Chapter -3
Practice of Secularism in Jammu and Kashmir
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The Kashmir valley famous throughout the world for its natural and scenic beauties, healthy and superb climate, is situated in the Eastern hemisphere where the borders of five powers—Russia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India merge, its strategic importance is immense and can not be over emphasized.

Since times immemorial, the valley is the abode of gods and every inch of its soil is described in the Holy Scripture as sacred. Thousands of the Hindus flock every year, in the month of August, from all parts of the sub-continent to participate in the pilgrimage to Swami Amarnath. Kashmir is also well known as the land of mushaiqs and awliyas besides being populated mostly by the believers. It is therefore, not surprising that India and Pakistan are intensely desirous of having the valley regardless of cost and sacrifice. Had natural environment been the sole or even the decisive factor in moulding and shaping the character of a race the Kashmiris should have been an ideal people; they should have uninterruptedly continued to produce lovely things in the domain of art and architecture and risen from one height to another. But, fortunate in having a beautiful homeland, they have been no so fortunate in their rulers who frequently were tyrants and cruel. The story of the Kashmiris is a melancholy tale of perpetual misgovernment by monarchs and their underlings. When we open any book of chronicles written by the sons of soil from Kalhana in 1149 A.D. to Hassan in 1893 A.D., we can not help lamenting that the poor people never enjoyed even a century of continued peace.¹

With the acquisition of the valley by the Dogras in 1846, the Kashmiri people entered a new era of their history. The Dogras continued the ban on cow slaughter first imposed by the Sikhs; the accused were imprisoned for life. Some special taxes were also levied on the Muslims, for
example a tax on shariat marriages. Many mosques in Srinagar and big towns were forcibly seized and impiously used to store grains offending the religious sentiments of the Muslims. By the Treaty of Amritsar between the British and Maharaja Gulab Singh, Kashmir had become a part of the Indian sub-continent which had been infiel and over which the British ruled as the imperialist power. In December 1929, the Indian National Congress adopted on the banks of Ravi at Lahore, the resolution of complete independence as its goal; a mass civil disobedience movement followed which electrified the sub-continent from Gilgit to Cape Comorian. Kashmir too felt its repercussions; people began to be deeply excited with what was taking place in the rest of the country.\(^2\)

**Secularization of State Politics**

Whatever the reasons for its adoption, the communal approach of the political struggle for freedom waged in the 1931, was inconsistent with the cultural traditions of the Kashmir. Unsurprisingly, this was being realized by the sponsors of the movement even as early as February-March 1931 while the masses held aloof and Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had not achieved the pre-eminent position of the top leader which he did in months to follow. An impartial study of the speeches delivered by the then luminaries of Kashmir Muslim politics such as Moulvi Mohammad Abdullah, Ghulam Nabi Gilkar and Saaduddin Shawl will bear ample witness that they were not happy over the happenings misleading public affairs into communal channels.

The Muslim Conference was founded in October 1932, and the records of the deliberations of this organization show that a number of leaders and workers of the party disliked communalism and disapproved of the religious basis of state politics. The non-Muslims repeatedly were invited to participate in the Struggle for freedom and assured an honorable
place in the political life. In the presidential address of the first session of
the Muslim Conference we find a remarkable declaration:

The Kashmir movement is not communal but has come into existence
to get the grievances of all classes of people redressed. We assure our Hindu
and Sikh brothers that we are prepared to help them in the same manner as
we do the Musalmans.

Thus the cooperation of enlightened Hindus and Muslims brought the
State politics on straight path indicated by the cultural traditions of the
people. Secularization became inevitable and the conversion of Muslim
Conference to National Conference easily followed. The secularization of
State politics was effected by the influential Muslim leaders (173 delegates
in the special session of the Muslim Conference out of 176 voting for it)
without any outside interference. When at the time of independence of the
sub-continent the country was divided and Kashmir confronted with the
choice of acceding either to secularist India or the Islamic republic of
Pakistan. The National Conference, under the leadership of Sheikh
Mohammad Abdullah, decided that the Kashmir will form part of India. The
Maharaja ratified the instrument of accession as required under the
provisions of the independence Act through his accredited representative. It
however needed ratification by the state people. At that time, the Indian
leaders frequently assert that Kashmir is a symbol of Indian Secualism.³

The situation in Jammu and Kashmir by the end of 1989 developed
into an “invisible war”. It was not a sudden outburst but the cumulative
result of various twists and turns in the state politics since 1947. However,
among the immediate factors while contributed to this crisis were: The
toppling of Dr. Farooq Abdullah’s government in July 1984 by disputed
Governor Jag Mohan, communalization of politics particularly under the
minority government of Ghulam Mohammad Shah (1984-86); formation of
new combinations of fundamentalist organizations such as the 'Muslim United Front'; opportunistic alliances and accords between the ruling National Conference and Congress (I) in 1987 assembly elections; recurrence of ethno-communal violence and regional agitations in different parts of the State and resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism across the border.

The conditions in the state deteriorated to such an extent that by October 1989 people in the valley were virtually seized by an all pervasive dread of militant violence. The militants, virtually overpowered the state apparatus and rendered the police and local bureaucracy demoralized. Initially, militants began by making frenzied religious propaganda, slogan shouting, sticking posters on walls and poles; spreading rumours and by killing some CRPF Jawans, policemen, IB officials, retired judges, bureaucrats, managers, politicians etc. by January 1990 the state authorities lost control and failed to prevent the situation from going out of hand. People were sandwiched between gun-totting militants on the one hand and state forces on the other.

**SECULAR RECORD**

(1) **The 1986 Riots**

Till 1986, the state, despite being multi-communal and extremely sensitive, had hardly witnessed any communal riot. Even the communal holocaust of 1947 had failed to affect the Kashmir valley even after mass murder of Muslims in Jammu backed by dogra government. Nevertheless, in the post-Independence period the state gradually fell prey to communal consciousness which unfolded in the form of fundamentalist organizations, desecration of shrines, discrimination on community basis, communal tensions, subversion, and occasional bomb blasts etc. By February 1986, it
witnessed senseless "violence triggered by conflicts arising from exploitation of religion". These riots were preceded by several incidents of communal and subversive violence. For example, the demonstrations against the Bhiwandi-Thane riots led to the killing of three persons and destruction of buildings, shops and vehicles in Kashmir in June 1984. Likewise, the protests, demonstrations and militant activities organized by the Sikh Youth against the army operation in Golden Temple (1984) resulted in the destruction of property and killing of people in the state on June 7, 1984. Stray cases of arson, looting and riots occurred both in the valley and the Jammu region. Due to effect of the Punjab crisis, about five feet of the railway track in Jammu was damaged in a bomb explosion on June 11, 1984. In addition, over a dozen explosions rocked the Poonch town during demonstrations by the Sikh Youth and certain Sikh militants allegedly organized militant activities in the Jammu region after the 'Operation Blue Star'.

Explosions also reverberated in Anantnag, Srinagar, Sopore and Baramulla areas of the valley. Some Muslim fundamentalists also joined the Sikh agitations and raised anti-India slogans. The state government failed to handle the situation. Senior Congressmen like late G.L. Dogra alleged that "agitation by the youth organization of Sikhs in the state was being supported by the ruling National Conference". Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the then state Congress-I's chief accused Farooq Abdullah and his party of actively encouraging pro-Pakistani and pro-Khalistani elements. Dr. Abdullah's links with the JKLF, according to Mufti Sayeed, were well known. The anti-India forces in any event found abundant opportunity to revive their activities in different parts of the valley. Azam Inquilabi, General Secretary of Mahaz-e-Azadi, was detained in February 1985. His services as teacher in the education department were also terminated for his alleged involvement in subversive activities. Shabir Ahmad Shah, the then
chief of the people's league, let off in 1984, was also arrested in early 1985 and put into jail.\textsuperscript{5}

