

## Political Awakening and the Religious Fissures in Kashmir Prior to 1947

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### Abstract

Kashmir under Dogra's has seen exploitation and oppression of worst kind. The people particularly Muslim met worst kind of treatment from the state. The oppression had forced him into nature docile and subservient, possessed by the desire to fulfill his daily needs. The start of socio-economic organization helped to develop a collective thinking within the Kashmiri community. However, it was challenged by the fissures that developed between the Muslims and Hindus and among the Muslims. The paper tries to understand how people mobilized against the repressive Dogra regime.

**Keywords:** Religious communities in Kashmir; Yuvuk sabha; National conference; Muslim conference; Sheik Abdullah; Dogra regime; Kashmiriyat

### Introduction

Throughout history, the outsiders have ruled Kashmir. Prior to Mughals, the rulers maintained its independence status. With Kashmir's incorporation into Mughal Empire, the independent status of Kashmir was lost. The takeover by Mughals marks the beginning of alienation and suppression of Kashmiris. The various regimes that followed Mughals like Afghans and Sikhs continued the apparatus of exploitation and discrimination. Under Dogra's the repression became more severe and a common Kashmiri became helpless and hopelessness<sup>1</sup>. Such was the nature of repression that he was reduced to a mere entity. The nature of repression had turned him into a docile and subservient. Under these conditions, what led to the political awakening of the people of Kashmir is the focus of this paper. The paper further tries to answer the question of how such a population was able to mobilize itself against the repressive Dogra regime. What organization was active in this mobilization? What role religion played in the political awakening of Kashmiris?

Political awakening leads to the awareness among the populace about their rights and the nature of relationship that exist between them and the institutions they live in. In a scenario where the relationship is oppressive and discriminatory, political awakening leads to movements for change of the structure. Political awakening in the aftermath of the technological revolution threatens the global structures maintained by the world powers. The awareness among the people about the importance of issues like environment, health, social inequality and starvation has challenged the world powers [1]. However, in this work we are concerned with the political awakening

in Kashmir prior to the technological revolution. The awareness among the people of British Indian Empire led to the collective demand for establishment of representative government. At the same time, the political awareness resulted in end of colonial order that had dominated the world politics for centuries.

### The Oppressive Machinery

The state of J&K<sup>2</sup> as known at present came into existence as an outcome of the sale deed between East India Company and Gulab Singh the Raja of Jammu on 16 March 1846 in what is popularly known as Treaty of Amritsar. Under the terms and conditions of the Treaty, the ruler of the state was left with greater autonomy when compared with other princely ruling states. Through Treaty of Amritsar, Gulab Singh acquired an area of 84,471 sq. miles along with its inhabitants. The treaty of Amritsar consisting of ten Articles made no mention, whatsoever, of the rights, interests of the people of the state. It was the rule of one man in who were vested all powers: legislative, judicial and executive and who, in order to stabilize his position, inflicted exemplary punishments on his subjects. Through the treaty, the men on the mission of civilizing the 'uncivilized' sold two and a half million people for nothing but their vested interests, without any concern for the rights of the later.

Gulab Singh, a Hindu by religion, sought the cooperation of his co-religious people in ruling the state, sidelining the Muslim majority of the Kashmir from the framework of authority [2]. The onus of administering the Kashmir was left in the hands of Kashmiri Pundits who made the best use of the powers to serve their personal interest. The Pundits were preferred not only for being Hindus but also for being the literate class in Kashmir. They occupied all important posts of the state administration and considered it as their natural abode. A Kashmiri pundit would find it hard to consider any other option, apart

<sup>1</sup> Robert Thorpe gives the details of the nature of oppression maintained by the Dogra regime. The prime victim of this oppression was the Muslims of Kashmir. He notes that a Kashmiri Muslim was taxed by the state in every field be it his life or product of his labor. He recalls the apathy of a worker in shalabaf industry; only death could act his savior against the exploitation of state. For details, see Robert Thorpe (2012) Kashmir Misgovernment. Srinagar: Gulshan Books.

