Shaikh Abdullah.48

Accordingly, on 23 February, the day before the Accord’s announcement, Syed Mir Qasim resigned as Chief Minister of the State. Two days later the Congress party in the State Legislature, which controlled it, unanimously elected Shaikh Abdullah its leader.49 The Shaikh could hardly have done more to identify himself with the party against which he had launched the Tehrik-i-Tarki-Mawalat only a decade before. He was sworn in as Chief Minister on 25 February 1975, returning to the post after nearly twenty two years.50

The Accord comes under severe criticism not only within the state but also at the national and international level. In Pakistan, unsurprisingly, the Accord was denounced as a “Sell-out”. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had particularly strong words for Shaikh Abdullah. He observed that this man who had set himself up as the champion of democracy was now about to become head of a government dominated by a party, Congress, to which he did not belong, in an Assembly of which he was not even a member.51 At Bhutto’s behest

48 G.R. Najar, op. cit; p.58
49 Alistair Lamb, op. cit; p.308.
50 Ajit Bhattacharjea, op. cit; p.236. According to Syed Mir Qasim Sheikh Abdullah refused to take office as he was highly upset with a statement made by Mrs. Indira Gandhi stating that relations between Kashmir and the Indian Union would continue as before, which was reported by the All India Radio. He was livid with rage, according to Qasim, “You have made a statement as if I have sold out Kashmir for the chair of Chief Minister,” he roared. I pleaded that he should not be influenced by the radio version of the statement [by Mrs. Gandhi]” Mir Qasim, op. cit; p.142-143.
51 Alistair Lamb, op. cit.
Pakistan observed an impressive hartal on 28 February, 1975,\(^{52}\) and overseas Pakistani and Kashmiris in the United Kingdom and elsewhere held demonstrations.\(^{53}\) After sometimes, on 12 March, 1975, China joined in the chorus of disapproval.\(^{54}\)

Within the State, the signing of the Accord by the Abdullah created a backlash of adverse public opinion as ordinary Kashmiri masses felt or were made to feel that Abdullah "had bartered the rights of state people and surrendered parts of Kashmir autonomy just to obtain crumbs of power"\(^{55}\), an impression which Shaikh Abdullah failed to remove till the end of his life. He repeatedly assured the people that he is bound to get the Accord approved by the state people but, according to Prem Nath Bazaz, "He never had the courage to do so".\(^{56}\) The Awami Action Committee and the Jamaat-i-Islamia in the valley and the Jan Sangh in Jammu left no stone unturned to divert the public disappointment in their favour to carve out a political space in the State.

The Jan Sangh in New Delhi and Jammu was vocal in its opposition to the Accord: it urged that Article 370 of the Indian Constitution be abrogated and the whole of the State of Jammu and Kashmir incorporated into the Indian Union just like any other state.\(^{57}\) The party challenged the claim of Shaikh Abdullah of being the leader of the people of the state. It held that Shaikh Abdullah could "....at best claim to be the leader of a Kashmiri population".\(^{58}\) Though Abdullah assured from time to time that regional aspirations of the people of Jammu and Ladakh will be taken care...
of in any future arrangement, "These assurances proved insufficient to ally the apprehensions of the majority of Jammu population".  

The most vocal reaction to the Accord and Shaikh Abdullah’s new political discourse, however, came within the Valley and was expressed by Awami Action Committee led by Mirwaiz Farooq and the Jammaat-i-Islamia. Mirwaiz Farooq who was trying “to carve a political niche for himself in the valley”, reiterated his charge that Shaikh Abdullah had given away his people’s right to self-determination. He was allegedly backed by some members of the Pradesh Congress members who had an apprehension that Accord will reduce their political influence in the state. Jammaat-i-Islamia also used the opportunity to make the people to believe that Abdullah was betraying them by making an Accord with New Delhi. The organization particularly criticized the wisdom of Plebiscite Front Chief for wasting two decades to affirm the reality of Kashmir’s accession with India. It was claimed that “If Mirza Afzal Beg had openly asserted his view on accession twenty five years ago, the people of the state could have been spared years of privation, bloodshed and continuous restlessness.”

Since Abdullah and his colleagues were left with little in the Accord to convince the people that the deal was in their favour, the criticism drive launched by these organizations received a big following in the state. Interestingly, even most of the Plebiscite Front members and carders too were not satisfied with the terms of the Accord. But they swallowed it as a

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59 Balraj Puri, op. cit; p.183.
60 Indian Express, 2 September, 1974.
61 Alistair Lamb, op. cit.
63 Indian Express, 22 December, 1972.
64 Times of India, 5 February, 1973.
bitter pill only because Abdullah, the man who struggled throughout to protect their rights—had accepted the Accord.  

As Abdul Qayyum Zargar, a veteran National Conference member, who had been Afzal Beg’s personal secretary in 1975, narrated later that, “we were faced with a very piquant situation after the 1975 Accord. The people wanted to go on strike, to protest what they saw as an unjust and inequitable agreement. But we could not let that happen, because the prestige of none other than Shaikh Abdullah was at stake.”

Shaikh Abdullah who had throughout derived his power from the masses, was conscious of the popular mood and hence in order to migrate the public anger after becoming Chief Minister on 25 February 1975 with the support of the Congress Legislature Party, he refused to merge his own group—Plebiscite Front— in the congress, in defiance of pressures and expectations of its State and national leadership. According to Puri, “this act of assertion of his political will….humored the regional pride of the people of Kashmir and compensated, to some extent, the adverse reaction of his climb down in agreeing to the terms of the Accord.”

He also revived the National Conference in October 1975. He demonstrated his independence by ending the central subsidy on rice even at the cost of sending up prices and when Indira Gandhi imposed her emergency in June 1975, he refused to go along.

When congress withdrew its support to Abdullah in the Assembly in 1977, Shaikh Abdullah declared very bitterly: “Since the congress party has

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65 Sumantra Bose, op. cit., p. 53.
66 Cited in ibid, foot note, no. 11.
69 Ajit Bhattacharya, op. cit., p.237.
withdrawn its support the Accord that had been concluded between him and Indira Gandhi should be deemed to have ended."\(^{70}\)

Ajit Bhattacharjea criticized Indira Gandhi that instead of supporting Abdullah, "She was exploiting and demonstrating Abdullah's weakness in order to erode his image in Kashmir, but not use the opportunity to revive secular forces committed to India..."\(^{71}\) On the other hand M.J. Akbar blamed local Congress members for making Abdullah's way a difficult one.\(^{72}\) Quiet unsurprisingly then Abdullah recalled later in his autobiography with disappointment: "Forgetting my past experience, I agreed to cooperate with Congress, but soon had to regret my decision."\(^{73}\) Not with standing, all this political reverses, though less popular then ever, there was still no rival to Abdullah in the valley, as he demonstrated in the elections of 1977.


\(^{71}\) Ajit Bhattacharya, op. cit.

\(^{72}\) M.J. Akbar, op. cit., p. 189.

