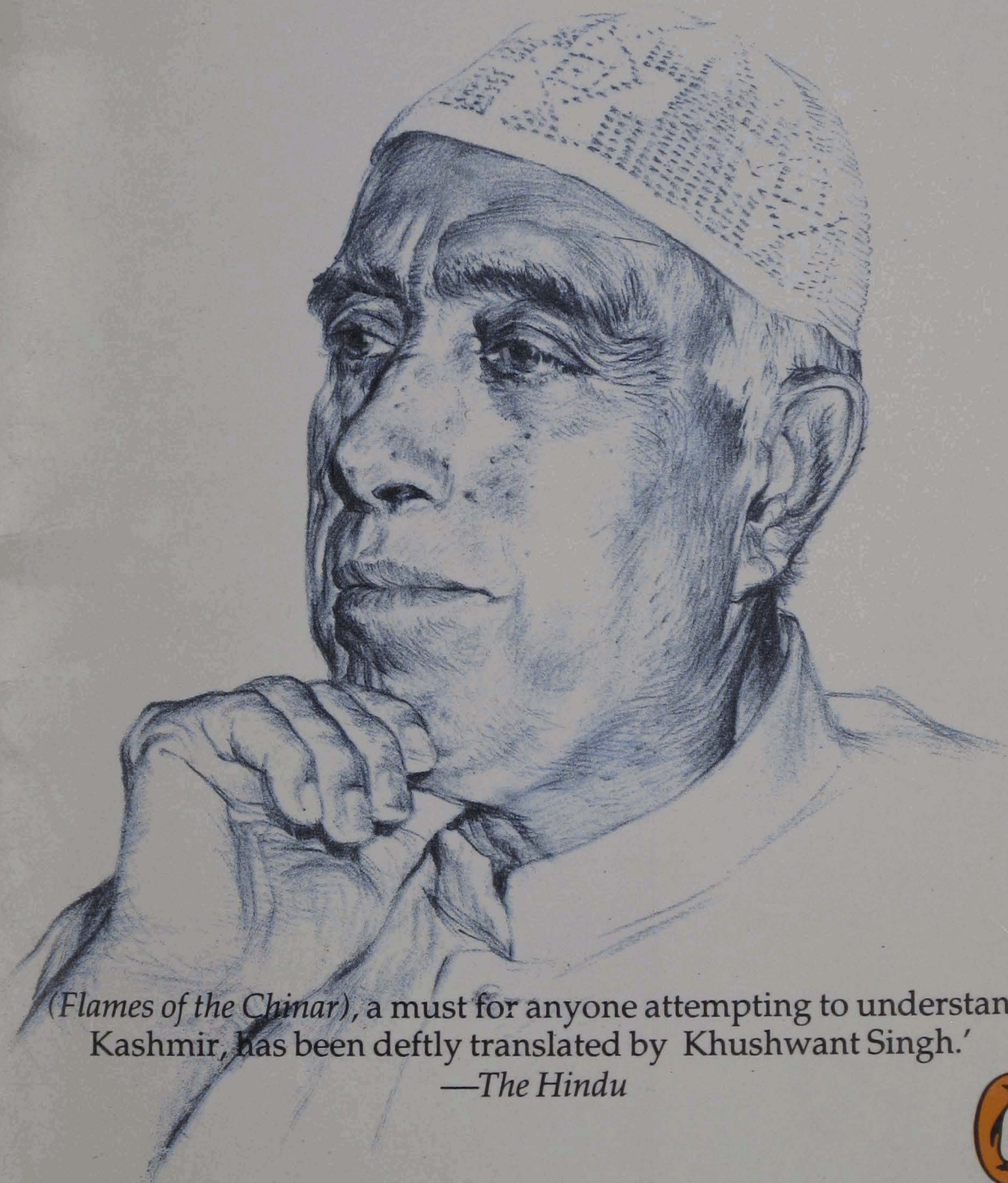


# FLAMES OF THE CHINAR

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## SHEIKH ABDULLAH



*(Flames of the Chinar)*, a must for anyone attempting to understand Kashmir, has been deftly translated by Khushwant Singh.'

—*The Hindu*



PENGUIN BOOKS  
FLAMES OF THE CHINAR

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah (1905–1982), popularly known as 'Sher-e-Kashmir' (lion of Kashmir), is acknowledged as one of India's most important leaders, for the manner in which he guided the political fortunes of one of the country's most sensitive states—Jammu & Kashmir.

Sheikh Abdullah, while still a student at the Aligarh Muslim University in the late 1920s, got his first taste of active politics when he exposed the social, economic and political injustices meted out to the Muslims under Maharaja Hari Singh's rule. This daring initiative established him as a force in politics and he was soon on his way to becoming the front-ranking leader of his people.

His efforts to place the problems of the Kashmiris before a wider audience led him to found the Jammu & Kashmir Conference in 1931 (later to become the National Conference) and launch the 'Quit Kashmir' Movement against the Maharaja in 1946, which effectively ended centuries of autocratic rule in the State. Thereafter, his parleys with other Indian leaders ensured that the interests of the State and its people were given priority while framing future national policy.

Sheikh Abdullah's rejection of the Muslim League's overtures to join Pakistan after independence, was the most significant victory for the Congress and its secular politics. He was Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir from 1975 till his death in 1982, a period particularly notable for the signing of the 'Kashmir Accord'. The Accord, signed between Sheikh Abdullah and the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975, was the basis for a longstanding political alliance between the Congress and the National Conference and confirmed his status as an all-India leader.

\*

Khushwant Singh is India's best-known journalist and has also had an extremely successful career as a writer. Among the works he has published are a classic two-volume history of the Sikhs, several novels (the best-known of which are *Delhi* and *Train to Pakistan*, which won the Grove Press Award for the best work of fiction in 1954), a number of non-fiction books on Delhi, nature and current affairs. An anthology of his best-known writings, *Not a Nice Man to Know: The Best of Khushwant Singh* was published by Penguin India in January 1993.

He has published several translations including *Iqbal's Dialogue with Allah*, *Umrao Jan Ada—Courtesan of Lucknow* and *Land of the Five Rivers*.



Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah

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# Flames of the Chinar

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*An Autobiography*

*Abridged, translated from the Urdu  
and introduced by*

Khushwant Singh



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July 13, 1931. Dedicated to the valiant soldier whose death dazed  
glance skimmed over the world he was leaving behind and rested on  
my face. His lips moved to whisper these immortal words:

'We have done our best . . . it is now upto you . . . Please don't let the  
Kashmiris forget their duty.'

*Qatal gahon se chun kar hamare alam  
Aur niklen gey ushaq ke qafile*

(Gathering our standards  
Strewn on the battlefield  
Bands of lovers will keep pouring out  
Endlessly.)

*16 August 1982  
Srinagar*



# THE ESSENCE

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Kashmir . . . By the power of the spirit . . . yes  
By the power of the sword . . . never.

– *Pandit Kalhana, Rajatarangini*

\*

I broke my sword and fashioned a sickle.

– *Nanda Rishi*

\*

*Jis khaak ke zamir mein ho aatish-e-chinar  
Mumkin nahin ke sard ho woh khaak-e-arjumand*

(The dust that has in its conscience  
The fire of chinar trees  
That dust, celestial dust  
Will never become cold.)

– *Mohammed Iqbal*





# CONTENTS

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<i>Introduction by Khushwant Singh</i>	xi
1. Childhood and Early Trials	1
2. Stormy Days	11
3. Sir Albion Bannerji's Exposé & Our Memorandum	16
4. Trials and Tribulations	20
5. Ahrars and Qadianis	31
6. Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference	35
7. Akbar Jahan Begum	43
8. National Conference: A Dream Comes True	49
9. War, Independence and 'New Kashmir'	55
10. Jinnah and the Kashmiris	59
11. Out of the Noose	62
12. Individuals and Nations	67
13. Quit Kashmir	77
14. Darkest Before Dawn	83
15. Victory of Public Opinion	102
16. Revolutionary Steps	108
17. Article 370 and the Delhi Agreement	113
18. Reign of Error	124
19. Unnerving the Oppressors	134
20. On a Fragile Branch No Nest Will Rest	140

*Flames of the Chinar*

21. The Mulla and the Mujahid	149
22. Last Meeting with Jawaharlal	152
23. Banishment and Return	158
24. The Second Assault	163
25. The Role of Kashmiri Pandits	170
<i>Index</i>	173

## INTRODUCTION

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Srinagar, 1979. It all started one summer evening. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, popularly known as *Sher-e-Kashmir* (Lion of Kashmir), was sitting in his garden enjoying its serene beauty, when suddenly a young man he had known as an ardent scholar and researcher walked in. 'Mohammad Yusuf Taing, what brings you here?' Taing looked earnestly at his mentor, and with some trepidation said what he had in his mind.

'Sir, I pray for your long life. But may I venture to say that before you go, you must pay a debt you owe to future generations?'

'I have spent my whole life paying debts,' he laughed. 'And now are you thrusting me back into the debtor's prison?'

Taing's tone became solemn. Each word was spoken with great conviction.

'You owe to the future, sir, the story of your life!'

For a few moments there was an audible silence. Sheikh Abdullah's care-worn face softened into a deep introspection. 'This is hard work, Taing, who will act as my amanuensis?'

'Would you consider someone . . . like . . . me?'

'Suraiya,' he called out to his daughter. 'Bring me those blue notebooks.'

'The Delhi notebooks?'

'Yes.'

Suraiya went inside, 'Perhaps they too have been lost . . . so be it.' The blue notebooks appeared. Without opening them the Sheikh handed them to Taing. 'I dictated these while I was under house arrest at Kotla Lane, Delhi. See if you find anything worthwhile.'

Taing carefully carried the treasure home. Settling down in his study he examined each paper in detail until the night turned to day. As soon as it was visitors' hour he appeared at Sheikh Abdullah's doorstep. 'These

are absolutely priceless,' he gasped. 'A few small errors about dates . . . but . . . .'

'You know, Taing, what life I have led? A dry leaf tossed about in a windstorm. Difficult to remember everything. In any case, at my age memory begins to fade . . . .'

'Sir,' Taing spoke carefully, weighing each word, 'we will divide the work-load. Your part in this will be to recall history and dictate impressions. Cross-checking dates is a researcher's headache. I am prepared to comb every library . . . .'

The next day was Sunday. The Sheikh and Taing spent the entire day closeted together. Three days later Taing presented the Sheikh with a neatly-written record of the reminiscences he had dictated that Sunday. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah read each word with his usual punctiliousness while Taing stood quietly waiting for his verdict. When he looked up at Taing, the Sheikh's eyes were blazing with excitement.

'*Alhamdϕlillah* (Praise be to God), you are the man I was looking for. We must get down to it at once. Remember, I am a busy man. You will have to pursue me. You will have to persist. Even if I try to shake you off don't give up. From now, the doors of my house will remain open to you at all times.'

In this matter, as in all others, Sheikh Abdullah proved to be a man of his word. He would often take time off from his busy schedule and go out for a long walk with Taing, reminiscing about his multifaceted life, his thoughts and feelings. He spoke frankly and fearlessly. In the words of Mohammed Iqbal:

*Aieen-e-jawan mardi, haq goi-o-bebaaki*  
*Allah ke sheron ko aati nahin rubahi*

(The law of the brave and the valiant  
Is truth and fearlessness  
For the lions of God  
Know not the ways of the fox.)

When Taing respectfully drew his attention to some unpleasant episodes he had recounted for the record, the Sheikh smiled.

'Don't bother about these things. Do your part. Write down what I have to say.'

## *Flames of the Chinar*

The two men worked at home and occasionally at the beautiful guest-house at Chashma-e-Shahi. Sometimes they would retire to the exquisite spot of quiet beauty, Dachigam, sixteen kilometers from Srinagar. During the winter months they met at the official Jammu residence and the Baagh Baalu House, where the same drill was repeated. Sheikh Abdullah proved a hard taskmaster. He never relented, always strived for perfection! He was meticulous about the right choice of words. 'The most important consideration in writing is the right feel for vocabulary.'

In 1965, Sheikh Sahib arranged for Taing to examine the government records preserved in the state archives. Taing was surprised to find references to the Sheikh in almost every document. One by one, he collected the file references and added others from books. He then, took the entire collection for Sheikh Sahib's approval. It was his moment of great pride for a job well done.

The Sheikh took one look at the product of Taing's sleepless nights which was piled before him in neat packages. 'Hard work I admire.' He looked squarely at Taing. 'This was my creed during student days. But . . . ' Taing listened, ever so carefully, 'if you look for me in files and books, you will get lost. My life-scape is too vast for any one person to condense into readable matter. You probably don't believe in the *piri-muridi*\* tradition, but if you can, even for a moment, consider me your guru, just follow me where I lead, and the parameters of your search will become defined.'

This process of dictation and writing continued until 1982. That winter, when he moved to Jammu, he said that the manuscript should be sent to the calligrapher. The publisher's agreement had been personally signed by him.

'We have only got as far as 1977.' Taing reminded him. 'The book must be updated.'

'What major events since 1977?'

'Mirza Afzal Beg and the parting of ways . . . .' Then Taing added hastily, 'But more important, your epilogue, in which you will leave your message for future generations.'

The work gathered momentum. That year, in June, Sheikh Abdullah went on a tour to Doda. Rejecting the advice of his physician and the

---

\* Teacher and disciple in the Sufi order

helicopter pilot he went up 12,000 feet to a village, Laal Darman. The strain proved too much. The doctor advised complete rest and no visitors. After a few days, however, Taing ventured to suggest that the Sheikh continue dictating from his bed. The work started again, but this time there was a difference—the man who was speaking softly about his recollections had seen the impending shadow of death.

‘Take down the dedication.’

‘Please, sir, you can do that later. Let us work on the epilogue . . . your advice to future generations.’

‘Every moment is precious. I want to be able to approve the dedication.’

After he had read the words he seemed relaxed.

Yusuf Taing worked hard on the epilogue. But the Sheikh could not linger to read his own words of advice to the future generations. In deference to the dying man’s integrity, that chapter was not included in the autobiography.

*Sher-e-Kashmir*, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, wanted to see the book appear simultaneously in Urdu and English. The English translation was entrusted to a distinguished oriental scholar, Ralph Russel, of the University of London. Unfortunately, Russel could not leave the university to work on this book in Kashmir. For sometime the work lay on the desk of Professor Maqbool Ahmed, Chairman, Central Asia Institute, but no progress was reported. Finally, an agreement for translation was signed with Vikas Publishing House. When the Sheikh received a few sample chapters, his keen eye found many faults. The writer had not projected the political and cultural ambiance of life in Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah wanted the work undertaken in consultation with Taing, an arrangement which was acceptable to all concerned. But his death ended this chapter as well. Earlier, when the translation project had been announced in the press, there was a barrage of requests for rights from vernacular publishing houses, in Hindi, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada. All this correspondence has been preserved for future consideration.

One last word. This autobiography cannot be read like a historical text. It does not adhere to any methodology. It is the result of the free flight of imagination of a rich mind. A stream of consciousness meanders through the work creating its own gaps, stops and stresses. Events appear

## *Flames of the Chinar*

in order of their importance to the narrator. In the original Urdu, Taing does not tamper with the swing of the Sheikh's mind, so we may read about one incident several times in the seventy-three chapters.

The English version has been condensed from 1,000 (Urdu) to 172 pages, and from seventy-three to twenty-five chapters. Some repetitions had to be dropped as also a certain logic of events introduced using editorial discretion. Other portions dropped were incidents of pure local interest, which were important in themselves but did not hold much interest for a wider non-Kashmiri audience.

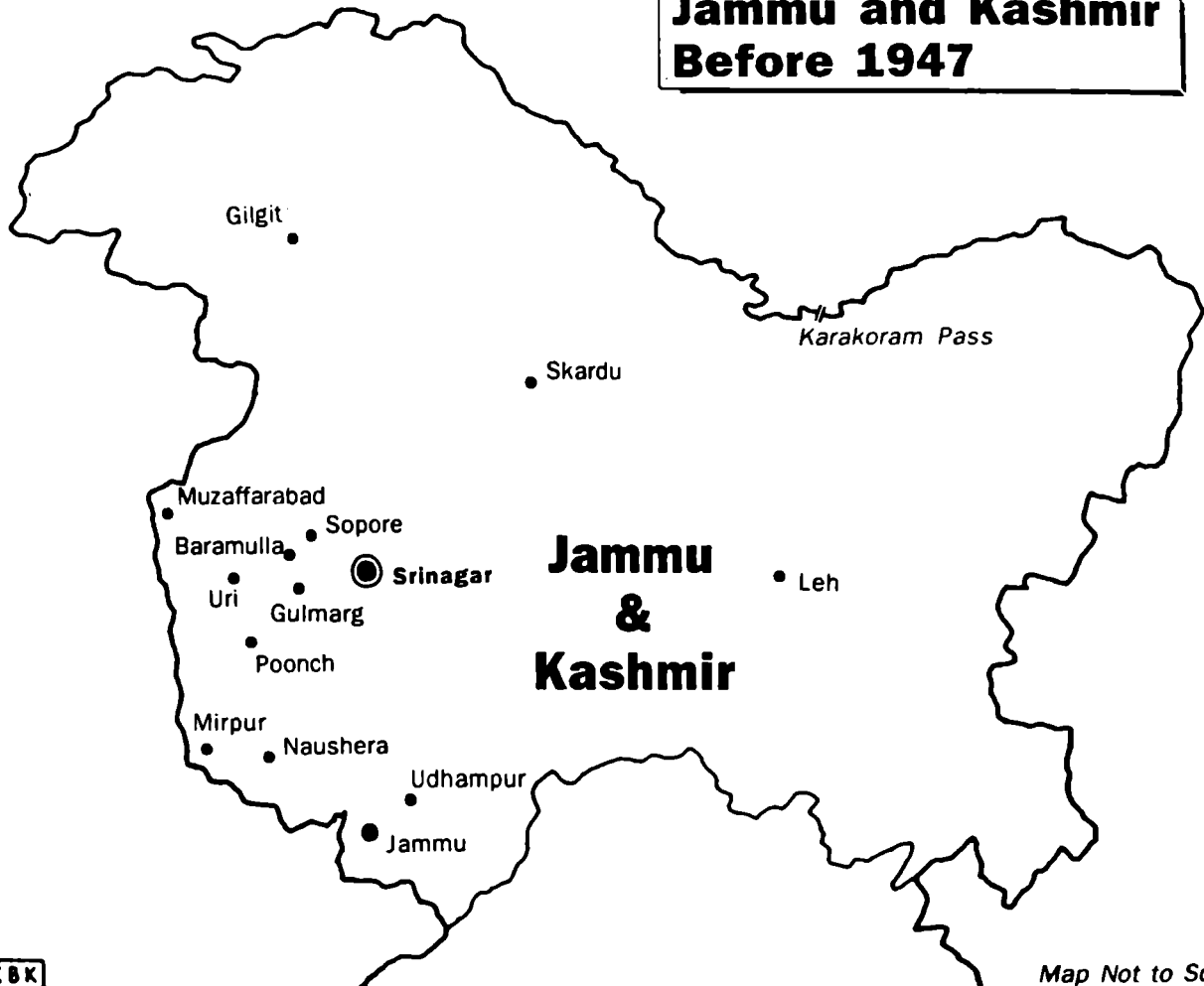
This book will remain a valuable reference for scholars and historians. While one may disagree with the arguments and interpretations, one can never ignore the eyewitness account of the enigmatic developments in Kashmir that have had such far-reaching consequences. More than anything else ever written, it is the candid story of one man's struggle to ensure the dignity of his people in working out a compatible solution between Kashmir and the rest of India.

*New Delhi*  
*1993*

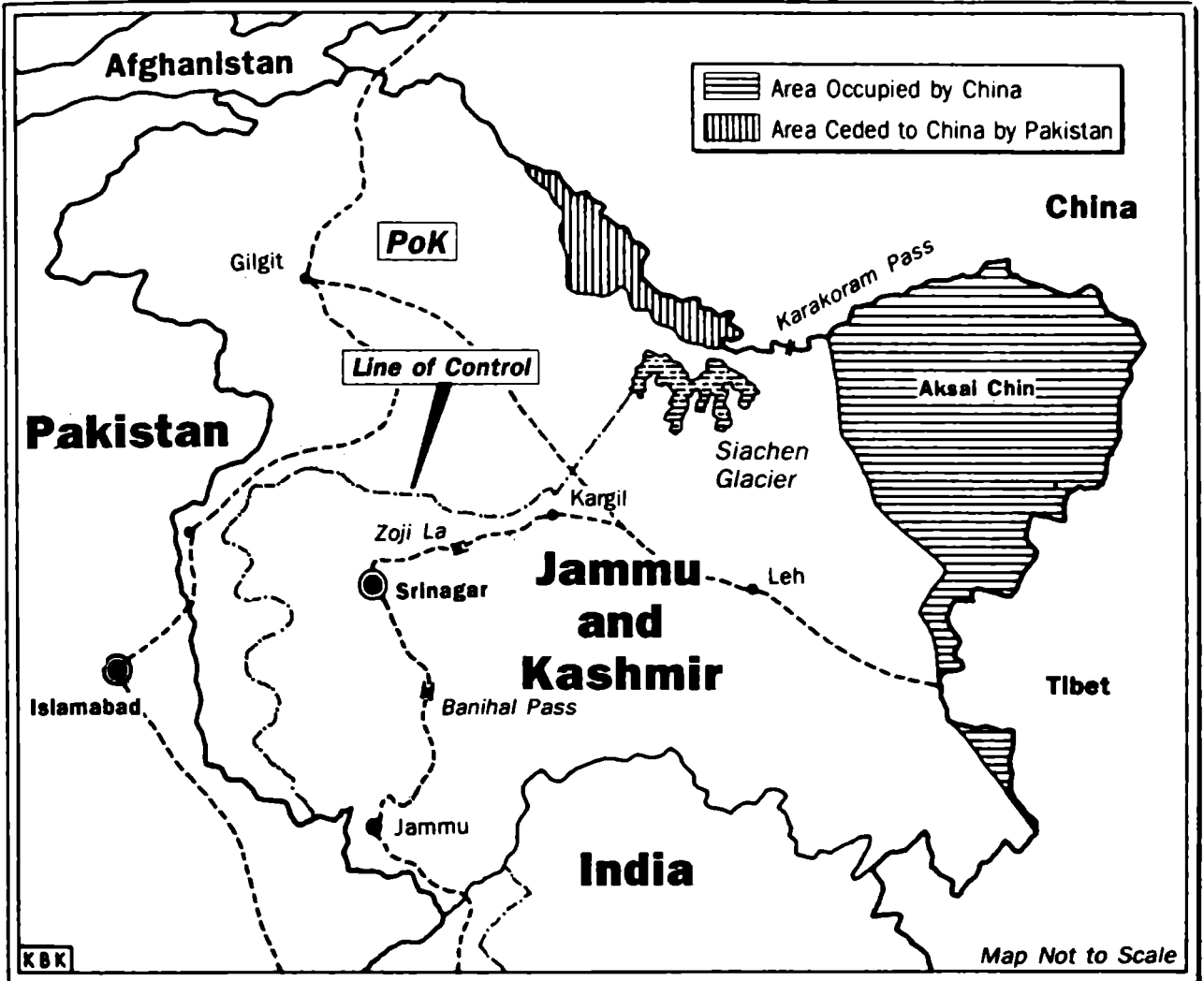
*Khushwant Singh*



# Jammu and Kashmir Before 1947



# Present Day Jammu and Kashmir





# Chapter 1

## CHILDHOOD AND EARLY TRIALS

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I was born in Sura, a hamlet on the border of the Srinagar valley, north of Hari Parbat. My birthplace was part of an ancient civilization. During excavations for construction of the Medical Institute, labourers discovered some beautiful relics: clay figurines, pots and other artefacts. Sura is mentioned in the chronicles of the famous rishi and zahid, Hazrat Sheikh Nuruddin Wali. According to oral tradition, rulers of the day, jealous of Hazrat's piety, sent a tantalizing beauty, Yaoon Mizi, to disturb his meditation. It is said that the Hazrat raised his head bowed in prayer and cast a withering glance upon her which changed her from a moon-faced beauty to a grotesque crone. Her flawless complexion became wrinkled, and her jet black tresses turned white as cotton. This miracle was a turning point for Mizi. She became one of Hazrat's devoted disciples.

The area surrounding Sura is replete with history. At its northern bluff is Naoshera, the famous spot where the wise and benevolent Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen constructed his capital. Here he raised his palace which he called 'Raazdani'. It was made of the finest wood, and considered the best specimen of Kashmiri architecture. The palace had twelve storeys and was regarded as a blueprint of the modern skyscraper. After his death, there was internecine strife during which this grand palace was burnt down; it is said that smoke from the smouldering ruins remained visible for one whole year. The story goes that if anyone needed kindling for his hearth, he could pick live embers from the smouldering 'Raazdani'.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

According to the historian, Hasan, who lived during the days of the Dogras, Sura was famous for its orchards and gardens. Located on the highway to Ladakh, its population was entirely Muslim. During my childhood I recall them working either as labourers or small craftsmen. Very few families were professional *zarigars*, (goldspINNers).

During Afghan rule, one of my ancestors (who were Kashmiri Brahmins) converted to Islam, and took on the Islamic name Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. They used to trade in pashmina. In our small domestic factory, formal Kashmiri *doshalas* (shawls) were woven to be sold in larger markets. Kashmiri shawls are known all over the world for their matchless quality. At the end of the eighteenth century, when Tipu Sultan sided with Napoleon Bonaparte, to challenge the might of the British Empire, he sent with his envoy a Kashmiri shawl of great beauty. Bonaparte was so struck by its exquisite workmanship that he presented it to his beloved Empress Josephine.\*

The Dogras, at the beginning of their rule, exercised strict control over the shawl trade. Maharaja Gulab Singh, the ruler of Jammu who belonged to a family of modest means, became ruler of the State through intrigue and trickery. He presented the British with a princely sum of seventy-five lakh rupees to purchase the entire valley of the Jhelum.\*\*). After that his only interest was to recover his investment as soon as possible by systematically stripping the Kashmiris of their livelihood. These new 'shawl merchants' levied heavy taxes on poor Kashmiri craftsmen. A Shawl Dagh Department was created to stamp every piece before it could be sold, so that no one escaped the taxes. Pandit Raja Kak Dar, as the keeper of Shawl Dagh, not only filled government coffers but accumulated enough personal wealth to last his family several generations. A small compensation in the form of grain was given to the

\* The story goes that over the years Josephine had collected hundreds of shawls. Once, Napoleon wanted to see her naked shoulders and threw her shawl into the fire besides which they were sitting. Josephine demurely asked her maid to bring her another and another, while her royal husband tossed shawl after shawl into the fire.