<sup>2</sup> By J&K, we mean the princely state of J&K as it existed before the independence of India and Pakistan, comprising of Indian administered Kashmir, Pakistan administered Kashmir, Gilgit and Baltistan.

from the state apparatus, as his carrier objective. In the later phase when the court language was changed from Persian to Urdu, the Hindus from adjoining states, more generally performed the job. The brunt of the tyranny and oppression had to be bear by the peasantry class who were mostly Muslims.

In this endeavor of exploitation and oppression, Dogra's found support from the British Indian government. The only thing they expected from the newly elevated Maharaja was his loyalty to the crown. The Maharaja remained loyal towards British and proved it, whenever the circumstances demanded it. Recognizing his loyalty, the Maharaja was allowed to adopt an heir from a collateral branch of family<sup>3</sup>. It was only towards the mid 1920's that the British under severe criticism were compelled to exert pressure upon the Dogra regime for reducing the intensity of oppression and for introduction of some representative mechanism in the state.

Under the Dogra regime, the condition of peasantry, majorly Muslims, was miserable. Depicting their misery Bazaz describes his condition as of "a starving beggar" who lacked the basic amenities of life like clothes, food [3]. The Dogra rulers followed the policy of making army and administration an exclusive domain of Dogra's in particular and non-Muslims in general. The British consented to the policy of Dogra's. For example, when a Council of Regency was formed for the administration of the state no Muslim was included into it [4]. The deliberate exclusion of Muslims of Kashmir valley from the military services of the state made them cowards and fearful. Biscoe described this exclusion as a way of robbing of their "manhood"<sup>4</sup>. This imposed cowardice turned a Kashmiri into what some scholars have termed as docile and subservient in character and behavior<sup>5</sup>.

In every aspect of life, there was discrimination against the Muslim majority and the application of legislation expressly designed to favor Hindus. Religion formed the base of governing the state. Hindus were seen as closer to the Dogra regime and important for administering the state. Until 1934, for example, the slaughter of cow was a capital offense and it continued to be forbidden under a lesser penalty after that date. Overt political activity and mobilization through public meetings were prohibited in J&K until 1932. Only those organizations were allowed who's purpose was economic or religious but with a condition not to carry any anti-state activity. For example, when a group of people decided to form a Zamindari Conference the governor of Kashmir was reprimanded for not taking steps to prevent even the eventuality of such a conference.

## Towards Collectiveness

The system of repression and exploitation maintained by the Dogra regime had turned the people into individualists. They had least concern for the collective political needs of the society. The Pundits were content with their status within the state apparatus. The concerns a Muslim Kashmiri, which had least representation in the state institutions, would be more individualistic. His actions would be guided by his need to satisfy the daily needs of his family in which

priority would be to manage two times food for them. The initiations towards thinking on collective lines were done by the introduction of socio-economic organizations. The socio-economic organizations were instrumental in leading to the political awakening of the people. They helped in realizing the importance of collectiveness, which helped in coming together of the people. These movements became the prelude to the movement against the Dogra rule [5].

One of the earliest socio-economic organizations active in Kashmir was Arya Samaj. In Kashmir, the organization was started by the Hindus who had come from adjoining states. Although its support base was confined to Jammu, it made the impact felt in the quite different domain. Its open criticism of other religious traditions such as Islam brought them increasingly into a confrontation with the Muslims of the Valley. The activities of Arya Samaj gave a push for Muslim unity who viewed it as a Hindu Nationalist organization. When Kashmiri Muslims started to think of having an organization on the lines of Arya Samaj, the Pundit community, although a small but most prominent Kashmiri community, felt insecure. The Pundit community found itself in a strange situation. On the one hand, was the threat from their co-religious Punjabis who had replaced them in the state services after the change of court language? On the other side, was the beginning of the mobilization among the Muslim subjects of the state for their rights and share in the services? To preserve their 'legitimate' rights from the alleged Muslim fanaticism as well as for securing their space within the services, they formed Yuvuk Sabha in 1915. It was presented as a secular organization aimed at social upliftment of the Kashmiri Hindus in comparison to the organizations formed by Kashmiri Muslims. Regardless of these claims, it was aimed at preserving the privileged status of Kashmiri pundit community in the state.