The February 1986 riots were mainly ignited by a court decision in Fiazabad to vacate the stay order on the temple-mosque dispute in Ayodhya. During this time a similar controversy had arisen in Jammu town, when the Chief Minister, G.M. Shah, decided that two rooms adjoining an old temple in the state secretariat at Jammu be made available to the Muslim employees for 'Namaz'. The 'Hyper-sensitive' Hindus of Jammu thought that it was an "attempt to set up a mosque next to temple". Soon it led to clashes between the Hindus and Muslims in Jammu town which eventually sparked off violence in other parts of the sate. The problem first started on February 17, 1986 when the Hindus and Muslims in Jammu took out processions on the same day. The Muslims protested against the police firing in Srinagar on February 15, when the Muslim Youth came out on the streets against the reopening of the Ram-Janam-Bhoomi Temple. As the unruly mobs in Srinagar, protesting against the unlocking of the Babri Masjid gate, indulged in violence, police resorted to firing in which one person was killed and several injured. The Hindus, on the other hand, protested against the Chief Minister's decision regarding the two rooms for Namaz in the state secretariat. The supporters of 'Shiv Sena' and 'Hindu Raksha Samiti' played a major role in the Hindu procession. The activities of the processionists soon resulted in clashes for which the provocation was said to be the alleged pro-Pakistani slogans raised in the Muslim procession. The allegation was however neither confirmed nor contradicted by the government. The police, though present in sufficient numbers, neither controlled the slogan shouting Muslims nor stopped the looting of Muslim shops.\textsuperscript{6} Continued clashes and indefinite curfew created panic among the Kashmiri Muslims in Jammu who had moved along with the Darbar in the month of October to the winter capital for six months. In fact, several terror-stricken families had to be
transported back to the valley for which the state buses and other vehicles were arranged by government. When the buses crossed the Banihal pass reached Khannabal the inmates narrated their tale of woe, and as is usual, gave a highly exaggerated version of the clash at Jammu. Such things were bound to surcharge the communal atmosphere in Kashmir. Soon it triggered off an unprecedented communal frenzy in the valley, in which scores of religious places, houses, shops, cowsheds, flour mills, petrol pumps and vehicles were damaged and plundered by the unruly mobs of the youth. The state administration remained totally ineffective in dealing with them. Local Muslims who provided protection to the Kashmiri pandits were attacked, given Hindu names and looked down upon by their coreligionists.

The communal situation in the Kashmir valley deteriorated to such an extent that on February 20, 1986 an indefinite curfew was imposed in Srinagar and the army had to be called out in Anantnag with shoot-at-sight orders to quell unruly mobs committing arson and looting in the nearby villages. Ten houses in the village wanpooh near Anantnag were ransacked by the violent youth who were reportedly led by the Jamaat-e-Tulba, a militant youth wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami. The affected minority Hindu families stated that if local Muslims had not come to their rescue, many of them would have been killed. Similarly, several Hindu families of Dhanav, Bonigund, Akoora and Salar villages were reportedly rendered homeless. They were saved by the Muslim neighbours who gave them shelter, food and clothes. Three Muslim leaders were injured while trying to save the minority people and their property. In Lokbhavan, where some tension existed between the Muslims and Hindus on the place of worship, arson, plundering, burning and destruction took place and for three days the administration took no measures.

However, the cultural and historical bonds were so strong that many Muslims from the affected areas offered money for repairing the damaged
temples in the valley. The local police, consisting largely of Muslims, proved unreliable to the minorities. With the result the state government on February 27, 1986 suspended Deputy Commissioner and senior Superintendent of Police of Anantang district for their failure to protect the minority community. In addition, the government also terminated the services of nine government employees allegedly affiliated with the Jammat-e-Islami.

Many towns in the valley were brought under curfew and the government warned the anti-national and anti-social elements who, according to it, were being supported by the opposition parties. The state cabinet at one stage also proposed to ban the Shiv Sena and Jamaat-e-Islami in the light of the February riots, but it was also found that the contribution of various other political parties including National Conference and Congress (I) was no less significant.

The facts revealed by the then Deputy Chief Minister D.D. Thakur, indicated that out of the arrested person 108 belonged to the various fundamentalist organizations like Jamaat-e-Islami, People’s League and Jamaat-e-Tulba; 142 to National Conference (Farooq); 44 to Congress (I) and 13 to ruling National Conference (Khalida). Interestingly the ruling party had to arrest its own political activists on the charges of communal violence. It was in fact that congress (I) supported minority government of Ghulam Mohammad Shah which lit the communal fire by creating the controversy over religious shrines in the state’s secretariat. Some observers believed that the February 1986 holocaust exposed the Mufti-Congress in Kashmir as the standard bearer of communalism. The fate of congress was sealed that very day when paid workers patronized by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed formed the vanguard of Ummat-e-Islami of Anantnag district. As a result of these riots the government of Ghulam Mohammad Shah was dismissed and the state was put under Governor’s rule on March 7, 1986,
which continued till Dr. Farooq Abdullah's return to power in November 1986. This communal resurgence which resulted in estrangement between the Hindus and Muslims could be regarded as a precursor of the current crisis that ensued around July 1986 and subsequently led to an unprecedented exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the valley in 1990.

2. The Situation in the Neighbourhood and Assembly Elections (1987)

The increasing incidence of communal violence resulting in rifts between different religious communities in the country in general and the much deteriorating conditions in the neighbouring state of Punjab in particular, also cast a shadow on the state's worsening political scenario in the late 1980s. The recurring communal tensions in the Jammu region were particularly attributed to increasing militant violence in Punjab. Apart from Punjab, the factor of religious revivalism in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan also made a definite impact on the attitudes of people in the Muslim dominated areas. The growing alienation of youth in the state, largely rooted in the economic crisis, found an outlet in communal organisations. Several youth organisations, including the Jamaat-e-Tulba of the Jamaat-e-Islami with an objective of bringing about an Iranian type of solution in Kashmir, were formed around 1980. Subsequently, the Muslim fundamentalist organisations proliferated in the valley and were considerably influenced by the Iranian revolution. Incidentally, it is believed that Ayatollah Khomeini's ancestors lived in Kashmir "before settling in Khomein in Iran." Khomeini in his own poetic compositions also referred to himself as “Hindi” the one from India, a name that his family also used.12

The 1987 Assembly elections, as discussed earlier, also showed an exceptional increase in the participation of fundamentalist organisations. In Kashmir it was manifested in the "Muslim United Front" (MUF). Like the valley, the role of communal organisations was no less significant in the
Buddhist and Hindu dominated areas of the state. The communally surcharged post-election scenario coupled with an intense agitational fervour against the alleged electoral malpractices soon brought the situation to the phase of subversion and violence and eventual breakdown of the political process. The MUF activists in Kashmir became so defiant that they questioned the entire validity of electoral process as a route to real representation. A successful opposition candidate attributed his victory to gun power and said that it was basically the gun which foiled attempts at foul play or rigging in his constituency and helped him to protect his democratic rights. These factors increased discontent against the state and the central authorities. The angry MUF leaders in a post-election public meeting in Srinagar on August 20, 1987 openly questioned the state's accession to India. The slogans "Jabri Nata Tod Do, Kashmir Hamara Chhod Do" (Break the forced relationship, leave our Kashmir) rent the air when some speakers rose to address the people from the rostrum. They denounced the March 1987 poll as farcical. Ghulam Nabi of 'Islamic Students' in his speech emphasised that people of the state now wanted "nothing short of complete independence".

In response to the Chief Minister's warning that the government would sternly deal with the MUF leaders, who preach secession and question the finality of state's accession to India, the MUF leaders said, "we are counting the atrocities being committed on us, and some day we will commence the process of retaliation, beginning with large-scale agitation". By mid-1989 the dominant faction of the MUF (i.e. Jamaat-e-Islami), as discussed earlier, even decided to part with the membership of the state legislature. Later in November 1989, they also boycotted the Parliamentary elections.

The fundamentalist and militant resurgence in the state was stepped up right from the day the MUF was founded on September 2, 1986. It was a
period when the state was ruled by Governor Jagmohan, and the phase of confrontation between the Congress (I) and National Conference (Farooq) ended in a friendly alliance, leading to a coalition government in the state. The MUF neither approved the Governor's rule nor the alliance between the Congress (I) and National Conference. The government was also accused of contemplating changes in the constitutional status of the state and ignoring the interests of Muslims, particularly in admissions to professional colleges and recruitment to government services. The valley and certain other Muslim dominated areas faced frequent agitations and hartals leading to the arrests of several top MUF leaders. The fundamentalist groups, among other, also gave a call to observe hartal in Srinagar in protest against the India-Australia cricket match on September 9, 1986. A poster issued in the name of 'Freedom lovers of Kashmir' said that since Jammu and Kashmir was a disputed territory, the playing of the match in Srinagar was unconstitutional and illegal. Some college students in Srinagar also joined the agitation against the alleged discrimination by the Governor's regime. They damaged the portraits of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his son Dr. Farooq Abdullah besides raising pro-Pakistan slogans. Moreover, in the wake of unrest some members of the minority community were also intimidated and their houses and shops were stoned. One person each was killed in police firing in Srinagar and Baramulla and several others were injured during these disturbances.

The fundamentalists asked the girl students to come to college with 'Duptas'. It also caused resentment among students of a particular community and led to communal clashes. On September 15, 1986 it sparked off violence in the Kishtwar town. The tension continued for months. Shopkeepers were also instructed to keep their business establishments open on Sunday but closed for two hours on every Friday. Similarly, the government employees were asked to offer prayers every day during office
hours and keep two hours off on every Friday for prayers. Some employees hardly returned to office after the Friday prayers.

