Azad's Voice of Freedom and Change

**Chapter—III**

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Azad was born in 1903 when the state of J and K, as a quasi sovereign, under the suzerainty of British India was seething in discontent. Kashmir, as the mainland of the State, was governed by Maharaja Sri Pratap Singh, a Dogra Ruler.

The socialist poet was born when Pratap Singh had ruled Kashmir nearly eighteen years. The condition of the valley of Kashmir at the time was very deplorable. "The Brahmans known as Kashmiri pandiths," writes Walter Lawrence, "had the power and authority, and the Muslim cultivators were forced to work to keep the idle Brahmans in comfort. In 1889, the Kashmir State was bankrupt. The rich land was left uncultivated, and the army was employed in forcing the villagers to plough and sow, and worse still, the soldiers came at the harvest time; and when the share of the state had been seized and these men of war had helped themselves, there was very little grain to tide the unfortunate peasants over the cruel winter, when the snow lies deep and temperature falls below zero."¹

In medieval times and after, Kashmir in general was seething in discontent on account of feudalism. However, Dogra rulers could not change the system but Pratap Singh tried to improve the situation. In

¹ *The India We Served*, Cassel, 1927, P. 128, 134.
Abdul Ahad Azad (1903-1948)
the beginning of 20th century the valley of Kashmir was experiencing the same feudal lords, vassals, guild masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs, in almost all of these classes, again, sub-ordinate gradation as Karl Marx and Engels describe in the communist manifesto.2

However, the difference was only in the nomenclature. In Kashmir, we had big Zamindars, Wadhdars, Jagirdars Checkdars, Halqadars, Mansebdars and Zaildars. The State service sectors were no whit better off. The extent of bankruptcy of the State treasury can be gauged from the fact that when Walter Lawrence demanded his salary he was first offered Singhara (Water nuts) and when refused by the Commissioner, oil seeds were offered. Lawrence, after great difficulty was able to get salary in cash (British Indian Rupee). Begar' or forced labour was a misery for poor people. Those who were extremely poor were impressed into service, but the grasping officials would levy blackmail from others. People were crushed under the heavy burden of unjust taxation. Even the office of gravedigger was taxed. Marriage tax was also in vogue.3

The unbridled autocracy of Maharaja Pratap Singh was controlled, when a resident was appointed by the British India Government, (1885) after some kind of manipulation, in the Maharaja’s court. The council of regency consisted of two brothers of the Maharaja namely Raja Ram Singh, Raja Amar Singh and one experienced European along with others known as Rai Bahadur Pandit, Bhag Ram and Rai Surj Koul. With the presence of experienced European as a

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member and under the direct and close supervision of the British resident the council set about its responsibilities and functions in the right earnest. Having made the position of their resident quite strong over the affairs of the state and having given a modern bias to the administration of the country, the British gradually restored Pratap Singh to power first in 1891AD as president of the state council and after some years in 1905 AD as a full-fledged ruler.

Azad’s time is calculated to be the first half of the 20th century and this half is conspicuous for four significant events of the time. Firstly, the Russian revolution of 1917, followed by the death of Maharaja Pratap Singh and also the world catastrophe of Second World War. However, struggle in Kashmir, the most innovative well known mass upsurge of 1931 against the kingship or despotic rule by some educated youth both Muslims and Hindus changed the course of events. Each of the event had its important influence on our radical humanist and poet of Kashmir, A.A. Azad. Let us examine and analyze.

Abdul Ahad Azad was born in a village known as Ranger, thirteen miles in the South Western side of Srinagar. His father was a mystic and was living a life of a mystic but was learned in Persian and Arabic languages. Azad was trained in the holy scripture ‘The Quran’ and in Arabic and Persian by his own father. Azad expressing about his own education writes:

“In 1916 AD, my elder brother Ghulam Ali opened a private school. In the same school I was trained in elementary Urdu & Persian languages.

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I was fond of reading and hence continued my studies. It gave me expertise in literary works".5

Finally, after some years in 1918 AD, he was appointed as Arabic Teacher in a government school at village Zoohama at Rs 13 per month. By the time Russian revolution had come to its stay and its literature had been penetrating in India including Kashmir. He became a rigorous type of reader and achieved versatility in Urdu and other languages. As a teacher, he had a chance to study Maths, Geography, History and many other disciplines. Consequential to it, he in 1925-26 AD, appeared in Munshi or proficiency in Persian language from the Punjab University Lahore and got a distinction in the examination.

Azad had a critical eye and had literary understanding. He had artistic tastes. He had a sweet and civilized tongue and could win anybody in the day today human interactions. He was shy but in the friend circle, he spoke exquisitely and could carry his argument across. He loved hearing music and himself sang well. He was sharp in wit.6

