Chapter Two

Incoming Lion of Kashmir: From Muslim Conference to National Conference

The absence of a popular protest until the end of 1920’s against the Dogra State was because of the mighty military power which had, what Tyndale Biscoe says, crushed the "manhood" of Kashmiris. However, by the end of 1920’s the Stage was all set for a revolution. A volcano was simmering in the hearts of Kashmiris. Only a spark was needed to light the fire; a leader was also needed to lead the revolution. And that was provided by two incidents in Jammu and Shaikh Abdullah respectively.

Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah who dominated Kashmiri politics for five decades was born in 1905, at Soura in Srinagar. His father Shaikh Abdullah Mohammad Ibrahim, who was a prosperous trader in shawls, had died fifteen days before Shaikh Abdullah’s birth.1 Shaikh Abdullah’s great grandfather was a Kashmiri pandit named Ragho Ram Koul, who converted to Islam in 1766, under the spiritual guidance of Saint Rashid Balkh.2 Shaikh Abdullah was brought up by his mother, Khairunnissa, and by his elder brother, Shaikh Abdullah Mohammad Maqboolnool, who served as a drawing master in the Amar Singh Technical Institute, Srinagar.3 As per tradition, he was taught Arabic and Quran-i-Sharief in a local maktab. At the age of seven he was admitted in the Islamia Primary School, Nowshera, then in Primary School Vicharnag.4 He did his matriculation from State High School, Fateh Kadal in 1922. By now he had developed interest in studies and wanted to become a doctor.5

He got admission for F.Sc in the S.P. College, Srinagar. Throughout, his stay at college, Shaikh Abdullah worked very hard to become a doctor. He was so obsessed with his aim of becoming a doctor that "[H]e gave no indications of even the least interest in politics ... and remained always indifferent to debates and discussions."6 However, after passing his F.S.C, he failed to get admission in a medical college. Shaikh Abdullah in his memoirs alleges that his application to the State Government for deputation to some medical college, outside the state as a state

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1 Shaikh Abdullah, Aatishi Chinar, Srinagar, 2006, p. 5.
2 Ibid., p. 3.
4 He was discharged from Islamia Primary School with the explanation that the ‘boy lacked discipline.’ F. A. Abba, Profiles of Abdullah, Srinagar, 1980, p. 8.
5 Abdullah, op. cit., p. 11.
6 Abba, op. cit., p. 10.
nominee was rejected and given to a pandit student. He was even not given admission into B.S.C., class in the Prince of Wales College, Jammu.\footnote{Abdullah, op. cit., pp. 15-19.} Shaikh Abdullah as a dejected man was convinced that there was no place for a Muslim student in the local colleges. And as such he went outside Kashmir and “joined the B.S.C., class in the Islamia College Lahore [1924] with the support of some Muslim philanthropists.”\footnote{F.M. Hussanan, op. cit., p. 34.} It was in Lahore that Shaikh Abdullah had his first “political schooling.”\footnote{M.Y. Saraf, Kashmir’s Fight for Freedom, vol. 1, 2005, Lahore, p. 351.} Lahore during those days was a ‘centre of cultural and political activity’- dominated by people like professor Dil Mohammad Alam, Shaikh Abdullah Abdul Qadir and his magazine “Makzan”, Lala Rajpat Rai, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, Sir Mohammad Shafi. However, it was Sir Mohammad Iqbal and his poetry which fascinated Shaikh Abdullah.\footnote{Abdullah, op. cit., pp. 39-40.} Iqbal’s poetry had such a deep impact on Shaikh Abdullah that ‘even in later years, he would begin his public speeches with a recitation of some of his verses.’\footnote{Saraf, op. cit., p. 52.} It was also in Lahore that Shaikh Abdullah realised the pitiable condition of Kashmiri labourers in who were working there as wood cutters, load carriers, coolies and used as beasts of burden. “[they] were working as assess in the Punjab. My class fellows would occasionally lash insults and taunts on me, calling me hatoo.”\footnote{\textit{Hatoo} was a derogatory term for Kashmiris. Abdullah, op. cit., p. 39.} It was this proletariat class, for whom Shaikh Abdullah worked in Kashmir and got their unprecedented support during his long career as an undisputed leader of Kashmir.

After completing his F.S.C, Shaikh Abdullah returned to Kashmir in 1927. Then he went to Aligarh Muslim University and got admission in M.Sc. Chemistry.\footnote{Again it becomes clear that he was not interested in politics; unlike the politicians and leaders of freedom movement of India who had degrees in law or the arts, Shaikh Abdullah choose chemical science, Alastair Lamb, Kashmir A Disputed Legacy 1846-1990, Oxford university Press, Karachi, 1993, p. 91.} This was the time ‘of great political unrest throughout the Indian subcontinent. Congress in its Lahore session of 1929, under the presidency of Nehru demanded complete independence. ‘Aligarh was the centre of the Muslim community’s political and economic aspirations in the subcontinent.’\footnote{Bhattacharjea, Tragic Hero of Kashmir, op. cit., p. 23.} It was at Aligarh that Shaikh Abdullah saw Gandhi for the first time.\footnote{Abdullah, p. 44.} In 1929, when Shaikh Abdullah was still at
Aligarh, Sir Albion Banerji, the Foreign and Political Minister under the Maharaja, resigned from the post and gave a statement on 15th March, 1929, in which he exposed the discriminative rule of the Dogra's. His statement had a great effect on Shaikh Abdullah. He was encouraged to write about the conditions of Kashmiris in "Muslim Outlook Lahore." This was first rung of his political ladder. After completing his Masters' degree in the second division, Shaikh Abdullah returned to Kashmir in 1930.

By the beginning of the 1930's the first batch of Kashmiri Muslim educated youth reached Kashmir after completing education from Aligarh and Punjab. Among those who returned were Shaikh Abdullah Mohammad Abdullah, Mirza Afzal Beg, G.M. Sadiq and Choudhri Ghulam Abbas, who would dominate the politics of Jammu and Kashmir later on. They were influenced by the political movements of the Indian subcontinent. At Lahore not far from Jammu and Kashmir, towards the end of 1929, the Congress adopted the purna swaraj (Complete Independence). Convocation of the workers of the 'States Peoples' was held and among the resolutions that it passed some were directly related to the Kashmir. Also the Muslim League took a new turn at its Allahabad session. Its president Mohammad Iqbal [who was revered in Kashmir] gave the idea of a 'separate Muslim State' or Pakistan.

These political meetings were also attended by many Kashmiris and it naturally imbued them with the zeal of starting a political movement in Kashmir for their betterment. So they belonged to the revolutionary era. However, Back in Kashmir their primary aim was to enter government services. But in Kashmir due to the discriminative policy of the Dogra rule against Muslims these educated young men who now formed a "middle class intelligentsia with a middle class political outlook" faced unemployment problem and felt 'frustrated; and began to organise themselves.' They used to discuss the unemployment and the politics of Kashmir

16 See first chapter.
17 After that the number of educated Muslim increased due to efforts of various social reform organisations prominent among them was the Anjuman-i- Nusrat-ul-Islam founded by Molvi Rasool Shah, a great educationist, popularly called Sir Sayyed-i Kashmir.
19 P.N. Bazaz, the History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, p. 141.
which led to the formation of ‘Reading Room Party.’ On May 8, 1930, the Reading Room was established at Fateh Kadal in Srinagar with Mohammad Rajab as president and Ghulam Nabi Gilkar as Secretary. It was a five men’s party- Molvi Basher Ahmad, Munshi Nasir-ud Din, Ghulam Nabi Gilkar, Mohammad Rajab and Muhammad Yahya Rafiqui. They would discuss the ‘current topics of the day,’ particularly the problem of unemployment among the Muslims. Shaikh Abdullah who had returned to Kashmir a month before the launching of the Reading Room refused to join it. After returning from Aligarh, Shaikh Abdullah’s main concern was to get job. After joining M.P. High School as science teacher he was a bit satisfied. At that time he never shared with others the idea of radical change which as they thought could only be achieved by showing Maharaja exit and there by ending age old rule of ruinous chicane and merciless tyranny.” Since, there were only few Muslim graduates so Shaikh Abdullah was frequently approached by Mohammad Rajab to join the Reading Room but Shaikh Abdullah refuted to join. Since, no political party could be established; it was given the name of ‘Reading Room’ derived from the Aligarh’s reading room. An underground political cell was also created to work for the political uplift of the Kashmiris. They established contacts with Muslim newspapers at Lahore like Muslim Outlook, the Siyasat, the inquilab and also contacted with Sir N. L. Bannerji, the editor of “Indian States” in London to write about the conditions of Kashmiris. It exposed the Dogra Government.