\*\* After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, the British were able to systematically establish control over Punjab with Gulab Singh's help. The treaty of Amritsar, signed on 16 March 1846, confirmed him as the ruler of the new state of Jammu and Kashmir, including Ladakh and Baltistan. Of the hill regions obtained from the Sikhs, the British retained control over Kulu, Mandi, Nurpur and Kangra, and sold the rest of the territory to Gulab Singh (M.J. Akbar: *Kashmir: Behind the Vale*, Delhi: Viking, 1991; pp. 58–59).

weavers on condition that they did not engage in any other industry. Their objective was to turn the shawl weavers into minting machines so that their blood and sweat could churn out the wealth in which the rulers would luxuriate. Master craftsmen continued to live in penury and deprivation.

A sympathizer and friend of the Kashmiri masses, Allama Iqbal, was mortified at their miserable condition. When he visited Kashmir in the early part of this century, he wrote in Persian:

*Ba resham qaba Khwaja az mehnat-e-oo  
Naseeb-e-tanash jama-e-taar-taarey*

(While you are destined to cover your body with rags,  
The Khwaja's silken robes are the fruit of your labour.)

The same sentiment is expressed in his Urdu couplet:

*Sarma ki hawaon me uryan hai badan us ka  
Deta hai hunar jis ka ameeron ko dushala*

(In the bitter chill of winter shivers his naked body  
whose skill wraps the rich in royal shawls.)

My father, Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim, traded in shawls. He started off with a small business, but persistence and hard work turned it into a medium scale enterprise. We were a middle class family. At one time, Kashmiri shawls were a hot-selling item. After the Napoleonic wars, when France, the fashion capital of the world, declined, the demand for Kashmiri shawls also waned. After the Revolution, France started manufacturing artificial machine-made imitations of Kashmiri shawls. Thereafter, Egypt became the important market for our shawls. They were made to a set pattern and design, known as the 'Egyptian Print', which replaced the classical *Qani* shawl. Later, this demand also declined, the *Ruffle* and *Sozan-kari* became the new favourites, with Amritsar as the main entrepôt for this trade. Its burgeoning demand resulted in every small and large centre in Srinagar producing *ruffle* shawls by the thousands. Our family, keeping pace with the times, shifted gear into *ruffle* manufacture.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

Raw materials were obtained from dealers in Amritsar and distributed among village and city artisans who were instructed to reproduce specified designs.

My father died two weeks before I was born. One of my earliest memories was that all responsibility for the family and the business was taken over by my older brother, Sheikh Mohammed Khalil. My father had married thrice. The first wife died in an epidemic, leaving one daughter. His second wife bore him three sons and one daughter; Sheikh Mohammad Khalil, Abdul Kabir, Sheikh Abdul Ghaffar and a daughter, Khadija. After the death of his second wife, my father married a third time primarily for the sake of running the household. This union produced my two older brothers, Sheikh Mohammad Maqbool and Sheikh Ghulam Mohiuddin, and one sister, Jaan Begum. I was the youngest child. My mother, Khairunnissa, came from a mohalla near Jama Masjid. Her brother, a respected professional, was a *zarigar*.

When my father died, my two real brothers were fairly young. My mother had to take on the entire responsibility of looking after us. We shared a common kitchen with our stepbrothers, but found it exceedingly humiliating. During those days, Kashmir was a dark hole—no electricity, no running water; women of the family had to draw water from the well and pound grain with their own hands. Very rarely was a family able to afford a servant for these menial tasks. My mother depended on her stepsons for maintenance. She was not highly educated but unusually worldly wise. Since we were not old enough to work, she looked to her stepsons for our education. She tried not to nurse minor irritants and disciplined us with a gentle hand. This quality was valued even by her stepsons who sought her advice on household matters and treated her with a degree of respect. Despite the respect there were occasions when, in addition to mental oppression, she was even subjected to physical abuse. All this she bore with fortitude, always concerned with the integrity of the household. When we became a little older, we became conscious of our mother's suffering. We advised her to run her own separate kitchen, for which we offered to work as hard as needed. My mother soothed our hurt feelings but rejected our advice, she did not want to see the family split up. She was more aware than any of us of the consequences of division. Our growing resistance to their treatment of us made our stepbrothers

mellow towards us, and as long as my mother lived we maintained a common kitchen.

My earliest memories are of my mother sitting on the prayer mat. She was very particular about observing the tenets of Islam. The sincerity of her devotion is hard to describe. How pure and innocent she looked when she raised her hands in prayer! I always wanted to follow her footsteps. After namaaz at night, she told me stories of emperors and fairies. I rode on the clouds, scaling the heavens, savouring another world!

Our household environment did not lend itself to education. My mother wanted us to go for further studies, but we did not have the means. My older brother, Sheikh Mohammad Maqbool, could not study beyond Intermediate. He became the headmaster of Hamdania Middle School, drawing a princely salary of ninety rupees per month. My second brother, Sheikh Ghulam Mohiuddin, could not study beyond class five. He was put to work at home at the *rafugari* (darning) factory, so that he, too, could pitch in to help the family.

During those days, Muslim families rarely sent their children to schools. They were not interested in education because of their abject poverty and the indifferent and discouraging attitude of the rulers. If a relatively well-to-do family decided to educate its children, it usually sent them to the *maktab* (seminary), where they were taught Persian and Arabic. My brother, Sheikh Abdul Kabir's son, Ghulam Nabi and I were sent to the neighbourhood *maktab* in 1909. Our teacher's name was Akhun Mubarak Shah, a happy-go-lucky grandee with a Sufi temperament.

Shah Sahib had great affection for us and taught us our lessons with utmost gentleness. His wife, Autan-ji, treated us like her own children, and fed us with whatever was laid on their table. This system of education was unique in that the student was treated like a son, with care and affection, and taught to develop a deep love of learning. There was no scope for distrust between the student and master, which has become characteristic of the present educational system and the cause for much of its problems.

This was the beginning of my love for the Quran. By the grace of God, that love has lasted to this day. Akhun Sahib used to instruct us to recite it aloud. I discovered that I was unusually talented in *quirrat* (recitation). After completing the Quran, we took lessons in Persian texts, *Karima*, *Naam-e-Haq*, *Gulistan*, *Bostan*, *Pindnama*, *Badai-Manzoom*,



etc. We accompanied our elders to the mosque for prayers and, from then on, namaaz became a part of my daily routine. Whether in the halls of power, or the solitude of a prison cell, namaaz has always filled my soul with peace.

At the time we had to recite one paragraph of the Quran loudly every morning. During those formative years, when my mind was malleable like freshly-mixed clay, the eternal truths of the Quranic *ayats* (verses) became etched on my soul. All through life's arduous paths, they gave me sustenance and enabled me to find my way. For this, all praise be to Allah.

After the *maktab* we enrolled in a primary school run by the Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam. I was so disappointed with its educational standards and management that I tried to switch to the nearest district school at Visrarnaag. The principal, however, refused to give me a school-leaving certificate. This was the first time that I raised my voice in protest. By the grace of God, this was the first milestone in my lifelong career of protest. Although I made representations to responsible individuals against the principal's irrational behaviour, I failed to obtain justice. Later, the principal of Visrarnaag School came to my rescue, enrolled me in his institution, and waived the requirement of a certificate.

We had completed only two primary grades, when my older brothers stopped me and my nephew, Ghulam Nabi, from attending school. Our pen was replaced with the *rafugari* needle. In addition, I was also required to work at a grocery store. One memory of those days is etched on my mind. One day, I was reciting a piece from the Quran in *quirrat*. I was in a state of ecstasy. After completing the *surat* (chapter) I looked up and saw that a group of Gujjars from the Gandharbal area had stopped to listen to my recitation, and the word of Allah had brought tears to their eyes. They gave me their blessings and went on their way.

After some time, the more far-sighted individuals in our family agreed to let us go back to school. I completed grade five from Visrarnaag, and took admission in the Government High School, Dilawar Bagh. I had to walk ten miles back and forth everyday from my home to my school at Fatehkadal. But education was such a treat that I did not mind this ordeal. It always bothered me, however, that the time spent in my daily walk prevented me from participating in sporting activities at school. Although as a child I loved playing street games, problems that became part of my growing years never left me any time for sports. After having matriculated

## *Flames of the Chinar*

from the Punjab University, I enrolled at the Sri Pratap (S.P.) College, Srinagar, for an FSc, with the intention of going to medical school. I selected my subjects accordingly. Another two or three miles were now added to my daily walk. I left home when the morning azaan was being called, and returned at the time the lamps were being lit.

During my student days, an Irish man by the name of Mcdermitt was the principal of S.P. College. After two years, I passed my FSc with flying colours. Student days are usually the most carefree times of one's entire life; but not for me. I had a tough childhood; my family problems and the political and social conditions in Kashmir, left me time for nothing but pure studies. One event in particular is unforgettable. One day, my older brother visited the patwari and brought home papers pertaining to our family property. I took one look at the demarcations where my brothers' names were written. I could not find my name anywhere. When I drew my brother's attention to this he became furious and gave me a resounding slap. The smarting from that slap still sears my memory. I never broached the subject again. I suspect that the papers still exist minus my name.

\*

After completing my FSc, I felt secure about my future; being among the very few Muslims who had gone that far I felt confident of receiving State support for medical school. However, that turned out to be a pipe dream. My name was not on the list of the twenty-two candidates which was presented to Maharaja Hari Singh. Hari Singh had ascended the throne recently and wanted to give the appearance of being secular and so, he refused to put his seal of approval on the list, because it did not include a single Muslim name!

When the list was returned, I ventured, once again, to put forward my name. It was rejected because I could not make myself obsequious enough to those in power. In those days bowing and scraping was considered a sign of good breeding. I could not qualify as a well-bred young man! Instead of ingratiating myself before my superior officers, I always adhered to the litany of truth. This outspokenness branded me as insolent and disobedient. My punishment: no official would deign to grant me an interview. When my older and wiser brother, Maqbool, learnt about my penchant for truth, he gave me a sound scolding. 'If candour is all that

you are going to offer the authorities, be prepared to spend the rest of your life in the rut in which you were born. The worldly wise, with an eye on the future soften their seniors with gifts. Why don't you take a shawl or two, and quit harping on principles?' Although I had the greatest respect for my brother, I could not agree with him.

On the 9th of Zil Hijj, 1926, I suffered the first tragedy of my life, my mother's death. We were preparing for Eid-ul-Zuha, when, suddenly, she collapsed. While we sat by her bedside, she passed away. The next day, while everyone else celebrated Eid, we drowned in sorrow. For weeks I was numb with grief. As Iqbal's lines came to my mind, my eyes filled with tears:

*Umr bhar teri mohabbat meri khidmatgar rahi  
Main teri khidmat ke qabil jab hua tu chal basi  
Khaak-e-marqad par teri ley kar ye faryad aoonga  
Ab dua-e-neem shab mein main kise yaad aaoonga.*

(All my life your love waited on me  
When I was ready to serve you, you faded away  
On the dust of your grave I will bring my lament  
In her midnight prayer, who will remember me now?)

My mother and I were very close to each other. I saw her face many trials, especially during her last days. I never heard her complain. Her love for me was at once spontaneous and genuine. What greater proof can one have of God's grace than the unstinting and magnanimous love of a mother for her child!

But life goes on. I had to attend to the business of living. Finally, I was forced to relinquish the idea of studying medicine, and began to explore other academic disciplines. In Srinagar, there was no provision for science education; only a general sciences programme was available at the Prince of Wales College, Jammu. However, the principal of the college, Mr Suri, disdainfully rejected my application. Fortunately, there was the Anjuman-i-Islamia, which had been set up to help Muslims with such problems. I met its leader, General Samandar Khan, and asked for his help. The General, along with a few of his colleagues, agreed to plead my case. Unfortunately, their strategy was to use flattery and sycophancy,

which would make the principal feel that in giving me the admission I deserved, he was doing me an immense favour. This was against my avowed principles, I spoke my mind to Mr Suri. Not surprisingly, my application was rejected.

As we were leaving the principal's office, General Samandar Khan tried to console me, 'Sorry about all this, Abdullah. You touched Suri's vulnerable spot when you spoke about your rights and the oppression of your people. A less blunt man would have been accepted. You are strong and courageous, but flattery is a sure winner. Pity that Kashmiri Muslims are not allowed in the army. You could make an excellent soldier!'

Finally, I found a seat in Lahore's Islamia College, headed by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. One of my main attractions in studying at Lahore was Thakur Janak Singh, a senior member of the Council of Ministers. He had promised to get me a government scholarship to study abroad, on completion of my BSc. However, when I started doing the rounds of government offices, I found the officers as tight-fisted as Scrooge! Disillusioned with hollow promises, I vowed to reach my Alpine peak all by myself. On completing my BSc, I joined the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), hoping to study science and law. This combination was not allowed, and I took chemistry instead.

Although scholarships were available for the subjects I chose, they were given only to non-Muslims. Nevertheless, I applied for one. The Education Minister, Agha Husain Rizvi, called me and pleaded his helplessness. When I reminded him about his duty to protect Muslims, he said, 'I am a mouthpiece, a phonograph. My role is only to amplify the sounds. I have no voice of my own.' I looked with scorn at the man, 'What are you doing here then? What right do you have to hold this position? Had a Hindu discriminated against a Muslim, I may have forgiven him. But a Muslim discriminating against another Muslim!' Agha Sahib looked at me dazedly but did not offer to vacate his seat, or to help me.

During my student days, the Vice-Chancellor of AMU was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's grandson, Sir Ross Masood. The stamp of his personality was evident all over the university. Aligarh had become the nerve centre of Muslim unrest. Following the modernization of Turkey, the Khilafat movement had begun to wane. Despite their deep disappointment, Muslims aspired for independence as was evident from massive turnouts

## *Flames of the Chinar*

at political meetings. It was impossible for me to remain indifferent to this highly-charged emotional environment.

I secured a second division in my MSc. Upon returning to Kashmir, I tried, again, to go abroad for further studies but discovered that I had crossed the age limit. This restriction was imposed upon Muslims. They were considered ineligible for higher studies if they crossed the age of twenty-four. I realized that I was not the only victim of communal discrimination which had infected the entire bureaucracy. I finally saw the hidden net which was ensnaring our people and stifling every attempt of protest to break loose out of it.

The year 1930 dawned. How could I have known that the nation was on the brink of an eruption. The trampled pride and hope of the people of Kashmir was like molten lava ready to flow. Nature fanned the embers of protest which were smouldering inside me. It was left to me to take the lid off the volcano's mouth.

The valley of flowers was about to burst into flames.

# Chapter 2

## STORMY DAYS

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It is always darkest before dawn, goes the old adage! What happened before 1931, when the youth of Kashmir offered their lives for their motherland and suffered unmentionable tyrannies, is known only to those who braved those storm-filled days.

Our house was surrounded on all sides by working class dwellings. The shawl weavers lived to the west, oilmen and darners to the east, and other labouring classes to the north. The walls of my house could not shelter me from this destitute environment. As I write these lines, my mind goes back to a heart-rending incident. Abdul Ahad was a young worker in our factory. He was a handsome lad with refined manners. For a few days he did not report for work. First, we were informed that he was taken ill. A few days later we heard that he had died. When I visited his parents to condole his death, his father related the tragic incident. The family owed money to a lender who often harassed them. Abdul Ahad could not bear this indignity so he decided to cut down on his own expenditure and save money. He used to feed his share of grain to his little sisters and keep the husk for himself. I was stunned. It tormented me that while I ate two meals a day, my neighbour had lived on husk.

I can think of other similar incidents. Once there was a slump in the shawl trade. The sums advanced to the weavers had to be collected from them. One of our weavers was from the Ganderbal Tehsil, against whom we had a court decree. I was sent with government functionaries to attach his moveable property. When we reached our destination what did we

find? Only a few mats and kitchen utensils. I was in tears. We were living a good life thanks to these wretched workers. Not only had this man lost his job but thanks to us he was about to lose his meagre possessions as well. I set fire to all the court decrees, and returned home with a heavy heart. When my brothers demanded the money, I narrated my experience. They were very angry but could not condemn my action.

At the market, one morning, I saw an octroi-duty collector mercilessly beating a villager. This unfortunate villager was driving his ponies laden with firewood towards the city. Having paid the octroi-duty, when he moved on, the collector demanded a log of wood. The man told me that in addition to paying octroi he had already given some wood to the collector. But he demanded more: hence the drubbing. On hearing this, I gave hell to the collector who shouted back that he would get even with me. After a few days, I was summoned by the octroi-duty inspector. Surprisingly, he was touched by my compassion, and I was let off with a warning.

Famine often strikes the valley of Kashmir. The smallest decline in the harvest results in a disastrous food shortage. History has recorded several such famines which devastated the entire region. As a precautionary measure, the government maintains a buffer stock of food grains. As a child I saw government officials collecting land taxes in kind. Grain collected from the villages was stored in Srinagar. This was the inception of the food department.

Those who lived within municipal limits received rationed grain. Since our mohalla was outside municipal limits, we were not eligible for rations. The people of our mohalla approached the department and an official was sent to make an inquiry. My older brother, Sheikh Mohammad Khalil, was a well-respected member of our mohalla. The officer wanted to know who was the 'leader of the mohalla?' People pointed towards my brother. The officer took one step towards him and gave him a resounding slap. We were stunned. I was livid with anger and suddenly realized that this was nothing unusual. It was the officers' method of dispensing justice to common people. Later, the officer realized he had made a mistake and apologized. But that one slap was unforgettable. I started to question why Muslims were singled out for such treatment? We constituted the majority, and contributed the most towards the State's revenues, still we were continuously oppressed. Why? How

long would we put up with it? Was it because a majority of government servants were non-Muslims, or, because most of the lower grade officers who dealt with the public were Kashmiri Pandits? I concluded that the ill-treatment of Muslims was an outcome of religious prejudice.

One day, I asked my mother, 'Who rules over us?' My mother simply said, 'God is the ultimate ruler.' I persisted, 'Then why this injustice meted out only to the Muslims of Kashmir?' My mother could not give me a satisfactory answer. She silenced me with a gentle slap on my cheek. These small incidents defined my future direction. I was gathering steam which would keep me propelled in new directions. Destiny had intertwined my future with the future of Kashmir. No one knew how the mysterious hand of God would unfold events, but the future was casting its ominous shadow on the present world of ideas and ideals.

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Wherever I looked I saw a relentless struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed. I yearned to become their saviour and sacrifice my life in their cause. In the spring of 1924, the workers of *Reshamkhana* (silk-house) protested against the oppressive attitude of the authorities. For the first time they organized themselves and gathered at Huzoori Bagh. The government ordered the cavalry, armed with lances, to disperse them. Many workers were injured, the public was outraged. A procession was organized; it included women and children. This was the first protest march of its kind. It created a sensation in the city.

Another remarkable incident followed. The Viceroy, Lord Reading, and Lady Reading were due to arrive in Kashmir in October 1924. Seething with anger against the Dogra government, Kashmiri Muslims decided to petition him. A few notables of Srinagar met secretly and decided that when the Viceroy embarked on his boat procession, people assembled on both banks of the river, would wave black flags and draw his attention to the worsening condition of the Kashmiri Muslims. A secret memorandum was signed by Khwaja Saduddin Shahl, Khwaja Hasan Shah Naqshbandi, Mirwaiz of Kashmir, Ahmadullah Hamadani, Agha Syed Hussain Jalali, Mufti Sharifuddin and others. This memorandum, which contained seventeen points, requested the Viceroy to inquire into our grievances. It drew special attention to the restitution of the ownership



of land to the farmers. The question of the representation of Muslims in the cadre of gazetted officers was also mentioned. Out of 421 gazetted officers in Kashmir, Muslims numbered no more than fifty. Demands for educational facilities, employment, and transference of the mosque were also made.

When the boat procession was passing by the Khanqah-e-Mualla, crowds gathered at the river bank, started waving black flags and raising slogans: 'Injustice! Injustice!' The memorandum, was placed in the Viceroy's hand. It sent a ripple of concern through official circles. As we expected, the Viceroy simply forwarded the memorandum to the Maharaja who made a fictitious inquiry through a hand-picked committee. Meanwhile, signatories to the memorandum were hounded by the police. Khwaja Saduddin Shawl was arrested and banished from the State. Khwaja Noor Shah Naqshbandi, son of Khwaja Hasan, was forced to resign from the post of tehsildar. Agha Syed Hussain Jalali was removed from the post of *zaildar* (Territory Officer), exiled from the State, and his jagir forfeited. Mirwaiz's name was removed from the list of durbaris and a strict warning was issued to him. The rest of the signatories, who submitted apologies, were mildly reprimanded. Important though this mission was, it did not involve the common Muslims in its confabulations. Nothing was done to take them into confidence or to gain their sympathies. Consequently, it made no impact on the masses.

Echoes of the incident were heard in Lahore, where I was a student of the Islamic College. Khwaja Saduddin Shawl and Khwaja Noor Shah Naqshbandi, both banished from the State, arrived there. They were the guests of Mian Nizamuddin, progeny of a prominent old Kashmiri family. Since I was homesick for Kashmir, I occasionally visited Mian Nizamuddin to meet Shawl Sahib and Khwaja Noor Shah. One day Shawl Sahib and Noor Sahib complained that the people of Kashmir had not expressed any emotion at their banishment. They claimed that when Maharaja Hari Singh visited the Idgah to express his solidarity with the Muslims, the Muslims, instead of demanding justice, remained silent. Characteristically, I blurted my disagreement that since they did not take the people into confidence they should not expect anything in return from them. Both the Khwajas were annoyed. 'Let us see what you will do,' they said. 'Let the time come,' I retorted, 'God willing we will show our worth.'

A heart-wrenching sight was the hordes of Kashmiri Muslims forced

to leave their beautiful country and move to the flat, dusty plains of the Punjab in search of a livelihood. It was really amazing that their fertile land could not provide sustenance for them. They had to cross the snow-bound mountains, like Banihal and Murree, to reach their destinations. Some died on the mountainous paths, others reached Punjabi cities to live in penury and degradation. They were like dumb driven cattle. Quite often I saw them begging. 'Why don't you work instead of begging?' I asked. 'We do work. But our day's earning is a rupee which we must save to pay government dues on our return. We must also buy clothes for our children and carry back tea and salt. If we spend what we earn, what shall we take back?' Their plight brought tears to my eyes. I was tormented at the sight of the numerous corpses of these unfortunate men and women strewn by the roadside and which people shunned like the plague. In life, they were denied every comfort, in death their bodies were handed over for research purposes to hospitals.

Among the people who dominated the literary and political life of the Punjab were, Professor Dil Mohammad Alam, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan and Sir Mohammad Shafi. Among women, Begum Shah Nawaz was very prominent. The Kashmir circle consisted of Mian Amiruddin, and Syed Mohsin Shah, and Gama Pahalwan, who was also from Kashmiri stock. Lahore was the hub of intellectual activity. I met Allama Iqbal, and had the pleasure of listening to the Nightingale of India, Sarojini Naidu. Her exquisite oratory held me spellbound. Another prominent Lahorian was Maulana Zafar Ali Khan who edited the Urdu daily, *Zamindar*. He was a fearless crusader of truth. Other prominent newspapers were *Milap* and *Pratap*. The leading English dailies were the *Tribune* and *Civil and Military Gazette*.

I first set eyes on Mahatma Gandhi at the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). He had been invited by the students. Those were the days when he had infused the country with a new spirit of freedom. We watched him with great admiration. Gandhiji was not a fiery orator; it was his simplicity and informality which captivated every member of the audience.

# Chapter 3

## SIR ALBION BANNERJI'S EXPOSÉ AND OUR MEMORANDUM

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I was at Aligarh when a momentous event took place in Kashmir. It all happened because of Sir Albion Bannerji.

Sir Albion was a senior officer of the Government of India. Maharaja Hari Singh appointed him as the Prime Minister and Foreign and Political Minister. A conscientious and enlightened administrator, he wanted to end the oppression of the common people. But the Maharaja disapproved of this approach as a result of which, the fearless Sir Albion, resigned from the Cabinet in 1929, and left for Lahore. There he was accosted by journalists who wanted a statement on the reason for his resignation. Sir Albion spoke of the conditions prevailing in Kashmir at the All India States' People's Conference in 1939:

In the State of Jammu and Kashmir, injustices of various kinds are prevalent. The Muslims, who form an overwhelming majority, are illiterate, steeped in poverty, and driven like dumb cattle. No rapport exists between the government and the people. There is no system to redress their grievances. Public opinion is not permitted. Newspapers are generally non-existent.

The root cause for this is the deplorable economic condition of the common people. The people of the state are exemplary citizens but they lack every comfort of life.

On 15 March 1929, when the statement was published in the English newspapers, it rattled the higher echelons in the corridors of power. The government groped around to save face. Exemplary loyalists like Agha Syed Hussain, General Samander Khan, Colonel Ghulam Ali Shah, Mirza Ghulam Mustafa and others issued a rebuttal stating that the Muslims of the State were leading a peaceful and fairly prosperous life.

I was shocked to read the rebuttal, and wrote a letter to Muslim Outlook, Lahore, in which I exposed this as a dirty ploy of the Maharaja. Hindu newspapers of the Punjab were publishing stories to minimize the impact of Sir Albion's statement. My letter exposed the other side. This was my first venture into politics which filled me with a strange rapturous feeling. I had finally found my voice! I was now prepared to face whatever challenges came my way.

Having completed my education at Aligarh, I left for Srinagar. The valley was still resounding with echoes of Bannerji's statement. In order to lessen its impact, the government announced stipends and scholarships for educated Muslims. Since I was one of the few educated Muslims I also applied but without much hope. The Kashmir government appointed a Civil Service Recruitment Board which required candidates to appear for an examination. We were, however, suspicious about this, as well as of any other administrative strategy of the government. This seemingly benevolent measure had a hidden component. The government's earlier claim that the scarcity of Muslims in public services was due to lack of education, was no longer acceptable because many educated Muslims had appeared on the scene. Therefore, they had to think up other excuses. First, only non-Muslims were appointed to the Public Service Recruitment Board. Second, Hindi and Sanskrit were offered as options, whereas Urdu, Persian and Arabic were not. Furthermore, the government could recruit 60 per cent of the candidates without referring their applications to the Board. The remaining 40 per cent were required to furnish details about their family background. Finally, the government also had the power to reject candidates without stating any reasons. We were familiar with these subterfuges. In order to oppose such discriminatory tactics, I decided to organize the Muslim youth to counter this move.

A group of us had started a Reading-Room Party near Fatehkadal, at the residence of Mufti Ziauddin. The Reading-Room Party served as a

rendezvous where we discussed national issues and amongst other things, deplored the existing conditions. Gradually, a number of friends started dropping in to join in our discussions. We then formed a management committee. Mohammad Rajab was elected President and I, the General Secretary. We wanted to open a window to the world to apprise it of the wretched conditions of Kashmir. Letters were sent to the Urdu newspapers of Lahore and we also contacted Rajni Dutt, editor of the progressive journal, *Indian States*. We had a distinguished visitor, Maulana Azad Subhani, the *khateeb* of the Jama Masjid of Calcutta. The Maulana believed in freedom, and expressed approval of our stand. He suggested that we join the Indian freedom movement. When the government got wind of our friendship with the Maulana, it tried to get hold of him but by that time he had left the State. After this episode, the government kept a close watch over the activities of our reading-room.