The Yuvuk Sabha challenged the maharaja in many ways and provided an example to the Muslim community of the effectiveness of techniques of communal organization. Although, these organizations were social in nature but they were also engaged in covert political activities, a fact known to the state. An organization that eventually brought forth the wrath of the Dogra rulers for its attempts at merging the religiously demarcated spheres for public action and more so in an effort at mobilizing for what were unmistakably political goals was the Dogra Sabha. The Dogra Sabha was formed by the conservative Hindu's in 1903, in order to bring before the maharaja the legitimate grievances of his "Hereditary State Subjects" and redefine it.

## The Religious Fissures

The success of Hindu religious organizations in making their voices heard in the Darbar prompted prominent Muslims in Kashmir to establish an organization that could work for the betterment of Muslims. The beginning in this respect was made in 1905 when Maulvi Rasool Shah (Mirvaiz-Jama Masjid) founded Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam directed towards the betterment of Muslim education. The Muslims believed that their backwardness was due to lack of education and as a result pressed upon the Maharaja for wider facilities in education. However, soon their emerged conflict between the various

<sup>3</sup> It must be noted that under principle of Doctrine of Lapse a ruler was not allowed to adopt a heir. In case a ruler dies childless, the right of ruling over the state would go back or lapsed to the sovereign. However, Dogra's were made exception to this rule. For details, see Victoria Schofield (2003) op. cit. p. 9. Also, see Lakshmi Iyer (2010) Direct versus indirect Colonial Rule in India: Long-Term Consequences. The Review of Economics and Statistics, 92 (4), p. 693.

<sup>4</sup> Tyndal Biscoe as quoted in Sumantra Bose. (2003). Kashmir: Roots of Conflict Paths to Peace. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Writers like Walter Lawrence have characterize a Kashmiri as deceitful, coward but at same time a clever individual who would make use of all tricks and methods to get his work done.

factions of Muslims. The association found itself in dispute with the Ahmadiyya Community who in turn were supported by the Hamdani faction of Kashmir Muslims. It deferred emergence of a unified movement against Maharaja in Kashmir and would become a continuous cause for the division within the Kashmiri Muslims [6].

The Muslim of Kashmir was divided along their loyalties towards the two Mirwaizes prominent in Srinagar; the Mirwaiz of Jama masjid (Wahabis) or the Mirwaiz of Khanqah-i-maulla (Sufi). The Dogra regime made use of this divide in keeping its grip tight over the control of Kashmir. The maharaja provided his patronage to the faction led by Mirwaiz Yousuf Shah. The schools established by the Anjuman-i-nusratul Islam received grants from the maharaja. The state lends its helping hand to the organization for its efforts to act as guardian of the Muslim poor. According to Mirdu Rai, the association provided a legitimized arena for the maharaja to build his own claims to the leadership of Kashmiri Muslim. The cleavage led the increased intervention of Dogra maharaja. It also prevented the emergence of any unified leadership capable of mobilizing Kashmiri Muslim that might have challenged the maharaja of the state.

Meanwhile, in 1924 workers of state silk factory protested for an increase in their pay, which was meager as four and half-annas per day. The protest was suppressed with full force by the maharaja's forces. It brought the condition of ordinary people in J&K state to the attention of British government of India. When Lord Reading visited Kashmir in October 1924, he was presented with a Memorandum signed by many prominent Kashmiri Muslims including Mirwaiz-i-Kashmir, which outlined the grievances of Kashmiri Muslim. The grievances of the people and the gap that existed between the state machinery and the people are noted by Albion Banerji in following words.

*"There is no touch between the government and the person, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances and the administrative machinery itself requires overhauling from top to bottom it up to the modern conditions of efficiency. It has at present no sympathy with the people's wants and grievances"*

Such was his disquiet that he resigned from the post of Senior Member (a post that would later be named as Prime Minister) of the Council of the State. The recognition by the British government of the legitimate grievances and sufferings of a Kashmiri made them press upon the maharaja to take immediate steps for their redressal.