At that time in Jammu there was also an organisation called Youngmen's Muslim Association and it came into contact with the Reading Room through the Lahore Press. A deputation was sent by it, to Srinagar which met Shaikh Abdullah and other people and they decided to cooperate and ‘coordinate their campaign.”

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21 Khan, Freedom Movement in Kashmir, p. 123.
23 Zahir-ud- Din op. cit., p. 34.
25 He was offered government service by the government and he joined as ‘science teacher in M.P. High School Bagh Dilawar Khahan. Abba, p. 18.
28 There was ban on freedom of press, association, expression, platform and forming of political organisation.
30 Saraf, op. cit., p. 357, also Bazaz, Inside Kashmir, pp. 104-05.
Shaikh Abdullah joined the Reading Room in 1931, after he resigned from the government service when he was transferred to Muzafarabad as a teacher. His joining intensified the work and activities of Reading Room and it was changed into a professional party. A memorandum was drafted by it and sent to the Government ‘registering their protest against the Civil Service Recruitment Board.’ The Government invited its signatories for a meeting. Shaikh Abdullah [then ‘absolutely unknown] and Abdul Aziz Fazli were chosen and they met three cabinet members—Mr. Wakefield, Mr. Wattal and General Janak Singh on October 16, 1930. But the Government remained adamant and even threatened the duo member delegation of dreadful consequences for raising voice against the Maharaja. This meeting convinced them that “it was useless to expect justice and fair play from the Dogra Government and that it was time to rise to the occasion and prepare Muslims for a political movement to gain their rights.”

The Reading Room now started a vigorous campaign against the discriminative policies of the Maharaja and also to arouse the consciousness of the Kashmiris by using the Punjab Muslim intelligentsia and press. This press campaign accelerated the ‘pace of Kashmiri Muslims consciousness and also enhanced the prestige of the leaders.’ The rising of Muslim subjects of the state against the Maharaja demoralized and unbalanced the pandit community. Prem Nath Baza, the great pandit leader and a visionary has aptly pulsed the nerve: “the surcharging atmosphere now prevailing in the country unbalanced the pandit community. They became suspicious, terror-stricken and demoralized. They now began to look upon the Maharaja as their protector and refuge. They became the defenders of the powers that were and thus came into clash with the dynamic times.” This attitude of the pandit community proved dangerous for the freedom movement of Kashmir.

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31 The Civil Service Recruitment Board was setup by the Kashmir Government which framed certain rules which appeared to have been framed to prevent the entry of Muslims in the government services. According to its rules, ‘every candidate was required to deposit a sum of rupees fifty as fee, the maximum age for recruitment was fixed at 22 years and the candidate should possess “good family background”. More over the Government had the right to reject any one without assigning any reasons whatsoever.’ Saraf, op. cit., p. 355, see also P. N. Bazaz, op. cit., pp. 100-102.
32 Saraf, op. cit., p. 356.
34 Bazaz, Struggle for Freedom, op. cit., p. 144.
35 Ibid.
The greatest contribution of Reading Room Party was the revolution of 1931, which is as important as the "French revolution of 1789 is in the history of France." The 1931 marked the beginning of the mass awakening in Kashmir. Although, Shaikh Abdullah was among many obscure young people in 1930's but because of his 'astute enough to predict the course of politics, foresee political challenges, he succeeded in the chaotic political atmosphere of the 1930's. The contribution and significance of Shaikh Abdullah lies "in the fact that he articulated, symbolised and directed the movement after that as long as he lived. Of course, like most popular leaders, he was as much led by his people as he led them." He was not influenced by any radical movement of Indian subcontinent. Shaikh Abdullah's main focus as also the Reading Room was to get government jobs. But what F.A. Abba has called, "things came to him all unsought." He even distanced himself from those who believed in radicalism that only remedy of Muslim sufferings was the end of Dogra rule. He believed in reforming the government, "not to break up the old socio-economic links but to revive them, and to get cautiously and gradually upper hand over the situation." Even after launching the movement he asserted that the movement was based on reformatory approach. "We have attempted to give a fair trial to all reforms believing that re-adjustment of human relationship will take place with the extension of the democratic framework to all fields of our national life."

However, with the passage of time he became revolutionary and radical and mass driver and the voice of the illiterate and suppressed people. His speech and orientation of the cause made him the important leader; so much so the Maharaja considered the whole uprising against his rule, because of Shaikh Abdullah. In order to "curb his activities and to crush the mass movement" Shaikh Abdullah was transferred to Muzafarabad far away from Srinagar. By dislocating Shaikh Abdullah, the Government thought that "the tolerant atmosphere would easily be restored." The Government was underestimating the mass movement, taking it only a movement of

36 Chitra Kachru, 'Don't Distort History,' Greater Kashmir, October 7, 2009. The factors that contributed to the birth of mass uprising like the miserable plight of the peasantry and the masses has been discussed in detail in the previous chapter.
39 Abba, op. cit., p. 18.
40 Abba, op. cit., p. 24.
few educated Muslim youth. They forgot that what had come to surface was the result of long and continued suppression and tyranny.\textsuperscript{42} Since, the Reading Room party was mostly concerned with the discrimination against the Muslims in the services; the ‘people’s gatherings, demonstrations, meetings, speeches and debates reverberated the cries of economic imbalance and injustice; so, it became necessary to form a political organisation. But there was complete ban on the formation of a political organisation. However, the coming events made the way clear.

The pace of Reading Room was accelerated by few incidents which happened quickly one after another; which lent themselves to the slogan “Islam in danger.”\textsuperscript{43} Two instances of interference with the religious affairs of the Muslims took place in Jammu which infuriated the Muslims and shaped the freedom struggle of Kashmir. On April 29, 1931, on the occasion of the Eid day, ‘after the prayer was over on Nov. 27, 1931, and before the \textit{khutba} was delivered the police entered the mosque and ordered the’ the \textit{Imam} to stop his \textit{khutba} and ‘Mussalmans to disperse.’\textsuperscript{44} On July 4, 1931, an incident of desecration of \textit{Quran} happened at Jammu’s central jail. “The profanation [sic.] of the Holy Quran was the immediate cause which ignited an inextinguishable fire of revolution for the first time in the history of Jammu and Kashmir state.”\textsuperscript{45} These incidents of insult to religion roused the religious sentiments of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir. A protest demonstration was organised at Jama Masjid, Srinagar on June 8, 1931. It was at this occasion that Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah, who afterwards became an undisputed leader of Kashmir, was introduced to the people of Kashmir by Mir Waiz Molvi Yosuf Shah, the grand Imam and leader of the time. Mir Waiz appealed to the audience to ‘listen to the young man and advised them to respect and value his ideas.’\textsuperscript{46} Shaikh Abdullah in his maiden speech explained to the huge gathering the superiority of the \textit{Holy Quran} and also

\textsuperscript{42} Abba, op. cit., p. 27-31.
\textsuperscript{44} Eastern Times, 5 October, 1931, File No. 663-p-1931, Govt. of India, Foreign and Political Department, and NAI.
\textsuperscript{45} Khan, \textit{Freedom Movement in Kashmir}, p. 37. According to Shabnam Qayoom, in order to evoke strong public reaction against the Dogra State a plan was devised to stage the drama of desecration of the \textit{Holy Quran}. For details see Shabnam Qayoom, \textit{Kashmir Ka Siyasi Inqilaab}, Srinagar, 2007, pp. 49-50.
\textsuperscript{46} Pir Mohammad Afzal Makhdoomi, ‘\textit{Tahrikhi-Hurriyat-Kashmir}', Srinagar, the Aina (weekly), September 7, 1971, p. 5. Khan, p. 76; Mir Waiz introduced Shaikh Abdullah as “our leader” and asked the people to follow him. Saraf, op. cit., p. 361.
asked the people to struggle for their rights. During his course of speech the audience 'wept bitterly.' The growing popularity of Shaikh Abdullah among the people made Shaikh Abdullah more radical and anti Dogra.