\(^{73}\) *Aatish-i-Chinar*, op. cit., p.841.
CHAPTER XI

RETURN TO POWER:
ROLE AS CHIEF MINISTER
(1975-82)

The 'Accord' was followed by the Shaikh Abdullah's assuming charge as the chief minister on February 25, 1975- an office which was a relegated one compared to the one Shaikh occupied prior to his dismissal on August 9, 1953. His seven years tenure as chief minister set the future pattern of the state politics. The Congress legislature party adapted a resolution whereby it pledged its support to Shaikh in "consolidating secular and democratic forces in the state and in toning up the state administration to make it a more effective instrument for the progress and welfare of the people in all the three regions of the state".\(^1\) Although superficially it seems that differences between Abdullah and the centre were resolved with the accord, but very soon it became clear that both were moving in the opposing directions. For instance, according to Indra Gandhi, 'the accord provided scope for further application of the Indian constitution to the state', while Shaikh Abdullah considered the accord as 'the first step towards restoration of [the] pre-1953 constitutional position of the state'.\(^2\)

Their political calculations also diverged. The Shaikh had greed to disband the Plebiscite Front but demanded dissolution of state assembly and fresh elections in order to be able to come back to power and form a democratically elected government. Mrs. Gandhi would not hold mid-term state elections. That the Congress might be wiped out in Jammu and

\(^1\) Statesman, New Delhi, 23 February 1975.
Kashmir, as would be proved two years later in the 1977 elections, was not acceptable to Mrs. Gandhi.³

The differences came to the surface even before Shaikh Abdullah assumed the power. Though Abdullah and his deputy Mirza Afzal Beg had assumed power as independent candidates in staged by-elections under the auspices of the Congress party, they rejected the suggestion of a formal alliance with the Congress party. M. J. Akbar, without providing any documentary evidence, attributes this to personal rivalries between the outgoing chief minister, Mir Qasim, and Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, a prominent Congress minister. When they both realized that there was to be no place for them or their relatives in the coalition government, they dissuaded Abdullah from contemplating the idea.⁴ Similarly, Mrs. Gandhi was keen to co-opt Shaikh Abdullah into the Congress fold⁵, and accordingly wanted him to be elected as the leader of the Congress parliamentary party- Shaikh Abdullah had initially agreed to join the Congress but, later, Mrs. Gandhi changed her mind.⁶ Thus, it appears that the accord was only a cosmetic arrangement because both the center represented by the Congress and the Shaikh, under the pressure of the circumstances remained stick to their earlier stands. A prominent political analyst, Sumantra Bose, comments: "The Delhi-centered circumstances of an emasculated Abdullah's return to office amounted to a clever evasion of the Kashmir conflict rather than a substantive solution to it".⁷ It is thus no wonder that when the Congress withdrew its support to Shaikh Abdullah

³ She later told Mir Qasim: 'for me the (1975) accord was, and remains a method of fruitful co-operation among all the secular and patriotic forces in the state. It certainly did not mean that the Congress would fade in to oblivion. I did not accept this interpretation of the accord'. Cited in M. J. Akbar, Kashmir: Behind the Vale, p.201.
⁴ Ibid. pp. 189-190.
⁵ G. R. Najar, Kashmir Accord 1975: A Political Analysis, p. 59
⁶ She was persuaded to believe that he would destroy the Congress base because the party cadre would owe allegiance to him and not to the central leadership. See Mir Qasim's interview with Udayan Sharma, Sunday, 23 September -1 October 1983, p.30.
⁷ Sumantra Bose, Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace, p. 89.
after its defeat in parliamentary elections in 1977, the later reacted in a press statement: "since the Congress party has withdrawn its support the Accord that had been concluded between him and Indra Gandhi should be deemed to have ended".  

Although the Congress pressed hard to force Abdullah to behave as its subordinate and accept his position as another chief minister, but the later was too strong and confident to give up entirely. "In April 1975 he was already talking about a possible merger of his state with Azad Kashmir, over which he declared that Pakistan had no rights, an idea which......had been made easier by the new Azad Kashmir Constitution which Z. A. Bhutto had caused to be introduced in August 1974: this emphasized the separateness of Azad Kashmir from Pakistan by giving it a parliamentary system of government in place of previous presidential structure, and by abolishing the old government of Pakistan Ministry of Kashmir Affairs".

The second important step which Abdullah took to demonstrate his independence was reviving the National Conference- to replace the Plebiscite Front- as a counterweight. This new development had its far-reaching consequences on the future course of Kashmir politics. He advised the Plebiscite Front, who's patron he was since its inception, and the Congress, who's support he was enjoying in the assembly, to merge in the National Conference. In doing so Abdullah actually wants to revive the pre-1953 situation when he dominated the politics of Kashmir through one party-state system, in which all opposition was systematically curbed with an active backing of Pundit Nehru. As expected, the merger proposal was unacceptable to both the parties because, their very political ideology was antagonistic- with one believing in the States' close integration with the

Centre and the other fighting against it. Both the local and the national leadership of the Congress were against the merger proposal. [T]he leaders of the Provincial Congress saw this arrangement as a passing phase, and turned down my invitation, says Abdullah. He reasoned that, "during this time, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Srinagar and advised the local Congress leaders to keep the organization alive and functioning".11

Similarly, not only did the Working Committee of the Plebiscite Front reject the merger proposal, but it did not favor the revival of the National Conference also.12 It instead suggested in terms of converting the party into either 'Jamhoori Mahaz' or Peoples' Front.13 In his letter to Mirza Afzal regarding the revival of the National Conference, Shaikh Abdullah wrote, "while drawing the contours of our new party, we have to be careful not to lose sight of our new basic aims, the history of our struggle to achieve them, the importance of our distinctive role and the compulsions of the present day circumstances. At no cost should we forget that we are the inheritors of a great past and it should be our anxiety not to take a false step that might disturb the historical continuity which, in turn, forms the base for the edifice of our pride......I do not think we should wash our hands completely from our past heritage only because some usurpers succeeded in sabotaging us...."14 In a letter to Mir Qasim on the same subject he wrote: "you will agree with me that no political organization can become live, purposive and strong, unless it has the resolute popular backing. This is possible only when this political organization has behind it the rich asset of a movement, a history and a struggle, whereby people have a sense of association. According to this standard National Conference is the only organization in

11 Ibid. p. 854.
12 Hindu, Madras, 1 July, 1975.
our state with which the history of our dreams and aspirations is linked. Every soldier and commander of our freedom movement will bear testimony to this fact that it is under the banner of National Conference alone that we fought a decisive and invigorating battles against despotism and feudalistic regime..... Thus this organization became the valuable heritage of our movement and history".15

Thus Shaikh Abdullah justified the revival of the National Conference to replace the Plebiscite Front in the context of traditions and freedom struggle of Kashmir. The revival was, therefore, intended to "....restore that continuity, which due to some unpleasant situation had been snapped for some time".16 Sensing the mood of the Plebiscite Front activists, Abdullah also rejected the idea of merging the party in to the Congress. He claimed that the people of the Kashmir "had come to regard it (Congress) as a body which gave shelter to thieves and other anti-social elements like blackmailing and blackmarketeers".17 Interestingly Shaikh continued to rule with an exclusive support of the same party.

Thus, under these circumstances, the special session of the Plebiscite Front on 4th and 5th July in Mujahid Manzil adopted the following resolution: "today on 5th July 1975, the All Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front in a special session, after due deliberations for about thirteen hours amongst the delegates from all parts of the state, giving due cognition and serious thought to prevailing political situations, decided to change the name of the Plebiscite Front in to the National Conference. For this purpose, appropriate amendments are visualized so that there is collaboration between the name and the deed-further the committees subordinate to it

15 Ibid. see also Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit., pp.851-853.
16 Economic Times, New Delhi, 20 April 1975.
17 Motherland. New Delhi, 20 April 1975.
accordingly bring a change”. The resolution also invited Shaikh Abdullah to assume the leadership of the party.