The poet himself accepts that his father was very much inclined towards poetry and music. His father was accustomed to hear poetry both didactic mystical and lyrical and was fond of music. The poet assisted his father by reciting various genres of poetry and its impact on our poet was that he started writing poetry at the age of fifteen. In the beginning he had the experience of composing lyrics and later he started working towards other genres, in particular long poems. In the early stages he used his pen name or 'nom de plume', as Ahad, his first

name and then he gave himself the name of Janbaaz as a poet. Later he reconciled himself with the name known as Azad. However, when the freedom struggle in Kashmir started in 1931, he was alleged to be associated with it. Consequent to it he was, as Government teacher, transferred to Government Middle School Tral, nearly hundred kilometers from his home. His punishment though ordinary in the present socio-economic scenario but during his time, it had its gravity that could not be overlooked. The social scenario of the valley is known to the historians by the 1929 AD as miserable. Maharaja Pratap Singh died in 1925 AD and things did not improve. As a matter of fact conditions of the people were deplorable. An intelligent observer like Sir Albion Bannerji condemned such state of affairs. He was disgusted with the unimaginative mind of the rulers, and resigned the post of Foreign and political Minister which he had held for over two years. On 15th March, 1925 AD his observations on the political social and economic conditions in the State made before a representative of the associated press at Lahore produced a deep effect on the minds of the people of Kashmir. He observed:

"Jammu and Kashmir State is labouring under many disadvantages, with a large Mohammedan population absolutely illiterate, labouring under poverty and very low economic conditions of living in the villages and practically governed like drum driven cattle. There is no touch between the government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances and administrative machinery itself requires overhauling from top to bottom to bring it up to the modern conditions of efficiency. It has at present little or no sympathy with peoples wants and grievances."
There is hardly any public opinion in the State. As regards the press it is practically non-existent with the result that the Government is not benefited to the extent that it should be by the impact of healthy criticism.”

According to the Minister the villages of Kashmir and the people living in them were in a poor state of affairs. The artisans of Kashmir were finding it very difficult to earn living owing to the unsympathetic attitude of their government. He advised the government to raise the standards of the people both Urban and Rural. Indeed after the Maharaja Hari Singh ascended the throne in 1925, the condition of the people further deteriorated. To the end of Pratap Singh’s rule, the capital of Kashmir started to be qualified as winter and summer capital of the state. This *Darbar* (Kings Court) started moving from Srinagar to Jammu. Srinagar was designated as summer capital whereas Jammu as winter capital, thus taxing the state ex-chequer. Later, Maharaja Hari Singh abandoned the practice of *Darbar move* with as some believe sinister motives. It is believed that the king wanted to force the Kashmiris to relinquish their government jobs and secondly to thwart their further recruitment. It had its effect on the trade of the people of Kashmir and further, it was to undermine the importance of Kashmir.

The doors of the army were closed against the Kashmiris, both Hindus and Muslims. The regiments of the army of the King belonged to Hindu Dogras, Muslim Dogras, Kangra Rajputs, and Gurkhas and even Punjabi Sikhs outside the State. The ordinary Kashmiris were not

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recruited in Dogra army on the ground that they were not a martial race, though they had inherited the glorious martial traditions:

“In the army reorganization I pleaded for the establishment of a double company of Kashmiris”, revealed G.E.C. Wakefield, Hari Singh’s Army Minister in his recollections, “but one day his highness told me that his grandfather, Maharaja Rambir Singh had raised a whole regiment and having uniformed and drilled them for six months in Srinagar, gave orders that they should march to Jammu. A deputation of their officers waited upon him with a petition pointing out that, in making arrangements for their march, no provision had been made for police for their protection. The regiment was disbanded.”9 The same minister in his book recollections admits that, “during the riots which occurred in 1931, the wounds of dead Kashmiris were all in front, “so that no fighter for freedom had turned his back to run away. Assuredly, the Dogras had racial discrimination against the people of Kashmir. In the civil administration higher appointments were practically reserved for the Punjabis in the reign of Pratap Singh and for the Rajputs when Hari Singh was the ruler.10

On the one hand the economic condition of the people was deteriorating and the masses were becoming poorer and poorer, on the other Dogra rulers, whether Pratap Singh or later Hari Singh, were pursuing a policy which positively discouraged and suppressed the non-dogra communities in the country. This created a deep resentment and anger in all classes of people in the valley. Hari Singh and the Dogra

9 Ibid, Wakefield’s Recollections as quoted by P.N. Bazaz, P. 141-142.
10 Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, Wakefield’s Recollections, Ibid.
Rajputs who composed the oligarchy moved by their behaviour what Fredric Drew had said half century before. He wrote in 1870 AD:

"Judged of in this capacity—that of agents and instruments of government—we must allow to the Dogras considerable failing. They have little tact, they have not the Art of conciliating the governed, of treating them in such a way as to attract them. Those who are high in authority have no width enough of view to see that the interests of both governors and governed maybe in a great measure coincident. As a rule they are not liked by the dependant nations even to that Degree in which, with moderately good management, a ruling race may fairly hope to be liked by its alien subjects."

If all classes of people in the valley were discontented with the Dogras in 1930 AD, Muslims had added reasons for becoming sullen. They formed at the time 95% of the population in the valley. They were treated more unfairly in every sphere of life than the Kashmiri Hindus. Muslims had to pay marriage tax. Though the tax was abolished by Maharaja Pratap Singh but other laws were discriminatory. The cow-slaughter had to undergo ten years imprisonment for offence or even injuring a cow or abetting the killing of a cow was cognizable offence. The law was so barbarous that on many occasions the entire male population of the village used to be tortured by the police.