The Government got enraged with the 'political activities of the Shaikh Abdullah' and transferred him to Muzafarabad. Shaikh Abdullah tendered his resignation and instead of accepting his resignation he was dismissed from services. Jan Copland says that after getting a huge financial assistance from Kashmir Committee, Shaikh Abdullah 'threw up' his job and 'opened a small office in Srinagar staffed by full-time political workers.' His dismissal infuriated the people of Kashmir and simultaneously enhanced the popularity of Shaikh Abdullah, who now fully devoted his time for the Kashmiri movement.

In fact, the protest movement of the Muslims against the 'interference in their religious matters' by the Government "had assumed a definite political character...[the demand of guilty involved in the desecration of holy Quarn should be punished] was soon coupled with the demand for Muslim share in the administration of the state." The meetings and speeches, in which Maharaja's discriminative policies were condemned, became the order of the day. At one such meeting on 25 June, 1931, an unknown man by the name Abdul Qadeer made a fiery speech. While pointing towards the Maharaja's palace of Shergri, he shouted, "Demolish this edifice of injustice, cruelty and subjugation." There is great controversy regarding the nationality of Abdul Qadeer. However, mostly it is believed that he was a Pathan from Peshawar, and was a cook and guide of a European official in Kashmir. He was immediately arrested which returned the protests and demonstrations. People took keen interest in the trial of Qadeer. On 13th July, 1931, when his trial was to be held at Central Jail, Srinagar, a large people had gathered there to hear the case. Due to the delay in the trial the mob became 'uncontrollable' and shouted slogans and

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47 Abba, op. cit., p. 25, fn., also Husainain, op. cit., p. 41.
48 For details see Husainain, op. cit., pp. 41-42.
50 Abbas, Kashmiri, op. cit., p. 68.
52 Fida Hussain, Freedom Struggle in Kashmir, op. cit., p. 43.
53 For details see, zahir-ud-Din, Flash Back: Kashmir Story Since 1846, pp. 37-40.
threw stones. The police in retaliation fired on the unarmed crowd that resulted the massacre of twenty-two Muslims.\textsuperscript{54}

The day, 13\textsuperscript{th} July, became known in Kashmir history as “Martyr’s Day”, ‘the official beginning of a struggle for independence from alien rule’.\textsuperscript{55} Although, Kashmiris had revolted from the very inception of the Dogra rule but the July revolution was “an eventful revolution and was the culmination” of all those political happening and movements.\textsuperscript{56} The killing shocked and infuriated the Muslims who took to the streets and violently challenged the Maharaja’s rule which shooked the very foundations of the Dogra rule. For two hours in Srinagar the Government faded away and was controlled by the demonstrators. Mridu Rai, a recent researcher on Kashmir while highlighting the importance of the day in the history of Kashmir writes: “the significance of the date drew from the fact that it was the first time that a gathering of Kashmiri Muslims openly challenged the authority of the Maharaja and his Government.”\textsuperscript{57} Incidents of communal riots were also reported.\textsuperscript{58} The Muslims attacked the Hindu shops at Maharaj Gunj, whom they took the signs of repression. Between the Mophla rebellion\textsuperscript{6} of 1921 and the Calcutta riots of 1946; the July 1931 incident, in “terms of casualties and damage to property it was possibly the most serious communal outbreak in India.”\textsuperscript{59} Immediately after the incident the political leaders were arrested which further accelerated the anger of the people. The protests and strikes against the arrests of the political leaders had no precedence in Indian subcontinent.\textsuperscript{60}

For the first time the authority of the Maharaja was challenged and he was criticised by the people without the discrimination of sex and age. ‘They rendered the sky high and recited the appealing verses:

\textit{The Quran is put to sacrilege, is it called justice}

\textsuperscript{55} Lamb, \textit{Kashmir a Disputed Legacy}, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{57} Mridu Rai, \textit{Hindu Rulers Muslim Subjects}, p. 258.
\textsuperscript{59} Ian Copland, \textit{Islam and Political Mobilization in Kashmir, 1931-34}, p. 231.
\textsuperscript{60} Abbas, op. cit., p. 88.
The preacher is stopped to preach, is it called justice
He who makes a request is put to destruction and is imprisoned. Is it called justice.
Arrest of Abdullah added fuel to fire and enraged commoners. Is it called justice
They put commonest to trouble. As if they fried fish. Is it called justice. Who escaped
bullets, could not escape the persuading police. Is it called justice.\(^{61}\)

Poets' praised Shaikh Abdullah and the movement he started. A poet wrote:

One called Sher-I--Kashmir has appeared demanding freedom of press
Without arms and ammunition he cries a true voice
Full of sincerity for the Kashmirians he recites Allah alone.
At the door-steps of AMir-e- Kabir with humble posture. He begs freedom of
assembly. Appointment if Glancy Commission was the result of his efforts.\(^{62}\)

The Indian Muslims and there press condemned the oppression of the Dogra's
rule in Kashmir. At Simla 'An All India Kashmir Committee was set up by Indian
Muslims to campaign 'for the redress of the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims, to
pressurise the British Government of India to intervene in Kashmir. It also appealed
the Muslims of Kashmir and India to observe 14th August as 'Kashmir Day'. The
day was observed throughout the sub-continent with great enthusiasm. Mention may
be made of Sialkot, Lahore, Gorakhpur, Deoband, Calcutta, Patna, Bombay, etc.\(^{63}\)
The Muslim Punjabi press, the Muslim organizations like the 'Kashmir Committee'
and Ahrars highlighted the repression, which forced British Government to intervene
and pressurised the Dogra Government to establish an independent commission for
inquiry about the happenings in Jammu and Kashmir. The result was the
establishment of Glancy Commission.\(^{65}\)

Whereas the incidents of July 1931, gave an "irreparable blow to the prestige
of the Kashmir Darbar" at the same time it "launched the remarkable career of Shaikh
Abdullah M-'the lion of Kashmir.' By September 1931, Shaikh Abdullah after Mir
Waiz was the most "influential Muslim leader in Srinagar. The events of 1931,
helped much more to Shaikh Abdullah; hence after he came to be known as Sher-i--

\(^{61}\) Abba, op. ci., p. 34.
\(^{62}\) Abba, op. cit., p. 35.
\(^{63}\) Saraf, op. cit., pp. 454-456.
\(^{64}\) Saraf, op. cit., pp. 457-460.
\(^{65}\) The British Government might be worried about the happenings in Kashmir at a time when the communism was making its firm base in China and Russia whose boundaries touched Jammu and Kashmir. Abbas, op. cit., pp. 97-98.
Kashmir, or lion of Kashmir because of his fearlessness. He was able to ‘assume the mantle of sole representative of the Kashmiri Muslims’ precisely because of the ‘moral support of the Mir Waiz Kashmir and the structural support of the all India Kashmir Committee.’ The Kashmir Committee which was established soon after the happenings of 1931 financially support Shaikh Abdullah from Punjab. At the same time he used the influence of Mir Waiz Yosuf Shah, the Imam of Jama Masjid Srinagar, in Kashmir, who actually introduced him to the people by declaring him their leader. On the one hand he used the ‘religious prestige of the Mir Waiz family’ to unite the Muslims of Kashmir on Islamic concepts; and on the other hand he used the ‘financial and structural support’ of the Ahmadiyas in Kashmir ‘with their contacts in the Punjab.’ Shaikh Abdullah actually used slogan of “Islam in danger” as a rallying point of Muslims which made him the “strongest local champion of Muslim demands, [having] a following greater than any other local leader.” The volatile political situation in Kashmir and his growing popularity motivated Shaikh Abdullah to give ‘his following and their demands an organizational shape.’ The result was the formation of a political organization by the name of ‘All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932.’