During one reading-room meeting, I drew our youthful comrades' attention to the new rules for the recruitment of public servants. I suggested we lodge a protest. We agreed to forward a memorandum to the Regency Council which was invested with all powers while the Maharaja was away in England. We decided to point out the violation of the rules, with the request that they be suitably amended. Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, a highly educated man and competent writer, was entrusted with the task of preparing the memorandum. Then we started a signature campaign of educated Muslims. Many friends signed, some refused. Our daily campaigning further aroused the suspicions of the government, and two inspectors of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) were asked to monitor our activities. By this time, however, we had become used to political surveillance.

The memorandum was sent to the President of Ministerial Council, G.E.C. Wakefield. We were not very hopeful of any response but were, pleasantly surprised at receiving a letter from the Council inviting us to present our case. Several of us gathered at the residence of Ashai Sahib, and, after a heated discussion decided to send Abdul Aziz Fazli, a law graduate from Aligarh, and me to appear before the Council.

News of this memorandum created a stir among the loyalists who condemned our move. When we reached the Secretariat we were asked to wait while the members of the committee, consisting of G.E.C. Wakefield (Chairman), Thakur Kartar Singh (Secretary), P. K. Vatil

(Finance Minister), and General Janak Singh (Financial Adviser) were closeted in another room. Finally, we were asked to come in and members of the Council fired a volley of questions at us. Though we were novices at this game, we stolidly met their onslaught.

First, they took great pains to explain that the Maharaja's government was very 'kind' to the Muslims and that it was most ungracious of us to oppose it! P.K. Vatil recounted instances of the Maharaja's kindnesses. I said that the Muslims wanted no more than their just rights. Members of the Council, especially Vatil, tried to cow me down and said that such activities would be 'appropriately dealt with'. However, I spoke with great firmness, 'If recruitment rules are not amended the consequences would be unpleasant.' My retort infuriated them and they abruptly ended further discussions.

Although our memorandum had no immediate effect, it did create a stir among the ruling élite. Meanwhile, we were desperate for self-expression. The State had no Muslim newspaper. Only one Hindu newspaper was published in Jammu, called *Ranbir*, which was a mouthpiece of the Maharaja and his cronies. *Milap*, *Pratap*, and the *Tribune* from Lahore, were also concerned with safeguarding the interests of the Hindu Maharaja. They supported all the legal and illegal activities of the State administration. Some newspapers of Lahore, edited by Muslims, were denied distribution in the State if they wrote anti-government articles. The only exception was an Urdu weekly edited by a Kashmiri, Mohammad Din Fauq. Apart from this, there was no media the Kashmiris could use to make their grievances known to the public.

I made contact with the *Inqilab* of Lahore. This paper was edited by two bold journalists, Ghulam Rasool Mehr and Abdul Majid Salik. I started contributing articles to this paper through Abdul Majid Qureshi of Jammu. When the entry of this paper into the State was banned, they retaliated by issuing a new weekly, *Kashmir*, which became very popular in the valley.

At the turn of the century some sympathetic Muslims, including Dr Muhammed Iqbal, formed the Kashmir Conference.

# Chapter 4

## TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

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Instead of imbibing its discipline, Maharaja Hari Singh got carried away by the outward trimmings of his Western education. His life was one continuous pursuit of pleasure! In 1931, accompanied by the Maharani, he went to Europe to attend the second Round Table Conference. A son was born to them in France. Hindu jagirdars decided to arrange a reception in his honour. Not to be outdone, their Muslim counterparts, decided to give him one of their own. They called a meeting of a few educated young men, where I was asked to speak. I spoke frankly about the difficult times ahead. The loyalists resented my speech and urged me to withdraw my words. I refused to do so. This incident became the talk of the town and people started looking at me in a new light. I was appointed convener of a committee of the Muslim élite. Meanwhile, the Maharaja, wisely, turned down the invitations of both Hindus and Muslims.

This was a strange phase in my life. All day I did the rounds of government offices collecting information. Members of my family were anxious that I start earning a livelihood. I, too, felt the pinch of poverty. I got a job as a science teacher in a school. It did not last long. A job could not bind my spirit of freedom. Having to travel six miles to the city everyday became a problem. I found a small room in the city. Subsequently, the modest little room, became the meeting place for young Kashmiris.

Meanwhile, certain incidents occurred in Jammu which deeply hurt Muslim sentiment. The first occurred on 29 April 1931. After the Eid

## *Flames of the Chinar*

prayers, when the Imam started to read the *khutba*, the police ordered him to stop. The second incident concerned a head constable, Labho Ram, who took a copy of the Quran from the bag of a Muslim colleague and tore it up. Jammu's Young Men's Muslim Association issued protest posters. We decided to display them in every mohalla. A young volunteer assigned to this job was arrested, but public pressure forced his release. To celebrate the peoples' victory, a meeting was held at Jama Masjid at which I said: 'Unless those who have desecrated the Quran are punished, we shall not rest. We will continue fighting until every Muslim is assured of his rights.'

After the Friday prayers, the Quran was recited and speeches made. My style of recitation had become very popular. I also started reciting the deeply moving poetry of Allama Iqbal. People were thrilled to hear my voice.

The government became apprehensive. The Governor, Raizada Trilok Chand invited a few prominent Muslims and asked them to restrain young men who were spreading anti-government feelings. A notice was placed at the Jama Masjid prohibiting meetings or speeches inside the mosque without prior permission of the District Magistrate. Through the good offices of a few prominent Muslims, the Governor of Kashmir agreed to meet young Muslims in Hazratbal. They grilled him with questions. He lost his temper and threatened them with dire consequences. This angered the crowd outside who threw stones at the Governor's party and forced him to beat a hasty retreat. Afterwards, a crowd marched towards Jama Masjid where a meeting was being held in contravention of the government order.

Throughout this period, I did not neglect my school duties. Unfortunately, my employers did not appreciate my conscientiousness and compelled me to resign. Thank God! The chains were broken and I could walk along my chosen path without any external hindrance. All my time was now committed to the fight for freedom. We began organizing meetings on the outskirts of the city; they were attended by thousands of men and women. I used to recite Iqbal's poetry which moved them deeply. The government dared not interfere. People were so excited that the slightest intrusion would have resulted in bloodshed. Meanwhile, back from his European tour, Maharaja Hari Singh decided to personally talk with Muslims leaders. The Minister for Political Affairs, G.E.C. Wakefield, advised him to invite a representative delegation which would be



permitted to submit grievances before him. On behalf of the Muslims of Jammu, the Young Men's Muslim Association nominated Mistri Yaqub Ali, Sardar Gauhar Rehman, Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas and Sheikh Abdul Hamid.

In Kashmir, the selection of representatives was done on a larger scale. We organized ourselves with the dual purpose of electing delegates, unifying the different factions and bringing the people on one platform. Followers of the senior and junior Mirwaiz were always at loggerheads. We managed to create a sort of rapprochement between them. A well-attended meeting was convened in the open space in front of Khanqah-e-Mualla. This was the beginning of our movement for independence. We swore an oath of loyalty to the nation. Seven representatives were elected: Mirwaiz Maulvi Mohammad Yusuf Shah; Mirwaiz Ahmedullah Hamadani; Agha Syed Hussain Jalali; Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai; Munshi Shahabuddin; Khwaja Saduddin Shawl and myself.

After the meeting, the organizers and the elected representatives proceeded for tea to the Hamdania Middle School. There, one Abdul Qadir made the sparks fly! He had arrived in Kashmir along with Major Butt of the Yorkshire Regiment. He suddenly spoke up, exhorting the people to fight against oppression. He was immediately arrested and prosecuted under Section 124 (A) and 153 of the Ranbir Penal Code. However, our meetings continued. One was held on 12 July 1931, at Gaukadal, at which we condemned the trial in camera, of Abdul Qadir. How were we to know that the very next day Kashmir would witness a fresh spurt of young blood? No one realized the significance of Abdul Qadir's outspokenness. The incident that was to occur on 13 July 1931, had the same impact on our movement that the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh of 1919, had on the movement of Indian independence.

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At the meeting held at Gaukadal, we pleaded with the people to keep away from the Central Jail on 13 July 1931, where Abdul Qadir's case was to be heard. Despite our pleas, hordes of people tried to force their way into the jail. Governor Raizada Trilok Chand arrived on the spot with a police battalion and ordered them to be arrested. People pelted him with stones.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

The governor ordered the police to open fire. Twenty-two persons were killed and hundreds injured. It was a coincidence that the French Revolution had also started on the same day in 1789.

By that time I had reached Nawab Bazar from Fatehkadal. On that day, I was in my new house near the Nawab Bazar bridge. A terrible storm swept across Srinagar, which reminded me of the following lines.

But never till tonight, never till now  
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.  
Either there is a civil strife in heaven  
Or else the world too saucy with the Gods  
Incenses them to send destruction.

I was sitting quietly when a terrified young man burst into my house and told me of the firing. He said that the dead were being brought in a procession towards the city. I was mortified at what this may trigger off. I entreated Maulvi Abdul Rahim to use his influence to contain the crowd. He returned after a short while to say that all his efforts had been in vain. The infuriated mob was moving towards the hospital. Rioting and plundering had started at Zainakadal and Bahorikadal. I left immediately for the troubled area. I learnt that some Muslims who were taking a dead boy to his home at Wazapura, had asked Hindu shopkeepers to pull down their shutters as a mark of respect. They refused. This provided the pretext for anti-social elements to go on a rampage. After the situation had limped back to normal, the police managed to recover property stolen from Hindu shops.

At Jama Masjid we placed the dead bodies on hastily arranged bedsteads and tried to get medical aid for the injured. Then came the news that a cavalry contingent sent to Maharajaganj, was beating and arresting Muslims. A while later, Nawab Khusro Jung arrived. When he tried to condole the death of those killed in the police firing, I told him that the blood of the martyrs has not been shed in vain and that we would fight until our last breath. At dusk we locked all the four gates of the Jama Masjid and directed young men to keep vigil over the dead bodies. Next morning, the Dogra army surrounded Jama Masjid and arrested me. I was taken to Badami Bagh and locked up in a quarter-guard. Maulvi Abdul Rahim and Khwaja Ghulam Nabi Gulkar were put in the same lock-up.

Also arrested were some of the elected representatives of Jammu and Kashmir. Those who escaped imprisonment busied themselves with arrangements for the burial of the martyrs. Khwaja Noor Naqshbandi suggested that all of them should be buried side by side in one place. They were interned in the courtyard of Khanqah-e-Naqshbandia which became the martyr's memorial and the focal point from which we received inspiration. Every year on 13 July people pay homage to these men who fell in the battle for freedom. So long as Kashmiri hearts beat to the national anthem, the Khanqah-e-Naqshbandia will remain the symbol of defiance, dignity, and pride.

Our Dogra rulers unleashed a reign of terror. Martial law was promulgated. People were made to crawl on their bellies. Hundreds were thrown in prison. At several places Muslims were forced to raise slogans in praise of the Maharaja. Undaunted, the people brought all activity to a standstill as if the valley had been struck with paralysis.

In the Badami Bagh quarter-guard we were cut off from the outside world. One night we were ordered to step out. Police officers, waiting outside, took us to the fort of Hari Parbat and locked us up in a dark, damp cell. We tried to get news of the city. A sentry informed us that there had been a general strike for nineteen days, and that the government was making every effort to break it. Eventually, it had to resort to the good offices of Ashai Sahib, Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf Shah, Maulvi Abdullah Vakil and Khwaja Noor Shah Naqshbandi. The government asked for written assurances that in future we would not indulge in seditious practices. We replied that the cry for justice could not be construed as rebellion. By this time, the government was so weary of the situation that it readily accepted our stand. After twenty-one days in detention we were set free.

Echoes of how we had braved oppression were heard all over the country, particularly in the Punjab. Unfortunately, the Hindu press of the Punjab projected our movement to be communal. However, the neutral press and Muslim papers extended full support to our movement by severely criticizing the policies of the government. The people of the Punjab, many of whom were of Kashmiri origin, were greatly dismayed. Under the leadership of Allama Iqbal they convened an All India meeting of Muslims which was attended by many prominent leaders. After

extended discussions a Kashmiri Committee was formed. The religious leader of the Qadianis,\* Khalifa Mirza Basheeruddin Mahmood, was appointed its President, and Abdul Rahim Dard its Secretary. A delegation of this committee came to Srinagar to study the situation. All this time, we were kept locked up in the Hari Parbat fort. As directed by the committee, 14 August 1931, was celebrated as Kashmir Day all over the country. Meetings were held and resolutions adopted. The entire valley went on strike. A meeting was held at the burial ground of the martyrs where people wept at the sight of the martyrs' children.

From the British point of view Punjab was the most important province because it was the chief recruiting ground. To keep their stranglehold over the rural majority they created vested interests and patronized pirs who exercised considerable influence over Muslim masses of the Punjab. One such pir was Syed Mehr Shah, who was given the title of Nawab in lieu of his loyal services. Raja Hari Krishan Kaul, who had by now replaced G.E.C. Wakefield, as the Minister for Political Affairs, persuaded him to liaise between the government and the representatives of Kashmiri Muslims. His efforts resulted in an accord, which was signed by the Maharaja's representative and the representative of the Muslims. It was the first of its kind. It had several important implications. First, it invested us with the status of a relevant party, in the case. Second, it gave us time to realign our forces and apply our minds to new developments. So far, our movement had been confined to Srinagar. Under one of the provisions of this accord, we had accepted the responsibility of touring the important towns of the valley and speaking to the people. I felt that this was a golden opportunity to broaden and strengthen the popular base of our movement.

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We started touring the important towns of the valley. We held meetings at Islamabad, Sopore and other towns. All our meetings drew large crowds. Everywhere we went, we established 'peace committees'. Another advantage of this accord was that all those who were imprisoned on fabricated charges were set free, and those who were dismissed or

\* Qadian is a town southeast of Ludhiana where the first followers of the Ahmadiyya sect were admitted and initiated.

suspended from government service were given back their jobs. However, I was certain that the Prime Minister would not abide by the accord for too long. I was buying time to hone our plan of action.

The word 'accord' created resentment among the people. Government's agents, feigning sympathy for the common people, instigated them to divert their anger towards us. They accused us of perfidy. The situation became extremely delicate. A public meeting was convened at Jama Masjid at which Maulvi Yusuf Shah read out the terms of the accord, explained its background, and spoke about its advantages. As a result, the people were slightly pacified.

While this was going on, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, accompanied by Colonel Haksar, arrived in Kashmir. I met Maulana Azad at the residence of Nawab Khusro Jung and apprised him of the situation. He was generally sympathetic and offered us some valuable suggestions. Meanwhile, I used every opportunity I got to criticize the State government. While raising funds for a school run by the Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam, I warned the government that unless it implemented the terms of the accord within the time stipulated we would be forced to re-start the agitation. Raja Hari Krishan Kaul, desperate for a showdown, decided to arrest me.

On 21 September 1931, after attending the meeting held in a house-boat, I walked straight into a police trap. I was arrested and was taken to the Badami Bagh cantonment. The news of my arrest spread like wild fire, leading to strikes and demonstrations. Thousands of people who had gathered at the mosque were brutally attacked by a posse of mounted troops. An army contingent, opened fire. Four persons were killed and dozens injured. Firing was reported in many other places. Hari Krishan Kaul was using the same ruthlessness he had displayed in the Punjab. He wanted to subdue us Kashmiris with brute force. He was not aware that popular movements cannot be suppressed with lathis and guns.

Though Kashmiri Muslims were very agitated, they honoured their age-old tradition of maintaining fraternal goodwill towards non-Muslims. Non-Muslims responded by joining the strike. Srinagar was placed under curfew. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the dictator of the War Council, was arrested. Until then not many people had heard of this young man. He was destined to play a very important role in the future of the State.

The agitation spread in the entire valley. In Shopian, a peaceful

protest march was lathi-charged. The infuriated mob attacked a police station. Unfortunately, a Kashmiri Pandit constable was killed. The town was, then, handed over to the army who shot several Muslims and indulged in horrible atrocities. Kashmir became the scene of unparalleled oppression. Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf Shah declared a holy war and invited the Muslims to take up arms and congregate at Khanyar. People flocked to Khanyar. Syed Meerak Shah Kashani, a noted religious leader, joined them with many followers.

Maharaja Hari Singh sensed the mood of the people and ordered the army and the police not to leave their barracks and stations. He sent Nawab Khusro Jung, Khwaja Salam Shah and others to negotiate with our representatives. They invited Khwaja Saduddin Shawl, Maulvi Yusuf Shah, Mirwaiz Maulvi Ahmedullah Hamadani and Maulvi Abdullah Vakil to speak to the Maharaja. At the meeting, the Maharaja lost his temper and threatened the members of the delegation with dire consequences. Nawab Khusro Jung had to remind him that the people were waiting for the representatives to return. When they came out they persuaded the crowd to disperse peacefully. The same evening Khwaja Saduddin Shawl was arrested and detained in the Badami Bagh cantonment. G.A. Ashai and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad were taken to the Kothi Bagh police station.

Next morning the situation worsened. Ordinance 19-L, which resembled the Burmese law used in 1818 to suppress armed rebellion, was promulgated in the city. The government wanted to terrorize the people. Martial law was imposed. Mass arrests were made and those arrested were mercilessly flogged. In some cases the lashes caused permanent injuries. Punitive fines were imposed and properties were confiscated. These barbarous measures failed to break the morale of the people. The government's behaviour was so atrocious that even the papers which used to be filled with praises of the Maharaja, were compelled to retract their words. When this news reached other parts of India, particularly the Punjab, people were stunned. The Majlis-e-Ahrar decided to send volunteers to Kashmir. Within the month some five thousand Ahrars were arrested at the border. The State government was compelled to ask the British government for military aid. On 4 November 1931, British forces took up positions at Mirpur. They intercepted the Ahrars and crushed the peasant agitation against non-Muslim landlords.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

Raja Hari Krishan Kaul was a cunning politician. He invited Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and told him that in the eyes of the government he was next only to the Maharaja. He also said that the government was prepared to accede all the just demands of the Muslims but they would have to wait for the appropriate moment. The Raja persuaded him to send a telegram to the Viceroy stating that the situation in Kashmir had returned to normal, and that all Kashmiris were loyal to the Maharaja who would peacefully sort out their differences. The Maharaja was very pleased. He invested Kaul with a robe of honour plus an annual stipend of Rs 600.

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During those fateful days I was confined at the Badami Bagh quarter-guard. One day, the Prime Minister's PA, Dewan Jiwan Nath came into my cell, and after a few homilies about not opposing the government, asked me to accompany him in a closed car. We drove to his house where Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, his brother Maulvi Yahyah Shah and Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad, were present. Yusuf Shah told me that Raja Hari Krishan Kaul had accepted all our demands, and we were going to be released soon. His one and only condition was that I stop addressing public meetings in future! I said that this condition should be placed before the members of our organization and I would abide by their decision. A couple of days later, I was released and escorted to the residence of Maulvi Yusuf Shah. A meeting of the representatives of our organization had been convened. Maulvi Yusuf Shah placed the condition before them. It was promptly rejected. The following Friday I was asked to address the congregation at the mosque. When Maulvi Yusuf Shah learnt of this he was very angry and condemned me. We had no alternative but to pick up his challenge. In my speech, I rebutted the charges levelled by Yusuf Shah and exposed his intrigues. Mirwaiz Maulvi Ahmedullah Hamadani and most members of his family sided with me.

Our movement had convinced the Maharaja that the tide could not be stemmed by his trigger-happy police force. On 3 October, which was his thirty-sixth birthday, the Maharaja held a durbar in which he made certain announcements and invited all sections of the population to bring their grievances to him. We prepared a memorandum and suggested the formation of a representative government consisting of an elected

assembly and the participation of the people in the administration. Signatures of all the representatives had to be affixed to the memorandum. A meeting was held at Shawl Sahib's house, and attended, among others, by Maulvi Yusuf Shah. At first, he was not prepared to sign the memorandum being opposed to the demand for freedom of expression and speech. He probably thought that this would endanger the monopoly of his family and his personal prestige. But he could not resist the joint front presented by Ghulam Ahmad Ashai and Saduddin Shawl and eventually signed the memorandum.

I vividly recall the scene when the memorandum was presented to the Maharaja. We were invited to the Chashma-e-Shahi palace. Some chairs had been placed on the lawns. We were received by the Prime Minister, who introduced us to the Maharaja. Khwaja Saduddin Shawl read out our memorandum. The Maharaja promised to consider our proposals, and disappeared into the interior of his palace.

To appease the public sentiment the government appointed a commission under the presidentship of Sir Burjor Dalal, Chief Justice of the State High Court to inquire into the 13 July firing at Srinagar. Muslims boycotted this commission, alleging that justice could not be expected from a mission of the government. Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah was appointed member of the commission, but due to the boycott we had announced, he had to decline the offer. On 12 November 1931, the Maharaja appointed another commission with B.J. Glancy as Chairman. Its terms of reference included an inquiry into the grievances of different classes and communities and asked it to recommend steps for redressal. Glancy had previously served the State in different capacities. At that time he was a senior officer in the Political Department of the Government of India. The Muslim nominee from the valley was Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, and from Jammu, Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas. Kashmiri Pandits nominated Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz; their representative from Jammu was Pandit Lok Nath Sharma. Both sides, i.e., the government and Muslims wanted me to serve on the commission but I did not want to sever my contact with the people. Meanwhile, the Maharaja appointed yet another commission of inquiry under the presidentship of one Mr Middleton. Its terms of reference included an enquiry into incidents that took place at Srinagar, Islamabad and Shopian after my second arrest. Unfortunately Middleton



*Flames of the Chinar*

was familiar with neither Kashmiri nor Urdu and, so, we had to translate depositions made by witnesses into English. The commission visited different cities while conducting hearings. I also submitted a written statement spelling out the situation that evolved after 13 July 1931.

# Chapter 5

## AHRARS AND QADIANIS

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The Middleton Commission recorded statements of 384 witnesses. Its findings disappointed the Muslims. While stating that the administration had failed to fulfil its responsibility to the people, it condoned official measures to crush the popular movement. Meanwhile, the government decided to hand over the Pathar Masjid to the Muslims. This mosque was built by the Mughal Empress Noor Jahan. During the Sikh rule it was taken over and used as an arsenal. The Dogras converted it into a godown to store rice and other cereals. Its transfer to the Muslims was joyously celebrated in the city. Very soon it became the centre of our political movement.

While we were engaged in sorting out our internal problems, there were moves in India, particularly the Punjab, to help Kashmiri Muslims. The All India Majlis-e-Ahrar tried to capitalize on this sentiment. This organization was founded by Chaudhry Afzal-ul-Haq and other leading Muslims who had left the Indian National Congress but did not support the ideology of the Muslim League. On Raja Hari Krishan Kaul's invitation, their delegation had visited Kashmir and held meetings with him. This had created doubts about their integrity and credibility in our minds. When I met them I was critical of their accepting government hospitality. After a stay of about eight or ten days, their delegation returned to Lahore. Another delegation, visited Srinagar in October 1931. This time too, they were State guests and spent most of their time in the company of Raja Hari Krishan Kaul. They complained to me that the

people of Kashmir paid no heed to them. I told them that this was due to their being government guests at a time when the people were being mercilessly killed by government forces. Further, I told them that they had not shown courtesy to the dead, by neglecting to visit the families of martyrs, and offering their condolences. Under these circumstances how could they expect the common folk to interact with them? I told them that people were being apprehended on false charges and needed money and legal assistance. The Kashmir Committee was helping them in their hour of need, it was not, therefore, surprising that they clung to the representatives of the Kashmir Committee. Members of the Ahrar delegation had nothing to say to me. When they returned to Lahore they gave currency to the story that Sheikh Abdullah had become an Ahmadiyya.

As stated earlier, that was the time when the representatives of the Muslims were finalizing a memorandum of demands. They considered and rejected the political overtures of the Majlis-e-Ahrar. This offended the Ahrars who dubbed us as Qadianis and circulated the rumour that the President of the Kashmir Committee, Mirza Mahmood Ahmad, who was the grandson of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyya sect, was trying to make Kashmir a centre of his activities. The Ahrars suggested that the Kashmir Committee get rid of all Qadianis. They forced Mirza Mahmood Ahmad to step down, and, in his place, Dr Mohammad Iqbal was elected President of the Committee.

I was opposed to the political angle presented by the Majlis-e-Ahrar, but, at the same time, I had no links with the Ahmadiyya sect. I was neither acquainted with their basic tenets nor had any interest in them. In the Punjab, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, editor of *Zamindar*, supported the Ahrars, and, in Kashmir, Maulvi Yusuf Shah gave currency to the rumour of my being close to the Ahmadiyyas. Members of the Majlis-e-Ahrar collected huge amounts of money in the name of Kashmir, which they spent in building up their organization. They did, however, send a few parties to Kashmir to focus public attention on the oppressive measures of the State government. One such party, led by Maulana Mazhar Ali, was apprehended at the border at Suchetgarh. Several volunteers were killed in the mêlée. They did succeed in constructing a mosque at Suchetgarh which to this day is known as Masjid-e-Ahrar.

As soon as it became evident that the Qadianis had plans to use our

movement to preach their beliefs we decided to sever our connections with them. My comrades and I were most perturbed. In Lahore, I convened a meeting to discuss the changed attitude of the Qadianis, which was attended, among others, by Mirza Mahmood Ahmad as well as Ghulam Rasool Mehr. I said that the greatest curse on the people of Kashmir was their dissensions and discords. The precondition for the success of any movement was unity. Unfortunately, the Qadianis were trying to use our platform for their propaganda. Mirza Mahmood gave me a patient hearing, then asserted that the Ahmadiyya sect was basically a proselytizing sect. This assertion forced me to retaliate that these circumstances made it impossible for us to involve the Ahmadiyyas and their fellow-travellers in our movement because their dual commitment could fan the flames of internecine strife. That ended our association and the Ahmadiyyas started opposing our movement. Maulvi Abdullah Vakil, Khwaja Ghulam Nabi Gulkar and some others, parted company. Khwaja Ghulam Nabi Gulkar's exit was a personal loss to me. He was one of my earliest comrades and, being highly educated, was an asset to our movement. Unfortunately, he chose to migrate to Pakistan and we lost touch. Another episode regarding the Ahmadiyyas comes to mind. Once we were invited to Qadian, the Headquarters of the sect. During the course of our conversation, Zain-ul-Abideen told us that while an Ahmadiyya Imam could lead non-Ahmadiyyas in prayers, the reverse could not happen. According to their belief, those who did not regard Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as Prophet could not be considered followers of the Islamic faith.