The involvement of British government in ameliorating the position of a common Kashmiri made the Pundits of Kashmir insecure. Kashmiri Muslims and Pundits were not on the same side in their struggles for the rights. Pundits had no problem with any regime so far their position in the state was secured. The roots of insecurity among Kashmiri Pundits can be traced back to 1889 when the state council changed the court language from Persian to Urdu and framed the rules for holding competitive examinations for appointment to government services. The cumulative effect of these measures was that the Kashmiri Pundits were increasingly put out of running for the most prestigious ranks of administration. An increasing number of Punjabis at higher echelons of administration threatened the interest of Pundits. This devoid them of their monopoly in administration they have enjoyed until now. According to Mridu Rai what pinched them most was that "it was with a Hindu ruler in power that the tantalizing prize of high office was slipping out of their grasp". Concerned with their being marginalized in government employment they established the Pratap

Singh Hindu College in 1906, later known as Sri Pratap College. The name of the college itself depicts their interest to impress upon the maharaja for their re-entry in services of the state. The urgency felt to restore their position in government department bound them clearly together in politically critical ways for the future.

For their solidarity, stimulus was provided by the threat posed to their leverage within Kashmir by the Punjabi Hindu community. In this fight against the dominance of Punjabi's, Kashmiri Pundit community had strategically broken new ground for mobilization by speaking not just for themselves but also for Kashmiris more generally and for state subjects. The popular agitation carried by Kashmiris led by Pundits with the motto of 'state for state's people' forced the maharaja to implement the State Subjects law. The Law provided that the Mulkis (indigenous people) would be preferred to outsiders in cases of employment in government services [4].

Although, the law ameliorated the position of Pundit community against the presence of Punjabis it also prepared a new rival i.e. Kashmiri Muslim. The regional solidarity they had waxed so eloquently on only recently began to sour a little. The indifference of Muslims to the regional cohesion propagated by the Pundits was due to former's preference for education over active participation in politics [3]. The Muslim leadership understood that the lack of Muslim representation in the state administration was due to backwardness in education. It was also made a point that the Hindu officers and teachers perpetuated such discrimination. Demands for inputs into the education of Muslims became prominent among the Muslims organizations. Such demands also found support from outside the state. The mobilization of Kashmiri Muslims for their rights was dubbed by Pundits as 'communal'. Earlier a movement of same nature by Pundits was more generally seen as a national struggle. The tendency of Pundits to equate their interests with that of all Kashmir and at the same time to present it as a regional or national struggle stood out starkly<sup>6</sup>.

### The Demand for Political Representation

While the gulf between the Muslims and Pundits was growing, a small group of newly educated Muslims formed Reading Room Party with the objective of securing the rights of Kashmiri people. In the beginning, it carried its work of mobilizing the people against Dogra rule through pamphlets. Later on, it started making public speeches at religious places like Khankah-i-Maullah and Sheikh Abdullah emerged as one of its strongest speakers. Faced with the durbars refusal of reserving jobs for Muslims, they took extensive propaganda campaign against the durbar and against the Kashmiri Pundits who had taken once again to active protest. The Pundits were concerned with the renewed threat of unemployment for their members but this time from Kashmiri Muslims. If there was even a small doubt among Pundit about the regional interest, that was cleared with the attack by a group of Muslims on Hindus in Srinagar on 13 July 1931.

On 25 June 1931 Abdul Qadir,<sup>7</sup> a non-Kashmiri, made a particularly vehement speech advocating violence against the maharaja for which he was promptly arrested. He was put on trial at the sessions Court Srinagar on 6 July. But so great was the assembly of Muslims outside the court that the proceeding had to be moved to the Srinagar Central Prison. The people kept on insisting to have a glimpse of their hero, but were denied by the authorities. On 13 July when the trial was going to

<sup>6</sup> For details on the contradictions about regional identity between Pundits and Muslims see Mridu Rai. op. cit. P.257.

be conducted, the crowd tried to enter the jail to free their hero. In retaliation, the police fired into the gathering, kill 31 people. In the aftermath of this massacre, the Muslim crowds attacked non-Muslim holdings in Srinagar.