Pressurized by the British India Government from above and besieged by the people from below, the Maharaja was forced to set up an enquiry committee that ‘would look into and remedy the more obvious Muslim grievances. On October 20, 1931, the Maharaja announced the appointment of Glancy Commission, after the name of its chairman, B.J. Glancy, a senior member of the Indian Political Service called Glancy Commission in after the name of its chairman B. J. Glancy. The Glancy Commission Report ‘forms the magna Carta of the State.’ Among the various recommendations of the commission, the freedom to the press and platform similar to those which existed in British India was recommended. ‘Taking advantage of this newly-founded freedom Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir formed a political organization by the name of ‘All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932. The inaugural session of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was held at

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69 Glancy commission and its recommendations have been discussed in detail in the first chapter.
historical *Pather Masjid* under the presidency of Shaikh Abdullah from 15th October to 19th October 1932. Its main aims were.\(^7\)

a. Organisation of the Muslims of the State;
b. Strengthening of unity between the Muslims,
c. Safeguarding of the political rights of the Muslims,
d. Struggle for moral, educational, social, cultural and financial uplift of the Muslims.

From the aforementioned objectives of the Muslim Conference including its nomenclature, it becomes clear that at this stage the Muslim Conference represented the Muslims of Kashmir and wanted them to unite under one ‘political umbrella’ and to work for their betterment.\(^7\) Shaikh Abdullah’s attitude towards *pandits* also was harsh at least in the early stage of the movement. He outlined that the task of Muslim Conference and that of Kashmir was to ‘torn out Hindus, who from times past [had] been giving [the Muslims] trouble and exhorted the crowd to take revenge.’\(^7\) Thus, in case of Kashmir movement Shaikh Abdullah was able to carry the day because the masses responded to his cry of “Islam in danger.” It was the time when a riot in Srinagar had hit Kashmir. Bazaz correctly judges: “it was surely not a suitable climate from [sic] introducing secular politics in the country.”\(^7\)

Like any other anti-colonial movement the Kashmiri movement was also launched on ‘progressive lines to end the oppression.’ It was actually a ‘war of the oppressed against the oppressor’ and the material used was religion to seek justice and redress.”If the ruler was Muslim,” declared a protagonist, “and his subjects the Hindus, the war would have been fought on similar grounds.”\(^7\) Shaikh Abdullah Abdullah believed that the socio-economic condition of the people could be improved only if there was ‘qualitative structural changes’ within the government. Shaikh Abdullah in order to mobilise the masses used religion and religious places where there were readymade public. It

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\(^7\) Zutshi, op. cit., p. 229.

\(^7\) Delivery of a seditious speech by Shaikh Abdullah, Political Department, 1933, File No. 31, JKA, In Mridu Rai, op. cit., p. 273.

\(^7\) Bazaz, *The history of struggle for freedom in Kashmir*, p. 158.

\(^\) *Al-Jamait*, Delhi, 20 August, 1931.
was so because the masses who lacked the political consciousness could not be ‘provoked on political and economic groans; and also majority population (Muslims) were worst suffers. Moreover, the Dogra rulers had called their rule as ‘Dharma Raj’ or Hindu rule, in order to get the support of their co-religionists in Kashmir. Shaikh Abdullah’s use of religion was just what D.E. Smith has asserted, “in transitional societies, religion can serve as the means by which the masses become politicized.” The mere fact that the movement was launched by Muslims and its nomenclature do not ‘necessarily make it a communal movement. Ian Copland has summarised the nature of the Kashmiri movement: “It would appear that religion was an essential factor in the process of mobilization, providing an avenue for organisation and a sense of communality among the Muslims which transcended the formidable barriers of class, education and region. But the root cause of the revolt was socio-economic a determination on the part of the Muslims to win for themselves a prominent position in Kashmiri society.

Since, the Muslims who constituted the majority of the population, were denied the civil and socio-economic rights as were enjoyed by the Hindus and Sikhs, it was but natural that the movement that was launched would assume religious character and even communal tinge. Helped by the Hindu press in British India, the Kashmiri Pandits criticised the movement and dubbed it as a communal one launched against the Hindu rule. They failed to understand the true nature of the Kashmiri movement, which was to fight for democratic rights without driving their ruler out” and “played a historic role of anti-revolution to a finish” but failed. Since the Pandits of Kashmir had associated themselves with the Dora rule they considered the voice of Abdullah as not only against the Dora rule but also against them; for they believed that their protection and safety in Kashmir was in the Dogra rule.

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72 Zutshi, Languages of Belonging, chapters IV and V.
75 Statesman, Calcutta, October 31, 1931.
But Shaikh Abdullah very soon realised that in order to give his movement a proper shape and for its success it was necessary to make it an organization of all subjects of the state without discrimination of religion. Thus, in his first presidential address he declared: "the Muslim Conference is not a communal organization and its existence will prove beneficial to all the communities living in this state...I assure all of my countrymen, be they Hindus or Sikhs that we are ready to remove their sufferings as we have done in the case of Muslims. But they must also respect our just rights."  

A subcommittee was constituted by the Muslim Conference in March 1933, 'to find out ways and means of uniting Hindus and Muslims.'  

Although, there were few liberal Hindus who believed that the Government should grant Muslims their 'legitimate rights; but they were not 'wanting to come forward and express their consent to join the ranks' of Muslim Conference. The Hindu leaders organised public meetings in which provocative speeches were delivered. "This caused a riot in Srinagar during October and passions ran very high. It was surely not a suitable climate from introducing secular politics in the country." The Hindus had reservations; the cry of responsible government awakened them that their interests would be demolished, and "if the process was allowed to continue before long there would be a popular government in the country, which in other words would mean the rule of the Muslims the majority community in the state." They therefore, linked themselves with the rule and even pressurised the Government not to become" just towards Muslims." 

The Government labelled the Muslim Conference and Shaikh Abdullah as communal. "Shaikh Abdullah wants to out Maharaja and to establish Muslim raj in Jammu and Kashmir. To achieve this end he and his organisation, Muslim Conference, are agitating up and down the country." Instead Shaikh Abdullah accused the State administration of holding communal views and insulting

80 'Presidential Address Delivered by Shaikh Abdullah to the first annual session of the Muslim Conference on October 17, 1932', in Mirza Shafiq, op. cit., pp. 219-232.
81 Although, this committee could not function but at the same time it shows the presence of a 'joint action in certain minds in the Conference.' Bazaz, Inside Kashmir, op. cit., p. 187.
82 Bazaz, Inside Kashmir, pp. 189-90.
83 Bazaz, the history of struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, op. cit., p. 158.
84 Ibid., pp. 157-58.
85 Abba, op. cit., p. 44.
Islam, *Quran* and playing with the religious sentiments of Muslims; which made them to assume religious colour.\(^{86}\)

At the same time like the moderate Congress leaders Shaikh Abdullah realized that it was not easy to challenge directly the Dogra rule; so he lowered down his tone against the State to strengthen the roots of Conference. Thus, in a moderate tone he assured his loyalty to the Maharaja; “[W]e have no grievances against the person of Maharaja Bahadur. Instead, 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.”\(^{87}\) Thus, Shaikh Abdullah did not want complete end of Maharaja’s rule but wanted ‘qualitative structural change’ within the government, or responsible government, so that the political and socio-economic condition of Kashmiris could be improved.\(^{88}\) He also threatened to resign from the Muslim Conference unless “its members obeyed his orders” not to do illegal procession. In March 1934, he made an about turn when he announced that “it was time to come to...an agreement with the authorities in the Kashmir state.”\(^{89}\)

Shaikh Abdullah was ‘apothecized’ by the supports of Muslim Conference ‘as their saviour’ and ‘a prophet sent by God to intervene on their behalf.’ Many supernatural attributes and legends were attached with Shaikh Abdullah and was spiritually exalted. According to one such legend it was made public that in 1931, Shaikh Abdullah ‘stepped forward to receive the cauldron of oil that was prepared by the oppressors for his community.’\(^{90}\) In the initial days Shaikh Abdullah found it hard to mobilise people on secular grounds. His activities were impressive but they

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\(^{87}\) ‘Presidential address delivered by Shaikh Abdullah to the first annual session of the Muslim Conference on October 17, 1933’, cited in Mirza Shafiq, op. cit., pp. 219-232, p. 222.