In the province of Jammu, the Ahrars had taken to violating the State borders. Anti-government demonstrations were widespread, but more alarming were the communal disturbances which had broken out in the province. On 21 January 1932, security forces fired on Muslims in a place of worship and twenty-five innocent people were killed. This incident led to another popular upsurge. The Maharaja had to invoke military assistance from the British, provided for by the treaty of Amritsar. Srinagar was relatively peaceful. We were busy with the proceedings of the Middleton and Glancy Commissions. But the people were greatly agitated over the situation in Jammu. A protest meeting was convened in the courtyard of Khanqah-e-Mualla. In his public address a mufti (religious leader) from Poonch strongly condemned the government. The government immediately banished Mufti Sahib from the State. I protested

and demanded revocation of this Draconian order. I also approached B.J. Glancy, but he pleaded his inability to intervene. Instantly, Section 144 was promulgated in the city. Defying government orders, I addressed a public meeting. In the evening I was arrested and taken to the cantonment of Badami Bagh. After a summary trial I was sentenced to six months in prison and shifted to the Central Jail.

That winter it snowed heavily. Thakur Kartar Singh had let loose a reign of terror in the valley. Several people fell to the bullets of the security forces. Hundreds of them were arrested every day. Most political prisoners were lodged in the barracks of the Central Jail, but their leaders, including myself, were kept in solitary confinement. To ensure better treatment we decided go on a hunger strike. Unnerved, the government granted us special treatment and additional amenities.

Spring time. The trees were blossoming. The Central Jail was surrounded by orchards of almond trees which were laden with reddish-white flowers. Nature lovers visited these orchards every Sunday. The hill of Hari Parbat was on the other side of the Central Jail. Its peak was visible from the jail courtyard. One day, some people who had climbed the peak recognized us and waved. We waved back. The gestures were construed by the jail authorities as secret signals. Consequently, despite our protestations of innocence, our security arrangements were tightened.

# Chapter 6

## JAMMU AND KASHMIR MUSLIM CONFERENCE

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The time was ripe to convert our movement into a well-knit organization. A dynamic party, it was felt, was essential in the national interest. I started negotiating with our comrades in Srinagar, and visited Jammu to consult with Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas, Mistri Yaqub Ali and others. I also called a sub-committee of Muslim representatives and assigned to them the responsibility of drawing up a constitution. A draft was prepared and presented in a meeting of the Muslim representatives of the State. A delegation of the All India Kashmir Committee also attended this meeting. It was proposed that the new organization be named the All India Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. I was unanimously elected its first President. Though not on good terms with me, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah attended the meeting along with his followers. Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai read out his inaugural address. In my presidential address, I said that our overriding objective was not only to safeguard the interests of the Muslims but of the entire down-trodden masses of the State:

We have repeatedly declared that the Kashmir movement is not communal; it is a platform to address the grievances of every section of people. We shall always be prepared to help our compatriots, Hindus and Sikhs. No progress is possible unless we learn to live in amity. For that, mutual respect for each other's legitimate rights is an important pre-condition. I repeat, Kashmir movement is not a communal movement.

The conference was attended by lakhs of people. Sheikh Abdul Hameed, advocate, was elected Vice President, Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas, General Secretary, and Maulvi Abdullah Vakil, Secretary of the Conference. As President of the All India Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference I was directed by the general body to call a meeting within four months to determine if the government had taken any action on the recommendations of the Glancy Commission.

A few days after the session I left for Lahore, where I was joined by Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai. I summoned a meeting of the working committee of the Muslim Conference at Jammu. At the end of the meeting, we drew the government's attention to the demands presented by the first session of the Muslim Conference and warned it of grave consequences if proper steps were not taken to implement them. After the meeting I left for Srinagar. I called another meeting of the working committee to take stock of the situation and set up a sub-committee to contact non-Muslim representatives and explore the possibility of forming a joint organization. This suggestion was not welcomed, and the idea of a joint organization had to be dropped. Next, I started a campaign of mass contact, to educate the people and prepare them for civil disobedience. The government was unnerved. The Prime Minister and the Minister for Law came to Srinagar and started a dialogue with representatives of the Muslim Conference. Some letters were also exchanged. A meeting of the working committee was held from 5-8 March, at the end of which I released the following statement to the press:

At the request of the Governor of Kashmir, I spoke to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister conceded that some recommendations of the Glancy Commission had not yet been implemented. But he said, the reasons for the delay were beyond his control. He showed great interest in sorting out our problems.

After a while we submitted a detailed memorandum to the Prime Minister which, *interalia*, contained the demand for freedom of speech and association. The government agreed to all the demands contained in our memorandum.

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## *Flames of the Chinar*

After my arrest on 21 September 1931 for anti-State activity when I was collecting donations for the Islamia School and taken to the Badami Bagh cantonment, the situation deteriorated rapidly. Starting from the Srinagar valley, chaos spread in the entire State. On 30 January 1932, Muslim representatives of Jammu met the Maharaja and brought the deteriorating conditions to his notice. The Prime Minister, Raja Hari Krishan Kaul, was present at this meeting. Members of the delegation, particularly Mistri Yaqub, told the Maharaja that he was being misled by high officers of the State. At the end, Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas raised the issue of my arrest and pleaded with the Maharaja to release me. He informed the Maharaja that I had been arrested just when I was starting to improve conditions. This the Maharaja resented and said, 'Abdullah has been released on several occasions. This clemency, Muslims attribute to our weakness.' Regardless of what he said, the request made an impact on the Maharaja's mind.

Conditions continued to deteriorate. In Mirpur, Raja Mohammad Akbar Khan Ghazi, Elahi Bux, Khwaja Wahab-ud-Din and others started a 'no-tax' campaign. The government was almost paralysed. In Kashmir, dozens of people including women were killed by the government. When the Maharaja learnt of this, he realized that the prime minister had deliberately misled him. Consequently, he was dismissed and a senior officer of the Political Department of the Government of India, Colonel A.G.D. Colvin, was appointed Prime Minister of Kashmir at the suggestion of the Viceroy of India. British imperialists thus directly undertook the responsibility of saving their pet Maharaja!

I was still in jail when a rumour started doing the rounds that Col. Colvin had been appointed Prime Minister with the express purpose of controlling me and making our movement subservient to the will of the British Government. Maulvi Yusuf Shah, the Majlis-e-Ahrar and some agents of the government took a leading part in spreading this calumny, but they failed to mislead the public. Future events also proved that the accusation was totally false. The manner in which I conducted that movement against Col. Colvin has become a part of Kashmir's history.

The Glancy Commission had been engaged in its work since November 1931. The commission was appointed as a result of public pressure from the Kashmiri Muslims, as well as individuals from outside the State. The Hindus were afraid that the rights granted to the minorities



would, in effect, curtail their own rights. Consequently, the Hindu members resigned. The commission, however, carried on its work, and, eventually, submitted its report along with the recommendations to the Maharaja. From these recommendations, it became clear that the Muslims had genuine grievances. The Maharaja accepted the recommendations, and, on 10 April 1933, the Prime Minister issued a government order directing that the implementation of the recommendations be commenced forthwith. The commission had recommended far-reaching reforms for the development of education, particularly, primary education. It had also suggested reforms in the appointment of government servants, as well as granting proprietary rights to the cultivators of government-owned lands. In addition it recommended setting up of industries to create employment opportunities.

The acceptance of the commission's recommendations by the Maharaja was a slap in the face of those who alleged that the Muslims were against a Hindu Maharaja and the Hindu population. The Pandits described the report as 'disappointing'. They thought of launching an agitation, but desisted in case it harmed the Hindu-Raj. What they started came to be known as 'Roti' (bread) agitation. Their main demands were:

- Free holdings for cultivation.
- Special stipends for industrial education
- Financial assistance for factories.

These demands had been included in the memorandum presented before the Glancy Commission and also formed a part of the government's schemes of redressal of grievances. Their agitation was started with the objective of diverting attention from the real grievances. The Right-wing Hindu press of Punjab and the Hindu Mahasabha supported them.

Col. Colvin, sagaciously nipped the Hindu agitation in the bud. One of its unfortunate aftermaths was a divide between the Pandits and the Muslims of the valley who had been living as brothers for centuries and whose sentiments had been lovingly nurtured by our sufis and saints. Communal riots broke out in some places and for some time bitterness and tension vitiated the atmosphere. Meanwhile, I was released from jail. As stated earlier we were planning to involve non-Muslims also in our organization. Unfortunately, an influential section of non-Muslims

regarded this detrimental to their interests and despite our best efforts did not join us.

A procession of school students was attacked in a locality mainly populated by Kashmiri Pandits. A leader of the Pandits, Jia Lal Kilam, delivered a highly provocative speech with the result that communal disturbances broke out and the situation became so alarming that the birthday celebrations of Maharaja Hari Singh had to be cancelled. During those days one Mr Jordan was in charge of the Law Department. I led a delegation of Muslims who presented their point of view regarding the riots. We said that it was eminently clear that the Kashmiri Pandits had started the disturbances. We demanded that security forces be deployed to control the situation and with members from both communities. This move would create a sense of confidence in both parties and would effectively defuse the situation. We issued an appeal for Hindu–Muslim unity which was signed by the leaders of the Kashmiri Pandits. Next day, a delegation of Muslim and Kashmiri Pandit leaders toured different parts of the city. Meetings were held in various localities and appeals made for peace and amity. Our efforts were successful and peace returned to the valley. For this God be thanked.

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While Maulvi Yusuf Shah attended the first annual session of the Muslim Conference, held after the communal disturbances, he did not fully support it. The reason: it had eroded his family's monopoly of leading the Muslims. Yusuf Shah was a simple and gentle individual but was provoked by interested parties who wanted to create discord among the Muslims and weaken the movement. Unfortunately, the Mirwaiz became embroiled in their intrigues. On 30 January 1932, he delivered a sermon at Khanqah-e-Naqshbandia in which he accused me of being a Qadiani. Everyone knew that I was a Sunni, of the Hanafi sect. This event took place in the dead of winter when most Kashmiris do not leave their houses without their *kangris*. During the altercations which followed his allegation, these *kangris* were freely used as trajectories, injuring a number of people.

It was the year 1933. Eid-ul-Fitr fell on 6 April. In view of the prevailing tension, the government advised the Mirwaiz not to go to the

Idgah where Maulana Hamadani was expected to deliver the sermon. He did not pay any heed to this advice. Maulana Hamadani delivered his sermon at Jama Masjid which was the stronghold of Maulvi Yusuf Shah. This led to a clash of the two groups, leaving many people injured. The government started criminal proceedings against both the Mirwaizes under Section 107 of the Ranbir Penal Code. They were ordered to furnish a bail of Rs 1000 each.

One of the followers of Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah delivered a provocative speech in Chattabal mosque which resulted in a riot in which one of our men was killed. While speaking at the condolence meeting, I criticized the Mirwaiz and his supporters. I was arrested, along with Mufti Ziauddin Punchi and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. Section 19-L was once again promulgated, and newspapers, including *Sadaqat* (an organ of the Muslim Conference), were banned. Munshi Asadullah Vakil and a few other activists of the other party were also arrested. The government imposed punitive fines on all, except Hindus, Sikhs and the supporters of Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah. Given below is the text of this government order:

His Highness the Maharajah Bahadur is pleased to order that a police post be located in Maiseema for a period of six months and expenses incurred on this, Rs 1828, be realized from people other than Hindus, Sikhs and Yusuf Shahi Muslims.

This fully exposed the wily Mirwaiz. The people reacted violently, and, once again, a War Council was set up. Despite the oppressive measures adopted by the government, our movement became stronger and more popular. Eventually, the government was forced to relent, and we were released on 7 August 1932. On 15 August a reception was arranged in our honour which was also attended by a large number of non-Muslims. After releasing us, the government, once again, tried to create dissensions among the Muslims. This time it used Maulvi Yusuf Shah. On 17 August, he went to deliver a sermon at the dargah of Pir Dastgir. The people of that locality resented his intrusion. A scuffle ensued from which the police had to rescue him. This led to bitterness between the two factions, which continued for a long time.

Yusuf Shah changed his stand, and severed his links with the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and set up a separate Azad Muslim

Conference. The first and last session of this party was held at the Jama Masjid. Meanwhile thousands of people gathered under the flag of the Muslim Conference. Sufi Mohammad Akbar, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, Maulana Mohammad Saeed Masoodi, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, Raja Mohammad Akbar Mirpuri, Haji Wahabuddin, Ghulam Qadir Bande of Poonch and many others joined hands and played important roles in its organization. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was appointed Commander of the Volunteer Corps. The second annual session of the Muslim Conference was held on 15, 16 and 17 December 1936. Dr Iqbal, while addressing me, pointed out that we would not be successful in our mission unless we patch up our internal differences.

After the expulsion of the Ahmadiyyas from the Muslim Conference, the Young Men's Muslim Association was formed in Srinagar with the avowed objective of saving the Muslim Conference from the domination of the Ahmadiyyas. This subsidiary organization was affiliated to the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, but its President, Maulana Mohammad Saeed Masoodi insisted upon preserving its distinct identity.

Soon after the 1936 annual session, the Young Men's Muslim Association embarked on an agitation. A War Council was formed and rhetoric became the order of the day. As a precautionary measure, the government banned their entry into the Idgah on Eid. A number of their leaders, including Maulana Masoodi, were exiled from the State and Section 19-L was promulgated in the city. Many of our workers were also arrested. The situation rapidly deteriorated, and many people died in police firing at Bulwama. I summoned a meeting of the working committee in Sialkot to take stock of the situation and decide our future plan of action. I was in favour of calling off the agitation but the rest of the members did not agree. They decided to dissolve the committee and invest all its powers in a dictator. Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas, the General Secretary, was appointed dictator and sent to Srinagar. He wrote to Prime Minister Colvin, stressing the need for a representative assembly and implementation of the recommendations of the Glancy Commission. Col. Colvin dithered, and Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas started a civil disobedience movement. He was arrested and awarded six months imprisonment.

The newspapers in Lahore published the reports about the incidents in Kashmir on their front pages. Meanwhile, the government announced

## *Flames of the Chinar*

elections to the Assembly. In the third week of April, Regulation I of the Act of 1919 was published, which contained the powers of the proposed Assembly. In consultation with my comrades in Sialkot, I decided that we should take part in the elections. When I reached Srinagar I spoke to Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas about my decision—he was still in jail. He disagreed with me. In view of broader interests, however, the Muslim Conference decided to call off the civil disobedience movement and agreed to participate in the elections.

# Chapter 7

## AKBAR JAHAN BEGUM

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In October 1933, I married Akbar Jahan who was the daughter of Michael Harry Nedou popularly known as 'Harry', the eldest son of the proprietor of Srinagar's famous Nedou's Hotel. Nedou came from Europe and started a series of posh hotels in Pune, Lahore and Srinagar. His son was converted to Islam and was named Sheikh Ahmed Hussain. He married a Gujjar girl and they had a daughter called Akbar Jahan. Mufti Ziauddin of Poonch played a significant role in arranging our marriage. My political preoccupations had never left me time to think about marriage, but, finally, I gave in to my friends and colleagues and decided to tie the knot.

My wife had been brought up in a devout god-fearing environment. My mother-in-law was a very nice person who took special interest in the religious instructions of her daughter. She completed her Senior Cambridge from the English Missionary Convent of Murree. Akbar Jahan was a devotee of Maulvi Mohiuddin who came from Kabul and was appointed headmaster of the Islamia High School, Srinagar. Ultimately he resigned his post and spent the rest of his life as a dervish. He played a significant role in Akbar Jahan's spiritual training.

Soon after my engagement I was once again, arrested and confined to Udampur from where I wrote regularly to Akbar Jahan. During summer we were transferred to a bungalow at Batot. I was released at the end of a six month period, after which, we were married in October 1933. We moved into a rented house in Puchwara and later shifted to the residential quarter of my parents-in-law, located at the back of Nedou's Hotel.

Meanwhile, my brothers helped me to construct a house near our ancestral home in Sura, where we finally settled down. During winter, my wife visited Lahore with her parents, and, whenever possible, I also joined them. My wife proved a true friend and comrade. She introduced order into my turbulent life; the extent of its disorderliness is best expressed by Ghalib:

*Rau mein hai rakhsh-e-umr kahan dekhiya thamey  
Nai haath baag par hai na paa hai rakaab mein.*

(Fast speeds the steed of life.

Neither is my foot in the stirrup nor my hand at the reins.)

Patiently, facing all the trials, she was my source of strength and inspiration. In my absence, she ran the house single-handedly and never complained. It was her untiring effort that resulted in my children completing their education notwithstanding my continued absence from the domestic scene. My wife was a perfect homemaker whose main concern was to look after her children's problems.

Eventually, however, she was dragged into national politics. It happened at a time when I was in prison and our movement was at its lowest ebb. During the 'Quit Kashmir' movement of 1946, Maharaja Hari Singh and his Prime Minister, Ram Chandra Kak, launched an offensive against our movement. My wife promptly stepped out of the seclusion of her home and toured village after village kindling hope in the heart of the helpless. When Mahatma Gandhi visited Kashmir in the summer of 1947, my wife received him and told him the sad saga of Kashmir. As I have written elsewhere, my wife used to recite the Quran at Babu's prayer meetings. In 1947, when the tribals raided Kashmir, she organized a Red Cross team and devoted herself to tending the afflicted. Her work in the recovery and rehabilitation of abducted women was greatly admired by Lady Mountbatten. After 1953, she was implicated in the Kashmir conspiracy case and soon she became the butt of slanderous attacks. But she faced all these indignities with courage and fortitude. In 1971, when Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad decided to contest elections for Lok Sabha, my wife supported an unknown contestant Shameem Ahmed Shameem. In this election Bakshi met his Waterloo—he suffered a crushing defeat.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

We had seven children. Two daughters died in infancy. My first child is a daughter, Khalida, who married Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Shah. My eldest son Farooq is a doctor married to an Englishwoman. Farooq was a candidate in mid-term election in 1980 and had the distinction of being the only candidate who was returned unopposed. My second son Tariq, completed his MA during my imprisonment, and spent his time in Europe fighting for the Kashmiri cause. My third son Mustafa Kamal, named after the Turkish leader, Kemal Atatürk, is a physician. Suraiya is my youngest child. She has completed her MA and is working as a lecturer in Government Women's College, Srinagar. She married Dr Mohammad Ali Mattoo. The government refused me permission to leave the prison even for a day to attend her marriage.

In the mid-term poll held in 1977 my wife was elected to Parliament. Because of my health and household pressures, however, she decided not to contest the next election. Instead, she opened a centre for the education of poor and destitute children which she named Gulzar-e-Atfal (Children's Garden).

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My comrades and I were fully aware that the proposed assembly (known as Praja Sabha) was a hoax, but we wanted to use it as a forum to demonstrate that the Muslim Conference represented the majority of the population of the State. We demanded the release of all political prisoners so that proper elections could be held. At first, our demands were accepted but on the eve of filing the nomination papers, the government backed out. Regardless, we filed our papers and started our campaign. Contesting against us were candidates of the Azad Muslim Conference. To everyone's surprise we won.

A majority of members in the Praja Sabha were nominated, only 28 per cent were elected. The Muslim Conference Parliamentary Party elected Mian Ahmed Yar Khan as leader and Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg as deputy leader. The first session of Praja Sabha was held on 17 October 1934. It was a strange assembly! All the legislative powers were in the hands of the Maharaja. He could also veto any act passed by the Assembly. The Assembly could not discuss matters pertaining to the Maharaja's personal expenses or the army. The Maharaja could nominate



any one as a member of the Assembly. Despite these shortcomings, the experiment proved beneficial to our movement. It brought the Muslim and the non-Muslim members of the Assembly closer to each other, and, in 1936, the entire country saw all elected members of Jammu and Kashmir staging a joint walk-out.

The following year, I became acquainted with Jawaharlal Nehru. Jawaharlal was of Kashmiri stock. His family had migrated from Kashmir and settled in Delhi by the side of a canal, which in Urdu is *nehr*; hence their surname Nehru. His father, Pandit Motilal Nehru was a shining example of our composite culture. Jawaharlal Nehru, under whose presidentship the Congress adopted the resolution of complete independence, became the hero of the Nationalists. I also met the Nationalist Muslim leader, Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew who also came from Kashmir. From his residence in Amritsar I addressed a press conference at which I said:

Communal tension in Kashmir is the result of propaganda by the communal leaders of Punjab. We want people of Punjab not to interfere in our internal affairs. Our next programme will be to follow the principles of the Congress party, and, after returning to Kashmir, I will strive to set up an organization which supports national ideology.

My statement had mixed reactions. In some quarters it created a political furore, some Muslim organizations of the Punjab did not like it. A group of Kashmiri Hindus called it 'deceptive strategy'. A large number of people in the Punjab, many newspapers and representatives of public opinion, were openly supportive, describing it as a giant step towards nationalist politics.

After returning from Lahore, I placed my views before the Muslim Conference. Despite some murmurs to the contrary, most of my comrades agreed with me. Progressive Hindus and Sikhs had begun to believe that the people of the State could get rid of the ills of maladministration only through a joint struggle.

My association, at this time, with Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz was very gratifying. We agreed that the Kashmir movement should be run on progressive and democratic lines. We decided to start a paper. The first

issue of *Hamdard* appeared in August 1935. After some time, however, we were forced to part company, and the paper, became Bazaz's property. During the Second World War, when the British were looking for propagandists, Bazaz joined the followers of M.N. Roy and served the British. He has since written several books. Notwithstanding my political differences with him I have always admired his non-political writings, and, as President of the Cultural Academy I made him the Academy's honorary fellow in 1976.

While our movement was gaining popularity in Kashmir, events of far-reaching importance were taking place in the country. In India, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, after a long spell of silence, was challenging the representative status of the Congress. Jinnah had a very high opinion of himself and wanted to carve an eminent place for himself at the national level. The entire subcontinent had to suffer the consequences of his inflated ego. The Congress and the Muslim League were spelling out their policies regarding the states. Since the Congress viewpoint conformed with our ideology we were, naturally, drawn towards it.

At the same time the British Parliament adopted the Government of India Act, 1935. Under the provisions of this act India was to become a federal state. After the enforcement of the act, the Viceroy of India invited more than five hundred rulers of Indian states to join the federation as provinces of British India. But every one of them including Maharaja Hari Singh refused. The Muslim Conference held the view that in case Jammu and Kashmir joined the federation, it should be represented by its people. In 1937, the Congress formed the first set of governments in the provinces of British India. The Government of India Act, 1935 formed the basis of our conditional accession to India in 1947. The Instrument of Accession was signed by Maharaja Hari Singh.

Another important event that took place in 1935, was the agreement between the British Government and the Maharaja regarding the administration of Gilgit. The British were interested in this region because it was contiguous to the erstwhile Soviet Union. Eventually, the Maharaja handed over Gilgit to the British.

In 1935, the annual session of the Muslim Conference was held in Srinagar in which, for the first time, a large number of non-Muslim leaders also participated. I was elected General Secretary. Next year although no session was held, we issued an appeal to observe a 'Responsible

## *Flames of the Chinar*

Government Day' on 8 May, in which along with Muslims, several non-Muslims took part and demanded the people's participation in the administration. In the same year, Jinnah visited Kashmir for the first time. The Muslim Conference organized a reception in his honour. Replying to the address of welcome, Jinnah said that Muslims, being the majority in the State, must be fair in their treatment of the minorities. A certain group of loyalists, however, rejected the idea because the unity of the people was considered hazardous for the autocratic rule of a Hindu Maharaja. Shiv Narain Fotedar, a communal Kashmiri Pandit, wrote a book in which he denigrated the Prophet of Islam. As a result, Maulvi Yusuf Shah led a protest rally in which a youth was killed and Maulvi Sahib was arrested.

People were incensed. With Fotedar's unconditional apology it seemed as if the storm had blown over. But communal riots broke out in Poonch and I rushed there along with Sardar Budh Singh and Prem Nath Bazaz to try and defuse the tension.

# Chapter 8

## NATIONAL CONFERENCE: A DREAM COMES TRUE

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At the close of 1937, the term of the Praja Sabha ended. The Muslim Conference, once again, contested and won the elections. The first session of the new Assembly was held on 7 September 1938. The Muslim Conference announced that so long as its just demands were not accepted by the government, it would not take part in the proceedings of the Assembly.

In 1937, I met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for the first time. He was on his way from Lahore to the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). At his behest I accompanied him and spent several days in the Frontier where I was introduced to Badshah Khan (Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan) and others. Panditji took interest in our movement and suggested that we throw open our membership to members of every community. I invited Bādshah Khan and him to visit Kashmir. After some time, the States' Peoples' Conference was set up in India, with Jawaharlal Nehru as its President. It was clear that if the Kashmiri leaders wanted support of the Indian National Congress, they would have to change the name and the constitution of the Muslim Conference. Dr Mohammad Iqbal, one of Kashmir's native sons, had given me similar advice in 1937. He had said that only unity could deliver Kashmiris from the present turmoil.

From its very inception, the Muslim Conference was essentially a national organization. Now the time had come to mould its external shape in consonance with national demands. The task of converting the Muslim

Conference into the National Conference was very complex. I had to deal with the suspicions of my comrades on the one hand and counter the moves of the enemies of the movement on the other.

At the sixth annual session of the Muslim Conference, held in Jammu, I said that our policy of admitting non-Muslims was neither tactical nor diplomatic, it was in response to a plea of the people of all communities. A working committee meeting held on 24 June 1938, thrashed out the issue of converting the Muslim Conference into the National Conference. After a marathon session, which lasted for about fifty-two hours, the majority supported the move and adopted a resolution recommending the change of name and constitution, which would enable people to become members, regardless of their religion, caste or colour.

A special session of the Muslim Conference had to be convened to ratify this resolution. Meanwhile, in 1936, Sir Gopalaswami Aiyangar was appointed Prime Minister in place of Colonel Colvin. As already stated we had issued an appeal to observe 8 May as 'Responsible Government Day'. Another meeting was held the next day at Pratap Bagh. On 29 August, I was arrested along with some colleagues and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. More than a thousand activists, including some non-Muslims, were also arrested. Prior to this we had prepared and published a document called 'National Demand' which was signed both by Muslims and non-Muslims.

I was released on 28 February 1939. As anticipated by some of my comrades, the move to convert the Muslim Conference to the National Conference had created doubts among certain sections of the people. I undertook a tour of the region to remove their misgivings. On 27 April the General Assembly ratified the resolution of the working committee. A special session of the Muslim Conference was convened on 10 and 11 June 1939. After prolonged discussions the session accepted the recommendations of the working committee. It was decided that some non-Muslims would be nominated as members of the working committee. All the units of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference were converted into units of the National Conference. Mujahid Manzil, built at about the same time, became our headquarters.

This conversion was a revolutionary step in the politics of Kashmir. Both Muslims and non-Muslims were unhappy with the state of affairs and wanted to do something about it. A few young Kashmiri Pandits, in

the face of much opposition from their community, joined our organization. But they were continually under pressure from their community to influence our policies. Finally, having protested against several practices followed at our meetings some notables sent their resignations. They presented their objection to my religious orientation before Pandit Nehru, who rejected it with the contempt it deserved.