The growing hold of fundamentalist forces in Kashmir, which gave vent to anti-India and secessionist forces had also encouraged Pakistani rulers to revive the pre-1971 scenario.

All this shows that unrest of one type or the other had become a regular feature in the state. Attention on the emotive matters such as Islamisation was so concentrated that even a small story in the Deccan Herald, allegedly derogatory to the Prophet, sparked off violent demonstrations in Srinagar on December 26, 1986. Such developments proved very conducive to the growing militant upsurge in the Kashmir valley.16

3. The Darbar Move Agitation

When the agitational fervour against the alleged rigging in the Assembly elections of 1987 tended to calm down, there emerged a movement against the ‘truncated Darbar move’ (partial shifting of offices from one capital town to another) in the Jammu region. It was launched against a government order issued on October 7, 1987 aiming to stop the winter movement of 27 departments from the summer capital (Srinagar) to the winter capital, Jammu. These 27 departments, in contravention of the old practice, were to be permanently stationed in the Srinagar town. First the issue of ‘Darbar move’ was included in the Governor's address (budget session 1987) which mentioned that this practice involved an annual expenditure of over Rs. 3.50 crores besides inordinate delay and avoidable loss of manpower. The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, also hinted in April 1987 about some change in the old practice of shifting offices from one capital town to another. This controversial government order was issued
without holding any prior discussions or debates among the people. As a result, the entire Jammu region, which had often made complaints against step-motherly treatment by the Kashmiri leaders, was caught in the throes of an intense agitation spearheaded by the ‘Jammu Bar Association’. Most parties of the region, barring the Congress (I) and National Conference, contributed to the success of the 38-day long agitation. Unofficially, the Congress (I) and National Conference members belonging to the Jammu region were also supporting and sympathizing with the agitation. One Congress (I) leader on unanimity stated that his party at the local level would prefer separation of Jammu and Kashmir rather than giving up the status of the winter capital of the state.¹⁷ Some observers even believed that while the agitation by the Jammu Bar Association had originally the blessings of the Congress (I), the one in Srinagar was master-minded by the National Conference.¹⁸ The government’s order to stop the movement of offices was regarded as yet another act of discrimination against the Jammu region, at the instance of the dominant Kashmiri Muslim leadership. Most regional groups including the Shiv Sena, International Democratic Front, BJP etc. in reaction also raised the issue of a separate state for the Jammu region. The CPI leaders in Jammu also expressed their concern and warned that such a step would affect the unity and territorial integrity of the sensitive region of Jammu. The Shiv Sena Chief, Devinder Shastri, went on fast unto-death in November 1987 against the order. Later the ‘Muslim Action Committee’ of Jammu had also joined the movement. The agitation ended only when the government order was rescinded on November 14, 1987. The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, mainly blamed the RSS and BJP for exploiting the situation and fomenting ethno-regional chauvinism. The Chief Minister, while reacting to the unprecedented upsurge, sarcastically remarked: "Had I known that the order would evoke such reaction, I would have brought the whole of Kashmir to Jammu during winter and the whole of Jammu to Kashmir during summer".¹⁹
Interestingly, the withdrawal of the order in November 1987 instantly sparked off an agitation in the Kashmir valley. The resultant jubilation in Jammu sent a wave of discontent in the valley. A bandh was observed which paralysed life in the valley on November 16, 1987. The Police had to open fire to disperse mobs destroying vehicles, fire engines, offices, etc. Like the Jammu region, the agitation in Kashmir was spearheaded by the Bar Association of Srinagar. The agitators termed the withdrawal of the order as an "abject surrender of Dr. Farooq Abdullah before the Jammu agitators". The MUF also threatened to observe a bandh to press for the ouster of the coalition government which, according to it, had lost credibility among the masses, because the Chief Minister had sold the honour and dignity of the people of Kashmir by mishandling the Darbar move issue. Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq, an ally of the ruling coalition, also supported the Srinagar Bar Association and criticised the intervention by the then Union Home Minister, Mr. Buta Singh, in getting the state government's order rescinded. The agitationists also demanded that Srinagar be made the permanent capital of the state. On November 18, 1987 some portions of the two religious places of Hindus in Srinagar were damaged. The agitation, however, did not lead to any further communal flare up, and after about a week's time it came to an end with the situation returning to normalcy.

In brief, the agitation in Jammu was regional expression of Hindu majority areas against the dominant Kashmiri leadership. Conversely the politics in issuing the order by Dr. Abdullah's government was aimed at placating the Kashmiri Muslims who had shifted their loyalty to the MUF during the March 1987 assembly elections. The detractors of Dr. Farooq Abdullah also alleged that the Darbar move drama was enacted by him to woo the Kashmiris back to the National Conference fold. Thus, if the ruling group had refrained from issuing this controversial order, ethno-regional chauvinism in the two regions would have not gained a new lease of life.
4. The Reasi Agitation

In June 1988, there began another agitation in Reasi which was also built upon the feelings of alleged step-motherly treatment to the Jammu region. The agitation continued for almost three months. Most opposition parties of the region (Janata, Panthers Party, BJP, Shiv Sena), and the Jammu Bar Association, supported the agitation. Traders and other prominent people of the area also extended their full co-operation. It was launched under the supervision and control of the ‘Citizen’s Action Committee’, which first directed an agitation against the decision of shifting the Divisional Office of PWD from the Reasi town to Dharmari, which falls in the Muslim dominated assembly constituency of Gulabgarh represented by the then ruling National Conference. This agitation continued for six days and came to an end on June 7, 1988 when the ‘Citizen’s Action Committee’ was assured by the authorities that the shifting would not be implemented. The six-day agitation was quite intense, during which all the shops in Reasi remained closed and the members of the Action Committee also went on hunger strike. The people of Reasi, a Hindu dominated area, felt that the shifting of offices from Reasi was a prelude to make Dharamari and not Reasi, the headquarters of the newly proposed district recommended by the ‘Wazir Commission’, set up in 1981 to inquire into the recurring problems of alleged discrimination and regional imbalances. They were demanding the status of district headquarters for Reasi town, which it had enjoyed in the pre-Independence period. It was on account of the people’s demand that the ‘Wazir Commission’ recommended the creation of a new district with Reasi as its headquarters.

Since the recommendations of the Wazir Commission remained unimplemented, a strong agitation was mounted in September 1988. The ‘Action Committee’ headed by Rishi Kumar Kaushal, accused the Kashmiri leadership of adopting a "callous attitude" towards the Jammu region. The
people of Jammu were allegedly being treated as second class citizens. The agitation soon got intensified, resulting in arrest of all its key leaders. The movement also flared up in Kishtwar and Samba areas. On October 10, 1988, Jammu city also observed a bandh in support of the Reasi agitation.

The stir came to an end only on November 11, 1988, following an assurance by the Chief Minister that due weightage would be given to Reasi while selecting the headquarters of a new district. He also assured the "Reasi Action Committee" that "steps would be taken to remove imbalances between the Jammu and Kashmir regions, and the recommendations of the Wazir Commission for creating three more districts would be implemented at the earliest". With this the Government released all the 111 persons including 25 who were detained under the Terrorist Act.

Notwithstanding government assurance, the implementation of the recommendation of Wazir Commission appears to be beset with difficulties as it has aroused opposition in the valley. The MUF leaders even maintained that the Wazir Commission was discriminatory as it recommended three new districts for the Jammu region. They in turn demanded three new districts for the Kashmir valley in Shopian, Kulgam and Bandipore. They also warned the authorities not to implement the recommendations of the Wazir Commission till the demands of the Kashmiri people for new districts were met.

The account of events clearly reveals the extent to which the regional and religious cleavages sullied public life in the state. The two main regions were pitted against one another almost intermittently. Political groups representing the dominant community of one region always felt scared of the moves of their counterparts in the other region. At times the inter-regional rivalries coupled with ethno-communal considerations became too
acute to resolve. This inter-regional chauvinism provides a happy hunting ground to fundamentalism which is in full swing at present.

5. Communal Strife in Poonch

On July 21, 1988, the town of Poonch in the Jammu region, and in close proximity to the Line of Actual Control, fell prey to communal tensions. The trouble began when the members of the local ‘Muslim Action Committee’ planted a ‘Chinar’ sapling in the middle of the parade ground on the outskirts of the town. The ground was being commonly used by all communities in the town. Having planted the sapling the members of the ‘Muslim Action Committee’ claimed that it was their old burial ground and should be restored to them. The Hindus, on the contrary, claimed that they had been using the ground for decades for their annual ‘Dussehra’ celebrations. The situation ultimately resulted in group clashes leading to tear-gassing, lathi charge and police firing. Two persons were hit by bullets and several, including policemen, were injured in the lathi charge and brick-batting. Besides this, communal skirmishes, arson, looting and burning of religious places occurred during the two-day rioting. The army was called out and shoot-at-sight orders were issued besides putting the town under curfew. The curfew was relaxed on July 25, the Eid day, but soon had to be re-imposed, as the Muslims, after the Eid prayer reportedly went on rampage. The tension also spread to other towns like Mandi, Mendhar, Surankot etc. In some villages the minority suffered arson and looting. The RSS, BJP and Shiv Sena leaders criticised the state government for failing to safeguard the interests of the minority community. They also accused the police of acting in a partisan manner and harassing the workers of ‘Vishva Hindu Parishad’, RSS, and Shiv Sena.