The poverty of Muslim masses was appalling. Dressed in rags which could hardly hide his body and barefooted, a Muslim peasant presented the appearance, rather of a starring beggar than of one who filled the coffers of the State. He worked laboriously in the fields

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during the six months of the summer to pay the state the revenues and taxes, the officials their *rasoom*, a bribe in kind and the moneylender his interest. Most of them were landless labourers working as serfs of the absentee landlords. They hardly earned, as their share of the produce, enough for more than three months. For the rest they had to earn by other means. During the six months they were employed and had to go outside the boundaries of the state to work as labourers in big towns and cities of British India. Their lot, as such, was no good, and many of them died every year, unknown unwept and unsung outside their homes. The disgraceful environment and unkind surroundings in which so many of them died was a slur alike on the people and the government of a country to which they belonged.\(^{12}\)

According to P.N. Bazaz, the whole brunt of the official corruption had been borne by the Muslim masses. The police, the revenue department, the forest officials, and even the employees of the cooperative societies, had their palms oiled by executive of the usual *rasoom*. Nobody felt any sympathy with this distressing picture of poverty. The channels of human kindness and mercy had run dry according to P.N. Bazaz. To loot the peasants was no sin and society did not disapprove of it.\(^{13}\)

In the rural side the majority of one faith and the population were synonymous with wood cutters and drawers of water. All sorts of menial work was done by them. Muslims were looked down and *feudals, chakdars, zaildars*, were respectables. Few petty Muslim

\(^{12}\) Bazaz P.N. *Struggle for Freedom*, Pamposh Publications, P. 144.

\(^{13}\) *Struggle for Freedom*, Ibid.
bourgeois were present in society but they had no recognition. In political, economic and social conditions such as enumerated, the Muslim leaders had no alternative but rose the patriotic and religious sentiment against the Dogra Hindu rule. It needed some educated young men amongst the majority who could rise to the occasion with burning patriotic zeal to carry the massage of rebellion to the Muslim majority. There was none in 1925, when the Dogras suppressed the freedom moment which was sponsored by the signatories to historical memorial that had been submitted to the Lord Reading. It was the time to ignite the mind of Azad to write patriotic songs.

In the beginning of 20th century the Dogra government opened schools and established one college in Srinagar. The Pandit fraternity joined these schools and college ahead of Muslims, and by 1925, hundreds of Pandit graduates were available without jobs. They, however, could not get jobs because the posts were drained either by Dogra Hindus or Muslims from the undivided Punjab. The policy of provincial discrimination became irritating for the minority community, particularly during Maharaja Hari Singh’s rule. For six years from 1925-1931, educated Pandit young men carried a well organized agitation in and outside press. According to P.N. Bazaz, Pandits demanded a due share in the public services in the State. They also demanded freedom of Press. This led to a ‘movement’ that was called, “Kashmir for Kashmiris”. As a result of this a definition of the term “Hereditary state subject was coined. It was duly passed into a law on the 31st January 1927 AD. According to the definition, “All persons born and residing in the state before the commencement of the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh Bahadur and also persons who settled before the
commencement of Samvat 1942 (1885AD) and have since been permanently residing in the country are hereditary subjects of the state. An order was also issued by the government of the Maharaja forbidding the employment of non-state subjects, in public services. The order stopped the entry of non-stat subjects to enter services but it did not stop Dogra provincial discrimination. According to P.N. Bazaz, Jammu Rajputs got the most of the big jobs while the Pandits from the valley of Kashmir were recruited as clerks in offices, vacated by the Punjabis. The policy did not satisfy the Pandit community. They were a minority and could not rebel or revolt in any way. However, the Indian press did highlight their demands and grievances.

But then the situation was moving fast. An organization had been set up in the Punjab, particularly at Lahore, by those wealthy Muslims whose origins had been Kashmiri. These Kashmiris from time to time, particularly during Sikh period, migrated to the other parts of India either on account of earning their livelihood or security. These rich people also helped promising Muslim boys by way of scholarship and got them educated at the University Aligarh or in other universities of India. A batch of such young men returned to the valley in 1930 AD after receiving higher education from Indian universities.

Fired with the spark of freedom and enthused with the emotions of Independence from Dogra rule, these young men established a reading room party and later, it turned to be the movement for struggle for freedom in Kashmir. Early in March 1931, the Mir Waiz, a Muslim religious head passed away his funeral was attended by the entire

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Muslim population of the city. The new Mir Waiz, Yusuf Shah, an enthusiastic Youngman was in full sympathy with the aims and objects of the reading room party, having himself while a student of the theological college at Deoband in U.P, witnessed the freedom struggle of the masses in the rest of India. There was thus no difficulty in calling mammoth public meetings in various mosques of Srinagar and other Muffasil towns, to be addressed by the young members of the Reading Room Party.\textsuperscript{15} At the same time these young men, most of them belonged to the middle class, desired to enter govt. service but failed. Dogra rulers as well as Dogra officers in the administration could not think that Kashmiris could be installed in places of power and responsibility, particularly when they belonged to the Muslim community. But there too a difficulty arose. By 1931 AD, Kashmiri Pandits had entered the offices in large numbers as clerks. Following the footsteps of the Punjabis and Dogras, the Pandits by hook or by crook, made it difficult for the Muslim young men to get even these subordinate jobs. Not without a struggle did some young men succeed in securing some jobs. Among the fortunate was one, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, M.Sc from AMU Aligarh, who became a junior Teacher in a Srinagar, High School at Rs 60.65 Pm. Though hardly such qualified persons were available yet he received a petty job at a low salary. Soon the educated Muslim young men began to organize themselves into a political party. They formed a party informally because there existed no freedom of association. They opened a reading room party in Srinagar where lengthy discussions were held among