On my part, I had to face the Muslim opposition. The Majlis-e-Ahrar tried to disrupt our organization through some of its sympathizers who had joined us. In Jammu, the leaders of the National Conference were vacillating. We were being pulverized, caught in the obscurantist grinding mill-stones of the Hindus and the Muslims.

The Ramgarh session of the Indian National Congress was held in March 1940, at about the same time as the session of the Muslim League in which the Pakistan resolution was adopted. I went from one session to the other and heard the impassioned speeches of the League leaders. Next day, I called on Maulana Ghulam Rasool Mehr and Abul Majid Salik who expressed sympathy with the League. For me this was a painful experience but there was little I could do about it.

Jawaharlal Nehru had started taking interest in Kashmir affairs. In February 1939, a session of the All India States' Peoples' Conference was held at Ludhiana. I was in jail at the time. In response to the invitation, several of my comrades attended the session. In his presidential address Jawaharlal Nehru spoke about Kashmir, saying that the incarceration of popular leaders like Sheikh Abdullah cannot lock up the truth about Kashmir. People's agony must be removed by the authorities.

In March 1939, the annual session of the Indian National Congress was held in Tripuri. There we got an opportunity to meet other leaders of the Congress, including those from other princely states. After concluding the Congress session, Jawaharlal Nehru and Badshah Khan arrived in Kashmir on 30 May 1939. Wherever they went they were given a rousing reception. Pandit Nehru addressed a number of largely attended meetings. At his departure he claimed that he had visited Kashmir, not as a tourist, but as a son of the soil. He said that the people of Kashmir were fully alive and awake while the administration was inert and ineffective.

The first annual session of the National Conference was held from 27 to 29 September 1940, at Baramulla where Sardar Budh Singh was elected President. In 1941, another session of the National Conference

## *Flames of the Chinar*

was held in Srinagar. Once again, Budh Singh was elected President. I had invited Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan to attend this session. At the end of the session, a mushaira was held, which was attended by almost every known poet of the subcontinent, many of them were my old friends. Their poetry left a deep impression on my heart.

The mushaira began with Hafeez Jallundhri's famous poem:

*Sheer se mahroom hai malik hai joo-e-sheer ka  
Ek pahlu ye bhi hai Kashmir ki tasveer ka*

(Master of the well-spring, deprived of the flowing milk  
This also is one aspect of the 'image' of Kashmir.)

Speaking of poets I recall one of our greatest benefactors—Allama Iqbal. He had dreamt of a new Kashmir, when we were still infants. I met him for the first time in 1924 when I was a student at Lahore. How he longed for Kashmir, and how proud he was of being the descendant of the Saprus. I had imagined that such a famous man would live in the lap of luxury—but when I met him I realized the true meaning of modest living. When I entered I saw him sitting on a white sheet spread over a modest charpoy. He always asked his servant, Ali Bakhsh, to prepare the special salty Kashmiri tea. How we enjoyed its familiar taste in these unfamiliar surroundings to which we had been exiled! He said that Lahore had his body—his soul was in Kashmir. Whenever we sought advice about our movement, he gave us gems of wisdom. We thought we would bring him to Kashmir and shower him with our care and love. But that was not to be. If his poetry is regarded the archangel's trumpet for the people of Kashmir, I consider this the *summum bonum* of his thought:

*Ishq ko faryaad laazim thi so woh bhi ho chuki  
Ab zara dil thaam kar faryaad ki taseer dekh.*

(Love lorn lamentations are over  
Now hold your heart and wait  
For the effect of the laments!)

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From the very inception of our movement, Muslims had demanded that all mosques, shrines and lands confiscated by the government within the last one hundred years be returned to them. After the birth of the Muslim Conference we decided to set up an Islamic Endowments Committee, of which, I was appointed Chairman. Most of our mosques and shrines, including the historic Pathar Masjid, were handed over to the Muslims. On the land adjoining the Pathar Masjid we constructed Mujahid Manzil and set up a litho press where our party organs, *Haqiqat* and *Sadaqat* were printed. Due to my political preoccupations and being often locked up in jail, I could not give full attention to the Islamic Endowments Committee. But whether in prison or outside, I never became negligent towards the *wakf* (Muslim religious trust). To quote Mirza Ghalib:

*Go mein raha raheen-e-sitam hai rozgar  
Lekin tere khayal sey ghafil nahin raha.*

(Although I remained burdened by the oppressions of employment

But I was never oblivious of your memory.)

We focussed our attention on the Idgah, in which the mosque was built by Ali Shah, the elder brother of Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen. We also renovated Asaar Sharif, in Hazratbal. More than one crore rupees were spent on these projects. The money came from donations given at Hazratbal.

The best marble was brought all the way from Makrana, Rajasthan, which was the source of the marble for Taj Mahal. Calligraphers from Delhi and Lucknow were asked to inscribe verses from the Quran on the marble. The central chamber which held *Moo-e-Mubarak*, or the Prophet's sacred hair, was decorated with a unique chandelier, flown in from Czechoslovakia. Asaar Sharif, Hazratbal, has a fascinating history. It is said that a hair of the Prophet was in the possession of a sheikh who belonged to the inner circle of the Haram-e-Kaaba. Differences arose between him and the ruler of the day, and he migrated to India and settled down in Hyderabad. A Kashmiri khwaja who happened to be visiting Hyderabad acquired the relic at an enormous price. When he was transporting it to Kashmir, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb heard about



it and immediately ordered it to be confiscated and placed at the Dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer. That night Aurangzeb dreamt that the Prophet had embarked on a journey towards Kashmir. 'Why are you trying to stop me from going to Kashmir?' The Emperor was asked in reply to his respectful salaam. The Emperor understood the divine message and the holy relic was sent to Kashmir under royal protection. When it reached Kashmir the entire *Jamiat* gave it the most reverential welcome. By common consensus it was placed at Hazratbal and became the symbol of faith and instruction to all the Muslims of the valley.

Some other important shrines were also brought within the ambit of the Endowments Committee. We started a scheme to give financial assistance to widows, orphans and destitutes. Schools of religious instruction were started and stipends were given to deserving students for higher education. To achieve self-sufficiency, we concentrated our efforts on acquiring real estate. Our annual income rose to approximately one crore rupees. We provided better facilities to pilgrims and a large portion of our income was ear-marked for education and other constructive activities.

Not only the Muslims, but all the people of the State benefitted from the Islamic Endowments. When I came into office, the public treasury was almost empty. We had to borrow money from the Endowments Committee to reorganize the public transport system.

# Chapter 9

## WAR, INDEPENDENCE AND 'NEW KASHMIR'

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The Second World War plunged the whole world in chaos during the 1940s. Britain was weakened by the Nazi onslaught. Rulers of Indian states were providing men, money and materials to help the British. In January 1942, Japan declared war against the Allies and destroyed British military power in the East. Having occupied Burma (now Myanmar), they reached the borders of India. With the help of the Japanese, Subhas Chandra Bose made plans to invade India and hoist the national flag on the ramparts of the Red Fort.

Unnerved by these reverses, the British sent one of their leading statesmen, Sir Stafford Cripps, a left-wing Labourite and Cabinet Minister, to start a dialogue with the Indian leaders. Cripps assured the Indians that they would soon get independence. While these talks were being held, rulers of the Indian states continued to deal with their subjects in a high-handed manner. The National Conference protested against this attitude and contacted other mass organizations which had been set up in the Indian states to formulate an all India policy. We declared that it was the people and not their rulers who had the right to represent their respective states. The All India States' Peoples' Conference supported our view. On 20 April 1941, a resolution was adopted by a well-attended meeting in Srinagar, which declared that representative governments must be formed in all states, and that, the people, should resist the onslaught of fascist powers like Japan and Germany.

We could not remain isolated from changes taking place in the world. I recall that in May 1942, a meeting of the working committee of the National Conference adopted the following resolution:

At this decisive turn in world history, people should realize the danger posed by the fascist powers. They must be awakened from slumber. Because the present war is not only confined to super powers, but has assumed the proportions of a united front of fascist and oppressive forces against the peoples of the world in which are included powers foreign as well as local. Global defeat of fascist and oppressive powers, will herald their defeat at the national level as well. It is, therefore, imperative that the people of Kashmir should help to defeat the world's fascist powers.

The Cripps Mission was doomed to fail. The Congress party rejected its proposals and launched the 'Quit India' movement in 1942. Rejection of the Cripps proposals was in my view, not in the best interest of the country. M.A. Jinnah and the Muslim League had already accepted them. Had the Congress party accepted them as well, the partition of the country might have been avoided.

The Muslim League, for the first time, appeared on the national scene as a people's organization. Feeling insecure and disheartened by the treatment they had received, the Muslims got carried away by an upsurge of religious emotions. On 9 August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress were arrested. We mounted a strong protest and demanded their release. We also demanded the reopening of negotiations for Indian independence so that the anti-fascist front may be strengthened.

With the leaders of the Congress behind the bars, the British virtually crushed the 'Quit India' movement. To protest against such brutal suppression, Gandhiji started a fast unto death on 10 February 1943, lasting twenty-one days. The Muslim League and its sagacious leader, Jinnah, took the fullest advantage of the absence of the Congress leaders. I confess that I had a subconscious sympathy for the slogan 'Pakistan' because it was a Muslim reaction against Hindu communalism. However, I realized that this was perhaps only an emotional response, and likely to harm Muslim interests more than a reasonable one would. I regarded the

demand of 'Pakistan' as an escapist device. In this state of mind, I attended the annual session of the National Conference, held at Mirpur, where I was elected President. In my presidential address I spoke about the manoeuvres of British imperialism and the mental and emotional state of the Indian Muslims. I concluded with the words, 'India is our homeland; and it shall always remain so. It is our duty to stay at the forefront of the struggle for the independence of our country.'

While at the global stage, fortunes were being made or marred at the point of a gun, the political and economic situation in the State was fast deteriorating. War had created a shortage of essential goods and the entire transport system was on the verge of collapse. Hungry people clamoured for bread. To divert their attention, the Maharaja announced the formation of a commission. We nominated Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg and Khwaja Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq to represent us. This commission turned out to be a royal farce, and we were compelled to recall our members. We then decided to draw up a charter of demands and place it before the State.

As I have said before, our movement had been thrown open to all religious groups. It became imperative to develop new political and economic rallying points. We had learnt from experience that the real reason for conflict was not religion but a clash of interests between different classes and groups. The primary objective of our movement was to oppose oppression and support the oppressed. We, therefore, decided that our charter of demands had to be given the shape of a manifesto to be adopted by various units of the National Conference. This manifesto was presented to the Maharaja.

'New Kashmir', as it was termed, was a revolutionary document. It assured the safeguarding of rights of women workers and weaker sections of society. Initially, 'New Kashmir' was opposed not only by the nawabs of the Muslim League but also by the reactionary forces within the Congress party. Subsequently, however, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress approved the manifesto. I had enumerated the objectives of 'New Kashmir' in its foreword:

We want to build anew the personality of every man and woman in 'New Kashmir' who has been spiritually and mentally

oppressed. We want to produce exemplary personalities who will be worthy of our beautiful homeland.

‘New Kashmir’ stirred the intellectuals of the State and became a burning topic for debate both in Kashmir and outside.

Uncertainties of the times led to the changes of prime ministers in quick succession. Ultimately Sir B.N. Rao came to hold the exalted position. In his press conference he said: ‘The State of Jammu and Kashmir is a Hindu state, still I want its non-Hindu population to make progress.’

Rao’s statement belied everything I had heard about him. While addressing a meeting at Hazratbal, I refuted his allegation, saying, ‘How can he call Kashmir a Hindu State when its population is 85% Muslim?’

# Chapter 10

## JINNAH AND THE KASHMIRIS

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In 1935, when Mohammad Ali Jinnah visited Kashmir, he had already acquired a national reputation. In addition to his political sagacity, he was generally admired for his legal acumen. His sister, Fatima, accompanied him wherever he went. Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg and I called on him with a request to take a case on behalf of a friend.

This was our first meeting. Since Eid-e-Miladun Nabi, the Prophet's birthday, was to be commemorated at a meeting held in the Shahi Masjid, we invited Jinnah to preside over it. He spoke in English, and exhorted the Muslims, as the majority community, to respect the sentiments of the non-Muslims.

When the first general elections were held in 1937 under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Muslim League won several seats. In the United Provinces (today's Uttar Pradesh), there was an electoral understanding between the Congress and the Muslim League. But when the Congress won a landslide victory, it went back on its undertaking and announced certain pre-conditions to forming a coalition with the League. These pre-conditions were not acceptable to the Muslim League. This led to renewed friction between Hindus and Muslims. When the Congress ministries resigned in 1939, the Muslim League promptly formed governments in Bengal, Sind and Assam.

In Kashmir, we had finally broken our links with communal politics. Although Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas tried to revive the Muslim Conference with the help of Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, he did not succeed. Wanting to

avoid a confrontation between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim Conference, I addressed a letter to Mohammed Ali Jinnah. He invited me to come to Delhi for talks. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad accompanied me, and we had detailed discussions on the political situation in the State and the country. Finally, Jinnah agreed to advise the Muslim Conference to merge its identity with the National Conference. A tentative date was fixed for his visit to Kashmir.

In May 1944, Jinnah visited Srinagar. Ghazanfar Ali and a few other League leaders preceded him. When Jinnah reached Srinagar, the National Conference gave him a rousing reception. A meeting was held in Pratap Park at which Pandit Jia Lal Kilam read out a welcome address in English. During his stay in Srinagar, I reminded him of his promise. Evading a clear cut reply, he asked me to sort out our differences by talking to Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas. We turned down his suggestion. After a time his inclination towards the Muslim Conference became more pronounced.

Jinnah was adamant about keeping politics and religion apart. To Maulvi Yusuf Shah he said, 'Provided you resign from politics we will respect you like the Archbishop of Canterbury is respected in England.' Jinnah also said, 'We need a leader, not a mullah.' It seems that Jinnah, could suffer no individual other than Mohammed Ali Jinnah himself. He used to claim: 'I have created Pakistan with the assistance of my steno and a typewriter.' His misanthropical attitude was legendary. To quote the poet Mirza Ghalib:

*Boo-e-gul, nala-e-dil, doodh-e-chiraq-e-Mehfil  
Jo teri bazm se nikla woh parishan nikla.*

(Whoever emerged from your chamber was distraught.  
Whether the fragrance of a rose  
Or smoke from the candle  
Or an anguished cry of the heart.)

During his stay, when some one asked Jinnah what he thought of Maulvi Yusuf Shah, he replied that he was a 'rotten egg'. One of our activists, Ali Mohammad Tariq asked Jinnah if the future of Kashmir would be decided by the people of Kashmir. Pat came the reply, 'Let the people go to hell.' When people learnt about this they were quite hurt.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

Jinnah's tour of Kashmir left him very bitter. He never excused the National Conference and its leaders, and we all know too well its traumatic consequences. It is said that Jinnah passed his last days in grief and pain. He was very disappointed with Kashmir. The complexities of the Kashmiri problems are the results of the inflexible attitude of Jinnah. As an individual he was very gifted, but history will record a different view of his political sagacity.

At the same time, a Congress leader from the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan also visited Srinagar. He was of Kashmiri stock and a colleague of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. We knew him as a nationalist and did not suspect him about having any secret links with the Muslim League. Through him, I sent several messages to Jinnah. Subsequently, I learnt that even Badshah Khan did not trust him. I also learnt that in 1944 he had misled Jinnah into adopting the wrong attitude towards Kashmir.

In Delhi I met Syed Qasim Rizvi, commander of the Razakars (volunteers) of Hyderabad. He was an impressive personality, but very emotional. We discussed the political situation and I impressed upon him the need to take a dispassionate view of the stark reality. Unfortunately, he paid no heed to my advice. The fate that he and his followers met in 1948 is recorded in our history.\*

In this context I recall my visit to Baroda in connection with some work of the States' Peoples' Conference. Some Muslims staged a black flag demonstration against me. That same evening, a meeting was held in the chowk. Speaking at the meeting I warned the Muslims of the difficulties they might have to face after the creation of Pakistan. I exhorted them to cultivate brotherly relations with the Hindus.

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\* The suppression of the Telengana revolt and the subsequent 'Police Action' by the Government of India against Hyderabad State in 1948, led to the banning of the Razakars and they were disbanded.



# Chapter 11

## OUT OF THE NOOSE

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After the departure of N. Gopaldaswami Aiyangar, B.N. Rao was appointed Prime Minister of Kashmir. Rao was quite aware of a powerful, popular movement and Maharaja Hari Singh sensed that the movement was gathering strength and the growing storm was about to break. Nevertheless he continued to clutch at every piece of straw within sight. He decided to try out dyarchy in the hope of delaying direct confrontation with us. On the advice of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, two men from public life were inducted in the Maharaja's Cabinet, Ganga Ram from Jammu, and Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg of the National Conference from Kashmir. Sir Tej was of Kashmiri stock and of the same branch of Saprus as Allama Iqbal. He was a well-respected lawyer and an expert in constitutional law, he was also well-versed in Persian and Urdu, and had played the lead role in the struggle to secure legitimate rights for Urdu. He was consulted by the Maharaja on legal and constitutional matters.

Beg had more standing in the public and was better educated and more capable than Ganga Ram. Even so, Ganga Ram was given the portfolios of Home Affairs and Education. While Beg got the much less important Department of Construction. It was clear that chicanery not sincerity was the motivating force behind this decision. Despite these discriminatory practices Afzal did not give up but whenever he drew the government's attention towards certain welfare needs, he was promptly told that there were no funds available. Of the five members of the Cabinet, his was the only voice asking for help for the people. During his

tenure, we kept abreast with the activities of the Cabinet. Soon enough, he realized that the so-called experiment of sharing power with the popular representatives was an eyewash. He asked us if he should resign from the Cabinet. In March 1946, only a few months after his induction, Beg quit his post. Ganga Ram remained in office, totally subservient to the Maharaja. After some time he too, had to resign.

Meanwhile, common goals and aspirations were drawing us closer and closer to the Indian National Congress. The leaders of the Congress party were sympathetic to our cause. Although the understanding between our respective leaders was not liked by many Hindu friends, there wasn't much they could do about it. The leaders of the Indian National Congress did not want to be directly involved in the States' affairs but they expressed sympathy for the States' peoples' aspirations. On the other hand leaders of the Muslim League were closer to the rulers of states and kept their distance from the common people. It may have been a diplomatic ploy but the result was that the Congress won our confidence through its friendliness and affability and the Muslim League failed to do so. To redress the problems of the states, the Congress set up the All India States' Peoples' Conference. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the moving spirit behind this organization. Although the Muslim League also followed suit and set up an All India States' Muslim League, it remained an organization only on paper.

The sympathetic attitude of the Congress led to the formation of Praja Mandals, which were affiliated to the All India States' Peoples' Conference. The National Conference was also invited to join. A delegation of the National Conference attended the Ludhiana Conference. During this session, a demand was made for my release, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, as President of the Conference, spoke with personal feeling about me and the popular movement of Kashmir. Our relationship with the All India States' Peoples' Conference continued to grow stronger. Later, I took over the responsibility for its organization, and was elected Vice-President and then President of the Conference. Before I took over as President, we were invited to a session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) at Tripuri and Ramgarh. In Tripuri we met Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He became deeply interested in Kashmir affairs, and was impressed by the non-communal nature of our movement. During

these sessions, our relations with the Congress and its leaders were further cemented.

Most astonishing was the attitude of Maharaja Hari Singh who claimed to have a personal rapport with the leaders of the Indian National Congress. Our growing friendship with them caused him great concern. He should have been pleased with our secular approach to politics, but he could not stomach our growing closeness to the Congress and began to drift away from the Congress. We knew that his belief in 'divide and rule' was calculated to turn the policy of Hindus against Muslims. Our assessment of the situation proved correct. The Maharaja began making overtures of friendship to the Muslim Conference.

When leaders of the Congress party were released in July 1945, they headed straight for Srinagar to rest and recuperate. We gave them a warm welcome. On 1 August, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Khan Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, Asaf Ali and others arrived in Srinagar. We organized a boat procession from Chhatta Bal to Ameerakadal for them. This event has a unique historical significance for Kashmiris being prevalent from the days of Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen. Boats are decorated with multicoloured buntings; those living on the banks of the river decorated their windows with beautiful carpets, rugs, and silks. The procession of decorated boats then starts from the lake to the river. It is a spectacular pageant called *Parindey*. The boats are rowed by oarsmen in bright liveries. Trailing behind are boats carrying bands of folk musicians. Smartly dressed men, women, and children line up along both banks, and the entire population flocks to the riverside. It is indeed a scene worth watching. Arrangements for the procession were supervised by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the commander of the Volunteers Corps of the National Conference.

When the followers of Mirwaiz at Zainakadal, tried to obstruct the boat procession, the spectators, who were so full of goodwill, ensured that his goondas could do no more than make a vulgar display of depraved manners. All they could do was throw stones and hurl abuses. The procession proceeded on its course with dignity. Behind this unwarranted intrusion was the Kak administration. Even Jinnah was upset, and, in a letter to the Viceroy, requested that an inquiry be ordered immediately. We supported his stand. The same evening, a grand rally was held at Huzoori Bagh to welcome the leaders. In my speech, as President of the

## *Flames of the Chinar*

National Conference, after extolling his unique qualities of head and heart, as well as his great sacrifices, I brought up major issues concerning our State. First, the right of self-determination. Those who have accused the National Conference of blindly toeing the Congress line should carefully read this address. In it I drew the audiences' attention to the just demands of the Muslim League:

We are aware of the fact that only a unified India can drive away British usurpers, and liberate the country. We firmly believe that on the question of independence all communities should speak with one voice. Esteemed Maulana Sahib, we need to make renewed efforts to achieve this unity. We would like to know why is it that despite the sacrifices made by the Congress, the greatness of its leaders, and undeniable urge for freedom among the Muslims, so few of them are with Congress. We strongly urge the need for a changed attitude. It is your responsibility to assess the *modus operandi* of the Muslim League and other Muslim organisations. Its just demands must be conceded. Whatever the source of goodness, so long as it benefits society, it must be acknowledged.

The Maulana's health had suffered during his imprisonment at Ahmednagar, in addition he had to face the trauma of losing his wife, Zuleikha Begum. He never spoke about it but sorrow was visible on his face. Addressing the rally in a soft voice, he said:

I have come here to recuperate. I hope you will let me stay quietly for a few weeks. I have a short message for you. Nature has bestowed on this country an able and great leader in Sheikh Abdullah. If you follow him and his comrades, the day of freedom will not be far. You will not need to run after success. Success will run after you, and your efforts will bear fruit.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stood before the same crowd and said, 'I have been referred to as a "guest" though I am proud of being a Kashmiri. Kashmir is in my blood and stamped on my head and heart.'

After a few days, the annual session of the National Conference was

held in Sopore. The people of Sopore turned out in full force. This session proved an important milestone in the history of our movement. For the first time, delegations arrived from every nook and corner of the State. Leaders of the Congress also attended: Jawaharlal Nehru, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, Abdul Samad Khan Achakzai, and Indira Gandhi (who was not involved in politics, but accompanied Jawaharlal Nehru). Due to ill-health, Maulana Azad, could not attend the session and remained at Gulmarg.

The resolution asserting the right of self-determination was adopted. It proved to be the guide for all political parties of India as it was the first of its kind. Supporting the resolution Jawaharlal Nehru said, 'Dogra government forced you to lead a sub-human existence. Thanks to Sheikh Sahib's efforts you have once again attained human dignity. In Kashmir, wherever I have gone I have heard the resounding slogans of "Long live the Lion of Kashmir".'

Nehru criticized the Kashmiri Pandits, not only in this session but also when he was invited by the Pandits at Sheetal Nag. Replying to the address of Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, which was composed in *shudh* Hindi, he said that slogan-mongering and clinging to the past in the name of religion and culture does not behove a progressive nation. 'Downtrodden nations have no right to claim cultural superiority. Kashmiri Pandits have restricted their politics to job hunting—a quest which symbolizes their degeneration. They are narrow-minded and short-sighted. They must seriously think of joining the National Conference.'

Later, I escorted Panditji to a number of places in the mountains. He loved the mountains and was always eager to climb high peaks. Ram Chandra Kak was jealous of our friendship. While going to the famous mountain-spring of Kausar Nag we passed through Shopian. Kak clamped Section 144 on the town so that people would be prevented from welcoming Pandit Nehru. But when we arrived we found that despite the curfew, people had gathered in their thousands. Panditji was taken to the city in a procession. Speaking on the occasion I said, 'The way government is treating our honoured guest does not reflect civilised behaviour. So long as our guests are with us, let us ignore their provocative gestures. After their departure we will settle our accounts with them.'

# Chapter 12

## INDIVIDUALS AND NATIONS

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The historical relationship between individuals and events is subject to two interpretations. Some believe that individuals make history while others contend that historical forces create individuals. I believe that reality lies somewhere between these two extremes. Unless given an opportunity, individuals cannot prove themselves. They can, however, accelerate the process and determine the direction of historical forces. Alexander the Great and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin are two cases in point. Karl Marx believed that among the European countries Germany was most suited and Russia most unsuitable for a communist revolution. But Lenin disproved this contention; the Socialist Revolution swept across Russia. On the subject of Napoleon Bonaparte, the poet Mohammed Iqbal said:

*Raaz hai raaz hai taqdeer-i-jahan-e tag-o-taaz  
Josh-e-Kirdar se khul jaate hain taqdeer ke raaz*

(Mysterious is this world of action  
Human effort unmasks this mystery.)

In the history of Indian independence, the interaction between individuals and nations makes an interesting subject of study. Just prior to independence, the Muslim League's concept of Pakistan had become so pervasive that some top ranking Congress leaders were prepared for

total surrender. Others poised themselves for a collision course with Mohammed Ali Jinnah. One example is Jawaharlal Nehru's statement, that after the departure of the British, the Congress would not be bound by the stipulation of the Cabinet Mission Plan about the right of self-determination of the states of the Federal Union. Jinnah's alarm at this declaration was reflected in his changed attitude towards the plan. Nehru's statement was the refutation of the Cabinet Mission Plan, and resulted in the division of the country.

In an interesting recap one recalls that Jinnah had carved a special place for himself in the higher echelons of the Congress. Sarojini Naidu called him, 'The harbinger of Hindu-Muslim Unity'. Despite all this, however, he could never reach the apex of the organization. On par with Jinnah, though facing the other way, there were Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Rajendra Prasad who had dreamt of a Hindu state, and were, in their old age, wanting dream-fulfilment. Abul Kalam Azad and a few of his like-minded colleagues, who were fiercely opposed to Partition, were not very popular among the masses.

The only individual with a national perspective and point of view was Mahatma Gandhi. He stood like a human barricade on the path of hate. At Noakhali and Bihar he jumped into the fray and fought tooth and nail against communal disturbances without the slightest concern for his personal safety. To protest against communal killings, he started a fast unto death in 1946. Regardless of the fragmentation of India, he still considered Pakistan a part of his spiritual territory. He, therefore, announced his intention to visit Pakistan, and, to continue his fight against evil on that soil. But the forces of evil in both countries played their deadly game, and this spiritual and intellectual giant fell to an assassin's bullet.