With the revival of the National Conference, Shaikh Abdullah’s twenty two years’ long movement for self determination formally reached to an end. He came under strong criticism in the Valley. Those who were not satisfied with his new political orientation started using the same epithets against him which his associates used against Bakhshi Gulam Muhammad, Gulam Mohammed Sadiq, and Mir Qasim etc. by calling them “puppets”, “stooges” or “courtiers”. Sofi Mohammed Akbar, who had played a very prominent role in the plebiscite movement wept when he saw the Front flag being replaced by the flag of National Conference. Molvi Farooq, who was waiting for an opportunity to log horns against Abdullah, organized a big mass demonstration on 12 July 1975 in which anti Abdullah slogans were shouted and speeches were delivered blaming him and his colleagues for selling the honor of the Kashmiri people. A new generation whom Shaikh had taught lessons for more than two decades were too reluctant to accept the change. Among others a Valley based activist, Shabir Ahmad Shah, formed an organization called the Peoples’ League around the same period to keep the quest for self-determination alive. Seeing the plebiscite platform closed some educated youngsters were attracted towards Jammat-i-Islami, an Islamic organization in favor of Kashmir’s accession with Pakistan. In the 1975 by-elections Shaikh Abdullah was expecting that he would win

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18 All Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front Special Session, 4-5 July 1975, Mujahid Manzil, Department of Information Srinagar.
20 Interview with Azam Inqilqbi in April 2006. Later on Sofi Akbar founded Mahaz-i-Aazadi in 1977 which attracted a good number of educated youngsters.
21 People shouted teasing slogans like “Rai Shuman Barikh Dabas Aalo Babas Mubarekh” (congratulation to Sheikh for undoing every thing he stands for) Mohammed Azam Inqilqbi, Payam-i-Hurriyat (Urdu), 2006 Srinagar. p.58.
22 Ibid.
the election unopposed. But he was shocked when Jammat fielded its candidate Ashraf Sahraie to contest against him. Although Shaikh won the election, he could never forgive Jammat this act. He replied by banning the Jammat run darasghas (schools). This single act affected the careers of ten thousand students studying within these. He continued to demonize the organization as a threat to Indian nation in the same way he portrayed the Praja Parishad during his early tenure. He said “I am fighting an in-depth battle. Jammat has to be resisted politically and socially” he described their schools as “the real source for spreading communal poison”. Later he also banned the World Islamic Youth Council planned by the Jamiat-ul-Tulba, the youth wing of the Jammaat-i-Islami, in August 1980. The youth wing had also threatened to launch an “Iran-type” movement to “liberate” Kashmir from India. Almost immediately after this announcement, on August 7, 1980, the State police, in a night long sweep, arrested some twenty four leaders connected with the Jammaat. These tough and swift measures did limit the activities of these organizations; however, the underlying conditions that had swept the movements remained largely unaddressed.

The revival of the National Conference also embittered Shaikh’s relationship with the Congress since the later feared that revival was made to end the Congress base from the State. The one positive result of the resurrection of the National Conference was that it ushered an era of competitive politics in the state which had hitherto remained absent in the wake of either declaring the opposition parties illegal or intimidating those who’s views differed from the ruling party. This new development polarized the politics in the State between the Congress and the National

25 P. S. Varma op. cit.
26 “Police Crush Revolt of Kashmiri Secessionists”, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Near East and South Asia (FBIS-NES), August 7, 1980.
27 Sumit Ganguly, Crisis in Kashmir, p. 78.
28 Sannaullah Butt, Kashmir in Flames, pp. 211-213.
Conference—one mobilizing the masses over the issues like integration of State with the Indian Union, economic development achieved during the Congress Governments in the state and Abdullah's authoritarian approach and the other mobilizing on preserving the separate identity of the State (read Kashmiriat) by voicing against the attempts made by the Congress to erode the State autonomy.

From the outset of his administration in 1975 Shaikh Abdullah, with no party majority in the Legislative Assembly, was obliged to rely on his own resources. Moreover, after his dismissal in 1953, in which his own colleagues took a major role, he was reluctant to share key responsibilities of the power with the Congress and with those who had remained part of the post-1953 regimes. Thus he made an extensive use of his family. He gave great responsibility to his wife, Begum Jahan Abdullah, to his sons Tariq (who had for a time gone over to the cause of Pakistan and served both in its embassy in London and its delegation to the United Nations) and Farooq (a Doctor of Medicine, who had spent many years in the United Kingdom, some of it as a General Practitioner in Bolton), and to his son-in-law G. M. Shah (an active leader of Plebiscite Front).29 In addition to that, Shaikh Abdullah supported and promoted those officials whom he considered had been loyal to him during his various periods in the political wilderness even if some of these were "notoriously corrupt".30 In the pursuit of creating a loyal bureaucracy, Shaikh rooted out those whom he deemed had at one time opposed him or supported his numerous enemies.31 Since all the activists of erstwhile Plebiscite Front could not be accommodated in the new power structure created by Abdullah and his associates, he encouraged his followers to follow unfair means to gain benefits. Thus he justified power

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid. see also Alestier Lamb, op. cit. p. 312.
theft in a speech at Eidghah and asked National Conference workers to erect shops on public roads along Abi Guzar and Janglaat Galee lanes in Srinagar. All public corporations started becoming bankrupt on account of excessive recruitments. Prem Nath Bazaz, who remained as ever a critical commentator on events, criticized the behavior of his old friend. He described Abdullah's new government as 'democracy through intimidation and terror'.

Even though squabbles with the Congress and his endeavor to re-establish his hold over the administrative machinery consumed much of his energy, Shaikh Abdullah took some very important steps of administrative nature. Even before the assumption of power and after the Accord, he had committed himself to certain changes in the administration and promised clean and fear administrative setup. He enthusiastically declared that "a clean and a fair administration shall be introduced in the state". In the outset Shaikh Abdullah set to resolve the following issues:

(i) How to eradicate corrupt practices both in an outside the administration?
(ii) How to provide to the state clean and effective administration?
(iii) How to renew and reorganize the programmes for the economic welfare and the promotion of the living standards?
(iv) How to achieve self sufficiency and economic progress based on social justice, within a short period?
(v) How to speed up the works of economic reconstruction?

32 Dr. Sheikh Showket, op. cit.
(vi) How to restore peaceful atmosphere in the educational institutions and how to bring prospects for the future of unemployed youth?34

In pursuance of these issues government took its first step to improve the educational sector in the State which was in the deteriorating conditions.35 A report about the achievements of the Abdullah government reads: "the first distinctive administrative step of the government was to restore order in educational institutions. At the time of Shaikh Abdullah's assumption of power, the educational institutions were subjected to naked copying in examination halls, disorder, violence and goondaism. The new chief minister declared these institutions as sacred, ordered disciplinary action against the students and himself went on inspection to various institutions. The order was restored and disorder was relegated to the history".36 Expert committees were set to suggest measures for improvement and on the bases of recommendations "enough funds were utilized over the construction of school buildings and libraries and repairs and reconstruction of older ones was initiated".37

Similarly, the government appointed Economic Review Committee under the chairmanship of the state Governor and a noted economist Sheri L. K. Jha to suggest reforms for the economic development of the state. On the basis of the recommendations of the commission, the government introduced an innovative Single Line Administration in the sate in 1976 with a view to nominate public representatives to District Development Boards, with the eventual goal of having elected representatives at all levels of

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35 Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit., p.848.
36 Numayan Kamamey, op. cit., p. 2.
37 Ibid., p. 5.
Its purpose was to decentralize the administration and build up a participatory base at the district level with the twin objectives of:

i. Making planning more reflective of the hopes and aspirations of the common man;

ii. Ensuring speedy implementation of developmental programmes.