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members of the party as to how they should get their grievances redressed. The new political atmosphere, thus, was eloquently expressed by means of the organizations ‘reading room party’ as mentioned above, and Young Men’s League. The Reading Room Party was a public body founded to articulate and organize the public opinion with a view to exerting pressure on government for constitutional reforms and if need be to revolt, with concerted and organized platform, at a time when conditions were conducive for the same. The party was in every sense a party of political nature, but ‘informally’ formed because there existed no freedom of association.\(^{16}\)

This party therefore, ostensibly gave its members a protection in the eyes of law, whereas, it used the organization for political purposes. *Late Mohammad Rajab, Late S.M. Abdullah, Late Mufti Jallaluddin, Hakeem Ali, Late Peer Gh. Rasool, Peerzada AS. Fazili, and Late Hakeem Gh. Murtaza* were some of its prominent organizers. The organization constituted revolutionaries to spread revolutionary ideas amongst all sections of society.\(^{17}\)

The other organization was the Muslim Youngman’s League, which was a secret organization. The objective of the organization was to prepare ground from a movement which could achieve economic and political independence of the State. Its activities were not confined to few sympathizers but to general public for converting them into the membership or the overall participation in the movement. In the membership of this organization some more members were added to

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\(^{16}\) P.N. Bazaz No. 57, P: 143.

make it broader based\textsuperscript{18} so that more cadre in revolutionaries could pave way for a revolution. All of its members were underground workers to activize the political consciousness. The members were mostly educated and could be termed as the closed elite, of the political party that had to fight and struggle for the independence of the State. The movement for the political change was likely to begin. Both the organizations had organized different cells to eulogize its programmes and all over the state a feeling had been aroused to fight out the Dogra rule. The impact of these organizations and calls was tremendous. The leadership, by then, had unified all sections in Kashmir and consequently a political party emerged, which was named as All J and K Muslim Conference. The party by 1939, rose stronger, firmer and mightier and set itself in an organized movement. The movement was not wholly socialist, but in the pursuit of egalitarianism, it is right to assert that it had elements of socialism in its essence, programmes and its operations\textsuperscript{19}

Azad a socialist and revolutionary poet and critic had reached the matured age of twenty eight years, when freedom struggle in Kashmir had started. He had witnessed the first world war in his teen age, he was able to get a government job in a school in 1918 AD and was appointed an Arabic teacher. Soon he developed contacts with intellectuals in Srinagar, who mattered as poets, journalists, critics and who happened to be political activists. Amongst them were \textit{Mahjoor}, the eminent poet, Bazaz a well known and significant ideologue, Dr

\textsuperscript{18} Kh. Ghulam A Ashai, S.M. Abdullah, Kh. Ali Mohammad Shah.

Padam Nath Ganjoo and many more veteran intellectuals. These intellectuals belonged to progressive movement of Kashmir and had tremendous impact on his poetic creativity. Most of his significant poems were composed by the poet during this period.

Azad happened to be a fan of Mahjoor and his romantic, revolutionary, nationalist poetry influenced him. Once Mahjoor in a revenue camp reached Ranger, the place where Azad dwelt. Thus Azad had a chance to meet his ideal intellectual, who in his first meeting suggested to the poet that he was interested to write his biography. Azad also started coming closer to Mahjoor, later becoming his teacher to improve the poetry of the former. He naturally committed to write Mahjoor’s biography which is an extant document. This experience led Azad to be the critic of poetry and he studied Mahjoor’s poetry in accordance with the accepted theories of the criticism in vogue those days. For long Azad presented his creative writings to Mahjoor for improvement in form and content. It was this experience of critical study of Mahjoor that Azad felt the necessity of understanding the evolution and growth of Kashmiri literature. He was very much impressed by the suppleness sweetness and starchy content of Kashmiri poetry, provoking him to write the “History of Kashmiri Literature”. He collected the scattered compositions of poets from time to time. For the purpose he had to travel far flung areas of the valley of Kashmir. In this endeavor, he met, very young, old men belonging to various professions and trades. He even contacted women who happened to be associated with institutions of prostitution in their youth and collected

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enough data regarding poets and their poetry. He even contacted the posterity of late poets only to get some material regarding their ancestors or poets of repute or poets who were forgotten. He was at times doubted as a man of intelligence agencies. He was sometimes denied access to the material by saying that their ancestors had no such secret designs. He had, therefore, to confront many hazards during the period 1935-1949, while compiling the literary history of Kashmir. However, our revolutionary poet, with a salary of twenty Rupees pm, faced all difficulties but completed the work before his death in 1948 AD. He treated the book, a landmark in the history of Kashmiri literature but he had no resources to publish it. Even the then Director of Education could not help him in publishing the document. Later after his death, the book was published by J and K Academy of Art, Culture and Language Srinagar in 1966AD.

Azad was very shy; he was the product of feudalism and lived in a society that was sapped by superstitions. At the same time, he was under those circumstances ultra revolutionary and hence he was possibly afraid to publish his works and poetry. That was the reason that his works and ideas could not reach the people openly. However, on account of the pressure from friends, during the Second World War, he got his poetry published in the Daily *Hamdard*, a newspaper issued from Srinagar. During1942, he got introduced to the editor of *Hamdard* namely P.N. Bazaz, who turned to be his intimidate associate in later years. Thus was a turning period for Azad’s poetic fame and name.

