Conclusion

The year 1947 is important year for India and Pakistan. It was in this year that India got independence from British, though with partition. Pakistan emerged on the world map as a new nation. They got, for which they had fought. But for Kashmir the long years of slavery was renewed and recharged for unlimited time to come. Kashmiris also went to welcome freedom, but they were told:

“Freedom, being of heavenly birth,
Cannot move from door to door.”

This study with ample sources affirms that that the movement that was launched against the Dogra State was not communal. The Muslims, who constituted the sheer majority of the total population of the State, were lagging behind in every field and were governed like dumb driven cattle. They were discriminated by the Dogra Maharajas for a simple reason that they were followers of a religion different to the Dogras. It is therefore not surprising that the political movement Kashmiris launched in 1930’s under Shaikh Abdullah would take the religious colour and mosques and shrines were used as platforms. Initially started for the uplift of the Muslims of the State, the movement, under Shaikh Abdullah, 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.

The origins of the present tragic struggle can, in a sense, be traced back to 1939. 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. As the previous chapters have shown, the conversion of the Muslim Conference into National Conference was a blunder on part of Shaikh Abdullah. He transformed the Muslim Conference to accommodate non-Muslims, i.e. elite section. From the first chapter it becomes clear that the non-Muslim elites had associated themselves with the Dogra rule which had protected their religious and economic rights. As was expected, the non-Muslims did not join the National Conference which they knew, being part of the state, was against their
interests. But worst was that Shaikh lost his close friends and comrades who were not in favour of conversion.

It was this division of the Muslims that in 1947, Kashmir could not decide its fate. Shaikh Abdullah being the most popular leader of Kashmiris never tried to come to terms with his erstwhile colleagues, to save Kashmir from another foreign domination. Shaikh failed to maintain equal-distance between the Congress and the Muslim League. At the time of partition an initiative was taken by Shaikh Abdullah and Ghulam Abbas to form a joint front. But it was beyond their reach to control the blowing political storm following the withdrawal of the British.

In the given surcharged political situation, Shaikh Abdullah’s slogan of “freedom before accession” lost its relevance. Having complete faith in the ‘socialist and secularist’ Nehru, who assured the world that the future of the State would be decided by a plebiscite, Shaikh attested the limited accession in his utterances. The presence of Shaikh Abdullah in Delhi on 26th October made the accession conditional and limited. In the absence of Shaikh it would have not been different as those signed with Junagarh and Hyderabad. Although Shaikh Abdullah had no official status at that time, but being close to Congress and the stand of Congress that accession should be decided by the people not by the ruler; made Shaikh an indispensable part of the of accession. Although it was because of Shaikh’s pro Congress attitude that Kashmir got plunged into another slavery, but he got something [autonomy and promised plebiscite] to show his people the results of their twenty year’s hard struggle. However, when India [read Nehru] retreated from its pledge of protecting the autonomy of the State and conducting of plebiscite, Shaikh also developed other thoughts- in which an independent Kashmir was not excluded. This led to the arrest of Shaikh in 1953 by his old friend Nehru.

Kashmir was projected as a show window of Indian secularism. But the Indian democracy and secularism could not satisfy the Kashmiris who found subtle difference between the Dogra State and the Indian sponsored NC’s rule. Really Indian democracy failed in its test in Kashmir. The selected politicians and unrepresentative leaders received generous grants in lieu of their endorsement to accession. The farce and rigged elections [except of 1977] were deemed as equal to plebiscite. The shame
of ‘Indian democracy’s’ shame in Kashmir was so ashamed that it stopped at Pathankot.

Like all personalities of history Shaikh Abdullah too is many persons, much opinion. His achievements and failure are not his alone. They have impacted history and people of Kashmir. Being undisputed leader of Kashmir, his fate became the fate of Kashmir and his decisions right or wrong were taken as the decisions of Kashmir. For 20 years he had stressed on the people to accept nothing short to self determination. In 1947 his decision was forced by circumstances; but in 1975 by signing the accord [the accord had no constitutional or democratic legitimacy] which was sooner discarded, Shaikh made the worst blunder. Nehru, who was as tall leader as Shaikh in their respective spheres and regions, had only betrayed and imprisoned him, but Indra Gandhi who was no math to him, humiliated and totally destroyed him. From a tall leader of Kashmir he was reduced to a small politician hankering after the loves of office. But it was impossible for educated youth, whom Shaikh had trained and politicized to accept the status quo. In fact Shaikh had gone so deep and far in inducting among the youth the desire of freedom, from where to get out was too difficult.

Nevertheless, ‘it did not bother Shaikh in his life time till 1982 because of his immense tall stature and unrivalled popularity.’ And also because the people considered him more as a religious leader than seeing him in ‘political terms.’ However, within a decade following the death of Sheik, an armed struggle was started by Kashmiris for their legitimate rights. Thus the present movement that started in 1989 was not all of a sudden but the continuation of the movement launched in 1930 for political rights. Shaikh was accused of treachery. Small wonder, then that the grave of Shaikh Abdullah became one of the main targets of attack in the beginning of 1990s. There is certain irony in present day that his grave near Dal Lake at Hazratbal is protected by Indian soldiers from the very people he had so loved and who virtually worshiped him. There is no gainsaying the fact that the outbreak of armed rebellion in late 1989 was thus an attempt to alter the status quo accepted by Shaikh Abdullah.

This study questions the validity of the Treaty of Amritsar of 1846, after the independence and partition of India. The formation of Jammu and Kashmir State [by the Amritsar treaty] by joining three different regions that differ in their geography,
culture and history, itself was and is a problem. So the solution, though not final, lies
in this that they may be separated as they were before 1846. Legally also, after the
lapse of the British rule, all treaties as per the Indian Independence Act, lost their
relevance and hence became obsolete, so why to continue that out dated Treaty of
Amritsar?

Moreover, Shaikh had no following in Jammu and Ladakh. Just as the Dogra
rulers were foisted upon Kashmiris, so was Shaikh foisted upon the people of Jammu
and Ladakh. They never accepted him as the sole spokes man of Jammu and Kashmir.
Like then, as now, the people of Jammu and Ladakh have, time and again, voiced
against what they call “rule of Valley,” Or “hegemony of Kashmir Valley.”

India and Pakistan should give away their stereotypes of ‘integral part’ and
‘jugularvein’ and start peaceful but result oriented talks not only between them but
also with Kashmiris. What is needed is sincerity and commitment to world peace; so
that the flames of Kashmir are extinguished.

“Don’t tell my father I have died,” he says,
and I follow him through blood on the road
and hundreds of pairs of shoes the mourners
left behind, as they ran from the funeral,
 victims of the firing. From windows we hear
grieving mothers, and snow begins to fall
on us, like ash. Black on edges of flames,
it cannot extinguish the neighbourhoods,
the homes set ablaze by midnight soldiers.
Kashmir is burning:

___Agha Shahid Ali¹