In order to achieve these objectives District Development Boards, for each district of the state (composed of people like members of parliament, members of state legislature, elected representatives of development blocks, chairman local bodies and some nominated members from backward classes and women) were constituted. The Deputy Commissioner of the district was appointed as ex-officio District Development Commissioner (DDC) with delegation of wide financial and administrative powers. The DDC was also made the chairman of the district development board. All the departments in the district were placed under the administrative and operational control of the DDC concerned.

The district development commissioners were authorized to issue the bulk of administrative approvals and technical/financial sanctions that were involved in respect of district plan, at the district level itself. On an average 49% to 50% of the total plan outlays were earmarked for district sector schemes every year. According to Summit Ganguli, "in many ways these reforms were an important precursor of the center government’s efforts, a decade later, to strengthen Panchayat Raj (local government)." Some

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39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
42 Summit Ganguli, op. cit., p. 69.
observers, however, disapproved these reforms by saying that it was only to avoid granting provincial autonomy to the regions and to run administration on a "unitary basis under a form of autocracy".43

Another important administrative measure but with political consequences taken by Abdullah government was ending the Central subsidy on rice in 1975, apparently, with a view to make more resources available for the economic development of the State44, but the step was actually taken by Abdullah to demonstrate his independence from the dictates of the Center45. The decision was taken at the cost of sending up the prices and giving Congress and the Janta party an issue to attack him with. It is pertinent to mention that food subsidy was introduced in the state as a political expediency after the arrest of Shaikh Abdullah in August 1953 to win over the people. An English daily commenting on the effects of ending subsidy observed that no doubt it "...brought some unpopularity to the government, but the Shaikh, committed to launching various developmental schemes, combated the general opposition and saved the state exchequer about Rs. 5 crores annually from the food subsidy alone".46

As discussed previously, one of the most radical changes Abdullah initiated in his tenure as Prime Minister of the State, and the one which earned him great name in peasantry, was the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act initiated to end the feudal setup in the State. Although the Act was progressive in nature, but was not without some in-build flaws, such as exemption of orchards from the ceiling limits and making no distinction between the 22.75 acres of dry or irrigated/fertile land to count only a few. In 1972 during the chief ministership of Syed Mir Qasim, the Jammu and Kashmir Agrarian Reforms Act was enacted to end the rights in land of

43 Alistair Lamb, op. cit., p. 311.
46 Tribune, Chandigarh, 3 April 1977.
those who personally never cultivated. It also reduced the ceiling limit 12.5 standard acres on land. But no progress could be achieved on implementation front.\textsuperscript{47} Justice Mufti who was presiding the full-bench judgment of the J&K High Court observed: “the new Act is not well drafted and this appears to me to be one of the main reasons which has mad its underlying scheme obscure and rendered it difficult for most of the people to comprehend its scope and content. I apprehend that the imperfection in drafting might even lead to unavoidable and unnecessary litigation”.\textsuperscript{48}

In order to remove these defects and to review it with a view to provide for more equitable distribution and better utilization of land, this Act was kept in suspension from 25\textsuperscript{th} March 1975 by the Abdullah government through the Jammu and Kashmir Agrarian Reforms (suspension operation) Act, 1975 (Act III of 1975) and a special committee was appointed to look in to the matter and scrutinize the Act thoroughly. Consequently, the Agrarian Reforms Act 1976 was passed. The main features of the Act are as under:

a) Abolishes absentee landlordism.

b) Imposes ceiling on agricultural land and orchards.

c) Makes provisions for resumption.

d) Makes provisions for the selection of land, if the land exceeds ceiling area.

e) Provides adequate compensation to the aggrieved parties.

f) Allows cultivation of land through servant or hired labor in genuine cases.


g) Recognized the private agreements between landlord and tenants of rent and amount and also appointment of land.

h) Prohibits the creation of new tenancy except in certain cases.

i) Protects the rights and interests of the evacuees.

j) Prohibits alienation of land by way of sale, gift, and mortgage with possession, bequest and exchange.

k) Makes provisions for the attachment by the collector of the orchard or a plantation of trees on state land or land reserved for grazing purposes.

l) Creates new administrative machinery for the implementation of the Act.49

The implementation of this Act, however, remained very slow and tardy. As an example, rights of ex-owners were extinguished for over 3,49,794 acres of land affecting 5,01,557 ex-owners and 5,33,222 persons were declared perspective owners. But till the end of 1990's absolute ownership rights were conferred only on 1,62,041 persons for land measuring 1,17,797 acres. Thus only 30.39 per cent of the persons conferred with perspective ownership rights were made absolute owners.50 It is, thus, needless to say that the Act because of its slow implementation could not become popular in the agrarian circles of the state.

In March 1977 Mrs. Indra Gandhi lost the general election to the Janta party in India. The many draconian measures that had been enacted under Indra Gandhi's eighteen-month “emergency” rule had alienated much of

50 K. Gopal Iyer, op. cit., p. 113.
India's electorate. Even Abdullah's National Conference faced a very tough challenge in the three constituencies it contested in the State. Though his wife managed to win the Srinagar constituency her opposing candidate Iftikhar Ansari secured no fewer than nearly eighty thousand votes. During the election campaign, The Times of India correspondent reported that "resentment against the chief minister, Shaikh Abdullah, finds expression in the large attendance at meetings addressed by opposition candidates. Thus a young Molvi [Iftikhar] is posing a serious challenge to the chief minister's wife, Begum Abdullah, in Srinagar." Prem Nath Bazaz termed these elections as an indicator of an "anti-Abdullah wave". "When it became obvious that the Janta Party would form government at the Center, the leaders of the State Congress party conspired to capture power in Kashmir", writes Abdullah. "A petition was submitted to the Governor declaring that they had lost confidence in me". Abdullah was furious. He called the Congress move as "second assault" and declared that he was not bound to the 1975 accord. It is interesting to note here that whenever Shaikh came under attack from New Delhi or by the parties in side the state, he raised the issues like accession and self-determination. In collaboration with the new Prime Minister Morarji Desai he foiled the attempts of Pradesh Congress president Mufti Mohammed Sayeed to form new government in the state and persuaded the Governor to dissolve the state assembly under Article 53(b) of the State constitution. He also saw in it an opportunity to free himself from the Congress influence and to re-establish his political

51 The best analysis on Indra Gandhi's political personality and its impact on India's politics and political culture can be found in Henry Hart, ed., Indra Gandhi's India: A Political System Re-apprised, Boulder:Westview,1980.
52 For more details see Bazaz op. cit., pp.28-31.
54 Aatish-i-Chinar, op. cit., p. 866.
55 First assault was his dismissal in 1953.ibid.
56 Ibid.
credentials in his own right. Thus, in March 1977, the State Assembly was dissolved and Governor’s rule imposed (an unfortunate precedent).