The government decided to convert the disputed parade ground into a public park open to all communities. Organisations like the ‘Auqaf
Committee’ and the ‘Sanatam Dharam Sabha’ were asked by the District Commissioner to provide documentary proof, if any, in support of their conflicting claims over the ground so that compensation be paid for the land.22


In August 1988, communal situation in the Doda district also became tense following the killing of a cow. When a sub-inspector along with some policemen reached the spot, they were also manhandled. The pistol of the sub-inspector was reportedly snatched away, though it was recovered and restored to him. Further, there arose a controversy on the ownership of the Gautam Nag temple in Anantnag. A group of Muslims led by one of the top MUF leaders claimed a portion of the temple complex on the basis of some graves in that part. The issue was brought to the state Assembly wherein the Chief Minister announced that an enquiry officer would be appointed to settle the issue. The MUF members in the assembly demanded that the portion of the temple complex with the grave yard should immediately be handed over to Muslims. The BJP members on the contrary found no reason for such a dispute as, according to them, the graves were of Hindu infants, who were buried and not cremated as per Hindu rites.23

7. The Ojhari Camp Blast and President Zia’s Death in Plane Crash

On April 11, 1988, the Muslim youths in Srinagar went on forcing shopkeepers to pull down shutters and observe hartal in sympathy with those killed in a blast in an ammunition dump in Pakistan on April 10, 1988. It was discovered that the camp had been secretly used as a depot for ammunition meant for the Afghan rebels.24 The youth took out a mourning procession in Srinagar. The processionists ransacked the Gandhi Memorial College, burnt buses, clashed with police and raised pro-Pakistani slogans.
Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq, among others, also sent a telegram to President Zia-ul-Haq expressing grief and sorrow over the heavy loss of life in the blast. The congregation in his Jamia Masjid offered "Fatiah" for the killed.

The students of the Islamia College reportedly indulged in arson, looting and destruction in the Lal Chowk area. The shopkeepers blamed the police and alleged that the policemen remained inactive during the course of arson and looting. Major loss was incurred by the shopkeepers belonging to the minority community. The BJP, Shiv Sena etc. accused the government of failing to take timely action to curb the situation. The Jammu based Panthers Party of Bhim Singh even demanded resignation of the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah. Begam Abdullah (MP and mother of the then Chief Minister) described the violence as most unfortunate and said that it was the handiwork of a few miscreants who were "enemies of the people." Whereas the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, said that in the blast it was their own ammunition which caused deaths. He further asked the mourners as to whether they did the same when Muslims were killed in Meerut in 1987. He regretted that "for Muslims of Pakistan these elements can have sympathies but not for the Muslims of India". Further, he accused that "Peace was sought to be disturbed to mar the tourist season which was the backbone of the state's economy".

On August 17, 1988 the then Pakistani President, Zia-ul-Haq, was killed alongwith several army officers and important persons in an air crash at Bahawalpur in Pakistan. It was mourned whole valley. According to the then Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, attempts were also made to create tension between Hindus and Muslims and between Shias and Sunnis. The law and order machinery was alerted on account of which the Friday after Gen. Zia's death passed off without any untoward incident But on August 23 five persons were wounded when police opened fire to quell Shia-Sunni violence in Srinagar town. Due to tension the Shias did not hold Muharram
celebrations on August 24, 1988. An impression was created that the Shias in Pakistan felt happy at the death of President Zia-ul-Haq. Some Shias in the valley were also accused of raising anti-Pak and anti-Zia slogans as a result of which on the next Friday, groups of people in Srinagar indulged in violence, in which three persons were killed in police firing. The unruly mobs reportedly looted property of people in Srinagar and Baramulla towns for which the Chief Minister assured a compensation from the budgetary allocations for these districts. The Chief Minister, among others, alleged that Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq had incited people during Friday prayers to create a big trouble for the government. The same Kashmiris who had condemned Zia-ul-Haq as murderer of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1979, now lauded him as a martyr. The Hizbul Mujahideen rather lauded him as ‘Baba-i-Tehrik-i-Jehad-i-Kashmir’ (Father of movement for Jehad for Kashmir). A mosque in Srinagar was also renamed ‘Shaheed Zia-ul-Haq Masjid’. It may be recalled that when Mr. Bhutto was hanged, the Kashmir valley had observed hartal and the Pro-Pak Jamaat men were attacked and their property including orchards, houses etc. were destroyed.

By the end of 1988, the situation in Kashmir had considerably deteriorated. Maulana Iftiqar Ansari, a wealthy Congress (I) Shia leader, now a senior member of Peoples Democratic Party and Srinagar-based Maruti car dealer, while commenting on the situation said "the Jamaat-e-Islami is on the rise. The Maulvis, Wahabis and other groups who are riding on pro-Islamic and anti-centre sentiments are now arrayed against Farooq Abdullah’s secular policies and are ready to strike at the same time." News regarding these untoward incidents in the valley soon traveled to the other parts of the country and it was emphasised that the provision of special status to Jammu and Kashmir be withdrawn and Article 370 be scrapped.

8. The Jammu Riots
On the occasion of Guru Gobind Singh’s birthday on January 13, 1989, Jammu town witnessed the worst mayhem in which 14 persons were killed and over 100 seriously injured in Hindu-Sikh riots. About 100 shops were reportedly looted, 75 were set ablaze and 50 vehicles were burnt by the unruly mobs, consisting of youth who went on the rampage in areas like Purani Mandi, Link road, parade Ground etc. The areas were located close to the central control room of the state police. Yet policemen acted merely as passive spectators. Hardly any known shop of a Sikh was spared by the mob.

Even the shops of Hindus rented to Sikhs and the shops rented by the Sikhs to Hindus in certain areas were set on fire. The major wrath of unruly mobs was confined to areas which happened to be strongholds of Hindu chauvinist organisations. Most of the killings were done by beating with lathis, rods etc. No fire arms were used. The areas where the riots took place were part of the Jammu East Assembly constituency represented by the BJP. The BJP however had no direct hand, but the Shiv Sena was largely involved.

The Guru’s birthday this time came immediately after the execution, of Satwant singh and Kehar Singh of the Indira Gandhi murder case on January 6, 1989. The processionists reportedly raised controversial slogans. The Jammu area being in the close neighbourhood of Punjab, was already upset by the day-to-day incidents in Punjab. The Jammu city itself had experienced some violent incidents and bomb blasts in the Nanak Nagar area. The hanging of four Hindus in Punjab to avenge the execution of satwant Singh and Kehar Singh was also fresh in the minds of the Hinduites in the Jammu city. But by mid-1980’s incidents of violence started taking place in the region causing Hindu-Sikh tensions.

In view of the explosive situation, the administration decided not to allow any procession in the city, but later it yielded to the pressure and
persuasions of Sikh political leaders, who assured that the procession, would remain peaceful. But a group of sword wielding youths gave it a different turn. The provocative slogans made the situation highly inflammable. When the procession reached the Jain Bazar and Link Road, the Hindu counterparts reportedly attacked the processionists with hot water, stones, brickbats, bottles etc. from roof tops. The situation soon turned into ghastly killings, plundering and burning. The residence of the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, was not far off, but he came to know about it only after rioting came to an end. When he saw the smoke he tried to contact the concerned officials, but there was no response from the control room. The Chief Minister also admitted that the ugly incidents took place due to administrative lapse. "I am ashamed of it", he said. He accused the Shiv Sena and said that some people in Kashmir valley were trying to oust him while the riots in Jammu had shaken him. The state government also transferred some key police and administrative officers and appointed a One-man Commission headed by Justice M.R.A. Ansari to investigate the incident. The situation could be controlled by calling out the Army in the town. Subsequently, the violence also spread to some other towns like Udhampur, Reasi, Kathua, Akhnoor, Samba and Hiranagar. In Udhampur the army had to fire on an unruly mob in which one person was seriously injured.

A couple of months later, on the night of August 8, 1989, two scooter borne Sikh youths opened fire in Gandhi Nagar and Shastri Nagar areas of the Jammu city in which five persons reportedly lost their lives. It was followed by curfew and deployment of police paramilitary forces to prevent any counter violence in the city. People in certain other towns and rural areas also clashed with the police and attacked houses of Sikhs.