\(^{88}\) For details see, Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, op. cit., chapter 4, pp. 231-280.


accomplished little. "Feeling that he was getting nowhere fast, Abdullah retired to Lahore to spend the winter in contemplation." Watching from Lahore the incidents of Kashmir, Shaikh Abdullah realised that "the Muslim masses appeared to respond to Islamic appeals and Islamic leaders to a far greater degree than to secular causes and political leaders like himself who just happened to be Muslim." Therefore, after his return he leaned towards Mir Waiz Hamdani who was younger and more radical. Mir Waiz Yosuf Shah being close to Darbar had earned the reputation of Darbar's man by urging his supports not to agitate pending the publication of the Franchise Report due sometime in 1933. Also Yosuf Shah did not like the activities of Ahmadiyas; Shaikh Abdullah did not want to lose the support of Ahmadiyas by siding with Yosuf Shah. The result was the separation of two. The separation was more based on "personality" than "any ideology."  

At this crucial stage of the movement the two important leaders, Mir Waiz Yosuf Shah and Shaikh Abdullah drifted away from one another and got indulged in slanging match. Mir Waiz founded his own Azad Muslim Conference and labelled Shaikh Abdullah as an Ahmadiya because of the influence of Kashmir Committee on the Muslim Conference. Srinagar witnessed the 'violent political rivalry in the Muslim ranks between the supporters of Shaikh Abdullah called Shers or lions [after the name Shaikh Abdullah who was called sher or lion of Kashmir] on one hand and the followers of Mir Waiz Yosuf Shah called bakras or goats [after his beard] on the other hand. Mir Waiz Yosuf did not like influence of Ahmadiyas on Kashmir movement and Shaikh Abdullah's inclination towards the Ahmadiyas and asked him to check the activities of Ahmediya which had enhanced after the 13th July massacre; which he did not for he was financially assisted by them. The result was separation.

However, Shaikh Abdullah knew that the Muslims of Kashmir could not be evoked on secular causes, owing to their strong traditional and religious [Sufi or shrine based worship] attachments. Shaikh Abdullah therefore, took sides with Mir Waiz Hamdani of Khangah-e-Mualla, who represented and supported the shrine or

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91 His appeals to non-Muslims were falling on deaf ears and simultaneously the Muslim subjects particularly leaders did not like his 'secular tune.'
93 Ibid., pp. 246-247.
94 Sana-ullah Bhat, Kashmir in Flames, p. 5.
95 A. Lamb, op. cit., p. 93.
96 Abba, op. cit., pp. 48-50.
Sufi cult of Kashmir, to broaden his social appeal. The growing popularity of Shaikh Abdullah [he took the case of peasants and also every time he was arrested his reputation spread ‘steadily’] had lessened the influence and prestige of Mir Waiz Yosuf Shah. He could not reconcile with it and drifted away from Shaikh Abdullah. Mir Waiz, who only a year enjoyed ‘the most powerful and influential in the valley, could not reconcile with the ‘sudden popularity of Shaikh Abdullah. He started a vilification campaign against Shaikh Abdullah and Ahmadiyas and ‘closed himself with Ahhrars, the arch rivals of Ahmadiyas. Khanqah-e-mualla, became now the seat of Shaikh Abdullah because of the support of Mir Waiz Hamdani. Interestingly, the pandits sided with the Mir Waiz Yosuf Shah, against Shaikh Abdullah although former was more religious in outlook and in tone.

The demands of Muslims “came to the Hindus as a bolt from the blue.” The non-Muslims sided with the Maharaja to protect the Hindu State. In a memorial to Maharaja they assured the Maharaja complete loyalty and support against the “disloyal Muslims of the cities of Jammu and Srinagar in complicity with outside pan-Islamic propaganda agencies, who abhor the very idea of a Hindu kingdom in northern India.” They considered the whole agitation by Muslims to replace the Hindu rule. They considered it their sacred duty to protect the Maharaja’s rule: “we hasten to avail of this opportunity to make an [sic] humble offer of our life, property and children—nay our all for the protection of your highness’ person and your Highness Raj.”

However, in spite of this criticism, the Maharaja could not ignore all the demands of the Muslim Conference. “Pressed by the British from above and by the Kashmiri people from below” the Maharaja enacted constitutional reforms.

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100 Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, op. cit., p. 166. The followers of Anjuman Ahrar-i-Islam were called. They were the Muslims who formerly were Congress Nationalists but had the lost identity among the Muslims. In order to retain an identity in the world politics, they were anxious to find a platform. This opportunity came to them from Kashmir and highlighted the atrocities of the Dogra State over the Kashmiris. Confidential, File No. 498-P. (Secret) of 1931, NAI, pp. 1-2.
102 Memorial, op. cit., p. 2.
103 Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir*, p. 17.
continuation with the recommendation of Glancy Commission, the Government had appointed a Franchise Committee on 31st May, 1932, under the Chairmanship of Chief Justice Sir Barjouir Dalal. The committee in its report called Franchise Report on 30 December, 1933, recommended the setting of a Legislative Assembly or Praja Sabha consisting of seventy five members. Out of its sixty non-official representatives only thirty three were to be elected, leaving the Maharaja with the majority vote. The distribution of seats was as follows:- (1) elected Muslims-21, (2) elected Hindus-10, (3) elected Sikhs-2, (4) nominated members-42.\footnote{105}

Although, the proposed Praja Sabha was a powerless body, as the executive was responsible to Maharaja not to assembly; and its elected representation was limited and the right of vote confined\footnote{106} to a limited population, the Muslim Conference decided to participate in the elections; to demonstrate its popularity in Kashmir and also to use the Praja Sabha as a forum to propagate its ideology of nationalism.\footnote{107} Another positive development of the Praja Sabha was “that the elected representatives of Muslims and Hindus were brought together on the floor of the house where they began to realize that most of the basic problems were common to both.”\footnote{108}

At this stage most leaders of Muslim Conference were in jails, While on the one hand it showed the strength of Muslim Conference against the Government at the same time it gave a ‘shattering blow to the prestige of Mir Waiz; because it won all the five seats of Srinagar. Commenting on the result of the election Mohammad Yosuf Saraf writes: “the result gave a shattering blow to the prestige of Mir Waiz Yusuf Shah. It showed unmistakably how a man 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.”\footnote{109} While as the religious leadership had drawn its influence and following mainly from urban areas of Srinagar; “the vast majority of the Kashmiri Muslim population, the

\footnote{105}{Franchise Committee Report, op. cit., pp. 10-12.} 
\footnote{106}{It was confined to zaleedars, Imam, doctors, lawyers, teachers, title holders. The women were not given the right to vote. Only those having high qualification 21 minimum age was fixed, pp. 13-17, Franchise Committee Report, op. cit.,} 
\footnote{107}{Abdullah, Aatish Chi Nar, op. cit., p. 204.} 
\footnote{108}{Bazaz, the history of struggle for freedom in Kashmir, op. cit., p. 159.} 
\footnote{109}{Saraf, op. cit., p. 505.}
agriculturists, fell outside its sphere of influence.” Shaikh Abdullah on the other hand derived his influence from all districts, localities and the Valley if not the whole State of Jammu and Kashmir. Ghulam Abbas who did not want to participate in the Assembly election, praises Shaikh Abdullah for giving a new life to Muslim Conference by convening its annual session at Sopore in 1934.

However, one import contribution of the Praja Sabha was that it brought leaders of Hindus and Muslims closer to each other. They did work for the goal of responsible government. Some liberal pandits joined the Muslim Conference. This according to a recent researcher on Kashmir, Chiralekha Zutshi shows that “the movement was not exclusivist in nature.” Although, the movement in its initial stage at least up to 1933 was Muslim in orientation whose main focus was the uplift of the Muslim community of Kashmir. He [Shaikh Abdullah] believed that “the Muslims were to be protected not necessarily because of their Muslim faith but because persecution of any community in any form was to be fought and overcome.” But after some concessions were given to Muslims by the Glancy Commission, the movement broadened its agenda and discourse “in clearly national terms, one that addressed the issues of the Kashmiri nation as a whole. Socialist ideals, which had the potential to unite people of different religious affiliations under a single political and economic program, became the basis of this movement.”