The elections to the state assembly were held towards the end of the June, 1977. P. S. Varma comments that these elections were “relatively free from the vices of rigging and other related irregularities” and attributes this to the fact that the Congress party was out of the power in Delhi and Janta was still in its infancy. Thus no official patronage from Delhi was forthcoming.\(^{57}\) Besides, the phenomenon of triangular contests between the Congress, the National Conference and the newly formed Janta party come to be witnessed for the first time. This itself became a potent factor in preventing any large scale rigging.

The election campaign was fought with great energy which helped foster a semblance of competitive politics in the State for the first time since 1947. In many respects the whole affair was run as if it were a referendum for Shaikh Abdullah. Though less popular then before, there was no rival to him in the Valley. His main plank was the restoration of Kashmir’s autonomy, an objective which he had failed to secure fully in the 1975 Accord. Unable to campaign due to illness, he recorded a cassette with the message that the election was a referendum on Kashmir’s self-respect; that they could now show to the world they were masters of their destiny and that Delhi could not dictate their future. He urged the people “to prove that Kashmiri nationalism cannot be undermined by conspiracy [of New Delhi]...only the people of Kashmir can decide about there future”\(^{58}\) The cassette was played through out the Valley. The Shaikh accepted that “Kashmir was a part of India and Kashmiris were Indians”, but he also threatened that “if we are not assured a place of honour and dignity in India,

\(^{57}\) P. S. Varma, op. cit., p.127.

we shall not hesitate to secede". These overtures helped him in restoring his position among his followers who were disgusted with his earlier power sharing with Congress.

Interestingly, Abdullah was not beyond playing Pakistani card to his advantage in order to gain his support. His colleague, Mirza Afzal Beg used to carry a lump of Pakistani rock salt in his pocket wrapped in a green handkerchief. As his speech reached its climax, he would take out the salt with a dramatic gesture and exhibit it to his audience, 'indicating thereby that if his party won, Pakistan would not be for away'. 59

The Congress, which with the reputation of being an instrument of Center's dominance, stood little chance in the Valley, although, for precisely those reasons, it was popular in Jammu and Ladakh.60 The Janta Party sent confused signals, divided as the conglomeration was between the Jan Sangh and the left. To quote Balraj Puri, the party consists of those elements, "...who till yesterday demanded the right of self-determination for the state and those who...were campaigning for abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution that guarantees special status to the state".61 Besides, when its leadership hinted that Abdullah was too old to rule,62 Kashmiris relied around him and instantly 'it became a question of Kashmir verses India'.63 Thus Abdullah was highly benefited by the unorganized and confused opposition camp. Had the Janta party been able to use anti Abdullah sentiment prevailing in the state properly and had Mirwaiz Farooq allied

60 Navnita Chadha Behera, State, Identity, and Violence: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, New Delhi, 2000, p. 140.
62 Janta stalwart Babu Jagjivan Ram who was elder then Sheikh emphasized that "the only way the people could let Sheikh Abdullah to take rest and retire from politics was to vote Janta to power". The Statesman, June 24, 1977.
himself with Jammat-i-Islamia rather with Janta, probably the results would have been altogether different. But then history is not about ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’.

The election results demonstrated how the people in the State felt. The National Conference won forty-seven out of seventy-five seats in the Assembly (thirty-nine in Valley, seven in Jammu and one in Ladakh). Congress was cut to size (ten in all; none in the Valley). Janta did slightly better (thirteen; with only two in the Valley).\textsuperscript{64} Jammat’s representation came down from five to one. Molvi Farooq who had consistently adopted a pro-Pakistani stance, lost credibility among his traditional sympathizers, by campaigning for the Janta Party, as did the Jammaat-i-Islami.\textsuperscript{65} It was the distribution of these seats which was more significant and it confirmed the polarization of political forces in the State. Despite its claims of representing the wishes and aspirations of all communities and regions, Abdullah’s National Conference had been endorsed by what can only be described as the Muslim vote.\textsuperscript{66} However, as Lamb puts it: “in no way could he [Shaikh] be seen to be the voice of Islam in the State of Jammu and Kashmir”.\textsuperscript{67}

Shaikh Abdullah returned to office on 9 July 1977 strengthened politically but in failing health. Confident of his new mandate, he sought to curb all political opposition in the state and tried to create a monolithic political setup with the National Conference under his presidentship dominating the proceedings. Never a staunch democrat, he was not above using democratic procedures for more parochial ends. Thus in November the state government assumed certain powers of detention (Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Ordinance 1977) for up to two years with out right of appeal. It also placed severe restrictions on news papers and other

\textsuperscript{64} P. S. Varma, op. cit., p. 128.
\textsuperscript{66} Shamim Ahmad Shamim, Kashmir, Seminar, New Delhi, no. 224, April 1979, p.18.
\textsuperscript{67} Alastair Lamb, op. cit., p. 314.
publications within the state in the interests of security.68 The opposition parties, both within and outside the state, with one voice, expressed their disapproval. Also the Indian press which had only a few months before freed itself from the Indra Gandhi's eighteen months emergency, remained violently critical.69 The pleas and criticisms had little impact on Abdullah. In March 1978 a new Public Safety Bill was introduced in the State Legislative Assembly to refine the provisions of the Ordinance. Despite the strong condemnation by the press and the opposition the bill became law on 1 April.

Although it is not possible to form an idea as what short-term gains this piece of legislation achieved, it is quite clear in retrospect, however, that "the passage of this law effectively closed yet another avenue for airing of the political grievances at the local level".70 In essence Abdullah no longer had an adequate appreciation of the changes in the political culture of the state. The society had undergone a change. Bread and butter was no more its sole concern. It wanted to share power. A new generation of educated, politicized and more articulate Kashmiris had begun to emerge during his long years of political exile and most of them under his direct influence. Thus Bazaz has correctly argued in 1978:

Tremendous changes had taken place in and outside Jammu and Kashmir. The educated Muslim youth whose number multiplied several times in 30 years realized that Shaikh Abdullah's inconsistent behaviour had done immense harm to the interests of the Kashmiris; it had thwarted their

68 The details of the ordinance are discussed in Bazaz, op. cit., pp 152-154.
69 Ibid.
70 Summit Ganguly, op. cit., p.72.
progress and deprived them of several political and human rights enjoyed by the other Indians”.71

During this time Abdullah also became suspicious about his own colleagues and in order to centralize the decision making in his organization he ordered all members of his cabinet to swear a political oath of loyalty to him72. Mirza Afzal Beg, who had stood unflinchingly beside Shaikh Abdullah for well over four decades, now broke with his old friend. He was blamed for trying to grab Chief Ministership and the one who was allegedly “responsible for the indiscipline in the election to the Legislative Council” in which he tried to arrange victory for his relative with the help of Congress party.73 He was duly expelled from the National Conference.74 In the next year Shaikh took yet another step to end any possibility of dissent against his authority in the Legislature. On 29 September, 1979, an act [anti-Defection Act] was passed in the Assembly which decreed that any member who resigned his party whip or abstained from voting according to his party whip would automatically lose his seat in the Assembly.75 This act was seen as a measure leading towards the permanent establishment of a one-party regime in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.76