The political climate in the state right from the beginning of 1989 was marred by intermittent clashes and conflicts of communal and subversive
nature. The communal killings of January 13, 1989 were followed by observance of "black-day" in Kashmir on the Republic Day for which the call was given by various militant groups viz. People's League, Mahazi-e-Azadi, Jamaat-e-Tulba, Islamic Students League and JKLF. It was also backed by the Jamaat-e-Islami. They hoisted Pakistani flags and raised anti-India slogans. It disturbed Dr. Farooq Abdullah, who on January 30, 1989 said, "I cannot show my face outside the valley, if you cannot fight these anti-national and disruptive elements, I shall fight them alone". He also asked the people to give up dreams, if any, of an independent Kashmir or of becoming a part of Pakistan. "On one side is a nation of 80 crore people, and the other 12 crore people. We should not give any body a chance to label us anti-national".

Further, on February 11, 1989 a call was given for the Kashmir Bandh in connection with the fifth execution anniversary of Maqbool Bhatt who was hanged in Tihar Jail in 1984 on the charges of having murdered a state CID man and a bank official in Baramulla. The Bandh call was supported by the Awami Action committee of Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq and the people's conference of Abdul Gani Lone.

9. The Satanic Verses

One person was killed and over 100 including 25 policemen were injured in police firing, stone pelting and clashes in Srinagar on February 13, 1989 when groups of youth protested against Salman Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses'. Srinagar city observed a complete hartal against the 'Verses'. A bomb was also placed in an insurance company's office which was however defused before it could go off. Again on February 17, a hartal was observed against the 'Satanic Verses' in which five persons were reportedly killed in police firing. The hartal spread to several other towns of the valley in reaction to this. On February 28, over 100 persons were injured when the
young men fought a ding dong battle with the police in Srinagar city. One of the prominent leaders of the ruling National Conference also condemned the central Congress (I) leaders, an ally of his party, for criticising Ayatollah Khomeini's stand regarding the 'Verses'. He said, "Ayatollah is a respected leader of Muslims and we accept his Fatwa". In addition, one of the MUF MLAs in the State Assembly on this issue even took-off his coat and advanced menacingly towards a Congress(I) legislator.

10. Bill on Shrines

On March 27, 1989, the State Assembly rejected a Private Member's Bill seeking a ban on the misuse of religious places by political parties and anti-social elements. It was "rejected by voice vote at the introductory stage itself". On its rejection the mover of the bill stated that it was strange that instead of making the law applicable to the state where religious institutions were being misused by separatist forces, the state government chose to oppose the Bill. In 1971 there were as many as 19,265 places of worship in different parts of the state. Thus for every 1000 houses, there were 19 places of worship in the state. The Law Minister while opposing the bill said "We already have laws to deal effectively with such a situation, and there is no need to enact fresh legislation." However, the reality was that the religious shrines played a crucial role in building up militancy in the valley. Besides sheltering the militants, Imams, Maulvis etc. also worked as ‘main recruiters’ of boys in several areas.

11. Communal Violence in Rajouri

Violence erupted in Rajouri town between Muslims and Hindus on March 22, 1989 in which a boy was killed in police firing. The trouble began when some youth of Muslim community tried to stop the procession taken out for celebrating the ‘Holi’ festival. Some people received bullet
injuries in the exchange of fire between the two warring groups. Several were injured in brickbatting. Stray incidents reportedly continued for three days. The situation could be controlled by imposing curfew and calling out army to assist the civil authorities. The BJP and Hindu groups, among others, accused the Kashmir police of partisan attitudes. One sub-inspector of police was allegedly inciting Muslims against Hindus. Moreover, some Muslim policemen reportedly revolted against the Superintendent of Police, A.K. Bhan, a Kashmiri Pandit. The BJP MLA, Prof. Chaman Lal Gupta, raised this issue in the State Assembly and denounced the police for arresting members of a particular community. The curfew was relaxed after three days in Rajouri and the army was replaced by the BSF.

12. Agitation in Ladakh

Ladakh “is one of the last places where Tibetan Buddhism continues to be practised as a living religion, as it has been for a thousand years; in landscape it probably resembles Tibet more than does either Sikkim or Bhutan”. There has been no caste distinction in Ladakh and racially it "exhibits a blending of the Indo-Iranian and the Mongoloid stocks". It is only recently that this land of peaceful lamas has been overtaken by communal clashes and violence as the Buddhists started feeling persecuted under the alleged Kashmiri domination. They raised demands such as Ladakh's autonomy vis-à-vis Kashmir, status of a federating unit in the state’s constitution, direct central rule or union territory status etc. It widened the rift between the Buddhists and Muslims on communal lines. Due to the growing communal consciousness, the educated youth and religious leaders on either side have become intolerant. It has also resulted in communal violence between Buddhists and others in 1988-89.
To begin with, in May 1988, the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) launched an agitation against the Christian Missionary Church by alleging that about 50 Buddhist children had been forcibly taken away by the Mizo Jasuit Mission from Leh to Srinagar for converting them to Christianity. The poor parents of these children, according to the Ladakh Buddhist Association, were offered money by the mission. Besides this, the Ladakh Buddhist Association also reacted violently to the marriage of a Christian boy with a Buddhist girl. Prem Paul (25) married a 21 year old Buddhist girl in a Srinagar Court on March 30, 1988. On May 16, Prem Paul's house in Leh had a bomb explosion damaging its kitchen wall. This led to spread of panic among the Christians in Leh district. The stir continued for a couple of days. On June 14, it climaxed when the entire district observed a bandh. They also demanded ban on a book "Skyabyon" written by Rev. Stephen which allegedly hurt the Buddhist sentiments. Some of the accused in the bomb explosion case were reported to be near relatives of a former J&K Minister, a Buddhist.

The Ladakh Buddhist Association was already involved in an agitation which was launched in the post-1987 Assembly polls to press for the demands relating to internal autonomy for Ladakh, grant of Scheduled Tribe status, and end of monopoly over the tourist trade by the non-Ladakhis, particularly the Kashmiri Muslims. By July 1989, the agitation got focused on the issue of "Union Territory" status for Ladakh. Their distrust and disillusionment with the Kashmiri leadership became deep. They felt that their region was grossly discriminated against ever since 1947.

Since the agitation was hostile to Kashmiri Muslims, a clash took place between the Buddhist and Muslim youth on July 7, 1989 at a cinema hall in Leh town. It resulted in large scale arson and violence. Bombs were hurled and shops set ablaze. Some taxies owned by Kashmiri Muslims were damaged. Violence also flared up in the villages where the Buddhist boys,
reportedly, forcibly converted some Muslim families. A 51 year old Muslim teacher in Tagar Sakti village was forced to temporarily accept Buddhism before being rescued and brought to Leh. He said, “It was a terrible feeling. I will never recover from it”. Similarly, a 30 year old Muslim lady said "They chased us with sticks and axes. We ran into the mountains and then crossed the Indus at night to reach Leh after three days. Our house was set ablaze". Her family along with others was sheltered in the Leh refugee camps. The Muslims were also put under "Hooka Pani Band" (Social boycott) by the Buddhists in the Leh region.

Again, on August 27, 1989 violence erupted in which three agitators were killed in police firing. The police also allegedly barged into Buddhist houses and entered their shrines. From then onwards began a phase of curfews, bandh, courting arrests and strikes by Buddhist employees. The Buddhist leaders compared it with the "Operation Blue Star" and accused the Kashmir police of being communal. Inter-community tensions also resulted in the migration of minority people to safer places. In Kargil the "Kargil Action Committee" countered the Buddhist demand for the Union Territory status. The minority Buddhists faced retaliation there. The Buddhists were not allowed to construct a Gompa in Kargil. The Muslim majority even refused to earmark a ground for cremation of Buddhists. Some Buddhists migrated to Leh for safety. Apart from Kargil, the Buddhist students studying in Srinagar returned to their homes. So much so that the Tibetan woollen garment sellers in Srinagar had to put up the sign boards "Tibetan refugees, not Ladakhis". The Muslim agitationists in Kargil received sympathy and support of the Kashmiri Muslims whereas the Hindus in Jammu sympathized with the Buddhists.

The Buddhists during the course of their agitation raised slogans like "Save Ladakh, Save India", "Free Ladakh from Kashmir" etc. They also declared that they would not enter into any dialogue, unless it was held
either at Delhi or in Leh in the presence of a Central observer. The agitation, however, began to subside after October 7, 1989 when the Central Government agreed to grant scheduled tribe status to eight tribal communities (Balti, Beda, Boto, Brokpa, Changpa, Karra, Mon and Purigpa) inhabiting Leh and Kargil districts. The then Union Home Minister, Buta Singh, also hinted at granting the status of an autonomous district council for Ladakh on the pattern of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council. The Government, however, did not make any commitment on the Union territory status.