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Before his intimate association with P.N. Bazaz, Azad’s poems causing great diversity had already been published in the same newspaper.\textsuperscript{24}

Dr. Padam Nath Ganjoo divides Azad’s poetry into three periods, each consisting ten years. In the first period of his poetry, we find the poet as a lyrical poet, with a difference of style. During the same period he started writing narrative genre of poetry. In the second period he improved upon lyrical poetry and also wrote poems that excel in its own right.

Before, the outbreak of World War-II, the people of the State of J and K had launched the movement for freedom. The centuries of slavery of the people was tumbling down and some light or dawn was set on move. The classes which were divided on the basis of governed and being governed, oppressor and the oppressed, peasantry and the master, the money-lender and the borrower, and finally in Marxian language the poor and the rich had created conflict and this was a provocation for the poet to react rigorously.\textsuperscript{25}

His sensitivities could not accept the agony of society both in its economic and political spheres of life. His mind was in agitation and it was natural that he stood firmly against all inequalities and injustices. He had no sword in his hand but he used his pen and the poetic talent to destroy the injustices caused to his innocent people. In his last phase of poetical genius he wrote great poems which revolutionized the society. His poems, lyrics, revolutionary poems, historico-genetic poetry,

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Kalyat-e-Azad}, Ibid, Pp. 42-43

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Kalyat-e-Azad}, Ibid. P. 44, Poems were discourse between Ishq and Akqal, Shakvai Kashmir, Shakvai-Iblis, Bi-khudi, and Budshah etc.
include his famous poems like Capitalism (*Sirmayedari*), Kashmir Complains(*Shikwae Kashmir*), King (*Budshah*), Our Country(*Soun Wattan*), Cataract(*Aab-shar*), River(*Darya*) and Russian Revolution(*Inqilabe Roos*), which are Azad’s great contribution to World literature. The theme and content of his poems is in essence, world literature—literature that advocates oneness of mankind. He sang songs of flowing rivers, greatness of *Budshah* and *Laltaditya*, unity of his people, the discrimination propagated by religious people and condemning the propaganda of rulers to sabotage the freedom struggle. He gave tongue to the flying clouds, melting ice and snow, falling cataracts, flower and nightingale, candle and self-immolating lone moth, ego, self-sacrifice and the like only to create a humanized world.\(^{26}\)

Azad witnessed the elemental upsurge in Kashmir in 1931, which shook the whole state including the administration. It unnerved the Maharaja of Kashmir. Our poet at the time was in his prime of life. The event or upsurge made the Maharaja to appoint many commissions only to recommend ways to redress grievances of the people. The report of the grievances by the *Glancy Enquiry Commission* was published, which inter alia suggested that distribution of government services be made as under:

a). Minimum qualifications should not be pitched unnecessarily high.

b). All vacancies should be effectively advertised and similar action should be taken up regards all scholarships intended to provide equipment in Government services.

c). Effective measures should be taken to provide a system of appointment and a machinery for supervising that system in such a way as to prevent the due interests of any community from being neglected.

With regard to land, the commission suggested immediate abolition of grazing tax (*Kahcharai*) in certain specified areas. It also recommended that forced labour should be abolished forthwith and payment should be ensured at proper rates for all services rendered. Finally, regarding industrialization the commission recommended that the promotion of industries should receive the first attention of the state authorities, so that avenues of employment are marked out.²⁷

Though the movements, in its beginning five years had the overtones of a communal character but disgruntled sections of society like Kashmiri Pandits including the leadership which had initiated to launch the movement, had realized that it needed to be secularized. Thus the parleys between the representatives of Kashmir Hindus i.e.(KP’s) and that Muslim leadership resolved to change the nomenclature of the Muslim conference into the National conference making room for all the sections of the society into it. In his Presidential address to the sixth annual session of the Muslim conference on 26th March 1938, Sheikh Abdullah observed:

“Like us the large majority of Hindus and Sikhs in the State have immensely suffered at the hands of the irresponsible government. They are also steeped in deep ignorance, have to pay large taxes and are in debt and starving.”

“Establishment of responsible government is as much as necessity for them as for us. Sooner or later these people are bound to join our ranks. No amount of propaganda can keep them away from us.”

“The main problem therefore now before us is to organize joint action and a united front against the forces that stand in our way in the achievement of our goal. This will require re-christening our organization as a non-communal political body and introducing certain amendments in its constitution and its rules”.

“I reiterate today what I have said so often. Firstly, we must end communalism by ceasing to think in terms of Muslims and non-Muslims when discussing our political problems. Secondly there must be universal suffrage on the basis of joint electorates. Without these two, democracy is lifeless.”

“You complain that the Hindus belonging to the vested interests are reactionary and stand in the way of our progress. But have we not had the same experience in the case of capitalist Muslims also? It is significant as well as hopeful that in spite of many difficulties in their way, some non-Muslims have cooperated with us though their number is very small. Their sincerity and moral courage make us feel thin strength. We must therefore open our doors to all such Hindus and
Sikhs, who like ourselves, believe in the freedom of their country from the shackles of an irresponsible rule.”