As Abdullah grew stronger and tried to centralize hold on decision making, regional tensions came to the surface. In Jammu, the police firing on student demonstrations against irregularities in the recruitment of teachers in Poonch on 2 December 1978 triggered a mass regional agitation. This agitation led by All-Party Jammu Action Committee, formed by major

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72 India Today Troubled Winds in the Valley, November 15, 1980.
74 Afzal Beg afterwards declared that he would setup his own party, the Inqillabi National Conference; but this never got off the ground(it had been wound up by the end of 1981) and Beg’s political career faded away.
75 Alistair Lamb, op. cit., p. 316.
76 Ibid.
political parties (and probably inspired by the Awami Action Committee formed in 60's against the theft of Holy Relic which was later used to mobilize public opinion in favour of plebiscite) enlarged its scope and begin to demand regional autonomy. On 26 December 1978, the Committee adopted a unanimous resolution demanding, statutory, political, and democratic set-ups at the regional, district, block and Panchayat level.\textsuperscript{77} Karan Singh who was still dreaming of carving a political base for himself, threatened that if the Jammu regional problems were not tackled, it would lead to "separation of Jammu region from the Kashmir Valley".\textsuperscript{78} Shaikh was furious, and he retorted, "If the majority of the people in the Jammu region believe that they can progress by carving out a separate state of Jammu, then there is nothing to stop them and we must part as friends".\textsuperscript{79} In the same manner when in 1981 an agitation was launched in Ladakh by the All Party Action Committee for regional autonomy, Shaikh Abdullah said that he would not stand in the way if Ladakh decided not to stay on with the state.\textsuperscript{80} It was reminiscent of a Kashmiri nationalist rather than a chief minister of the State. He even impressed in 1947-48 that non-kashmiri Muslim areas be allowed to remain with Pakistan because they were opposed to the National Conference.

The disturbances in Jammu and Ladakh alarmed Abdullah and he resorted, as had Sadiq a decade earlier, to establish a commission, headed by

\textsuperscript{77} For a detailed description on the agitation and its repercussions, see Balraj Puri, \textit{Simmering Volcano: Study of Jammu's Relations with Kashmir}, New Delhi, 1983, pages, 39, 70 and 89.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{The Statesman}, December 11, 1978.
\textsuperscript{80} R. N. Koul, \textit{Sheikh Abdullah: A Political Phoenix}, p. 107. See also Sharidhar Koul and H. N. Koul, \textit{Ladakh Through Ages: Towards a New Identity}, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 273-292. A parallel Kargil Action Committee constituted by the National Conference raised a different slogan 'provincial status for the two districts of Leh and Kargil'. It was used as the counter weight by the State.
a retired Chief Justice, S. M. Sikri, to suggest measures for redressing regional imbalances in development allocations, government services and admission in professional institutions. However, it declined to consider any constitutional changes to satisfy the political aspirations of the regions. It must be admitted that the Sikri Commission, when it reported on 25 August 1980, did not advance much beyond the parameters set out by the Gajandharkar Commission: it put its major emphasis on the establishment of a State Development Board chaired by the Chief Minister, that is to say Shaikh Abdullah. The Report met the same fate as that of its predecessor; it was never implemented by the Government. The fall out of the Ladakh agitation was that, first, the central security agencies were used to maintain law and order and secondly, the State Government agreed to some Ladakhis being declared members of “scheduled tribes” which entitled them to special assistance from New Delhi. “All this in one way or another implied an attack on Article 370”.

Around the same period, Shaikh had to face the growing communal and revivalist forces in the State. In the Valley, although banned, the Jammaat-i-Islami was able to attract an impressive following through its network of Darasghas. When the organization organized a Seerat Conference in the Valley, which was attended, among others, by the Imam of Kaba, the Indian press raised a storm dubbing Shaikh Abdullah as promoter of communalism. It is no wonder then when Shaikh Abdullah banned a massive convention planned by Jammiyat-i-Tulba, a youth wing of Jammaat-i-Islami, and promulgated Criminal Law (amendment) Ordinance on 23 August 1980 to curb the activities of Jammat and other youth

82 Alastair Lamb, op. cit., p. 318.
84 See the reporting of the Indian Express of 22 and 23 July 1980.
organizations like People's League, the same press hailed him in no ambiguous terms: "Shaikh Abdullah's government has taken lead in combating the current ill winds of communalism by an Ordinance that provides for more stringent punishment ...."\(^85\) In Jammu, the communal tendencies received a new booster with the arrival of Indra Gandhi on April 5, 1981 who had returned to power in the previous year. In order to win people to her side, she expressed her sympathy with the Hindus of Jammu who were facing, according to her, the problem of 'insecurity' in a Muslim-majority state\(^86\). Shaikh was, however, quick to remind her that "the war among parties should not harm our national interests". He was surprised that the Prime Minister of the country was making such a charge and thus predicted that "people outside the State will take it seriously".\(^87\)

With the return of Mr. Indra Gandhi to power in the 1980 General Elections an increased pressure from New Delhi over Shaikh started building up inspite of the fact that Abdullah had openly supported Mr. Gandhi against the Janta Party in the elections. The Congress party in the State launched a campaign maligning Abdullah's government for corruption and price hike.\(^88\) Abdullah responded by again raising the issue of accession—an instrument which he had used quit often to re-establishing his political credentials. In an address on 13 July 1980, he declared that "no one would be able to enslave us again, whether it is India or Pakistan".\(^89\) One result of this confrontation was that Indra Gandhi appointed her own kinsman B K Nehru as the next Governor of the State. According to Lamb, "he would surely be more loyal to what she considered the essential interests to India then L K Jha proved to be."\(^90\) In the same way when in April 1981, the Central Income

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\(^87\) Ibid.
\(^88\) Ajit Bhattacharjia, op. cit., p. 238.
\(^89\) *Indian Express*, July 16, 1980.
\(^90\) Lamb, op. cit., p. 319.
tax agency raided the big business class in the valley, Abdullah considered the act as an encroachment to the State's autonomy and thus, he retorted the Central government with the remarks: "The Kashmir individual character shell not be permitted to be altered. Recent income tax raid on businessmen in Kashmir was motivated by political expediencies." The raids intensified the center-state conflict. "The victim was myself", Shaikh told India Today, describing the people raided as just the instruments.