During his last days, Gandhiji was wedged between two extremes. One extreme was the fire-spitting hatred of the Muslim League. Having glimpsed the fulfilment of their dream, the leaders were anxious to turn it into an enduring reality. The capitalists among them could not wait to grab power and wealth in the newly carved state. Since the Muslim League was primarily represented by these powerful landlords, it was concerned with protecting their rights, rather than safeguarding the interests of the people. Gandhi's words to the votaries of this extreme were a wasted effort. The other extreme was Mahatma Gandhi's own Congress party which had talked itself into accepting Partition.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

The old Congress stalwarts were, by this time, eager for power so that at the end of their lives, they could leave their impact on history. They turned a deaf ear to Mahatma Gandhi's pleas. The Hindu bourgeoisie was anxious to replace the British in government, but more so in the wealth and power which they saw within easy reach. In working towards this goal, adherence to Gandhian principles was increasingly viewed as an impediment.

With a bitter smile, the Mahatma watched this scenario. He had been systematically isolated. In this vortex of selfishness no one was prepared to listen to him. In the words of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Gandhiji had reached this state of mind:

*Teri nazar ka gila kya jo hai gila dil ko  
To hum sey hai ke tamanna ziyad rakhte hain.*

(I blame not your glance  
I blame myself  
For my desire for you is boundless.)

His own party workers, who he had carefully groomed, began to whisper about an old man's garrulousness and approaching senility. Like an infant, they said, he was running behind illusory firebirds. Who cared that he ultimately offered his blood to put out the flames of hatred?

*Mard-e-dervish ka sarmaya hai azaadi-o-marg  
Hai kisi aur ki khatir ye nisaab-e-zar-o-seem*

(Freedom and death  
Are the wealth of the dervish  
For others are the silver and gold.)

Mohammed Ali Jinnah was an important player in this dramatic interlude. As we have seen earlier, during the first quarter of the century, he had become the star of the Congress party. He was an eminent lawyer and a skilled orator who had aligned himself against the British rule. Although initially he had pledged his support to the Congress party, differences arose between him and its leaders, and, subsequently, he



became its staunch opponent. Jinnah emerged as the undisputed leader of the fundamentalist Muslims, who were campaigning for a separate homeland for themselves, although his background and upbringing had nothing in common with the people whose cause he was supporting.

Neither was he conversant in Arabic, Persian or Urdu, nor was he prepared to mould his life according to the tenets prescribed by Islam. Despite finding it difficult to offer namaaz, he became the beacon of light in the quest for Pakistan. Hate being stronger than love, the hatred in him, born out of his rejection by the Congress leaders, fuelled his desire for political recognition. The result was Pakistan. But when the fountainhead is sullied then each strata becomes impure. Once Jinnah had defeated his Congress opponents, with a *coup de grâce* to a united India, his quest ended. No longer did he try to propagate the differences between Hindus and Muslims, the rationale he had given earlier for the need for a separate nation. In fact, he welcomed Hindu migrants. Had he lived longer, Pakistan politics would have been very different.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar's plight throws a flood of light on the Indian independence movement. At the beginning he was hurt by the unsympathetic attitude of Mahatma Gandhi. Later, at the dawn of independence, Jawaharlal Nehru managed to win him over. He played an important role in framing the Indian Constitution. But a day came when he was forced to leave the Congress. Along with thousands of his followers, he embraced Buddhism.

The most prominent Muslim in the Congress camp was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. His extreme intelligence and education singled him out as a great Muslim leader. However, his aloofness and individualism was less heartwarming for the masses than the sentimental slogans of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The Maulana was a skilled orator and a patriotic Indian. His newspapers, *Al Hilal* and *Al Balagh*, were tools for the education of Muslims. But the fact remains that his mental framework was not that of a popular leader. The result was that while Jinnah continued to attract Muslim masses, Azad's following steadily declined. He was in an untenable position. Fundamentalist Hindus avoided him, while Muslims regarded him as a show-boy of the Hindus. Although he had a close bond with Jawaharlal Nehru, Nehru rarely endorsed his views, as evident in passages from *India Wins Freedom*. Thus in his later years,

Maulana Azad became a recluse. Conflicts arose between Sardar Patel and him.

Sardar Patel was influenced by Hindu fundamentalism and wished to secure the interests of Hindu revivalists. From the social and political standpoint he was a staunch reactionary; he shunned progressive politics. During the communal clashes he encouraged the Hindu communalists to combat the Muslims. Once, while talking to me he said that the one way to destroy Pakistan was to drive more and more Muslims there so that it may burst at the seams and be forced to come to terms with India. It was evident that the politics of Sardar Patel was at work behind the communal disturbances in Delhi and its adjoining territories. He also delivered a blatantly anti-Muslim speech at Lucknow. When Mahatma Gandhi received the report of this speech, he was greatly perturbed.

There was a vast difference between the ideologies of Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru. Jawaharlal was born and brought up in a family which recognized no communal barriers. His father, Pandit Motilal Nehru, was a scholar of Urdu and Persian, with many Muslims in his circle of friends. From him Nehru imbibed tolerance and large-heartedness. On the contrary, Sardar Patel had been brought up in a fundamentalist Hindu environment. He regarded himself as the representative of the Hindu masses and the rightful claimant for prime ministership. Pandit Nehru's elevation to the post of prime minister irked him. One must concede the fact that Jawaharlal was a dreamer and an idealist whereas Sardar Patel was an adroit administrator and a realist. Sardar Patel considered Jawaharlal Nehru's friends and admirers, his opponents. Since Jawaharlal Nehru and I were ideologically close to one another, Sardar disliked my friendship with Nehru and counted me among his opponents. Once a high-ranking officer of intelligence, Hasan Walia, was discovered submitting malicious reports about me and my government. We asked him to leave the State within twenty-four hours. Sardar Patel was Home Minister, and responsible for the Intelligence Department. He was annoyed at our perfunctory dismissal of his employee. Consequently, Jawaharlal, invited me to Delhi to sort out the problem. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and Beg Sahib accompanied me. A meeting was arranged at the residence of Sardar Patel which included Jawaharlal, Maulana Azad and Gopaldaswami Aiyangar. While discussing the matter, Sardar said, 'I have told Jawaharlal again and again that the die is cast against us in

Kashmir. We must give it up.' He then added with obvious pain, 'A few days ago, the Maharani of Kashmir came to see me. She fainted while relating her suffering because Maharaja Hari Singh had been asked to leave the State.'

'You are so concerned about your Maharaja and Maharani,' I exclaimed disgustedly, 'have you any sympathy for the thousands of innocents who were butchered by them in Jammu?' Sardar answered, 'It would probably be best if we part company with them.' I retorted, 'The people of Kashmir have opted for India because of the similarity of ideals. But let me make it clear to you that we did not elect to be with you but with the people of India. We shall place our case before them, and abide by their verdict.'

Sardar kept quiet but Jawaharlal Nehru took me aside and said: 'Enough has been spoken on both sides, Sheikh Sahib. Best leave the matter alone.' I answered, 'We do not want to snap relations. If Sardar does not like it so be it. According to the Instrument of Accession, the Centre cannot set up an Intelligence office in Kashmir. As a matter of courtesy we had allowed it to function. But we shall not permit it to create bitterness between us and the Central Government. Still if you insist that we let Hasan Walia remain in Kashmir, we will concede, but if he dares send any more slanderous reports to the Centre, we will fire him instantly.' Sardar's antagonism towards me can be gauged from B.N. Malik's book, *My Years with Nehru* (Agra: Deep Publications, 1971). Matters reached a point where he organized a group in the Ministry of Home Affairs which aimed at removing me from power and installing a parallel leadership in Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad.

At that time, the older generation of Muslim leaders consisted of Maulana Husain Ahmed Madani, Maulana Hifzur Rehman, Maulana Habeeb Ahmed Ludhianavi and others. These theologians belonged to Deoband, which was an important centre of national activities. It inspired Mahmood-ul-Hasan and Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi to perform unforgettable deeds for the cause of the Indian national movement. These leaders, however, were not in the least prepared for the popular following that had evolved around Jinnah and the Muslim League. It was not until Partition that the Muslim League won the support of Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. Its major opposition in Punjab was a federation of landlords called the Unionist Party of Khizer Hayat Khan.

The NWFP was under the influence of the Frontier Gandhi. The Congress also had a strong foothold there, and, in 1946, Maulana Azad was elected from the NWFP to the Central Assembly. But after Partition when a plebiscite was held, the people of the Frontier voted for Pakistan, thereby, inflicting defeat on the Khudai Khidmatgars, popularly known as the Red Shirts, who had been struggling against the Muslim League and the formation of Pakistan. Badshah Khan felt betrayed, hence, he presented his demand for including an independent Pakhtoonistan (along with Pakistan and India) in the proposed plebiscite. He felt that he could offer no moral justification for his people to join India. The British, the Muslim League and even his long-standing allies, the Congress, refused to consider the inclusion of Pakhtoonistan.

The Muslim League, appealing to the religious sentiments of the people of NWFP, exhorted them to pledge themselves to an Islamic nation, Pakistan. Despite the increasing odds against him, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan continued to oppose the two-nation theory. He claimed that more than the League, the leadership of the Congress was responsible for the partition of the country and the creation of Pakistan. He believed that the Congress aimed to create an essentially Hindu state and did not relish the idea of many Muslims joining the Congress. They took advantage of Jinnah's demand for Pakistan, which was only a bargaining counter to secure the rights of the Muslims. They compromised with Jinnah and did all they could to facilitate his work. This attitude continued even after Partition, and became the *raison d'être* for more and more Muslims being driven to opt for Pakistan. It was the angst behind the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, who could never reconcile himself to the moral justification of Partition.

The Congress leaders pointed accusing fingers at the Muslim leadership as harbingers of Partition, they failed to see that the Congress was also partly responsible for the condition that led to Partition. The only Hindu Congress leader against Partition was Mahatma Gandhi, while there were many Muslims, like Maulana Azad and the Frontier Gandhi who supported him. A farcical situation! The first anti-Partition front opened in Kashmir, which had a majority of Muslims. In fact it was they who single-handedly confronted the Pakistani expansionists before any armed reinforcements arrived from the Centre.

An interesting fact behind Partition was that the areas where Muslims

were a majority wholeheartedly supported Pakistan, although their territories had little chance of being included in it. The plight of Muslims in UP and Bihar instigated them to advocate the two-nation theory. Unfortunately, these Indo-Gangetic areas still bear the brunt of pre-Partition tension. Contrary to the southern states they are easily inflammable zones of frequent communal riots.

Jawaharlal was one of the most illustrious leaders of this era. Being as enigmatic as most geniuses, he was a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. His Kashmiri ancestry was reflected in his handsome features like his apple-red cheeks! His broad-mindedness and moral strength stemmed from his affluent family background. Educated along with the cream of the English society, he was part of the British liberalism, influenced by the British social tradition of the nineteenth century, as well as the Fabian Society. His liberalism had a militant dimension as evidenced by his admiration for Karl Marx. Neither a total liberal nor a staunch socialist, like Hamlet, he was suspended between the two ideologies. He moved easily from one extreme to another, reminding me of these lines from Iqbal:

*Chalta hoon thodi der har ek rahrau ke saath  
Pehchanta nahin hoon abhi raahbar ko mein*

(A short distance  
I walk with one, I walk with another  
I do not yet recognize the leader.)

Jawaharlal's consonance with the English literary tradition is reflected by Maulana Azad's remark that he dreamt, muttered, and even thought in English! That Jawaharlal Nehru was a gifted and fiery writer, is apparent in his literary ventures. Although he claimed to be an agnostic, he wrote in praise of India's past, which was fraught with Hindu revivalism. His *Discovery of India* often comes close to the perception of revivalist Hindus such as K.M. Munshi and Dayanand Saraswati. He regarded himself as an instrument to establish, once again, that old dispensation. His idealism, was tainted with politicking and conjurations of Machiavelli. He was an admirer of the famous ancient political thinker Chanakya and kept the *Arthashastra* by his bedside. Nehru was influenced

by Machiavelli's doctrines and practiced them with us in Kashmir. He was the product of the confluence of British elegance, Hindu refinement and Muslim civility. Thus his personality was extremely attractive. He was loyal to his friends and sought to do all he could for them so long as it did not impede his country's interests or his own. When he felt a danger, his attitude drastically changed; for example, his decision to throw me in prison. At his behest Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad betrayed his benefactor and his motherland. But Nehru mercilessly put him aside when he was of no use.

V.K. Krishna Menon, another such victim, was summarily dismissed from the Cabinet. Jawaharlal was hot tempered, but he had a disarming way of making up after his angry outburst. Oh, to make him angry and see him make amends! What Ghalib said about the beloved is descriptive of Jawaharlal's moods blowing hot, blowing cold:

*Wida-o-wasl juda gaana lizzat-e-darad  
Hazaar baar birau sad hazaar baar biya.*

(Different pleasures  
Her absence and her union  
So go a thousand times  
And come back a hundred thousand.)

Nehru had a soft spot for the gentle sex. Often he was distracted from important meetings by the arrival of a lady friend. Some of his colleagues became quite annoyed at this habit. His ladies, however, were no brainless mannequins! They were the brightest women such as Sarojini Naidu, Padmaja Naidu, Mridula Sarabhai and Edwina Mountbatten. This aspect of his temperament reminds me of Akbar Allahabadi's lines:

*Rok sakti nahin taqvey say mujhe koi sada  
Shart ye hai ke woh pazaib ki jhankar na ho*

(Nothing can tempt me from piety  
Except the tinkling bells on her dancing feet.)

Jawaharlal Nehru always maintained a strong affinity for Kashmir,

## *Flames of the Chinar*

the land of his ancestors. He once explained to Lord Louis Mountbatten that just as before her execution, Mary Queen of Scots had claimed that if her heart was opened up 'Calais' would be imprinted upon it, Kashmir was engraved upon his own heart. It would not be difficult to believe that when he died, like when the Emperor Jehangir passed away, 'Kashmir' was hovering over his last few breaths. His love for Kashmir drastically shaped its fate for better or worse. Nehru's perception of Kashmir was unusual; his metaphor for its scenery was a woman of infinite grace. He called it his second Achilles heel.

'Kashmir is like a woman of heavenly beauty, at once aloof and chaste. Her dupatta is its rushing streams; her cupped hands filled with flowers are its valleys. She sways as the trees sway with the wind. Entranced, I watch her as if I am in a dream for surely I shall soon wake up.'

It has often crossed my mind that Nehru's love of Kashmir made him jealous of my hold over its people. This resentment expressed itself in his taking action against me.

Although he was essentially carefree, his last days were full of sorrow. His life was marred by the Chanakya in him. China's aggression completely broke his spirit. He claimed to be the successor of Gandhiji but doubts arose about his moral leadership following the Kashmir crisis. After the 1953 coup of Kashmir, his supporters' actions tarnished his image. During his last days, however, he tried to repair the damage done to the valley. He removed Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad from prime ministership, and, upon my release, in 1964, expressed his personal regrets for what had happened. He was trying to set things right with my help, when he was suddenly called back to his creator. His plans for Kashmir remained unfulfilled.

# Chapter 13

## QUIT KASHMIR

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In the general elections the Muslim League scored a spectacular victory. At the same time, the British Government despatched a Cabinet Mission to India to hold talks with various political parties. The Second World War had ended, reducing the erstwhile great British Empire to a shadow of its former self. Although the Allies defeated the Axis powers, Britain paid the heaviest price. The 'first world power' was so badly mauled that it had to strain to maintain its third-class world position.

Sick of his war-mongering policies, the British threw out Winston Churchill and voted instead for the Labour party of Clement Attlee. The new government was desperate to salvage the remains of the Empire. It, therefore, confessed that the British sovereign's hands had been paralyzed to the extent that they could not hold on to a country which was several thousand miles away, and which was seething with anger and discontent at its subject position. It announced the decision to send a Cabinet Mission in 1945, led by Sir Stafford Cripps.

One of the important issues before the mission was the future of the princely states. It was being considered that after Partition, the ruling chiefs of the states would decide which federation to accede to. Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress were opposed to this procedure while M.A. Jinnah and the League supported it. I presented my case before Gandhiji saying, 'The right of accession should rest with the people of the States. We must start an agitation to press this right.' Finding Gandhiji unwilling to initiate any action on this matter, I was crestfallen. On my



## *Flames of the Chinar*

return to Lahore, I learnt that the Cabinet Mission had gone to Kashmir. Immediately I sent them a telegram, the essence of which was as follows:

Today, the people of Kashmir cannot be pacified with only a representative system of governance. They want freedom. Total freedom from the autocratic Maharaja. One hundred years ago Kashmir was sold for 75 lakh Nanakshahi rupees to Raja Gulab Singh by a sale deed of 1846 wrongly called the Treaty of Amritsar. Less than 5 lakh pound sterling changed hands and sealed the fate of over 40 lakh men and women and their land of milk and honey, without the slightest regard to public sentiment. We challenge the political and moral status of this sale deed, this instrument of subjugation, handed by the East India Company agents to a bunch of Dogras.

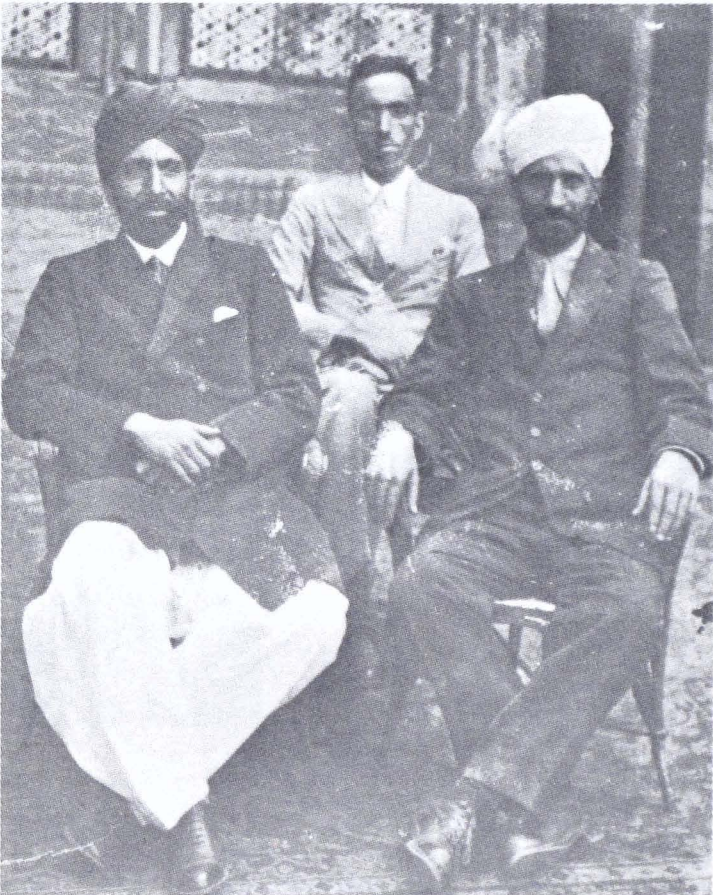
This is a historic moment. The future of the Indian people is being determined, while the Cabinet Mission is working out a constitutional framework of the country. The right of accession is a contentious issue between three parties, the people, the rulers and the federation. We Kashmiris have to put it in its historical perspective. A sale deed does not have the status of a treaty. Therefore after the termination of British rule Kashmir has the right to become independent. We Kashmiris want to inscribe our own destiny and we want the Cabinet Mission to reaffirm the correctness of our stand.

Ours is a unique land. Its physical beauty is unparalleled. Its strategic importance for military operations is undisputed, located as it is at the meeting point of the Chinese and Russian frontiers. Ours is also a unique polity. We have a tradition of communal harmony and joint struggle; consequently, all communities and classes are supporting this joint national demand.

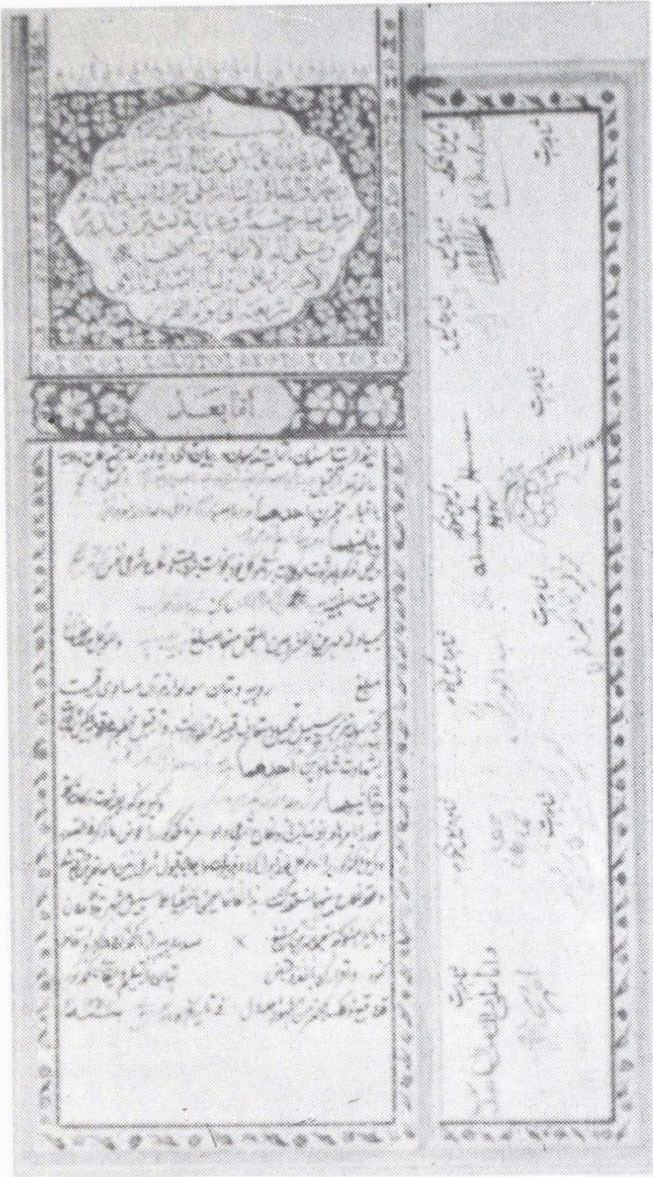
Having wired the above message, I decided to personally warn my people of what lay ahead. In my speech delivered in May 1946, I declared that the termination of the British regime would mean the end of the rulers



As a student in Aligarh – late 1920s



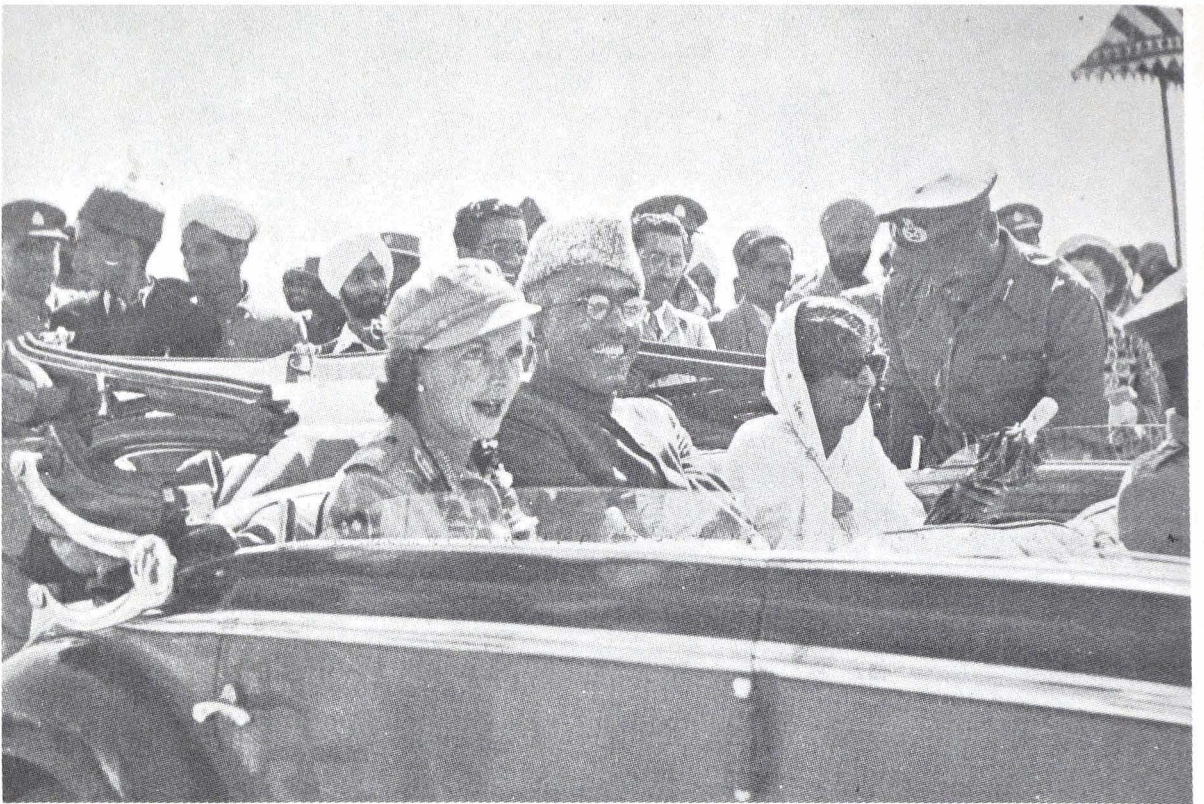
Sheikh Abdullah (seated centre) with Shawl Sahib (right) and Ashai Sahib (left) – 1931