The events of 31 July led to the arrival of new actors on the political stage of Kashmir, each seeking to capitalize on the momentum of Muslim discontent unleashed through these incidents. The prominent among them was Sheikh Abdullah and Ghulam Abbas representing a younger generation of Muslim politicians. These two will take center stage in the movement against the Maharaja.

The Punjab press further raised the consciousness of Kashmiri Muslim towards their rights, by carrying news and editorials related to the situation in Kashmir. Diverse Muslim groups from Punjab, in turn, reacted to and sought to influence developments within Jammu and Kashmir. This concern was partly institutionalized in the formation of the All India Muslim Kashmir Conference in 1911 in Lahore. This organization was dominated by Ahmadiyya's. The other Punjabi Muslim organization, which became active in Kashmiri politics, was the Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam. It was composed of anti-British urban Muslim and reformist members of the Ulama with links to the Indian National Congress. These organizations played a vital role in highlighting the situation in Kashmir under the Dogra rule and thus bringing it to the notice of British government.

The protest and the aftermath of these protests compelled the Maharaja to appoint a commission under the chairmanship of B.J. Glancy, which was asked to look into the grievances of the state subjects and to make such recommendations as it deemed necessary. Its other members included Bazaz, Ashai and Ghulam Abbas<sup>8</sup>. The recommendations broadly included avoidance of religious discrimination and an openness in state employment with special emphasis on the education of Muslims.

Under the recommendation of the Glancy commission, the Maharaja through Regulation No. 1 of 1934 provided for the establishment of the legislative assembly for the state called the Praja Sabha. It was to consist of 75 members, 63 of whom were non-officials and 12 were officials. The seats to be elected were based on the principle of communal representation. Thirty members were to be nominated by the maharaja and 33 were to be elected. Out of 33 seats to be elected, 21 were reserved for Muslims, 10 for Hindus and 2 for Sikhs. Most of the poor subjects, who were generally Muslims, were excluded from the voting due to the condition attached with voting right. Only that person was allowed to vote who was paying Rs. 20/year as Land revenue. The Praja Sabha was only a recommendatory body. The use of communal constituencies and a highly restricted electorate made it far from the representative government. However, it provided the platform for political activity to the members of newly formed Muslim Conference.

The Muslims of Kashmir established All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932 in order to articulate their grievances. The organization saw Hindus of Kashmir valley as accomplice to the state in the discrimination that were guided against the Muslims of the valley. The anti-Hindu stance of Sheikh Abdullah and Muslim Conference took a U-turn in mid-1930 with the establishment of Praja Sabha. As majority in Praja Sabha was retained by official and nominated members, Sheikh Abdullah and the Muslim Conference tone down some anti-Hindu oratory. The idea of secularism, imported from Indian National Congress and demand for rights became the dominant language. The Muslim Conference sought the incorporation of those Pundits who would see Muslim as being discriminated in the past. Under the changed strategy, Abdullah would seek guidance from Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress leader. However, Abdullah could not do away with the use of religion in advocating these ideas. Religion will figure continually in his addresses aimed mobilizing the people.

In the meantime, there developed differences between the Mirwaiz Mohd. Yusuf Shah and Sheikh Abdullah<sup>9</sup>. The reason being Abdullah's sympathetic attitude towards the Ahmadiyya community whom the Mirwaiz considered heretical. The difference with the Mirwaiz and the need to garner the support of Pundits for making the Praja Sabha meaningful compelled Sheikh to move towards a more inclusive approach in the nascent Kashmiri freedom movement. In this direction, the name of Muslim Conference (MC) was changed to National Conference (NC). The change in name helped Nehru to sell NC as a representative of the people of Kashmir within the Indian National Congress. Sheikh Abdullah looked at Nehru for guidance in carrying the struggle forward. Determined to structure the party like INC, Abdullah appealed to the Muslims that it was a fight of the oppressed against an oppressor. Even after that, Sheikh Abdullah appealed to the Muslim identity of a Kashmiri in achieving the goal of establishing a responsible government. The people of Kashmir, generally illiterate, understood it as a way to end the Maharaja's rule and to regain self-ownership of which they were devoid for almost four centuries. This change in Abdullah's political outlook hardly impressed the Pundit community. They rather trusted their co-religious people in securing their rights and privileges.