The Muslim Conference took the issues of tenants and labourer classes without the distinction of religion and tried to unite the people of Kashmir on economic issues. For the first time Shaikh Abdullah overtly claimed to represent the both Hindu and Muslims of Kashmir. In his presidential address to the Annual Session of the Muslim Conference in December 1933, he urged the Kashmiri Hindus to join the movement on national front. Shaikh Abdullah also tried to free him and his Conference from the influence of the Punjabi organizations which he labelled as ‘communal organizations’; and looked upon in terms of Kashmiri nationalist movement. Shaikh Abdullah accused them of misleading the Kashmiri movement

111 Abbas, Kashmakash, op. cit., p.133.
112 Zutshi, op. cit., p. 234.
114 Zutshi, op. cit., pp. 244-45.
115 “Presidential address of Shaikh Abdullah at the Annual Session of Muslim Conference at Mirpur from 15 to 17 December”, 1933, Mirza, op. cit., pp. 291-307.
from the very inception. The *Hamdard*, the official mouthpiece of Muslim Conference condemned all Punjabi organizations as communal that misled the Kashmiri movement. “How did the communal mentality become widespread in Kashmir?”116 Through, the columns of *Daily Hamdard*, he expressed the necessity of a secular movement. “We want to build a joint front of Hindus-Muslims and Sikhs. The ambition of my life is to serve the land and people of Jammu and Kashmir who are oppressed by the extreme poverty, lack of freedom and opportunity. We cannot ignore the process of history. To us the arising of July, 1931, and what followed is no mere temporary phenomenon. We do not want to keep it rest, but it is our utmost need and desire to seek to develop it by meeting the changing conditions. It is my faith that changing conditions demand the close cooperation of all sections of the community.”117

Shaikh Abdullah’s move unto national ideology was boosted by the joining of some liberal *pandits* including Bazaz to Muslim Conference. Bazaz being ‘ahead of his times’ realised that the *pandits* of Kashmir had only one choice to join the movement and to work for change its direction; giving the changing political situation of the Indian subcontinent. He believed in nationalism. In a letter to Mahatma Gandhi he wrote: “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 (non-Muslim) families (in Kashmir).”118

Shaikh Abdullah and other Muslim Conference leaders were mesmerized by the incredible role of Bazaz in the Glancy Commission Report and afterwards even when his community dissociated him.119 He convinced Shaikh Abdullah that the real tussle in Kashmir was not between Hindus and Muslims; but between the oppressed and the oppressor.120 Even, Mr. Jinnah who visited Kashmir in 1935-36, advised the leadership of Muslim Conference that being in majority “they should not only win over the hearts of non-Muslims but also carry them along like a wheel of the political

117 Cited in F.A. Abba, op. cit., p. 51.
120 Saraf, op. cit., p. 508
vehicle.” Thus, to secularise the Kashmiri politics and movement, Bazaz and Abdullah came closer to each other.

On 1st August, 1935, Shaikh Abdullah and Bazaz jointly started a weekly journal the *Hamdard* in Urdu “to popularise the ideology and to lay the foundation of progressive nationalism in the state.” It was because of Bazaz that Shaikh Abdullah came closer to Nehru and Congress. Both extended their invitations to Nehru to visit Kashmir in 1936, “to boost their attempts at establishing a joint Hindu-Muslim national front in politics.” It was also at this time that Congress developed interest in Kashmiri movement and Shaikh Abdullah sought its assistance for the movement. Nehru was greatly impressed by Shaikh Abdullah’s ‘political acumen’ and the Indian National Congress’s interest in Shaikh Abdullah had been growing since 1931. Shaikh Abdullah was also impressed by Nehru’s broadmindedness and ‘wanted to employ him as an intermediary in negotiations with the Hindus for a united front against the Darbar.’

In February 1934, he declared that “my highest desire is that the peoples of this country should fight for the liberation of their motherland without distinction of caste, creed or community...let Hindus and Muslims, by shedding their fears and misunderstandings of each other, launch such a movement.” He even invited Nehru to Kashmir in 1936, to use his influence for the establishment of a joint Hindu-Muslim national front. After Nehru’s decline Shaikh Abdullah himself made it to meet Nehru in the NWFP, the meeting that not only impressed Shaikh Abdullah but also had a far-reaching consequences for the future of Kashmir. In a press Conference at Amritsar, after his meeting with Nehru and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, he declared; “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

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121 Abbas, op. cit., p. 213.
122 *Bazaz, the history of struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, op. cit., pp. 159-60.
123 Zutshi, op. cit., p. 249.
124 The role of Bazaz cannot be overlooked in this regard
126 ibid.
after returning to Kashmir, I will strive to set up an organization which supports national ideology." Chitralekha Zutshi is of the opinion that, "Shaikh Abdullah's decision to lean towards Congress and Nehru was "quite possibly the Congress's increasingly leftist leanings on social and political issues, which were similar to the socialist ideas being propounded by the Muslim Conference for Kashmir at this time." To create a sense of unity and nationalism among the elected members of Praja Sabha without the distinction of religion, the Muslim Conference declared to observe 8th May, 1936, as 'Responsible Government Day.' But the non-Muslims did not join the celebrations. The Daily Martand, the official organ of the Hindu Yuvak Sabha dubbed the Muslim Conference as "an organisation of communalist Muslims which has come into existence for the protection of the Muslim rights. This organisation has been established with the idea of crushing the Hindus... it is therefore, not expected of its members that they will allow this organisation to work, like the Indian National Congress,... for the common cause of both the Hindus and Muslims." The demand for a 'democratic form of political system' apprehended the non-Muslims. To end their apprehensions and also to prepare the public opinion for its acceptance, Choudhry Ghulam Abbas, assured them that their legitimate rights would be protected. In his presidential address he stated: "I on behalf of Muslims, appeal to my Hindu countrymen, that they should cooperate with us. I assure them that Muslims do not want to usurp the legitimate rights of any community. A Muslim wants justice for every community in the same manner in which he wants for himself. Let us, therefore, join hands together and struggle for the emancipation of our country."[^129]

[^130] The movement against the Maharaja was considered by them as against the non-Muslims, as for them the maharaja was there to protect their communal interests. So while as they wanted Muslim Conference to become nationalist at the same time they themselves were communalists; cited in Khan, Freedom Movement in Kashmir op. cit., pp. 325-26.
[^131] Choudhry Ghulam Abbas An important leader of the Muslim Conference from Jammu.
[^132] Presidential Address Delivered by Choudhry Ghulam Abbas at the 4th Annual Session of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference held at Srinagar on 25, 26 and 27 October 1935'.
The appeal did not go in vain. The day was observed with great enthusiasm throughout, the State and besides Muslims the good number of Hindus also participated in it and demanded making the Assembly responsible to the people.\textsuperscript{133} Towards the end of that year a drama was played which shattered the Dogra regime and also highlighted the growing nationalism among the people of Kashmir. On 29\textsuperscript{th} October, 1936, Sardar Budh Singh one of the elected Sikh members of the Sabha declared it a “toy assembly” and tendered his resignation. His decision was followed by other members also; “entire block”, writes Bazaz, “of the elected members with the solitary exception of one Hindu member, Amar Nath Kak, walked out of the Kashmir Assembly as a protest against the unsympathetic attitude which was persistently maintained by the Government towards the public demands.”\textsuperscript{134} commenting on this the Tribune wrote, “from the events that have happened in the Assembly during the last few days it is evident that there is a general awakening in the State and that the people can no longer be satisfied with the toy legislature, though, it may be given the grand eloquent name of Praja Sabha\textsuperscript{135} Shaikh Abdullah further demanded the responsible government from the platform of the fifth Annual Session of the Muslim Conference held at Poonch in 1937. In his presidential\textsuperscript{136} address, he declared: “we have demanded responsible assembly and independent administration from the beginning of the freedom struggle. Since, the last year, the demand for a better constitution has not remained a demand of the Muslim majority population in the state, but we hope that poor among the Hindus and Sikhs will also work shoulder to shoulder with us for the attainment of responsible government. We must sincerely continue our efforts in that direction, and bring it to the notice of the Hindu and the Sikh masses in the state.” Shaikh Abdullah’ desire and decision to transform his movement into a nationalist one like that of Indian Congress needed the support and participation of minority community.


\textsuperscript{134} Bazaz, \textit{Inside Kashmir}, op. cit., p. 190.

\textsuperscript{135} Cited in Bazaz, \textit{Inside Kashmir}, op. cit., p. 190.