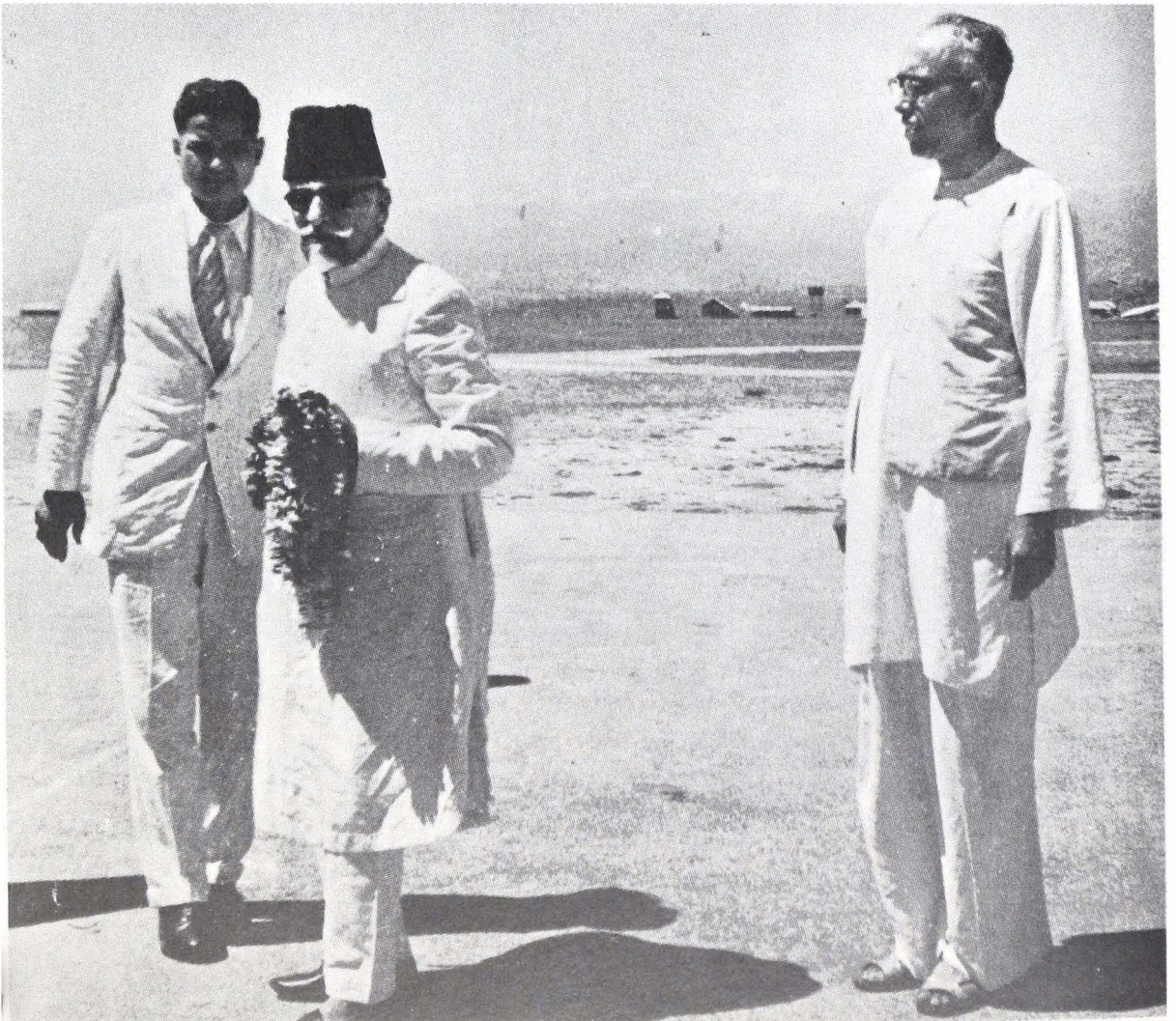
Begum Abdullah in Lahore - early 1940s



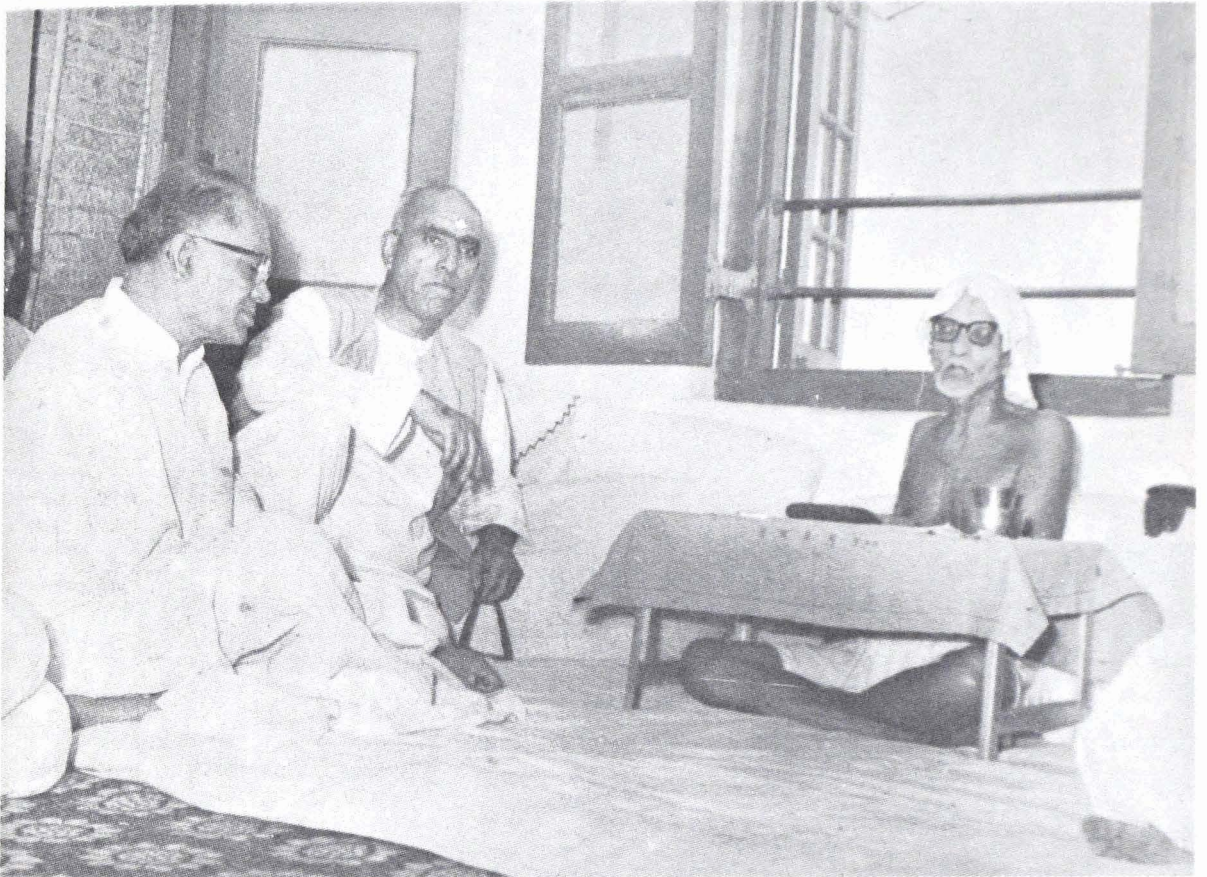
With Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Pandit Nehru – late 1930s



With Lady Mountbatten (right) and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (left) – late 1940s



Welcoming Maulana Azad to Srinagar – 1948



With Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan – 1964



With C. Rajagopalachari and Vijayalakshmi Pandit – 1950s



Being received by the people of the Valley after his release. With him are (left to right) Farooq Abdullah, Beg Sahib and Ali Shah Sahib – 1958

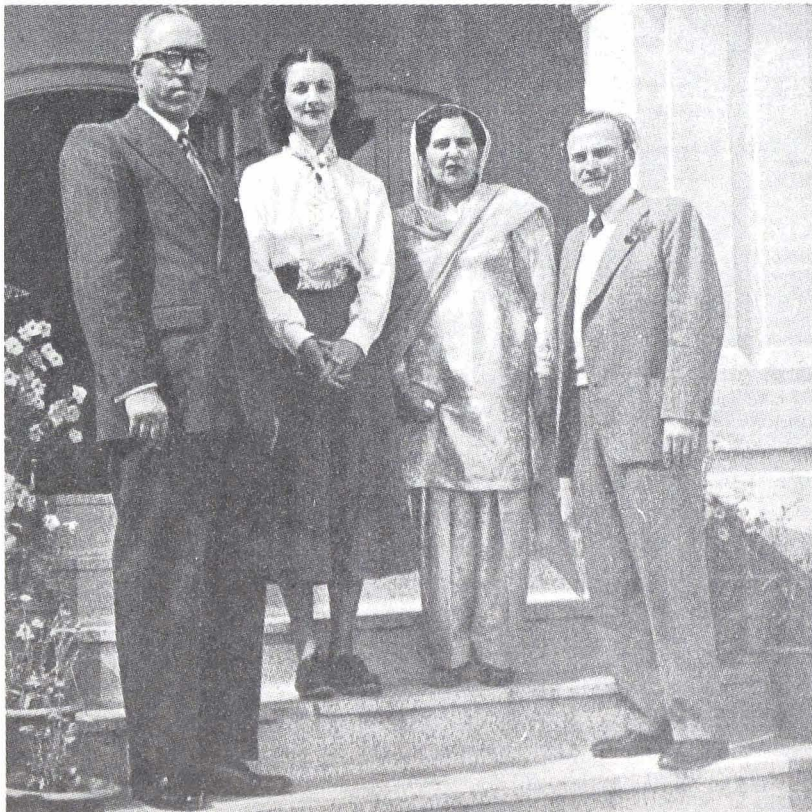


Addressing a gathering at the Hazratbal Shrine – 1950s

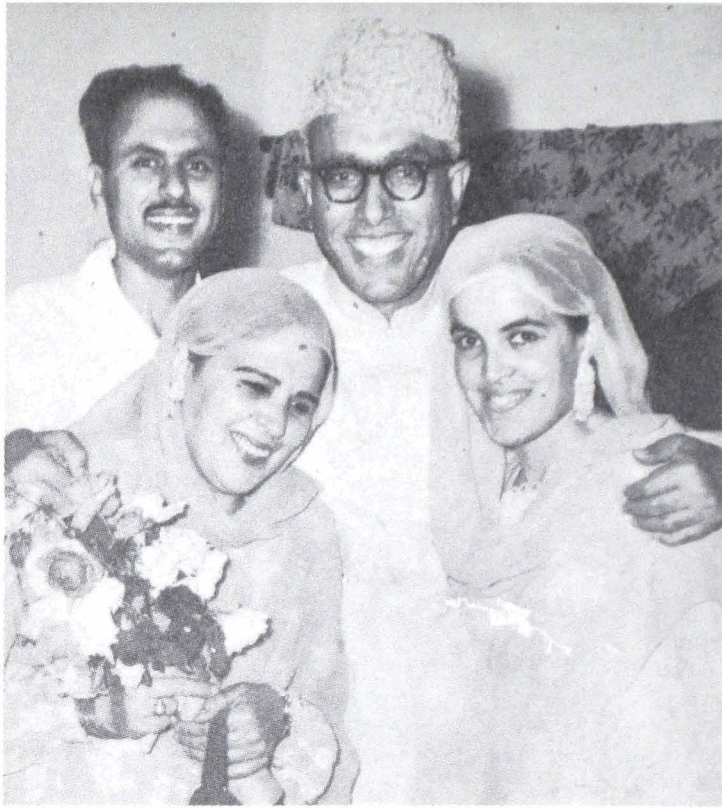




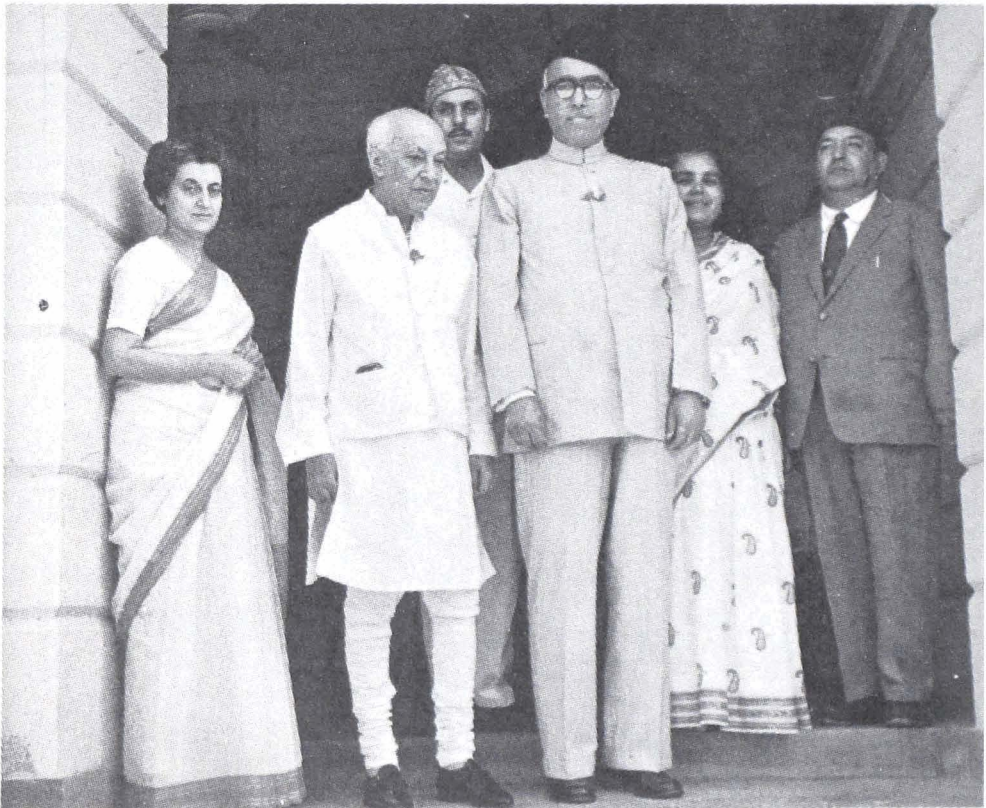
Signing the 'Land to the Tiller' order – 1948



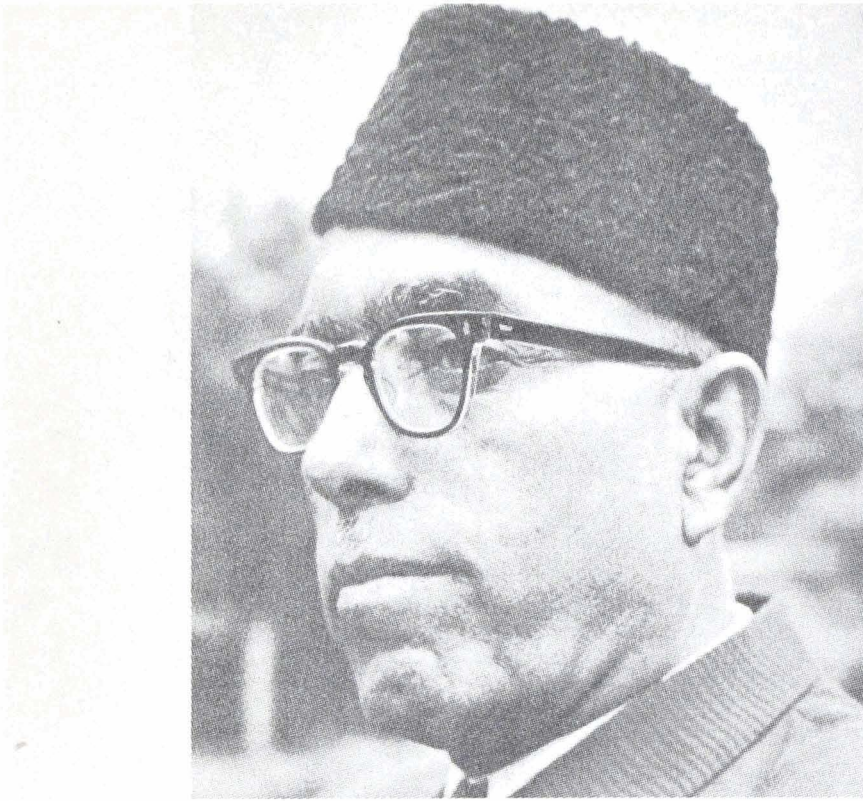
With Begum Abdullah and Yehudi Menuhin and his wife – early 1950s



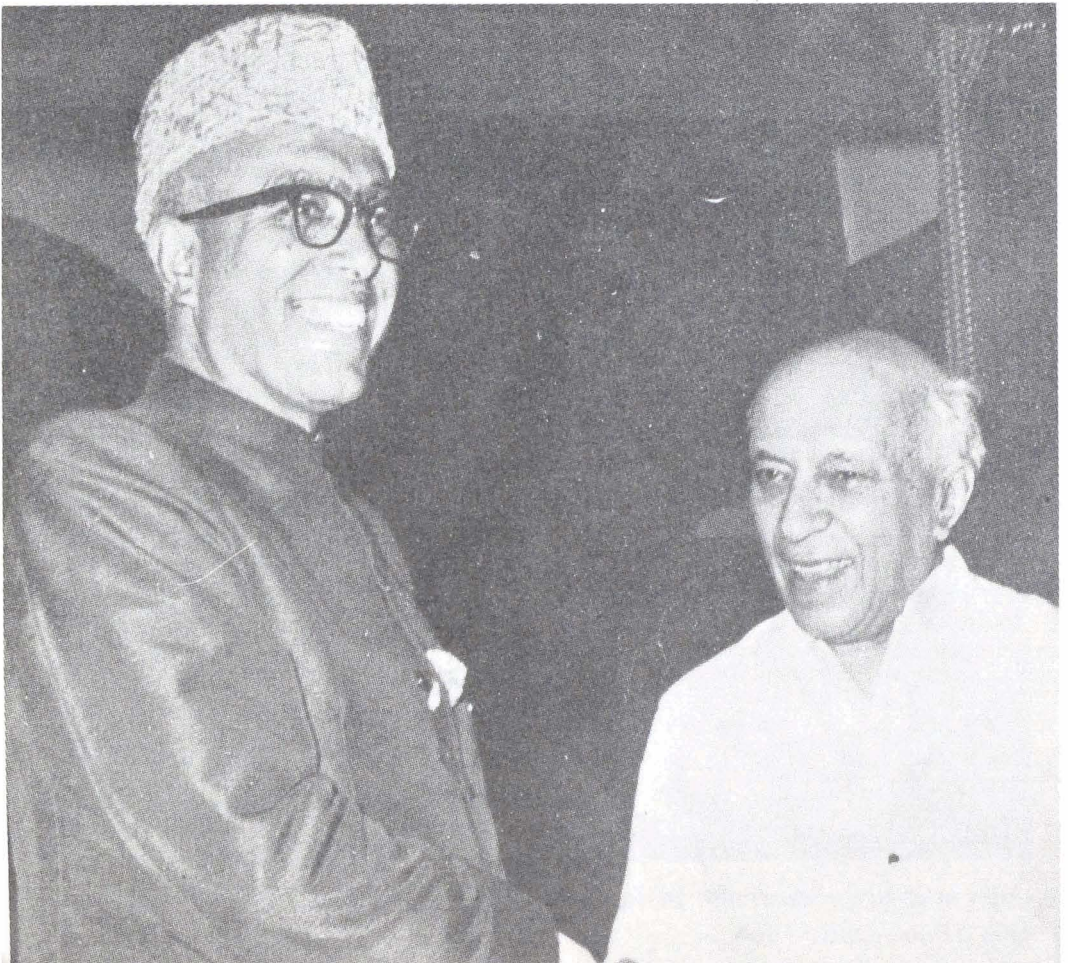
Reunited, after his release from Jammu Central Jail, with his wife, elder daughter, Begum Khalida Shah and elder son, Farooq Abdullah – early 1964



Soon after his release with Indira Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Dr Sushila Nayar and Beg Sahib – early 1964



Before his visit to Pakistan at the behest of Pandit Nehru  
- 1964



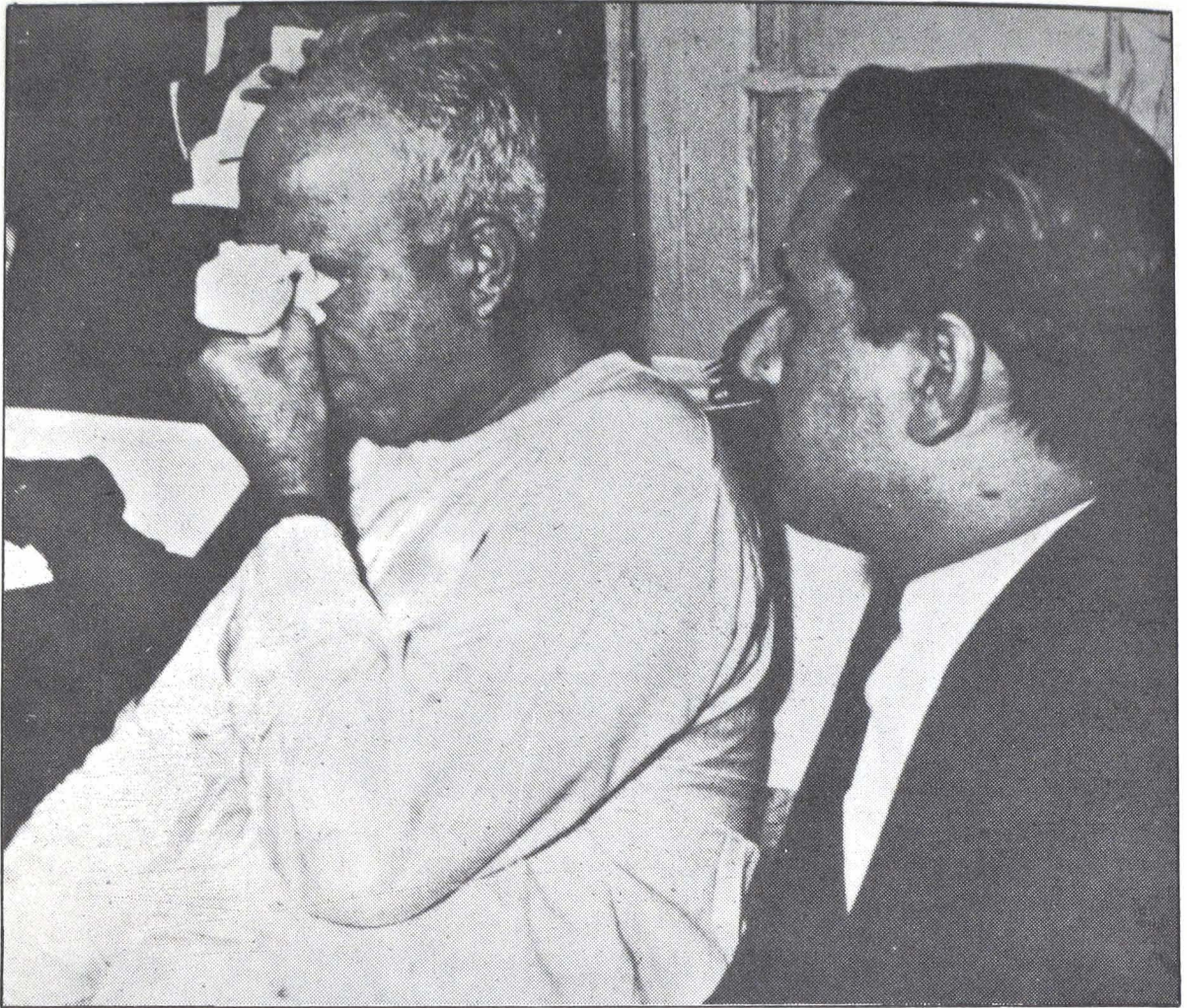
Meeting Pandit Nehru for the last time before leaving for Pakistan as Nehru's emissary  
- 1964



In Pakistan with Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah (on his extreme right), Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas (on his immediate left) and the then President Ayub Khan – 1964



During the talks in Rawalpindi, Pakistan (right to left) Foreign Minister, Z.A. Bhutto, President Ayub Khan, and his aides – 1964



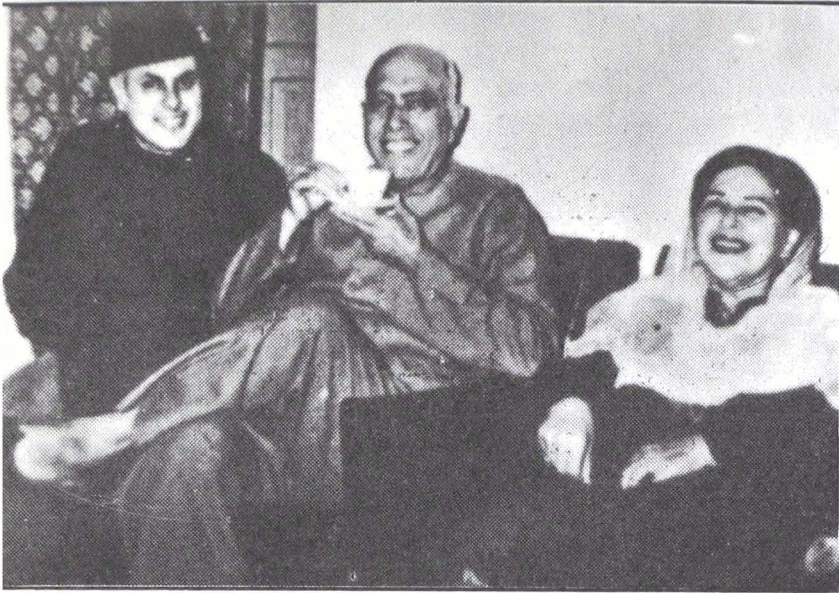
Breaking down (in Pakistan) on hearing of Pandit Nehru's demise – 1964



At Riyadh with late King Faisal (centre), Tariq Abdullah (extreme left) and Beg Sahib – early 1965



Praying in a village – early 1970s



With Begum Abdullah and Farooq Abdullah – mid 1970s



Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir – 1975



Addressing a mammoth meeting at Lal Chowk – early 1975



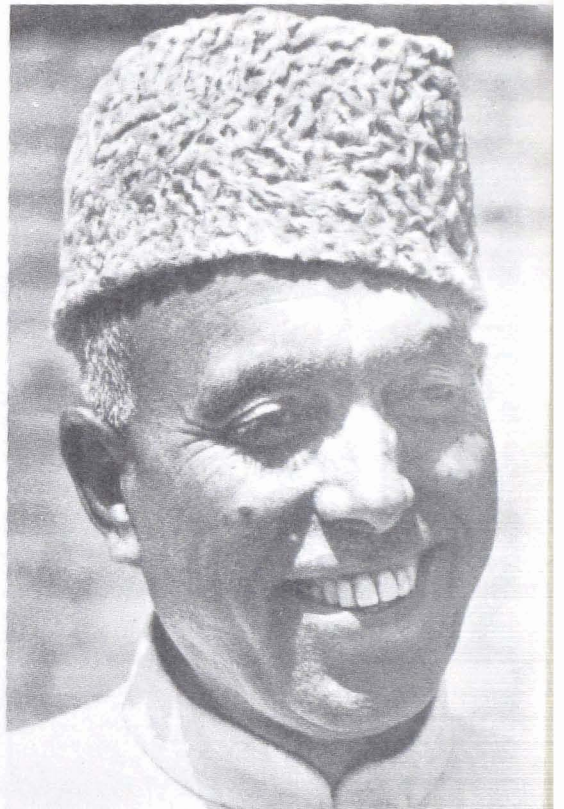
A caricature of Sheikh Abdullah in the early 1970s by R.K. Laxman



After the Kashmir Accord with Indira Gandhi, with Mrs L.K. Jha in the background and Begum Abdullah and Indira Gandhi – early 1975

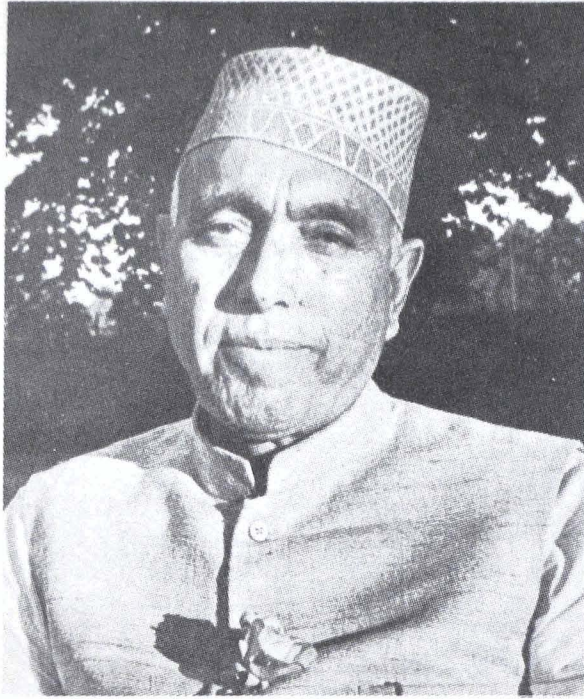


In close contact with the people at the Hazratbal Shrine – late 1970s



Sheikh Abdullah in the late 1970s





At peace under the Chinar tree – late 1970s



Sheikh Abdullah in the early 1980s



His last resting place near the famous Dal Lake at Hazratbal – 1982

who were stooges of imperialism, and the cancellation of the treaties which were meant to enslave a people against their will. In another speech I entreated people to contribute one rupee each towards a collection of seventy-five lakh rupees so that we could return the investment of the present Maharaja's grandfather and buy back the independence of Kashmir.