There were members within Muslim Conference who were skeptical about the change in the name of the party. To allay their fears an understanding was reached among the leaders. It was agreed that the movement would steer clear of both the Congress and the All-India Muslim League<sup>10</sup>. Contrary to the agreement the closeness deepened between INC and NC, as a result, some of the leaders like Ghulam Abbas and Mirwaiz Yousuf Shah revived the old Muslim Conference. The reason for revival included disenchantment with party's secularism; the liaison between Sheikh and Nehru, National Conference and Indian National Congress; and personal and regional rivalry between Sheikh Abdullah and Ghulam Abbas [6]. The beliefs of these leaders in the hollowness of Sheikh's adherence to secularism

<sup>7</sup> His identity still remains mystery and is believed to have entered Kashmir as a cook of a European. In a meeting while delivering a speech, Qadir openly advocated revolt against the Maharaja. The people listened silently and were surprised, since none has dared to speak openly and publicly against the Maharaja. He appealed the people to fight against the Maharaja's rule, which he defined as unjust, cruel and oppressive. This speech will end up in his arrest and will become the cause of first major political revolt against the Maharaja.

<sup>8</sup> What the membership of Commission informs us is that the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir were divided religiously and regionally. Ghulam Ahmad Ashai a Kashmiri Muslim, Bazaz a Kashmiri Hindu and Ghulam Abbas a Muslim from Jammu. And also the other important community that is Hindu Dogra's was content with the present order.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed study of these differences, see Mridu Rai (2004). op. cit. pp. 265-275.

<sup>10</sup> See Sumatra Bose (2003). op. cit. p. 21.

were strengthened with his almost silence on the massacre of Muslims in east Jammu at the time of India's independence.

The majority of the Pundits was not ready to give up their privileged position and thus appealed to the Hindu's of British India for securing them. The Pundits supporting the Hindu Yuvak Sabha continued to oppose the legitimate aspirations of the Muslims. It was the consequence of this discourse that a collective consciousness around the political entity of Kashmir was created. This collective identity was termed as 'Kashmiriyat'. A concept, which saw its emergence in mid-1930's to represent the composite culture of Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir. The tendency of the political parties to present the culture of Kashmir as harmonious and syncretic, Chitrlekha Zutshi in her work *Languages of Belonging*, sees in it a conscious conspiracy to denigrate and demonize religious affiliations. As she notes in her book "The discourse on regional identities in the early twentieth century specifically denigrated religious affiliations in favor of an all-encompassing regional nationalism" [7]. The votaries of Kashmiriyat who view Lal Ded and Nund Reshi as its pioneers forget to make reference to the times they preached these values. They existed at a time when religiously Kashmiri society was showing the signs of transformation from one based in Hinduism to Islamic. They represented a tradition that shows contextualizing of change rather than a transcendental movement of tolerance and porous boundaries<sup>11</sup>.

NC's close relationship with INC relegated a secondary status to the goal of establishing a representative government and seeking citizenship rights for the people of Kashmir. NC's close association with INC brought ambiguity in the goals and vision of the movement. Also, it brought differences within the party members which resulted in the withdrawal of many prominent members like Bazaz from the party. According to Zutshi "The population of the organization [NC] dwindled as it moved away from its emphasis on forging a just society based on the Islamic ideals familiar to the population and began to focus instead on the undefined ideas of nationalism and secularism that specifically disparaged religious affiliations". It became a common practice among the members of National Conference to use Kashmiriyat as an antonym to communalism. Any opposition to NC or Sheikh was designated as communal and on the other hand, support to NC would signify adherence to Kashmiriyat. Sheikh Abdullah led NC epitomized the ideal of secularism and any opposition to it was deemed anti-national. This practice was just a copy of what was going in the Indian Sub-continent. In order to maintain this discourse of binaries NC through its members propagated the idea of Kashmiriyat as the popular voice of the people. Zutshi has termed it as a "myth", simply invented and popularized by the organization itself in the face of increasing opposition from various sectors of the population of J&K in the 1940's. Sheikh Abdullah's efforts in this endeavor were supplemented by the Leaders of Indian National Congress, especially by Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. He never refrained from claiming the NC as the most popular organization of Kashmir representing the aspiration of Kashmiris. Nehru and the other Congress leaders would not hesitate to take tour of Kashmir in order to strengthen Sheikh's base in Kashmir. Even the leaders of Muslim League will follow this practice and would lend support to the Ghulam Abbas led Muslim Conference. As early as in the beginning of 1940's the two contending heirs of British Indian Empire were involved in Kashmir politics to nurture a force that is supportive of their respective political aspirations.