During the same time, Abdullah was asked to grant State Subjects to a few lakhs of Hindu refugees, who had come from West Punjab to Kashmir. That would obviously upset the ratio of Muslim population in the State. Abdullah was therefore reluctant to do that. When pressed hard, he reacted sharply and introduced a bill by name, "the Jammu and Kashmir Grant of Permit for Resettlement in or Permanent Return to the State", shortly abbreviated as Resettlement Bill in Assembly. Summit Ganguly, comments that the "Bill could best be described as a populist measure". He further says that its main motive was to "silencing those critics who had chastised him [Abdullah] for Kashmir's full accession to India". The proposed legislation gave any Kashmiri who was a State Subject before 14 May 1954, or a descendent(wife or widow) of the subject, the right to return kashmiri provided the person swore allegiance to the Constitution of India and the Constitution of the State. On the face of it, this seemed consistent enough with India's non-recognition of Pak-controlled-Kashmir as a separate entity. But the surcharged atmosphere and suspicious climate in which the Bill was passed by the Assembly caused a storm of protest both within and outside the state. The Bill aroused fears in New Delhi of

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91 The Aftab, May 1, 1981.
94 Summit Ganguly, op. cit., p.78.
Pakistani agents and sympathizers being able to freely cross the border and settle down in Kashmir. It also provoked reactions in Jammu, where Hindu and Sikh refugees who had settled on property that had once belonged to Muslims felt threatened. There were also fears that Jammu may regain its Muslim majority.\textsuperscript{96} Abdullah insisted, however, that proper procedures for vetting individual applicants would be established. Eventually, the State Assembly passed the Bill in 1982. In September 1982 the Governor B K Nehru, returned the Bill to Legislature for reconsideration under the plea that the Bill “makes it possible for spies, saboteurs, and foreign agents to come and settle in the state as a matter of legal right.”\textsuperscript{97} The Bill’s initial passage was one of the Shaikh’s final acts in office.\textsuperscript{98} Alistair Lamb observes that “[I]n its way it was as near to a formal declaration of a virtual independence of the State of Jammu and Kashmir as Shaikh Abdullah ever got since Maharaja Hari Singh let him out of prison in late September 1977.”\textsuperscript{99}

Thus Shaikh Abdullah spent last years of his long political career in, unsuccessfully, persuading New Delhi to make any meaningful gestures towards restoring Kashmir’s autonomy. He also failed in creating a secular social democratic set up in the state. In fact, in the beginning of 1980’s, the communal and regional divide in the State was more visible then ever. Nor was Shaikh Abdullah able to solve the issue of the future affiliation of the State in any satisfactory manner. Even after concluding the 1975 Accord with Indra Gandhi, he was not successful in mobilizing the people around it. It was opposed by both, Hindu as well as Muslim in the state. In the end,

\textsuperscript{96} Bhattacharjea, op. cit., p. 243.
\textsuperscript{97} Cited in M N Ghatate, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{98} This Act never became law because the president of India, whose assent the constitution of India required, referred the matter to India’s Supreme Court, which “respectfully returned” it, unanswered, to the President in November 2001. the act now stands challenged before the Supreme Court, which had stayed its implementation.
\textsuperscript{99} Lamb, op. cit., p. 320.
sensing the mood of the people, Abdullah himself declared, more than once, that he was not bound to the Accord since it was only a political understanding with the Congress headed by Indra Gandhi. Notwithstanding his catchy gestures, by the end of the decade, Abdullah’s popularity had relegated considerably. He was not popular in Jammu or in Ladakh and the Islamic groups, which had opposed the Accord, were gaining support in the Valley.

By the late 1970’s the Lion of Kashmir was in the twilight of his life and as Sumantra Bose observed that “fundamentally he was a defeated man”. Intensions of Abdullah gradually became known that he wanted to groom his son and install him in his place. Afzal Beg who was next to Abdullah sensed this. Fissiparous tendencies in NC therefore started which led to Beg’s exit from the National Conference. In 1981 when Abdullah sensed that his health had started deteriorating, he lost no time to push up his son to the president of the ruling party to ensure that succession remains within family. On 23 March 1981 at a prayer gathering of Muslims at Hazratbal he declared, “I appoint Dr. Farooq Abdullah as my successor”, in keeping with the subcontinent’s destructive tradition of combining democratic and dynastic politics. On 21 August, he pinned the badge of president of the ruling National Conference on the Farooq Abdullah’s chest. After some time he also made him a Cabinet Minister. By creating family rule Shaikh’s split nature came to the surface. He tirelessly fought the dynastic rule of Maharaja for two decades but sought to create his own dynasty by appointing Farooq Abdullah as the president of National Conference. The organization is still in the hands of Shaikh Family.

100 Victoria Schofield, op. cit., p. 221.
101 Sumantra Bose, op. cit., p. 90.
On 8 September, 1982 the 'lion of Kashmir' died. But two years before his death, Shaikh would courageously accept the failure of his mission - to carve out an honorable place for his people to live in with dignity in the comity of nations. He lamented at the grave of Yaqub Chak, who died fighting Mughals: "I failed to bring back your period. Perhaps the Creator did not destine me to achieve. He will some day empower any one else to achieve my mission." The Yaqub Chak was a Shia by faith and his grave's custodian at Banderkote Kishtiwad was a pundit when Shaikh, a Hanifite Muslim visited the place broken hearted in 1980. Akhter Murtaza, a state bureaucrat then, who accompanied Abdullah to the place, discovered that the custodian's family lit candles on the grave on every Thursday night.103

After his death even those who had opposed the Shaikh politically praised his conviction. At his funeral all the shades of dissatisfaction and disappointment in him were forgotten. "The grief, as the cortege passed", writes Talveen Singh, who covered the historical event, "burst out like an uncontrollable wave. The salutation – was on everyone's lips. People wept, the chanted dirges and mouthed melancholy slogans...... for that day the man Kashmir remembered was not the Shaikh who had been chief minister for five years but the man who, for nearly thirty years, had symbolized Kashmir's identity."104 Those landless and oppressed people who were given land by Shaikh and who perused him as Batt-i-Bab (bread giver) were orphaned. They avoided taking bread for days together.


CHAPTER XIII

Conclusion

Shaikh Abdullah was, without question, the dominant figure in Kashmir from 1930s until his death in 1982. He was the harbinger of national consciousness and instrumental to introduce political modernization in the state. Those who met Shaikh Abdullah during his political hay-day attest to his enormous charm, considerable presence, and unquestioned charisma and authority - though his political wisdom was always not so evident. By establishing the Muslim Conference Sheikh not only started political life in the state, but his organization also became an important pressure group over the feudal establishment which compelled the state to introduce different socio-economic and administrative reforms. The organization, with Sheikh its moving spirit, championed the civil liberties, freedom of press and platform, spread of modern education and economic emancipation of the downtrodden sections of the society.

*Sheikh Abdullah was deeply religious and staunchly secular.* Even before the conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference, he had demonstrated his secular credentials. In 1939, anxious to avoid any association with communalism, he renamed the party as the National Conference, though it remained overwhelmingly Muslim in membership and symbolism. This was but natural for Dogra state had defined itself and its right to rule solely based on religious affiliation, and, much like its colonial counterpart in British India, categorized its subjects singularly on the basis of their religious affiliations. Undeterred by the state sponsored communalism and non-Muslim subject's (barring exceptions) reactionary role, it was, through Sheikh Abdullah's persistent efforts that the slogans
like 'Hindu-Muslim-Sikh Ithad, Zindabad Zindabad' became the rallying slogans throughout the struggle for freedom. Since Abdullah's secular political discourse was in accordance with Kashmiri mass psyche, which believes in religious syncretism, he was well received by common Kashmiris. It is no wonder then that during 1947, when whole subcontinent was burning in the communal fire, Mahatma Gandhi saw a ray of hope in Kashmir and Muslim majority protected the life and property of non-Muslim minority.