Thus, we see from the very inception Shaikh Abdullah appealing the non-Muslims to join the Muslim Conference.\textsuperscript{137} To the sixth annual session of the Muslim Conference, Shaikh Abdullah as the president addressed as a nationalist, "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 ranks. No amount of propaganda can keep them away from us."\textsuperscript{138} A manifesto called 'National Demand' was published on August 29, 1938, which was signed by "twelve prominent Hindu, Muslim and Sikh leaders of the national bent of mind."\textsuperscript{139} The document was the landmark in the history of Kashmir for it was the joint document of all subjects of the state being signed by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Its main demands were:\textsuperscript{140}

1. Establishment of Responsible Government in the State with a responsible executive having control over the purse of the State except on certain specified subjects which were to remain under the control of his highness;

2. An elected legislature founded in the system of adult franchise with special representation given to the labouring classes, traders, landlords and educational interests;

3. The principle of joint electorate for purpose of election to the representative institutions. However, seats could be reserved for the minorities with safeguard and weightage guaranteed to them by the constitution for the protection of their linguistic, religious, cultural, political and economic rights in the same manner as enunciated and accepted by the Indian national Congress to minorities from time to time.

4. The grant of basic rights of citizenship to all the people living in the state.

\textsuperscript{137} In fact in many ways the Muslim Conference seemed much broader in its outlook and programmes regarding the non-Muslims than the Congress in India. Shiekh, \textit{Aatishi Chinir}, op. cit., pp. 221-22.

\textsuperscript{138} Mirza, op. cit., pp. 425-435.

\textsuperscript{139} The non-Muslims who signed the document of National Demand were, P.N. Bazaz, Jai Lal Kilar, Pandit Kashyapa Bandhu, Pt. Sham Lal Saraf, Dr Shamboo Nath Peshim and Sardar Budh Singh. Saraf, op. cit., p. 527.

\textsuperscript{140} See Saraf, op. cit., pp. 540-41.
It was declared that the movement belonged to all communities and the goal of which was “to bring about complete change in the social and political outlook of the people and to achieve responsible government under the aegis of the Maharaja.”\textsuperscript{141} This joint document encouraged and convinced the Muslim Conference leadership to throw open the doors of the Conference to non-Muslims by ‘rechristening the Muslim Conference into a national body.’\textsuperscript{142} Ian Copland affirms that right from beginning “left-wing of the Muslim Conference, led by its president, Shaikh Abdullah, sought to play down the party’s religious character, believing that the democratic movement would carry more moral and physical thrust if it was representative of all communities.”\textsuperscript{143} It is imperative to mention here that in 1934, Shaikh Abdullah toured the neighbouring states of Punjab, Frontier Province and other states of India “following the call from the leaders of Hindustan.” F.A. Abba believes that Shaikh Abdullah had interactions with different nationalist Indian leaders of different ideologies and parties, but he “found himself closer to Congress ideology, for it had already occurred to him that in his homeland, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike were facing the tyranny of feudal autocracy.” It strengthened the growing national outlook of Shaikh Abdullah.\textsuperscript{144}

Needless to say that while Shaikh Abdullah tried his level best to motivate Hindus to join the Muslim Conference and even changed its name; he did nothing to convince Mir Waiz faction to shun its activities and work for whole community. He instead guided his volunteers to fight against the followers of Mir Waiz, while himself carrying a hockey stick.\textsuperscript{145} So, politically the wedge that existed among the Muslims, Shaikhs responsibility could not be ignored.

Founded mainly for the concerns about jobs of Muslims and representation of Muslims; the Muslim Conference ‘assumed a political role. “The period from 1931 to 1935 saw the political might of Kashmiri movement gaining so much ground and so quickly,” that political parties of British India “were forced to take notice of

\textsuperscript{141} Bazaz, \textit{the history of struggle for Freedom in Kashmir}, op. cit., p. 162.
\textsuperscript{142} Khan, \textit{Ideological Foundations of the Freedom Movement in Kashmir} Ideological, op. cit. P. 97.
\textsuperscript{143} Ian Copland, \textit{Kashmiri Muslims and the 1947 Crisis}, op. cit., p. 226.
\textsuperscript{144} Abba, op. cit., pp. 50-51.
\textsuperscript{145} Tasur, \textit{Tariikh-i- hurriyat Kashmir} op. cit., p. 290, See sources. In Saraf, \textit{Kashmiris fight for freedom}, op. cit.,

Up to 1938, the Indian National Congress adopted ‘an official policy of non-interference in the affairs of the states... ostensibly, out of respect for the princes' traditional rights of sovereignty.’ Nevertheless, it showed verbal sympathy. After the passage of act of 1935, a resolution was passed by the Congress working committee, held between 29 July, and 1 August, 1935, in which it declared: “the Indian National Congress recognises that the people in the Indian states have an inherent right to swaraj no less than the people of British 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 and to guarantee fundamental rights of citizenship, like freedom of person, speech, association, of the press, to their people but has also pledged to the states people its’sympathy and support in their legitimate and peaceful struggle for the attainment of full responsible government.”\footnote{M. J. Akbar, *Kashmir Behind the Veil*, p. 81; Ajit Bhattacharjua, *Shaikh Abdullah Mohammad Abdullah Tragic Hero of Kashmir*, p. 53.}

However, after the rise of Congress in provincial elections of 1937, it ‘jettisoned’ its traditional policy of non-interference in the affairs of the states, when Peoples Conference with the active patronage of Congress ‘rocked princely India.’\footnote{Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plebsey to Partition, a History of Modern India*, Delhi, 2007, p. 330.} Particularly its main focus was on Kashmir. Nehru as a descendent of a Kashmiri Brahman took ‘passionate interest’ in Kashmir. In his presidential address to the all ‘India Peoples Conference’ in February 1939, at Ludhiana, Nehru, ‘gave public support to Abdullah and noted, “in Kashmir, I am glad to say, a number of wise and far-seeing Hindus and Sikhs threw their weight on the side of the popular movement and supported the ‘national demand’ which asked for a responsible government.”\footnote{Cited in Akbar, *Kashmir*, op. cit., pp. 81-82.}
Since, Muslim League was less concerned 'with such matters as the relations of princes with their subjects,' Shaikh Abdullah therefore, was 'quite impervious to the appeal of the Muslim League.' Shaikh Abdullah met Nehru for the first time in January 1938, at Lahore Railway station [a meeting that had a far-reaching impact on the future of Kashmir and subcontinent] and along with him visited Northern Frontier Province where he met Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Shaikh Abdullah was greatly impressed by Nehru's thought and ideology. It was Nehru who advised Shaikh Abdullah to broaden and change the name of Muslim Conference. At a time when Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha were propagating that Hindus and Muslims were two separate nations, "Nehru sorely needed the support of an acknowledged secular Muslim leader with a mass Muslim following to counter the thesis" of communalists. Abdullah himself needed the support of Nehru to disprove the thesis of Kashmiri non-Muslims that the movement of Shaikh Abdullah was communal in nature. At the same time he criticized the Indian Muslim League's policy of non-intervention in the princely states. It is imperative to mention that Gandhi himself was not in favour of intervention in the princely state, particularly in Kashmir. He even accepted the invitation of the Kashmir government to visit Kashmir as a state guest in 1939. Visiting Kashmir as a state guest might not look a big thing but the time he was to visit Kashmir made his decision a big thing.

By 1938, on behalf of the Abdullah group, which included many Hindus and Sikhs, the Muslim Conference decided to "end communalism by ceasing to think in terms of Muslims and non-Muslims" and invited "all Hindus and Sikhs who believe in the freedom of their country from the shackles of an irresponsible rule" to participate in the 'freedom struggle.' The Sixth Annual Session of the Muslim

151 Muslim League because of the fear of 'retaliatory action by its political opponents' did not interfere in the states.' Also like the British the League considered the princes 'as a valuable counterweight to the socialist tendencies of the Congress;' Ian Copland, The Princely States, The Muslim League, and the Partition of India in 1947, The International History Review, vol. 13, No. 1(Feb., 1991), pp. 38-69 p. 45.
152 Birwood, op. cit., p. 44.
153 See, Aatish Chinar, pp. 226-228, Abas, Kashmakash, p. 159.
154 Ajit Bhattacharje, op. cit., p. 52.
155 "Times of India, May 19, 1939, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Times of India (1838-2001), p. 3.
156 It was only after the pressure from other leaders that Gandhi had reluctantly cancelled his visit to Kashmir. Times of India, July 22, 1939, ProQuest Historical Newspapers Times of India (1838-2011), p. 14.
Conference held at Jammu on the 25th, 26th and 27th March, 1938, is turning point in the political history of Kashmir, for it was in this session that a proposal was introduced for the change of name of Muslim Conference. Shaikh Abdullah who was the president of session said in his presidential address: "the demand for responsible government is not meant for eighty per cent Muslim alone but for all inhabitants of the state; therefore, it is necessary to March together with the twenty per cent non-Muslims. The main problem now before us, therefore, is to initiate joint action and form a united front against the forces that stand in the way of the achievement of our goal. This will require re-naming of our organisation as a non-communal political party, necessitating amendments in its constitution."