With the grant of Scheduled Tribe Status the agitation calmed down temporarily. The Buddhists gathered in a rally in Leh demanding an end to Kashmiri domination again in February, 1991. The LBA leaders in the rally "declared that they would settle for nothing less than Union Territory status for Ladakh". Interestingly, the Bhartiya Janta Party, which has been a non-entity in the Ladakh region, also participated in the rally. Krishan Lal Sharma, the then Vice President of the party said, "Ladakh should be separated from Kashmir".41

In August 1991, the LBA called for a complete shutdown (bandh) in Ladakh and took to direct confrontation with the government to free Ladakh from Kashmir".42 The discontent was so deep that the Buddhists in Leh observed social and economic boycott of the Muslims for three years or so. On May 11, 1992 the LBA took out a procession in Leh in which Thupstan Chhewang, President of LBA, declared that nothing short of an autonomous Hill Council for Ladakh on the pattern of North-East Hill Council would be acceptable to Ladakhis. Subsequently, the state conceded, in principle, the demand of Ladakh Buddhists for setting up a separate Leh Development Council in order to ensure proper development of the region. The agitationists accused Kashmiri Muslims of continuous exploitation of the Ladakh region. The LBA, while accusing the Kashmiri Muslims, often
alleged that they had been made into rich contractors or businessmen by the government by granting licenses as whole-salers etc. The Buddhists blamed the Kashmiri leaders for ignoring the interests of the Ladakh region. Some Buddhists even perceived that if the Chinese had not invaded India in 1962 they would have been without the roads and the airfield.43

On the political front too, the Buddhists felt sore as no MLA from Ladakh was included in the Council of Ministers for long. The practice of a separate minister for Ladakh under a Ladakhi minister was also abolished in early 1980s. The state administration, as alleged by the Buddhist Association, also failed to pay due respect to the socio-cultural traditions and the composite character of the Ladakhi society. Some non-Buddhist bureaucrats and businessmen allegedly converted their Buddhist wives to Islam after marrying them. These conversions proved "jarring to the even tenor of Ladakhi society".44 Most Buddhists perceived that it was an attempt to wipe out the followers of Buddhism.

The Buddhist youth felt that they were being discriminated against in the recruitment for state services. The LBA asserted that in Leh they constituted 86 per cent of the population but had only 49.79 per cent of the jobs. Whereas the 12 per cent Muslims in the Leh district got half the seats in Medical and Engineering Colleges.45 After the bifurcation of Kargil and Leh, the Muslim areas, according to LBA, had received far greater attention than the Buddhist dominated Leh. They also accused the Kashmiri politicians, civil servants and technocrats of pocketing the central funds earmarked for the development of Ladakh.

Inadequate share in state services, lack of development, increasing dominance of outsiders in business, tourism etc. and the fear of "Islamisation of Ladakh" were the major issues used to mobilise people for obtaining union territory status for Ladakh. The co-operation extended by
the head of monasteries and other Lamas also ensured greater participation of the Buddhist masses.

The aforesaid developments in Ladakh show a complete departure from the region's past history as there was hardly any communal consciousness among the people of this area in the past. In fact, factors such as ethno-regional chauvinism, misuse of shrines, violence etc. were alien to the peaceful land of Ladakh.

The above account of events clearly reveals that the state in recent years has been subjected to intense communal polarization. All the three regions in the state have been equally affected by ethno-regional resurgence. The Buddhists in Ladakh boycotted the Muslims on socio-economic and political considerations; temples were desecrated and ‘Holi’ processions attacked in Muslim dominated areas and the Hindus and Sikhs clashed on ‘Gurpurb’ day in Jammu.

Politicians in times of crises have mostly acted as Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. The age-old traditions of communal amity and peace have fast crumbled. The state has fallen prey to multiple stereotypes such as Jammu vs Valley, Valley vs Ladakh, Leh vs Kargil, Reasi vs Dharmari, Jammu vs Poonch, Hindu vs Muslim, Buddhist vs Muslim and Hindu vs Sikh. This has provided a fertile ground for the growth of militant upsurge and subversive violence supported from across the border.

The state at this crucial juncture was bereft of a leadership of the stature of Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and Ghulam Mohammad Saddique to face such an alarming situation. Dr. Farooq Abdullah, though enlightened and secular, lacked the ability to fill up the vacuum created by the demise of his father in 1982.
Most of his rivals tried to fish in troubled water. The late Mirwaiz Maulvi Mohammad Farooq on March 11, 1989, for example, said that the crisis in Kashmir valley was the consequence of Dr. Farooq Abdullah's incapacity to rule. Like him, most opposition leaders who earlier cried hoarse against rigging, now stopped-up their demand for the dismissal of Dr. Abdullah's government. Ghulam Mohammad Shah said that Dr. Abdullah had lost the moral right to govern. An independent MLA, Mir Mustafa, even demanded the imposition of Governor's rule in the state. Bhim Singh in April 1989 decided to sit on a 48-hour fast outside the Raj Bhawan for the immediate dismissal of Dr. Farooq Abdullah's government. Mufti Mohammad Sayed emphasised that Dr. Farooq Abdullah had proved to be a liability, who had trampled all democratic processes and institutions under his feet and compromised the Nation's unity and integrity. All this not only helped the ultras to consolidate their position but also accorded legitimacy to their actions, particularly among the Muslim masses in the valley. The inter-group and intra-elite no-holds-barred battles, communal resurgence, growing credibility gap etc. totally alienated the state system from the masses. It was not that only the aforesaid events that nurtured the current crisis, the state, in fact, also remained impregnated with such fissipерous tendencies right from 1947 onwards.

The Militant Violence

The militant violence, spearheaded by the JKLF men, was first perpetrated on July 31, 1988 with the exploding of a bomb in the central telegraph office, Srinagar. Next day, on August 1, 1988, another bomb was exploded in the Srinagar Club. Again on August 31, 1988, a powerful bomb exploded in an empty bus at Anantnag bus stand killing one person and injuring two who were standing near the bus. The militants mainly struck on empty vehicles, official buildings and uncrowded places. But gradually it turned to large-scale destruction, killings, kidnapping etc.. The Kalashnikov
culture boomed on all sides in the valley. For this, the then Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, at first accused Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq and others like his estranged brother-in-law, Ghulam Mohammad Shah, the ‘Jana Morcha’ of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, MUF etc. But subsequently he came round to the view that Pakistan was encouraging subversion in Kashmir.

By the end of 1989 violence had acquired ominous proportions. The militants through frequent explosions, killings, kidnapping and bandhs rendered the entire state machinery dispirited and demoralized. The incompetence and inefficiency of the state police was fully exposed. The militants mostly attacked the Central Government concerns, security forces (Army, CRPF, BSF, Police etc.), VIP houses, airport, bridges, roads, transformers, radio stations, post and telegraph offices, press, schools, banks, party offices, liquor vends, video parlours, cinemas etc. Another aim was to incapacitate the state and disrupt its financial and communication infrastructure. State's retaliatory measures against them on most occasions boomeranged as the elusive militants would disappear after provoking, leaving the people of the area to bear the brunt of security forces.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah's image was tarnished by the use of force against the militants in the valley. He became a major target, particularly after January 8, 1990 when the security forces shot dead 13 persons and injured over 100 to quell mob violence. Strikes and bandhs were organized to protest against police repression. The militants retaliated and hanged a CRPF jawan, killed three Central Intelligence Bureau (IB) officials. Senior officers of the Kashmir Police were also intimidated and their families attacked. The new central government under V. P. Singh, instead of helping him, had used it as a handle against Dr. Farooq Abdullah. On January 19, 1990 a new Governor (Jagmohan) was appointed and the Dr. Farooq
Abdullah resigned from the Chief Ministership on the same day. The state's administration was thus left to the Governor.

However, contrary to expectations, the new governor failed to combat the growing menace of violence. Instead it became more intense and widespread. Moreover, the excessive use of force had alienated most of the Muslims from his regime. He rejected all hitherto 'soft' and 'permissive' attitude of the state and decided to "stand firm against the browbeating and bullying tactics". But his hardline option proved disastrous. People frequently mobbed the streets and his detractors showered on him epithets such as "Hallaqu", "Chengiz Khan", "anti-Kashmiri", "anti-Muslim" etc. The other constraint which hampered his efforts was his being a non-Muslim. In addition, the extremely fluid political situation in the country in 1989-90 further marred his activities. His entire drive against militancy provided grist to the propaganda mill of the militants and their Pakistani supporters. In fact, conditions at the time of his joining had completely deteriorated. Information furnished to the Parliament revealed that the phenomenon of violence had become serious even prior to the kidnapping of Dr. Rubiaya Sayeed on December 8, 1989. As many as 1600 violent incidents, including 351 bomb explosions, took place in the state in the year 1989. By August 1989, the militants, with one anonymous call "could order a complete bandh for nearly two weeks". Even a Congress minister dared not defy it. The civic staff too saw safety in switching off street lights on August 15 to observe black day and some high-ranking officials absented themselves from the flag-hoisting ceremony by the Chief Minister. The situation had become so volatile and explosive that within hours of his joining, searches had to be conducted for which Mr. Jagmohan mainly blamed Dr. Farooq Abdullah. He alleged that the searches and related actions of January 20-21, 1990 were actually ordered by Dr. Abdullah's regime on the very first day of his arrival. Further, while highlighting the
gravity of the situation, he wrote that "between January 1 and January 19, 1990 there were as many as 319 violent acts — 21 armed attacks, 114 bomb blasts, 112 arson and 72 incidents of mob violence". All this, however, does not mean that Jagmohan can be absolved of all responsibility.