Shiekh Abdullah placed a resolution embodying his views before the working committee on 28th of June 1938. There was an opposition from some members including Late Gh. Mohd Bakshi and Late Mohd Afzal Baig but after a heated discussion for about fifty two hours the committee adopted the resolution. It said:

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

Thus All J and K Muslim Conference was converted or redesignated as all J and K National Conference. The repression by the Dogra Maharaja strengthened the forces of Nationalism then and the P.M of the State released all political prisoners and workers including those who had signed the memoranda of the National demand for establishment of responsible government in the State of J and K. Since the establishment of NC, a struggle continued with the idea of bringing

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29 S.M. Abdullah, Presidential Address, Sixth Annual Conference of Muslim Conference, Jammu, 1939.
the party either near to All India National Congress or to All India Muslim conference. Non-Muslim members were not interested in what is called ‘freedom’ as much as they wanted to secularize the politics and bring the party closer to the Indian congress. Opposed to it the same happened with most of the Muslims in the NC. The high command of the National conference was a house divided against itself.

The Second World War had started a few weeks before the session of the National conference commenced at Anantnag. A resolution was passed in which the conference “appreciated the intention, underlying the statement issued by the working committee of the Indian National Congress about the war and the policy of the British Governments towards the political aspirations of the Indian Nation”. It was observed that both these resolutions drove the conference closer to the Indian National Congress. It is interesting to record that this association with the Indian Congress did not make any Muslim leadership to oppose the resolution. Even hard core Muslims did not react.\(^{30}\)

Muslims who were closer to the Indian Muslim League intellectually created a public opinion against Sheikh Abdullah’s stance towards the Indian Congress. Consequentially, it was not surprising that the Sheikh Sahib felt extremely disheartened at these developments. However, instead of critically examining the situation, Sheikh Abdullah invited Pt Jawaharlal Nehru to Kashmir soon after, there was a change, in the bureaucratic apparatus in the State by

installing a Brahman namely Sir Gopalaswami Ayyenger an efficient civil servant as PM of J and K State.

In Indian sub-continent, the British India, political conditions were changing, the Muslim league under the leadership of Late Mr. Jinnah and the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru had created a psychological warfare. Under the situation, the epoch-making resolution in 1940 at its Lahore session demanding partition of India on the basis of religion, the Muslim League of India placed Kashmir under the danger zone. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah under one pretext or the other continued to woo people towards the orientation of NC to that of congress alliance or culture. However, the leadership of the NC failed to convince people to adopt a policy towards the Indian Congress and consequently, the dissidents in NC after some initial difficulties, revived the All J and K Muslim conference in 1941. Mir Waiz Yousuf Shah and his followers in the valley decided to rally round the organization. Soon after, the politics of the State of J and K, particularly in the valley, turned to be the politics of Shears and Bakras (Nicknames given to each other).³¹

But the national conference did not remain politically inactive. In 1944 it adopted a programme of socialistic pattern of society with egalitarianism as its goal. It laid down a plan for “an all sided advance along all avenues of human activity regulated in a democratic manner on a country-wide scale”. The plan covered agriculture, industry, and transport distribution, utility services, currency and finance. The scheme was based on the “democratic” principle of responsible

government with the elective principle applied from the local *panchayat* right up to the legislative Assembly”\(^{32}\)

In Kashmir, where the ruler was a Hindu but the majority of the people Muslims, one might have supposed communal politics would thrive but the centuries old composite culture that was inherited by the people defeated it. The people and their main political organization, the NC believed like the Indian National Congress in nationalism based on community interests, not on religion. According to Bamzai, the NC had spiritual sympathy with Indian National Congress.

After Pt. Nehru’s visit, Mr. Jinnah tried to win the sympathies of the Muslims of Kashmir for his ‘two nations’ theory. Some people in Kashmir tried to resuscitate the old Muslim conference which some people managed to keep alive but it had no popularity and practically no platform. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, on account of his charismatic personality captured the political platform in Kashmir.

In spring 1944, Mr. Jinnah visited Kashmir, to revive the Muslim conference though ostensibly he had come to the valley only to rest. He was accorded reception both by the NC as well as the Muslim conference and the welcome address by the NC read,

“We Kashmiris today receive you as a prominent Indian despite ideological differences we have with you. We hope that you, along with other leaders of India, will try to arrive at a solution which will go a long way to emancipate the teeming millions of India.” To this Mr. Jinnah replied, “I am happy to see all classes and groups combined here to receive and honour me.”

On the stage and reception of the Muslim conference, Mr. Jinnah said,

"Muslims have one platform, one Kalma and one God. I would request the Muslims to come under the banner of the Muslim conference and fight for their rights."

In a rejoined later, the National conference leadership said that, "ills of this land can only be remedied by carrying Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs together."33

While the National Conference was holding its annual session in Srinagar in 1944, in which it was adopting the future programme on socialistic pattern of a social system and a democratic and responsible government, the Maharaja of Kashmir announced his decision to include in his cabinet two popular ministers to be chosen from among the elected members of the Praja Sabha. Though meager in content the reforms were accepted by the NC as a step towards future cooperation between the monarchy and the people of J and K. However, in due course of time the NC felt the helplessness and non-cooperation of the government by which the popular ministers felt powerless even in functioning their own departments. Hence on the 17th March, 1946, the popular ministers resigned. A month later, the NC launched its "Quit Kashmir" movement for the transfer of power to the people.