At a time when the three years rule of Congress had disappointed Muslims of British India in general and were thinking in terms of a single Muslim platform; Shaikh Abdullah was busy to collaborate with Congress. Consequently, the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference met in Srinagar on 24th June, 1938, to consider the question of changing the name of the party. The marathon discussions lasted for five days and spread over fifty-two hours and finally the following resolution was passed:—"Whereas in the opinion of the Working Committee the time has now come when all the progressive forces 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 forthcoming Annual Session, the name and the constitution of the organization be so altered and amended that all people who wish to participate in the political struggle are enabled to become members of the Conference irrespective of their caste, creed or religion." While as the princes had reservations to join the federation of British India, Shaikh Abdullah showed readiness to join the federation of Indian National Congress.

It is interesting to note that it was the time when Subash Chandra Bose had resigned from Congress and Maulana Azad was made president of Congress. Shaikh

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159 Times of India, January 26, 1938, ProQuest Historical newspaper, Times of India (1838-2001) p. 12, Bazaz, the history of struggle for freedom in Kashmir, op. cit., p. 166.
Abdullah found this change a “favourable and effected the change.” The General Council of the Muslim Conference met in Srinagar on 27th April, 1939, and confirmed the resolution of the Working Committee of 28th June. Consequently, a special session of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was held in Srinagar on 10th and 11th June, 1939, under the Presidentship of Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, the known leftist. The resolution for the change of name was introduced by Maulana Mohammad Saeed Masudi, chairman of the reception committee. The resolution reads: “The special session of Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference approves the working committee resolution No. 5, of 28th June, 1938, for the change of the name of the Conference and for bringing about the necessary amendments and changes in its constitution, which was confirmed by the General Council in its session on the 27th of April, 1939.”

Many Muslim leaders particularly from Jammu, initially some close colleagues of Shaikh Abdullah from Kashmir also, had reservations and apprehensions regarding the change. They considered it inappropriate to change the name for non-Muslims who had remained aloof from the movement and had attached themselves with the Dogra rule. They feared “that the Hindu-Sikh elements in the party would undermine the movement because of their vested interests in Dogra rule.” Important among them were Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas, Chaudhri Hamidullah, etc. Later on Abbas supported the move, after he was assured by Abdullah that National Conference would have its own individual character and would not be influenced by Indian National Congress. Shaikh Abdullah further made his argument in a socialist manner that tussle in Kashmir was not between Muslims and non-Muslims, but between “the haves and the have-not’s” and “no betterment of the people could be expected so long as the political struggle was not launched on these lines.” Consequently, all important leaders from Jammu, except Chaudhri Hameedullah, supported the Working Committee resolution to rename the party as all Jammu and Kashmir National Conference conditionally. Shaikh Abdullah will not

161 Abba, Kashmirkash, op. cit., p. 62, f. n. Abbas, in his memoir claims that Shaikh Abdullah was also motivated by Gopala Swami Ayyanger, a Congress man, who wanted to convert Muslim Conference into a party that would be part of National Congress, for details see, Abas, Kashmirkash, op. cit., pp. 169-170.
163 Saraf, op. cit., pp. 528-29.
163 Bazzaz, the history of struggle for freedom in Kashmir, op cit., pp. 163-64.
164 Saraf op. cit., p. 530.
own Congress politics nor will he support the Congress in any case.165 Shaikh Abdullah in his memoir also confirms that he assured Abbas that National Conference would not be influenced by the Congress.166 Bazaz in his Freedom Struggle says that “Muslim leaders feared that the National Conference would become a hand-maid of the Indian Congress.” they were given full assurance that “the organization should keep aloof from the Indian national Congress as well as Muslim League. On these assurance misgivings of Abbas were allayed and he gave his fullest support to the resolution in the plenary session of the Conference.”167

Thus, all the major opposition was removed and the way was cleared to change the name. The special session of the Muslim Conference was held at Pather Masjid Srinagar on 10th and 11th June 1939, which was presided by known leftist Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, “to get this resolution ratified by the mass of the Conference. In his presidential address, Sadiq said, “this day will be written in golden letters in the history of the national awakening of Jammu and Kashmir. The decision which you are going to take is not being watched only by the Kashmir Government but by the whole India.”168 There was a long discussion and a ‘series of detailed lectures by the delegates in favour of the resolution. ‘The resolution was later on subjected to vote; 175 votes voted in favour of the change of the nomenclature. Only three opposed the idea. It was at almost 2:00 Am., [intervening night of 11th and 12th June] that Sadiq declared the passing of the resolution and the formation of National Conference;169 a party of Hindus Muslims and Sikhs, “and one whose ideology was ostensibly secular.”170 The local units of Muslim Conference in Poonch, Mirpur and Kotli ‘repudiated this decision and decided to unite all Muslim leaders under one umbrella that would also act as a local unit the Muslim league in Srinagar.171 The National Conference as the name depicts was “the bearer of the” majoritarian nationalist ideology for the people of the state; and the organization of “downtrodden

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165 Abbas, Kashmakash, op. cit., p. 178.
166 Shaikh Abdullah Aatishi Chinari, op. cit., p. 238.
167 Bazaz, the history of struggle for freedom in Kashmir, op. cit., pp. 163-64.
168 President Address by Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, to Special Session of all Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, held on 10th and 11th June 1939, Srinagar, Mirza Shafiq, pp. 475-485.
169 Abba, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
170 Ian Copland, Abdullah Factor; Kashmir Muslims and the 1947 Crisis, p. 226
classes.’ The flag of the National Conference was red in colour with a white plough in the centre, depicting the socialist revolution for the peasants of the state, who form a majority.172

But many of the Muslim leaders particularly from Jammu ‘found party’s new orientation unpalatable.’173 In Kashmir, M.A. Saber, Ghazi Aman-ullah Khan, Khawajka Ghulam Nabi, Mirza Ghulam Mohiud-din, Mr Abdul Aziz Mirpuri and others criticised Shaikh Abdullah and his new party and raised the slogan of ‘Islam in danger.’174 Charges of corruption were levelled against Shaikh Abdullah and he was dubbed as ‘agent of Congress, who had been purchased by Hindus.’175 Under the command of Qureshi Mohammad Yosuf, an angry mob attacked Mujahid Manzil, the central office of National Conference on 15 June 1939.176 It is pertinent to mention here that at that time Sir Gopal Swami Ayyenger was the Prime Minister (Dewan) of Kashmir and he was accused of propagating the ideology of Congress in Kashmir. He played an important role in the division of Muslim leadership after the formation of National Conference.177 Josef Korbel traces the present tragic struggle to this date and holds Shaikh Abdullah responsible for it. “The origins of the present tragic struggle can, in a sense, be traced back to those months. Up to that time the Muslims had been united through the Muslim Conference. In 1939, this unity was broken. Responsible for this tragic schism was none other than the popular lion of Kashmir, Shaikh Abdullah Mohammad Abdullah.”178

Thus, the ‘freedom movement’ of Kashmir during its first phase from 1931-39 had to face ‘serious threats from the forces of communalism having strong feudal ties; which as a consequence changed and shaped the ‘orientation, content and structure of the movement. Initially started for the uplift of the Muslims of the State, it broadened its outlook and accommodated the Non-Muslims, and fought for the ‘Responsible Government. This continuity and change marks the progressive march of the ‘national movement’ in Kashmir.’

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172 Hussainain, op. cit., p. 103.
173 Ibid., p. 89.
175 Ibid.
177 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
178 Korbel, Danger in Kashmir, op. cit., p. 18.