The killings, arrests and atrocities by the state forces earned him all round condemnation in the valley. The militants gained considerable sympathy from the masses. It led to a mass upsurge of people against the repression by the police and security forces. Many 'boys' reportedly fled across the border fearing crackdown, shoot-out, torture etc. and took to arms training. Moreover, lots of people including women "instead of running away had started converging on the streets and braved the bullets of security forces". The processionists shouted for freedom and damaged public property worth crores of rupees. Religious shrines were also used to prompt people to join the movement. From every corner the slogans of freedom from India were raised. As a result, lots of Muslims in the valley got alienated and started supporting the cause of militants. Thus the number of militants also increased manifold.

The Governor could have achieved some success only with the cooperation of the local people and officials in civil and police services, but alienated all of them. A discerning commentator has observed; “The instruments of administration have virtually crossed over to the militants. Senior government servants talk so critically about India's enslavement of Kashmir that it is not possible to argue with them beyond a point. What is true of other departments of the government is equally true of the police". The Governor himself said that the government officials refused to carry out orders and even the Advocate-General did not appear before the court to represent the state. The militants had also asked the officials to "revolt against the government. Any strict action of suspension, dismissal, warning etc. led to strikes, fasts, marches, bandhs, demonstrations and demands for
intervention of world bodies and human rights organisations. More
dependence on para-military forces under the ‘menacing clouds of chaos and
confusion’ further caused a variety of problems including excesses,
suppression, atrocities, molestation, rapes etc. A four-member civil liberty
team on behalf of the "Committee for Initiative on Kashmir", though it
became very controversial among the Kashmiri Hindu migrants, claimed to
have obtained facts about excesses and atrocities including rape of women
by the para-military forces in the valley. Whether the committee's findings
were authentic or not, its report generated considerable anger against the
security forces in the Kashmir valley.

The situation came to such a pass that the security forces had to fire at
the funeral procession of Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq, who was killed at his
residence by three unidentified youths, on May 21, 1990. Eye witnesses
confirmed that the Mirwaiz's poll-bearers were gunned down, but another
set of volunteers prevented the body from falling to the ground. Three
bullets hit again to the dead body of Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq. Whatever
factors may have forced the security forces to fire at the procession; this
incident totally discredited the state apparatus and strengthened the hands of
militants enormously.

It was mainly on account of this incident that Jagmohan had to resign
as the Governor. The ruling and the opposition members both in the
Parliament made a scathing attack on the Governor. Only a few groups such
as the BJP, Shiv Sena, etc. felt sore when Jagmohan was ousted. These
groups also organised a bandh on May 26, 1990 in the Hindu dominated
towns of the Jammu region against his ouster. At some places the offices of
the Congress (I), N.C. and CPI (M) were also reportedly ransacked by the
agitators.
The change of Governor however, did not bring any significant change in the situation. Despite massive killing and arrests of militants (as many as 700 militants killed and over 5,000 arrested between January 1990 and May 1991) there was no respite from violence. On occasions, the toll of violence rather escalated. Sometimes even old mistakes were repeated. In May 1991, the security forces allegedly fired at a "Namaz-e-Janaza" at Khanyar in Srinagar when people had gathered to bury four dead bodies of civilians. The firing took a toll of 15 lives. In 1992, a large number of people, including women, demonstrated against an alleged gang rape by the army personnel. Earlier in December 1991, five women of the village Hillar Bahi were allegedly raped by the security forces. The trouble further brewed against the authorities on the issue of the dead bodies of 73 suspected militants killed in a clash with the security forces along the border on May 5-6, 1991. These dead bodies were buried right away by the security forces without giving them for identification and burial to their relatives. Again on June 11, 1991 in a shoot-out at Chhota Bazar, 28 persons were killed and over two dozen injured. Likewise, on 12 October 1990, in Handwara 10 persons were killed and over 65 houses set ablaze by the security forces. In another incident, worst of its kind in Kashmir, in Sopore town on January 6, 1993 over 44 persons were killed and property worth crores of rupees destroyed. Over 200 shops and houses were gaited razed to the ground in retaliation. According to eye-witness accounts, the militants fired and launched a grenade attack on the picket of BSF in Sopore town. Two BSF men were seriously injured (one of them later succumbed to his injuries) and a couple of weapons were seized from the picket. The BSF men reacted by using all their weapons against the people in the area. "Knowing that a large number of people were indoors in the area they set a house and a shop on fire. The fire spread to the neighbouring houses and shops. People were trapped inside and could not come out because the BSF men continued to indiscriminate fire." The South Asian Human Rights Documentation
Centre (SAHRDC) claimed to have obtained affidavits stating that BSF Jawans threw pieces of rags dipped in kerosene or petrol to set the structures ablaze. In yet another incident in April 1993 several persons were killed and over 250 shops were set ablaze at Lal Chowk (Srinagar).

The then Governor, Gresh Chandrer Saxena, constituted a one-man independent inquiry into the incident of Sopore and suspended three inspectors besides shifting two platoons of BSF. He also announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs. one lakh each to the kin of those killed in the tragedy and 50 percent, subject to a maximum of Rs. one lakh, of the estimated loss to property to those rendered homeless.

Such incidents kept on repeating from time to time and fueled anger against the security forces. The militant outfits, on such occasions, organised mourning precessions, bandhs, strikes and stepped up firing at security forces. People belonging to different walks of life, including government employees (mainly Muslims), teachers, Bar Association members etc. also followed suit. Efforts have also been made to draw the attention of the world bodies including the United Nations and various human rights organisations. Srinagar and most other towns have witnessed frequent militant sponsored demonstrations against the violations of human rights.

The authorities have also been accused of custodial killings and "catch-and-kill" policy. This created greater sympathy and support for the militants. As a matter of fact, protracted use of security forces has been counter-productive and has had dangerous consequences. One fall-out of this was that the inward looking Kashmiri Muslims, including localised Muslim middle class, which so far favoured the National Conference in the valley, started sympathising with the militants. Even the framework of Article 370 seemed inadequate to them. Liberation from India emerged as the dominant ideology particularly in the years 1990 and 1991. People's
anger against the authorities not only came as a shot in the aim of the militants, but also helped the rulers across the border in intensifying their anti-India lobbying by accusing her of holding Kashmir by force.

**Politics of Human Rights Violations**

Indian Response to Intermittent violation of human rights at the hands of militants and security forces has become a major problem in Kashmir since 1989. Lakhs of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims inhabiting Kashmir flee the valley since January 1990. Many people in Kashmir have been kidnapped, and killed for rupees. According to Kashmiri Pandits, "More than 25,000 houses of their community have been occupied and over 4,000 set ablaze by pro-Pakistani Kashmiri militants".\(^{58}\)

All those who oppose the liberating movement were targeted and even Muslims were not spared. Frequent attacks on security forces, particularly in crowded places, caused the loss of precious lives in cross-firing and destruction of property in valley and other Muslim dominated regions of Jammu.

On various occasions the security forces also frenziedly involved in killings, destruction and harassment of innocent people. Some how, the human rights organizations have focused mainly on the human rights violations by the security forces especially in the valley. Such reports were also utilized by the Pakistani rulers to carry out their anti-India propaganda and to get maximum support from the out side world. Most politicians in Pakistan have tried to turn Kashmir into an Islamic issue. As a result, forums like the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), formed in 1970, had to adopt pro- Pakistan resolutions in its conferences. On April 30, 1993, The OIC in its meeting in Islamabad maintained that what was happening in Kashmir was a legitimate struggle for self-determination. The OIC’s
frequent support to Pakistan’s stand on Kashmir has pushed this issue into the forefront of the Islamic agenda.\textsuperscript{59}

The Iranian President, Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, during his visit to Pakistan on September 7, 1992, declared “Kashmir an Islamic issue”. The Saudi Prince, Al Faisal, also demanded solution of the Kashmir problem on the basis of the UN resolution.\textsuperscript{60} Some British labour leaders such as Gerald Kaufman had also favoured independence for Kashmir. Apart from Britain, former U.S. Ambassador to Indian, Senator Daniel Moynihan, in May 1991 stated that Kashmir was “infact a separate country”. But the Government of Indian at the same time denounced this as a blatant intervention in its internal affairs.