The reason behind Shaikh Abdullah's spontaneous emergence as most popular leader and symbol of Kashmiri nationalism was that he identified himself with popular sentiment and derived his authority from the common masses, as against the traditional elite which identified itself with the feudal state. However, Shaikh Abdullah's discourse of nationalism could not become popular among the non-Kashmiri speaking masses of the state. His Valley-centered slogan of 'Kashmiriat' and demonising of state as 'Dogra Raj' annoyed non-Kashmiri Muslims and Jammu Hindus respectively. It was for these considerations that Nehru accepted a ceasefire with Pakistan in 1948 even when Indian army had an upper hand because there was no support for Shaikh Abdullah in what is now called as Azad Kashmir. Kashmir still continued to be divided. Likewise, Shaikh Abdullah's Quit Kashmir Movement and the subsequent abolition of the Dogra monarchy created a permanent wedge between the Valley and the Jammu based Hindus who identified their interests with the Dogra state.

The early and mid-1940s were a turbulent time in Kashmiri politics. The popularity of both Shaikh Abdullah and his party, the National Conference, was harmed by an increasingly close association with the Congress, which was seen both as an outside force and Hindu-dominated. In spite of this, the rival Muslim Conference was never able to douse down its own internal divisions or to enunciate a policy platform sufficiently
attractive to eclipse other parties. Its areas of strength were in Jammu and Poonch more than in Kashmir Valley. However it is a fact that, although, Abdullah came very close to the Congress during this period, his organization cannot be called as a satellite or another branch of Congress in the state. The New Kashmir Manifesto, and Quit Kashmir Movement – both opposed and criticized by the Congress – are sufficient evidences to prove this point. Sheikh utilized the services and help of organizations and individuals of British India only as long as it strengthened his struggle against feudalism. He ended his relationship with Punjabi organizations in 1930s only to demonstrate his freedom.

From 1944, the National Conference championed a determinedly left-wing social and political programme, including far-reaching land redistribution. With its publicity, by the autumn of 1947, Shaikh Abdullah's party was the predominant political force, certainly among Valley Muslims.

Abdullah was essentially a Kashmiri patriot inspired by the socialist rather communal aspiration who would have preferred independence for his state had it been possible. Despite their mutual dislike, Maharaja also shared with him the desire for independence (though for divergent reasons). But the Poonch uprising (led by the Muslim Conference supporters and provoked by Maharaja's repression) and the Pakistan-sponsored tribal invasion which was more directed against Abdullah than to anyone else, left him with no option other than death or India. Thus he pushed himself to become an important facilitator of Kashmir's accession with India. In the sudden reversal of events he would not see it fit to consult even his party, leave alone the people in whose name he was making bargain. Later it was Indira Gandhi who discovered in 1948, and informed her father that there were only few people who subscribe Abdullah's views on accession. Not surprising then, Abdullah, sensing the popular mood, too began to express his doubts about accession albeit privately. In any case, Abdullah got three
crucial things from Nehru’s India-Prime Ministership of the state, internal autonomy (read Article 370) and a promise for a plebiscite to satisfy public ego.

In the early years of his administration, Abdullah managed to secure a formal end to the Dogra monarchy. Of still greater importance, he implemented land reforms probably more radical then anywhere else in India or in any non-communist state. These reforms broke the economic and political power of Jammu and Kashmir’s (mainly non-Muslims) large landlords. It changed the face of Kashmir countryside and undoubtedly ushered a new era of agrarian history in the state. It also earned Abdullah the lasting loyalty of a previously impoverished peasantry and rural labor force in the Valley. However, the deposed but still influential landlords would never forgive Shaikh and they constituted an important lobby against him in Delhi and also within the state.

Shaikh Abdullah proved to be much more effective as a nationalist leader, and a mobiliser of Kashmiri opinion, than as a politician or statesman. During his tenure as prime minister (1947-1953) of the state, Abdullah’s split behaviour came to the surface, with very detrimental consequences. While he had come to power on a platform of opposition to feudal privilege, his own style of politics was also in large part based on patronage and personal loyalty. He was a populist more than a democrat. It was he, who, in collaboration with Nehru, conducted the first rigged election in the State in 1951. Election was held for only two seats of Constituent Assembly, whereas seventy three out of seventy five members were declared ‘elected’ uncontested. Elections in Kashmir are yet to prove credibility.

In the pursuit of establishing a monolithic-party state, Shaikh made it a point to banish every individual whom he perceived to be opposed to his
views. Scores of intellectuals and leaders were banished and imprisoned for their simple fault of opposing his decision to accede to India. Undemocratic procedures were not only followed in the state-craft, but also within the party. He fought the dynastic rule of Maharaja but sought to create his own dynasty through appointment of his inexperienced son, Farooq Abdullah, as the president of National Conference, overlooking main contenders like Mirza Afzal Beg. National Conference is still under dynastic rule.

The arrest of Shaikh Abdullah in August 1953 at the behest of Pundit Nehru left a scar on the Kashmiri psyche that refuses to heal. He was arrested for taking Nehru at his word and asking him to fulfill the pledges he made publicly and repeatedly to the people of Kashmir. With his arrest Indian State lost trust of Kashmiris which it still struggles to regain. Mir Qasim was Chief Minister of Kashmir (1971-1975) and had supported the dismissal of Shaikh in 1953. He wrote in 1992 about legacy of the incident: “Whenever New Delhi feels a leader in Kashmir is getting too big for his shoes, it employs Machiavellian methods to cut him to size”.1 For years since then India has supported or tolerated the undemocratic governance of the state by a favoured elite that skillfully played on fears that full democracy in the state would lead the people to gravitate towards Pakistan. This tragically unfounded suspicion lies at the root of what went so wrong in the late 1980s.

After 1953, while on the one hand central government followed the policy of making inroads in the state autonomy by eroding Article 370 of the Indian Constitution with the (or without) concurrence of its grafted governments in the state, on the other hand, Shaikh patronized a two decade long movement under the banner of the Plebiscite Front, employing all the techniques of mobilization (including religious language and symbols), as a bargaining ploy to regain his lost position. People again perceived him as a

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1 Mir Qasim, *My Life and Times*; p. 119.
symbol of Kashmiri nationalist aspirations and a defender of their identity. The high profile movement which Abdullah patronized, saw the highest watermark of political mobilization in the state, with Abdullah not only challenging the Indian state’s methods of ruling in Kashmir but also the very basis of state’s relationship with India. This movement highly influenced the mass psyche and created a strong public memory which its creator failed to eradicate in the end. Abdullah taught his followers to accept nothing short of the right to self determination.

Few years after the creation of Bangladesh and the Simla Agreement (between Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto), an aging and prison weary Shaikh Abdullah did a deal with Indira Gandhi in 1975. A life replete with struggle for restoring self respect of people ended in a compromise. Shaikh made a deal without taking his people into confidence. He accepted the finality of accession and the erosion of Kashmir’s autonomy since his dismissal in return to regain the limited powers of Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. His followers felt betrayed for their self-respect was damaged. Some of his veteran comrades, like Munshi Ishaq and Sofi Mohammad Akbar, were disgusted and they retired from the active politics, whereas, some young men out of frustration accepted offers of training in arms in Pakistan-held-Kashmir. The outbreak of militancy in 1990s was thus an attempt to alter the status quo accepted by Shaikh Abdullah. Small wonder, then, that the grave of Shaikh became a prime target of attack in the beginning of 1990s. Located beside the great Dargah so painstakingly built at Hazratbal on the shores of the Dal Lake outside Srinagar, the grave is still placed under heavy police security to protect the Sheik’s remains from the very people he had so loved and sought to serve, and whom he raised from ‘dump driven cattle’ (which they were called before 1930s) to the center of world’s attention.