National Conference was in particular reciprocating the strategy and ideals of Indian National Congress. Religious affiliations were denigrated in such a way as to present them as cases of communalism. Secularism was used selectively to ostracize any opposition. This in no way means defense of religious antagonism that was prevalent in the Sub-continent. But not all religious affiliations were communal. Contrary to their claims of being inclusionary and accommodative, according to Ayesha Jalal "Indian nationalism represented by the INC excluded those seeking to accommodate religious differences within the broad framework of Indian nationalism" [8]. This stood equally applicable in case of National Conference, who would frequently use this strategy to denigrate any opposition.

Towards the end of the decade, a new constitution was introduced in order to pacify the protesting Conference. The number of elected seats in the legislative assembly was increased to forty to give the elected members a theoretical majority. In 1944, maharaja seeking to broaden the base of his popular support appointed Mirza Afzal Beg, the deputy leader of the National Conference and Wazir Ganga Ram as the ministers in his government. It was, however, to be a short-lived experiment. Beg resigned and Sheikh Abdullah launched the "Quit Kashmir" movement with an objective of ending the Dogra rule. The maharaja responded by arresting Sheikh Abdullah which in turn generated public protest. The response again came in the form of repression and killings. The state was placed under martial law. The repression strengthens the resolve of people to overthrow the Dogra regime.

National Conference in its Quit Kashmir movement, to a certain extent, was supported by the Muslim Conference. Officially, Muslim Conference adopted a stance of neutrality to the movement as they saw it as a political ploy on the part of Sheikh Abdullah's faction in alliance with the Indian National Congress. However, many of the Muslim Conferences members did participate energetically in the movement. A fact proved by Prime Ministers Kak's attempt to persuade the Mirwaiz against the movement by calling it as a bit of trouble making by Sheikh Abdullah [9]. Several MC leaders including its leader Ghulam Abbas, were arrested.

The closeness between Sheikh and Nehru was growing deeper since they first time met in 1938. Nehru along with Khan Abdul Gafar Khan toured Kashmir in 1942 and helped Sheikh to broaden his base. Nehru considered him as the leader representing the aspirations of the people of Kashmir. When Sheikh was arrested for Quit Kashmir movement, Nehru came to Kashmir to plead his case. However, the maharaja's forces detained him near Punjab border. Later with Lord Wavell's intervention, Nehru attended Sheikh's trial. Nehru believed in the popularity of the National Conference whereas Jinnah considered Muslim Conference as the representative of Kashmiri people. When Jinnah visited Kashmir, both NC and MC welcomed him and arranged reception for him. He tried to mend differences between the two parties and advised them to fight together. He even advised Sheikh Abdullah about the nationalism later was fighting for and asked him to take a lesson from formers experience in working with the Hindu leaders. However, his attempts at reconciliation between the two parties could not work out and NC continued its close association with INC.

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed study of the concept of Kashmiriyat, see Ibid. pp. 24-25.

## Conclusion

The political awakening in Kashmir was clearly based on religious lines contrary to the claims of adherents of Kashmiriyat. The ambiguity developed in the movement due to its shift from Islamic ideals with which people were well accustomed. Difference developed among the Muslim leadership over the means of reaching the goal of representative government. Sheikh Abdullah's association with Nehru and former attempts at reproducing the methods of INC in its fight against maharaja would become a contentious cause of friction between the Muslim leadership of Kashmir. The Pundits found it hard to accept the leadership of Kashmiri Muslims in the state who were threatening their privilege within the services of the state. These differences thwarted the possibility of emergence of a unified Kashmiri movement against the Dogra regime.

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