The Quit Kashmir movement launched by the NC gave the prime minister of the State, a Kashmiri Pandit by name Kak, an opportunity to assume and wield unlimited authority in the State. A reign of terror was let loose and within a few hours of the arrest of

leaders of the NC, hundreds of workers were arrested all over the valley according to a pre-arranged plan. But before Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and G.M Sadiq could be arrested, they had left the State to direct the movement from outside the State. They were successful to keep the people fully posted with the real aims and objects of the movement.34

Banzai writes that on hearing that the people in Kashmir were made target of repression in Kashmir, Jawaherlal Nehru rushed to the State but was arrested by the state authorities after he had crossed into the State territory. The entire Indian people stood up against this arrest, the congress leaders called Nehru back but Mr. Jinnah issued a statement in which he described the ‘Quit Kashmir’ movement as, “an agitation carried on by a few malcontents who were out to create disorderly conditions in the State”.35

Gandhiji visited Kashmir in July 1947, and found the people calm and serene, without any communal politics and conflict. At that he asserted that it was very difficult for him to know whether the state of Kashmir, particularly the valley was predominantly Muslim or Hindu. At the same time the whole of India, particularly north of it was seething with political discontent and at the Middle of August. The whole country was running a blood bath. The partition of India into two dominions India and Pakistan was announced by the British Government. The partition was necessitated by the sinister passions roused by intractable and interested parties among a section of

communal—minded Hindus and Muslims during the period 1947-48. Kashmir was placed under a danger zone when immediately after the Independence of India and Pakistan, the later attacked Kashmir but the State remained practically under the siege of uncertainty and chaos.

It was during these uncertain and chaotic months from the middle of 1947, till end of March 1948, when our poet Abdul Ahad Azad lost his health. He had inherited a feeble constitution, a darkish, skin, shining teeth, sophisticated accent, inherent shyness but overall physical weakness. On 30th March 1948, Azad made complaints of acute pain in his abdomen and was undergoing high fever. There was no hospital or dispensary in any village in the area. To avoid the risk of carrying the crying patient on a stretcher from that remote village to Srinagar the services of local ‘hakims’ were utilized. They failed in their diagnosis and the pain would not subside. Hence on the special messages from his doctor friends from Srinagar, Azad was brought to the city. The doctors attending at him diagnosed appendicitis and advised immediate surgery. He was shifted to SMHS hospital Srinagar, where he was operated upon. But he did not survive because the poison had gone deep in his body and in the evening of 4th April 1948, he passed away.36

Azad’s life span extends from 1903 to April 1948. Whether Azad is the product of the freedom struggle in Kashmir or whether the struggle is caused by the revolutionary poetry of Azad is not likely to be ascertained. The reason is simple—Azad by the beginning of 1931 upsurge had turned a poet of commitment and the impact of his poetry

36 A History of Kashmir, Ibid.
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over the masses was impressive. He had necessarily and deliberately not become a poet of publicity but it is believed that his poetry reached fairly to good number of readers. However, after 1931 upsurge, both his thought and his art acquired a revolutionary fervour and consequently he attracted the attention of the elite and the intellectual class. It is during this period that he came in contact with an outstanding journalist and historian of Kashmir Mr. P.N. Bazaz. He also developed contacts with a group of Royist intellectuals and thus cultivated a sense of appreciation in him for the philosophy of M.N. Roy. Dr. Padam Nath Ganjoo, Dr. Omkar Nath, K.L. Koul, G.A. Ashai and other intellectuals became his personal friends. It is during this period that the Urdu daily of Late P.N. Bazaz reserved a column for Azad’s poems.37

Again whether Azad was influenced by the philosophy of the NC, after it went through the process of political secularization or the poet had the impact on the elite political leadership of the NC to move on the path of rational political thinking, remains unascertained but it is expected that both were working independently—yet in harmony with each others philosophy. The secularization of politics by the NC envisaged consolidation and unity in all the ranks of the workers and the labour class. It made small traders, shopkeepers, handicrafts men, peasants, Pandits, Sikhs, and Muslims gradually shrink into a class, enabling themselves to be guided and led by the NC. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah gave a call for this unity at Anantnag when he said, “when we say that there is need for the unity of Sikhs, Hindus,

37 Gowhar, G.N. Abdul Ahad Azad, Makers of Indian literature, Sahitya Academy, P.12.
and Muslims, we mean such of them as are oppressed and exploited. For we know that the exploited might profess any religion, he can never pity the oppressed unless he is removed.\(^{38}\)

The philosophy of the NC was based on the principles that the common and poor people in the society need to be carried with the organization. In Kashmir during thirties and forties of 20\textsuperscript{th} century, we witness degrading position of workers, labour and peasantry. Beggar or forced labour was the worst oppression on the poor classes. All the people were subjected to forced labour without discrimination and compensation. There was no shelter no clothes for the poor whether in winter or summer. The peasantry was under the burden of debts of the \textit{Sahukars}. Tyranny was perpetrated by Revenue officers while collecting taxes, cess and other kinds of levies. The corrupt practices during the times of our poet by the forest and police officials were rampant. If the NC was fighting against oppression and exploitation and trying to solve the socio-economic problems in future through socialism and egalitarianism, our poet Azad sang the same tone by his poetic talent. Azad while reacting to the deplorable conditions of his people, could not but exhort his people to revolt because he had a keen eye to observe, a heart to feel, a sharp mind to move”.\(^{39}\)

Azad asked his country men, when NC also was provoking them to rise and wakeup from the slumber of ages and rise against the injustice done to them and love their country. Consequently he sang:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The free Bulbul creates a tumult, \\
Sings melodies on a flowering bow.}
\end{quote}

\(^{38}\)\textit{Abdul Ahad Azad, Makers of Indian literature,} Ibid, P. 13.