The Human rights organizations were blamed for ignoring the atrocities committed by various militant outfits in Kashmir. The then prime minister, P.V. Narshimha Rao, came down heavily on human rights organizations accusing them of not raising their voice against the killing of innocent persons by militants. Further, he said that “wild and totally false” allegations were being orchestrated against the security forces to demoralize them and sap their courage.

The official reaction to some human rights organizations such as “Asia Watch” or “Amnesty International” many be summarized in the words of then Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, who argued, “we do not need outsiders to come in and preach about democracy and constitutionally guaranteed rights. We not only have a free press and judiciary but also an active human rights movement in the country”.\textsuperscript{61}

It needs to be mentioned that doubts about the reports of various human rights organizations have persisted right from the very beginning. Not only these have been criticized by the governmental authorities, but by
the Kashmiri migrants and the major political parties in the state have also denounced them for being totally partial in their approach. The leaders of Kashmiri migrants accused the Amnesty International of refusing to entertain their plea of human rights abuses and brutality at the hands of the militants.\(^{62}\)

Nevertheless, some excesses have been committed by the security forces for which the para-military and police personnel have faced punitive action from time to time. According to the then Home Minister S.B. Chavan, many police men have been downgraded and their service terminated on this basis. However, the issue of excesses has often been blown up to widen the gulf between the state authorities and the Muslim masses. The excesses have washed away the gains achieved through concerted efforts by launching various socio-economic progress aimed at winning the hearts of Muslim masses in the state. Free elections, human rights and judicial reforms are basically non-existent when it comes to Kashmir. The Indian government has refused to allow Kashmiris to determine their future and believes the state elections are democratic. Rather these elections are merely formalities on the part of India. Human rights have been blatantly ignored especially in the past decades. Houses are routinely barged into, women and children are raped, and men are taken into custody indefinitely for being “suspected” to have ties with the militant groups. There are routine checkups on the roads, and curfews are given at any moment. Any one who breaks the curfew is shot. The people live in constant fear of the military.

In view of all this, efforts should be made to prevent any violation of human rights. The guilty should immediately be brought to book under various laws such as TADA, NSA, PSA, etc., should not be allowed to provide any immunity to the violators of human rights.
Table 3.1
Patterns of Terrorist Violence, 1998-2002

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Note: *Provisional Figures, to December 25.
Source: Union Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi.
Table 3.2

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Note: *Provisional Figures, to December 25.
Source: Union Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi.
Amarnath Land Row

It all started over a piece of land. It began in May 2008 when the government of Jammu and Kashmir ordered the transfer of 40 acres of forest land to the Shri Amaranth Shrine Board -- a conglomerate of about 30 Hindu groups that manages the annual Hindu pilgrimage to Amarnath, a remote cave deep in the Himalayas near Kashmir for the construction of temporary shelters for the Amarnath travelers.

The order sparked violent protests in the Muslim-dominated Kashmir valley, where politicians in favor of separating Kashmir from India considered the transfer a loss of territory to Hindu outsiders, and raised the specter of Hindu encroachment on the Muslim majority in the state.

They created violent protests against the transfer, and as things went out of control, the state government backtracked and reversed the transfer order. While the Kashmir valley calmed down, the Hindus in Jammu saw the revocation of the order as a disregard of the minority's interests within the state, and the Hindu-dominated area erupted in large-scale violence that took an even more serious turn.

Hindu militants not only rioted across the district, but the protesters also created an economic blockade that cut off the Muslim-dominated Kashmir valley from the rest of India.

With the situation going from bad to worse, it was time for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to intervene. He called for an all-party meeting on August 20, 2008 to come up with "an immediate initiative for a dialogue to facilitate a suspension of the agitation and a peaceful resolution."

But that meeting failed to reach a consensus and ended in a stalemate. And while protests refuse to die down, the situation in the region, many say,
has never been so bad. Not only has the region already seen 40 deaths but worse, the region has come under renewed terror attacks.

Terrorists struck Jammu on Wednesday, storming into the city, killing five and holding six people hostage. The crisis was eventually brought to an end after police managed to kill the terrorists in an 18-hour gun battle, but not before it resulted in two more deaths of innocents. According to authorities, even though the rest of India has seen intermittent terrorist attacks, this was the first in Jammu and Kashmir in six years.

Admittedly, the region has never been a peaceful territory in the last 60 years, but according to Vijay Sazawal, international coordinator of the Indo-American Kashmir Forum, an advocacy organization for Kashmiri Hindus, the region has never seen a communal uprising like this emerging from within either. Of course, communal passions have erupted in the region many times in the past, the last major one was seen in 1990, when the region experienced "a dangerous unleashing of this passion" but that, too, according to Sazawal, was "mostly orchestrated by Pakistani-trained operatives."

Kashmir dispute is a political dispute though its roots are in partition of the British India, which took place in 1947 on religious lines with formation of two nation states, India and Pakistan. India described Kashmir as face of its secularism and Pakistan called it an unfinished agenda of the partition. But as for as the kashmiris are concerned, they have all along fought for their rights seeking right of self-determination as guaranteed by the United Nations in its resolutions, despite the partition on the religious lines being root cause of Kashmir problem.

It may seem that the history and geography of Kashmir and the religious affiliations of its people present an ideal type recipe for bitterness
& animosity. But it is not so. The Hindus & Muslims of Kashmir have lived in harmony since the 13th century when Islam emerged as a major religion in Kashmir. The Rishi tradition of Kashmiri Hindus and Sufi-Islamic way of life of Kashmiri Muslims not only co-existed, they complemented each other and also created a unique ethnicity in which Hindus and Muslims visited the same Shrines and venerated the same saints. But the present turmoil has clearly shattered myth of Jammu and Kashmir as a single entity. The deep-rooted religious and social divide prevailing in the region in entirely exposed now. Political gambits have caused a colossal damage to the economy, education system and social fabric of Jammu and Kashmir. The once tranquil and gorgeous land has turned into a valley of fear. It has turned into a land of orphans and widows, a land of grave yards. After frequently witnessing violent deaths and funerals of near and dear ones, the people here have lost their normal human beings. Violence has affected all sections of life. Human values are so devalued that a few killings hardly shock anybody. Students have lost their inquisitiveness to learn. Teachers lost their enthusiasm to teach. To visit homes of friends and relatives people has to prove their innocence before security personnel. Everyone has to carry an identity card, which is regarded almost an oxygen. The presence of army and security forces in every nook and corner has developed a feeling of confinement and repression. Armed conflicts and disputes have halted the economic development of the state. There is very little hope for an exuberant future left over for the ordinary people of Jammu and Kashmir. Time after time, people's trust worthiness has been used by fraudulent leaders for their own wicked causes. Who will tell them that division is greater a problem, not a solution. Trust is the most politicized commodity in today Jammu and Kashmir. Truth is perilous because it badly damages the vicious interests of the various players in this unfortunate state.
It seems that the urge for an identity, which has been recognized by postmodern social scientists as one of the basic human urges, is as strong a motivating force in the political behaviour of the people of the State as it is for those living anywhere else. An elementary knowledge of the identities of the people of Kashmir is therefore indispensable for understanding the problems they are faced with. The most important fact in this context about the State is that it has far more kinds of diversities than any other State of India. For instance, followers of almost all major religions of the world live in Jammu and Kashmir. Its racial composition included Aryans, pre-Aryans, and Dardic and Tibeto-Mongolian races. Its Constitution recognizes eight regional languages, and the number of dialects spoken is much larger.

If the interests and urges of a people with such diverse identities could be reconciled, the diversities themselves would have been a great source of strength for the State. But the failure to recognize and reconcile them became its biggest weakness. First, these diversities are not widely known. Secondly, there has been an overemphasis on only one kind of identity - the one based on religion.

Nobody can deny the role of religion and religion-based identities in shaping human behaviour. But no identity is monolithic, and there are other identities that cut across religious identities and sometimes play a more decisive and healthier role than the religious identity in determining this behaviour. The move to alter the status of Jammu and Kashmir without evolving a system that can accommodate its diversities in a democratic manner will only heighten communal and regional tension and add to the complexity of the Kashmir problem.

India has, far too long, tolerated violent dissent in the name of democracy. This has not only widened the separatist spaces in J&K, it has also made moderate and secular politics inadequate for handing radical
forces. The hitherto hard approach of the Indian administration, therefore, must be brought to an end, and the necessity now is to use a far greater positive approach than what has been used so far, to promote peace and democracy in the region.
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