\(^{39}\)S.M. Abdullah, \textit{An Address,} National Conference Annual Conference, Islamabad, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Oct, 1939.
Bulbul to flower and flower into Bulbul speaketh
This country of ours is all beauty. \(^{40}\)

(Trs. Manzoor Fazili)

In the poem, “Song of the country” or ‘Taranai Wattan’ Azad asks the youth of his country to muster courage to fight the tyranny for they live in a beautiful country:

Oh, young brave youth,
Bravo, advance ahead,
Struggle perpetually
Then alone hope and desire
Gather thee and desire
The songs of your country. \(^{41}\)
The( rich) have robes coloured in our blood,
We with wounded heart weep like flood.

Working classes were very much exploited and Azad wanted after the NC philosophy to make them conscious of it. He Sings:

You neither heard nor did you see,
What you gained of your labour,
Thee I would speak but cannot,
So hear and know the meaning.

Capitalism presupposes a class society and Azad finds no justification to create classes. So regarding ‘haves and have nots’ he sings:

\(^{40}\) Ganjoo P.N., Edited, Kulyati-Azad, Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Srinagar, P. 45.
One decorates his plates and dishes of gold,
The other has no meals in the evening whole,
The virtuous I said going without goals,
for you have no drink and meals for such men of gold.

Azad condemns slavery and wants his fraternity to fight it out.

Slavery is a curse and he sings:

- The slavery makes the heart to sink,
- The slavery makes the mind to wink,
- The slavery deadens men alive.

All clever, witty and intelligent alike.\(^{42}\)

In line with the future programme for the people, Azad, in his poem *Panchadar* (i.e. water cataract), outlines some broad roadmap to fight all reactionaries and enemies. Accordingly he sings:

- There shall not be discard on account of *Kafur and Deen*
- There shall not be discard on sacred thread and beads,
- There shall be neither rich nor poor,
- Thee, oh waterfall, yet wait for a moment.

There are many poems composed by Azad which relate to revolution. He wants all Kashmiris to rise against the oppressor He sings:

- Why should one look backwards?
- Why should one request the reactionary?
- Revolution shall teach thee to go ahead.

Some youth did not awaken through my call,
Today or tomorrow, revolution shall awake them all.

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What is life? A book of revolution
Revolution, Revolution and revolution

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Really life means commotion,
The essence of agitation is revolution.\(^3\)

Azad’s hope for the future lay in socialism and Marxian socialism to him was a faith. That is why he defined it as gold purified and perfected through fire. It is believed and many writers have confirmed that the *Naya Kashmir* document was a constitution based on the principles of socialism drafted by two committed persons like Late Bedi and his wife Farida Bedi. The poet believed that socialism had made the secret of happy life easier through the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

He sings:

His (Marx’s) faith is the faith of nature,
His faith is the gold from fire,
His faith is the spring of springs.

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All secrets are opened to the worker,
All steps are taken by wisemen in caution.

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The wealth of the world is produced by working class

\(^3\) Kulyati-Azad, Ibid, Pp. 221-224.
Azad believed in scientific socialism and he did not believe in working for just society through non-violence. Gandhiji’s condemnation of workers that their strike was illegal, was disfavoured by Azad, writes Padam Nath Ganjoo. According to the poet oppression is the meanest trade and hence a strong reaction to it is moral. The worker has right to revolt. In the future state Azad likes freedom for all. P.N. Bazaz writes, “Azad is confident that he is free spiritually as well as intellectually, but he is anxious that his country men may also share this freedom. In freedom and socialism his future was safe because it assured him equality and fraternity. All that he desired of future lay, according to him, only in the struggle for freedom or in his often composed poems on Revolution (Inqilab). So he sings:

The law feeds, where labour bleeds,
Is this human in the capitalist.

(Future) The wealth shall be the wealth of all
The capitalist, is killed, so it is all.

To become free, to end tyranny and to abolish superstition,
This is my cherished dream, this is my desire and this is my slogan.

I have accepted the burden of ages on my head,

\[44\, Kulyati-\, Azad,\, Ibid,\, Pp.\, 298-306.\]
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The angles and heavens have shuddered at my doggedness.
I have chewed steel, I have braved fire,
I have sipped the blood of my heart,
But this my head has not, till this day,
Bent low before any one but thee.

(Bright Future): Let spring set in
   All ice shall melt away,
   Let summer set in,
   All ice on peaks shall vanish away.45

Thus it can safely be concluded that the voices and struggle for freedom by the NC mingled within Azad’s voice of freedom and change culminated in the abolition of monarchy or despotic rule in the State. The unfortunate is that he could not see and know the outcome of his intellectual fight that he had initiated to liberate his countrymen. His times was the epoch, generating a new vista of life in Kashmir. It is also unfortunate that with his death, his voice of freedom, liberty, equality and socialism also died, leaving a vacuum which till date remains unfulfilled. Let us examine how Mykovosky’s voice mingled with the revolution in Russia during the first three decades of 20th century in pages ahead.

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