In Delhi, Jawaharlal was kept apprised about my activities. On his invitation, I left for Delhi on 19 May 1946. When I reached district Muzaffarabad, I saw an enormous roadblock. That night I was held prisoner at a bungalow at Ghari, and the next day, through a circuitous route, I was removed to Badami Bagh. Despite the government's secretiveness, the news of my arrest spread all over the city causing demonstrations and processions. Meanwhile, the government had deployed the police, not only in the city but contingents had been sent to Poonch, Rajouri, Bhadarwah, Kotli, Banihal and outlying areas. A large number of arrests were made and the demonstrators were indiscriminately fired upon. The official death toll was twenty. All the top leaders were arrested. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and G.M. Sadiq were the only exceptions. They managed to escape to Lahore where they exposed the conditions in Kashmir to the press and to the leaders of the Congress. The Prime Minister of Kashmir, Pandit Ram Chandra Kak admitted during a press conference that for eleven months he had been busy preparing for this day.

The people were galvanized. 'Quit Kashmir' was on the lips of every Kashmiri, all but a part of the Hindu press who believed that the administration of the Hindu Maharaja must be defended. Acharya J.B. Kripalani, Congress President, was also opposed to our movement; ironically, so was Mohammed Ali Jinnah and his Muslim League. He supported the Maharaja, and the Kak administration, and gave us the derogatory appellation, 'anti-social elements'. A hint of 'foreign aid' and 'Russian hand' was also dropped. The only unequivocal support came to us from Jawaharlal Nehru.

The Maharaja and his friends started approaching the Congress, particularly, Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. In Delhi, Jawaharlal met Gandhi and briefed him about Kashmir affairs. Jawaharlal was most upset to hear about my arrest particularly because I had set out on his invitation. His telegram to the Maharaja demanded my immediate

release and declared that he would personally negotiate it. The Maharaja tried to stop him but Jawaharlal stuck to his guns. Meanwhile, the Congress leadership was engaged in important discussions with the Cabinet Mission. Jawaharlal was one of the key figures in the discussions. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad, then Congress President, tried to dissuade him from going to Kashmir. 'I must go.' Jawaharlal's decision was irrevocable. 'I belong to the masses.'

In Rawalpindi, the reception committee consisted of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad plus several Congress leaders. Jawaharlal's inflammatory remark, 'Srinagar has been transformed into a graveyard,' and condemnation of the repressive measures of the Maharaja, led to a ban on his entry into Kashmir by Prime Minister Kak. First, there was the military contingent at Kohala bridge, next, the Hindu organizations, and finally, representatives of the Dogri Sabha.

It is interesting to observe that the Kashmiri Pandits who were proud of their 'son', Jawaharlal, were lined up behind Pandit Shiv Narain Fotedar, in black flag demonstrations against him. The man whose only fault was his love for the Kashmiris, suddenly, faced several vociferous demonstrations against himself.

Once when stopped by a barricade, undeterred, Jawaharlal stepped forward, and the army ran helter-skelter. One soldier pointed his bayonet at him. Commotion broke out. Panditji's supporters defied the government order and crossed the bridge. No sooner had they entered the prohibited territory, they were arrested and detained at the dak bungalow at Uri. When the news of his arrest hit the press, the nation roared with anger. The usual confrontation started between the police and public. Outside the Uri dak bungalow two cars were standing by to transport Jawaharlal, if he wished to return to Delhi. But Jawaharlal refused to budge.

Meanwhile, the Congress circles in Delhi were becoming restive without Jawaharlal. He was required for negotiating with the Cabinet Mission. On Gandhiji's request Maulana Azad called long distance and implored Jawaharlal to return, promising that he could return to Kashmir in a few days, and, in his capacity as the Congress President, he could effectively intervene in the affairs of Kashmir. Archibald Percival Wavell sent his private plane and Jawaharlal returned on 22 June. Exposing the repressive acts of the Dogra government, he said:

## *Flames of the Chinar*

The Lion of Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah is my closest comrade and a popular representative of the masses. Does anyone believe for a moment that we will part company with him and his comrades, simply because the government has control of the arms? The blood of Kashmiris is flooding the valley and their oppressors are hell-bent on seeing every last bastion of the revolt razed to the ground. But we will stand behind the people of Kashmir.

Another letter despatched to the Maharaja stated that he would return to Kashmir, and, if entry were denied he would, once again, defy orders.

Meanwhile, I was interned at the Military Hospital, Badami Bagh, which had been converted into a detention camp. Under Section 144A, criminal proceedings had been started against me. While the government appointed several high priced public prosecutors, Jawaharlal Nehru deputed Baldev Sahay from Patna as my defence counsel. Asaf Ali and Dewan Chaman Lal were my defence lawyers. Asaf Ali examined and cross-examined witnesses, and finally, argued the case. Restating the famous words of Bhulabhai Desai spoken at the trial of the Indian National Army (INA), Asaf Ali said, 'Revolt is the birthright of slaves. To revolt against the Treaty of Amritsar is the right of all Kashmiris. This is the year 1946, when the British Government has conceded India's right of independence. People all over the world are talking about independence. Is it a crime to say at this turn in world events, that government should be based on people's will and not on a century old sales deed, which cannot be upheld by the highest court of the world?'

After a few days, when Jawaharlal Nehru returned to Kashmir the scene had changed. The Maharaja was too scared to ban his entry, so Nehru visited my family and me in my detention camp. One day, he donned legal robes and joined the panel of my defence lawyers. This was the first and last time I saw him in this role.

My trial lasted three weeks. On 10 September 1946 the court was packed. Thousands of people waited outside to hear the verdict. I got three years' rigorous imprisonment on each one of the three counts. The terms were to run simultaneously, amounting to three years in total. Before leaving the courthouse I made the following statement: 'It is of no significance that I am arrested, tried or awarded punishment. But the

high-handedness with which the people of Kashmir have been treated is appalling. It has provided the rationale for our demand “Quit Kashmir”.’

“Quit Kashmir” was spreading in the valley like wild fire. The Muslims were courting arrest by the thousands and many young men were riddled with bullets.

One interesting aspect of the movement was that while the Congress supported us, the Congress press, run by capitalists, supported the Maharaja. Conversely, while Jinnah and the Muslim League opposed us, Muslims and the Muslim League press in Lahore was ranged on our side. *Zamindar, Ahsan* and other newspapers wrote editorials in our support while bitterly criticizing the Muslim League. Jinnah issued a statement from Simla which described our movement as the, ‘movement of lumpen proletariat, instigated by foreign elements.’

The famous poet, Shorish Kashmiri wrote glowing poetry about our movement:

*Ai Hari Singh nava hai sharar bar sey dar  
Waqt aur waqt ki badli hui raftar sey dar  
Bijliyan kaund rahi hain sar-e-maidan-e-wafa  
Sher-i-Kashmir key awaza-i-paikar sey dar.*

(O Hari Singh! Fear the lightning-laden cries  
Fear time and its revolutions  
Lightning flashes over the battlefield of faith  
Fear the battle cry of Sher-e-Kashmir.)

The words of Jawaharlal Nehru in his foreword to *Kashmir on Trial* are a powerful and moving statement on the angst of Kashmir:

The prosecution of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, was the prosecution of one entire nation. And in the court of public opinion, it was the trial of those who had tried to pervert this movement. The people of Kashmir have launched a struggle against the military force of the State. The struggle will not terminate with the trial. Unless it reaches its logical end, the story will go on.

# Chapter 14

## DARKEST BEFORE DAWN

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Only our bodies were imprisoned. Our minds were out there, prancing in the sunlit world outside. There was only one question: should Kashmir accede to India or to Pakistan; or should it maintain its independent identity?

I had my views. If we were to accede to India, Pakistan would never accept our choice, and we would become a battleground for the two nations. My colleagues felt differently. The Muslim League, they said, will always be dominated by feudal elements which are an anathema for enlightened and progressive views. The peoples' vision of a 'New Kashmir' will never be accepted by the newly created Pakistan. Chains of slavery will keep us in their continuous stranglehold. But India was different. There were parties and individuals in India whose views were identical to ours. By acceding to India, then, wouldn't we move closer to our goal?

The other choice was an independent Kashmir! But to keep a small state independent while it was surrounded by big powers was impossible. If those powers guaranteed stability to an independent Kashmir, it was another matter. We spent hours agonizing over the three choices. Meanwhile, the communal situation was fast deteriorating. East and West Punjab were passing through hell. People were having second thoughts about the virtue of their struggle.

During my imprisonment two persons visited Kashmir, leaving behind vastly different impressions. Mahatma Gandhi, and the then

Congress President, Acharya J.B. Kripalani. Ostensibly, Kripalani had come to study the conditions in Kashmir, but what was his real mission? People were suspicious. It was believed that he was carrying Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's message for the Maharaja. He also received a cheque worth fifty thousand rupees from the Maharaja. No one could ever find out why.

This was Gandhiji's first and last visit to Kashmir. Before he set out for Kashmir, a highly potent drama was enacted in Delhi. Jawaharlal Nehru, as it happened, had once again decided to visit Kashmir. The Maharaja was alarmed. He asked Lord Mountbatten to intervene. Mountbatten requested Gandhiji to dissuade Jawaharlal. Seeing Jawaharlal's emotionalism, Gandhiji offered to visit Kashmir himself. Mountbatten, after consulting the government, asked Gandhiji if he could hold off. 'Mohammed Ali Jinnah may follow you into Kashmir, and that will considerably heighten the tension.' When Jawaharlal heard about all the opposition that had gathered around his visit, especially that of Ram Chandra Kak, he wrote to Gandhiji:

I have seen the letter of the Viceroy, I am sick of hearing what Kak thinks or feels. For many months the decision on mine or your visit to Kashmir is hanging fire. I am fed up. This is not my way of doing things. If I had to choose between becoming Prime Minister of India and staying among the people of Kashmir, I would go for the latter.

Disregarding all opposition, Gandhiji left for Srinagar. That evening Srinagar was lit up in celebration of the restitution of Gilgit to Kashmir and termination of British rule. Barefoot, carrying in her slender hands a plate of gold on which rested a glass of milk, Maharani Tara Devi walked all the way to greet the Mahatma, 'When a great seer graces our land, it is our custom to offer him a glass of milk.'

'Gandhi cannot accept the offer of milk from a Maharaja whose subjects are distressed.'

Mahatma Gandhi toured the valley, met the Maharaja and bluntly told him: 'Your subjects are unhappy. That is not a good sign at all!' He politely refused all meal invitations with the royalty.

To my wife his advice was: 'courage'. Begum Akbar Jahan not only

attended his prayer meetings, but participated in them by reciting the Quran. At a prayer meeting in Jammu he said, 'Only the people of Kashmir have a right to decide about the future of Kashmir.' A press statement released at Delhi stated: 'The Maharaja does not enjoy the confidence of his people. The only person they respect and want to see free is Sheikh Abdullah.'

Similar sentiments were echoed in the Mahatma's letter to Jawaharlal:

I only held prayer meetings, and made no political speeches. I told the Prime Minister, 'You are a very unpopular man.' Subsequently, he (the Prime Minister) wrote to the Maharaja that he was prepared to submit his resignation. The Maharaja, Maharani, (and their heir-apparent, his leg in plaster) agreed that after the termination of the British rule, the Kashmiris would become their own sovereigns.

The Treaty of Amritsar was a sales deed. After the termination of its term, the people of Kashmir should have their own sovereigns.

Meanwhile, India and Pakistan had come into existence. Communalism was a bushfire, sweeping through the two Punjabs. News smuggled across the border contained reports of the onset of Pakistani tribals. The Maharaja, visibly upset by these reports, thought of asking for my help. I was released from prison on 20 September 1947. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims of Srinagar filled the streets to welcome me. I was taken in a splendid river-boat procession. Hundreds of boats were sailing alongside mine. The river banks were crowded with men, women and children.

In the presence of the Maharaja, Maharani and Mehr Chand Mahajan, I assured His Highness that no one wanted to dispossess him. All we wanted was to run Kashmir along constitutional and democratic lines. There was no doubt, however, about the gravity of the situation. Mehr Chand Mahajan was a capable judge, but not one who enjoyed public confidence. His appointment as prime minister would be in no one's interest, not even his own!



## *Flames of the Chinar*

In Delhi, Jawaharlal had said in Parliament that the Maharaja had been forced to release me. Instead of three years I had served a prison term of one year, four months and eleven days.

At a rally held on 2 October 1947 at Huzoori Bagh I spoke about the rights of the Kashmiri people:

I do not know why I was arrested, and why I have been released. For more than a year, I was separated from my people and from the rapidly changing conditions in my country. When I went into prison, I took a last look at undivided India. Today it has been broken in two fragments. We the people of Kashmir must now see to it that our long-cherished dream is fulfilled. The dream of freedom, welfare and progress. No decision, however, is possible while we are slaves. It is, therefore, imperative to set up, without delay, a representative Government which chalks out a plan to safeguard the rights and interests of the people of the State. 'Freedom before Accession' should become our resounding slogan.

I added a few thoughts to this subject at another public meeting:

We are facing the question of accession to India or Pakistan, or keeping our separate identity. I am the President of the States' People's Conference which has a clear policy. I am also a friend of Pandit Nehru and I have the greatest respect for Mahatma Gandhi. It is a fact the Indian National Congress has extended full support to our movement. But the question of accession will be decided in the best interests of the people of Kashmir. Our first priority is to get rid of the Dogra domination. Then if the people decide to accede to Pakistan, I will be the first one to sign my name.

At the same time I reiterated my basic ideology. 'Even if we decided to accede to Pakistan we shall never support the two-nation theory . . . which has breathed poison in the atmosphere of our country.'

\*

My release from prison initiated the acquittal of other National Conference members. The reorganization of the party began and we changed our headquarters from Mujahid Manzil to the Palladium Cinema, located in Ameerakadal or Lal Chowk, as it is called now. We organized volunteer corps for protecting the life and property as well as the honour and dignity of the people. I invited men of every caste and creed to join this organization. At a meeting held in Khanqah-e-Mualla, I elaborated on the aims and objectives of our group. I said that our volunteer corps would strive to uphold the freedom and dignity of Kashmir and its people. They would impress upon the Muslim majority that the rights of the non-Muslims were equally respectable, even according to the tenets of Islam. The army would guard against communal hatred, and prevent any untoward tendency from surfacing.

At this time, alarming reports of heavy violence were coming in from West and East Punjab. As ours was the only State free from violence, it became a haven for streams of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh refugees. Although the Maharaja wrote to the Government of India offering to maintain status quo, the government did not reply. At this time Kashmir had no direct link with India, but it had entered into an agreement with Pakistan for postal and telegraphic services. Consequently, the Department of Posts and Telegraph, Pakistan, was visible in Kashmir. On 14 August 1947, the Pakistani flag was hoisted over the General Post Office in Srinagar. The acting Prime Minister of Kashmir, General Janak Singh, ordered the flag to be taken down immediately.

A special emissary from Pakistan had arrived in Kashmir to try and persuade the Maharaja to accede to Pakistan. But he failed in his mission, despite Ram Chandra Kak's earlier assurances to Liaquat Ali Khan\* that Kashmir was all for Pakistan. Consequently, Pakistan cut off its supplies of essential commodities such as salt and petrol. It also stopped its supply of notes and small coins to the Imperial Bank, Kashmir Branch. Since the roads joining Kashmir to the rest of India ran through Pakistan, matters became more critical despite the protest lodged by the Maharaja.

Two envoys of Pakistan, Dr Mohammad Din Tasir, and Sheikh Sadiq Hasan were despatched to Srinagar to negotiate with us. Both were of Kashmiri stock. Dr Tasir belonged to a well-to-do Kashmiri family from

\* Finance Minister in the Interim Government (1946), who subsequently became the first Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Lahore. He had served as principal of the S.P. College in Srinagar. We developed a strong rapport with him during his visit. Sheikh Sadiq Hasan was from Amritsar, where he owned a large carpet-weaving factory. A meeting was arranged with them at my house, where Ghulam Ahmad Ashai and I extensively discussed our future plans. I asked Sadiq Hasan, as one Kashmiri to another, for his advice on the future of Kashmir. It was his opinion that Kashmir should join neither Pakistan nor India, but ought to become independent as the conditions in neither of the two countries were conducive for its accession. However, as the President of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League, he advised that we join Pakistan. I told him that we were slaves of an autocrat, and as such, had no say. Our first objective should be to break our chains of slavery. I assured him that the past attitude of the League would not affect our decision. If after independence, we found it in the interest of forty lakh Kashmiris to join Pakistan, we would certainly do it, but we will, at the same time refuse to be dictated to by others.

Although Dr Tasir pressed us to join Pakistan, I firmly told him that the time to decide had not yet arrived. Both countries are caught in a vortex. There is no way of telling how each would emerge. 'Give us time to put out the fires and restore the peace. Our decision will effect our future generations.' As our argument reached a crescendo, Sheikh Sadiq Hasan and Ashai Sahib intervened and endeavoured to pacify us. The two delegates, then, invited me to meet Jinnah in Lahore. But first I was to go to Delhi. During my imprisonment, I had been elected President of the All India States' Peoples' Conference. Besides taking charge of the new office I had to attend a meeting of the working committee of the National Conference. I sent a message to the Pakistani leaders that I would personally visit Lahore to present my point of view. I sent my trusted lieutenant, G.M. Sadiq, to Lahore. Meanwhile, I headed for Delhi.

This was my first visit to Delhi after my release. Jawaharlal Nehru had, since, become Prime Minister of India. Discarding all protocol, he personally received me at the airport and invited me to stay with him as his special guest. I was presented with a guard of honour. Later, I called a press conference to speak on the Kashmir issue. 'Kashmir,' I said, 'needs peace to decide her future. She will not tolerate any external interference. Any effort to pressurize us will result in revolt. The decision will be taken,

not by the monarch but by the people. Until we are free ourselves, we cannot give you an answer.'

It was difficult to ascertain whether or not the friendly attitude the Indians had demonstrated was a ploy. Pakistan's strategy was more confused than enigmatic. The initial hostility exuded by Jinnah towards our party was now causing them more than a twinge of guilt. They had a strong feeling that, unlike the NWFP, a plebiscite in Kashmir would not be in their favour owing to the popularity of the National Conference. Thus they attempted to secure a back-door entry through the Maharaja, as they considered a head-on approach through the Kashmiri public beneath their dignity.

The Maharaja nourished hopes of an independent state. When Lord Louis Mountbatten visited Kashmir in June 1947, he advised the Maharaja to accede to Pakistan, in consideration of its Muslim majority. If not, he would have to agree to its joining India. Mountbatten promised to send an infantry division to defend Kashmir against aggression from interested parties. The Maharaja in a bid to escape making a decision, avoided Mountbatten. When the latter called on him to say goodbye, he claimed to have an acutely upset stomach for which the doctor advised 'no visitors'. The Pakistanis, finding their royal supporter resorting to political ailments to avoid commitment, were up against a wall. They did not want to opt for plebiscite. They knew that the only reason the plebiscite in NWFP was in their favour was because the Frontier Gandhi's Red Shirts had boycotted it. This was a consequence of their growing suspicion that they had been betrayed by the Congress leaders. Therefore, they were unwilling to press for accession. In its editorial, the *Dawn* of Karachi summed up the attitude of the League over the Kashmir issue. 'The time has come for the Maharaja of Kashmir to join Pakistan. If he continues to evade the issue he will have to face dire consequences.'

Tribal hordes from the Frontier and an adjoining territory, Gandhara, began to advance towards Kashmir and reached Muzzaffarabad. The situation in Srinagar became tense. The Maharaja rallied his small army in an attempt to defend the State. Meetings were held in Poonch and Mirpur, in which resolutions were adopted. The Maharaja was requested to accede to Pakistan. He was also asked to personally tour Poonch. Accompanied by the Chief of Staff, Major-General H.L. Scott, he arrived in Poonch. A majority of the people of this area were either in the Indian

or in the State army. They greeted him in true military fashion. The Maharaja misunderstood their uniforms and medals and treated them with great haughtiness. Their demand for accession to Pakistan irked him. The next thing he did was to send his army to subdue them. People of Poonch were persecuted, houses burnt down and women raped. The National Conference sent representatives to investigate the matter. They returned with heart-rending accounts of the atrocities they had witnessed.

We protested against the incidents in Poonch and asked the government to stop the carnage. In Delhi, I called a press conference and said: 'The Maharaja is the sole miscreant behind the Poonch affair. He has brought the situation to the verge of disaster by his military action. We will strive to attain our rights and deprive the Maharaja of the right to commit such a gross blunder again.'

I tried to explain the psyche of the Kashmiri Muslims. 'There isn't a single Muslim in Kapurthala, Alwar or Bharatpur. Some of these had been Muslim majority states. Try to symbiotically understand the Kashmiri Muslims. They are afraid that the same fate lies ahead for them as well.'

Meanwhile, Mehr Chand Mahajan and his assistant, Ram Lal Batra, began distributing guns among the Kashmiri Pandits for their self-defence. Fortunately, the leader of the Kashmiri Pandits discovered this arms deal and put a stop to it. He said that goodwill, not arms, was the best defence.

In order to keep the transport and communications intact, the outgoing British Government proposed Standstill Agreements for states who had not chosen their allegiance by August 1947. The Maharaja entered into an agreement with Pakistan, but India refused to sign on it unless the political prisoners were freed. The Maharaja refused and the agreement was, thus, inconclusive. Pakistan's role in communications, however, was well-defined. Pakistani flags, were hoisted over all communication offices in Srinagar. The employees of the Post and Telegraph offices were then asked whether they would opt for India or Pakistan or whether they thought that Kashmir had opted for Pakistan. Accordingly they stated their option. Under the provisions of the Agreement they had six months to change their minds. But India never allowed them to re-confirm their views, and the employees were

subsequently dismissed. This was one of the reasons for my bitterness towards India.

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Ram Chandra Kak started as a junior officer in the Archaeological Department. He rose to be Home Minister and then Prime Minister. He was a Kashmiri Pandit but lacked the gentleness and humility of his clan. On the contrary, he was very hot-headed. The first Kashmiri-speaking Prime Minister in the Dogra government, Kak had extraordinarily good relations with the ruling circles of Pakistan. His own assessment was that Kashmir, with a Muslim majority and geographical contiguity with Pakistan, would, in the long run, be forced to accede to Pakistan. Having met M.A. Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan, Kak had beaten a path for himself in case the above assessment proved right.

The Maharaja did not appreciate Kak's expediency. On 11 August 1947, three days before the birth of Pakistan, Kak was sitting in his office at Shergarhi, when the Maharaja's ADC brought him a letter (the Maharaja himself was on a hunting expedition) ordering his immediate dismissal. Kak was stunned. He tried to flee, but the Maharaja's men caught him at the airport. Kak was thrown into the Srinagar Central Jail and Major-General Janak Singh was appointed Prime Minister.

The Maharaja had always appeared to be free from religious prejudices. He was close to his Muslim courtiers especially Nawab Khusro Jung, Abdul Rahman Afandi and Sahibzada Noor Mohammad. But things took a drastic turn at the time when the *shuddhi* and *tabligh* movements gathered force. Khwaja Hasan Nizami in his magazine, *Manadi*, announced that the Maharaja of a Hindu state was about to embrace Islam. This caused panic among the Hindus, who tightened their grip on him, and the Maharaja moved closer to the Arya Samaj camp. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, taking advantage of the situation, planted Mehr Chand Mahajan and Ram Lal Batra in the Kashmir administration.

On the question of accession, the Maharaja wanted an independent Kashmir. Before he was compelled to sign the Instrument of Accession, he had written to Lord Mountbatten stating that in view of Kashmir's location and the composition of its population, he wanted independence. But Pakistan's short-sighted policy of invasion of Kashmir left him no

alternative. There was no choice but to accede to India and ask for military help.

Despite the fact that at the Constituent Assembly, I had expressed my views on the accession issue, the communal Hindu press still continued to repeat its claim that I dreamt of becoming the Sultan of Kashmir. It seems that they had full faith in the philosophy of Joseph Goebbels who had said, 'Keep on repeating the lie. Ultimately people will believe it.'

When I returned from Delhi, I found that G.M. Sadiq Sahib had arrived one day before me. He had some difficulty in leaving Pakistan because they wanted to hold him hostage. It is sad to think that at the very time when they were discussing with my representative the details of my visit to Pakistan, their mercenaries were advancing into the Srinagar valley. In Lahore, Sadiq could not meet the Pakistani Prime Minister, and had to content with meeting second rank leaders like Nawab Iftikhar Husain Mamdot. They insisted on a firm promise to accede to Pakistan. Earlier they had tried to extract the same commitment from Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. Sadiq also brought the message that I should visit Karachi and talk to Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The editor of *Kashmir Times*, G.K. Reddy, later, privately informed me about their real intentions. They wanted to detain me in Karachi, and issue appeals in my name to the people of Kashmir for accession to Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the State was facing great danger on the military front. The Maharaja's thirteen thousand men were deployed at the border near Muzaffarabad. This was a mixed contingent of Hindu Dogras and Muslims from Poonch and Mirpur. The latter were agitated because they constantly received news of the atrocities committed in Muzaffarabad by the Dogra army. Therefore, they revolted and joined the tribal invaders. Two thousand Mahsuds, Mohmands, Waziris and Afridis launched an attack on Muzaffarabad one early morning, raising slogans of 'Long Live Islam'. They were hoping to gain the sympathies of the local population. The army could not withstand the attack for more than a few hours. The local deputy commissioner was killed while the tribals routed the area. This occurred on 22 October 1947, Chinari fell on 23 October, and Uri on 24 October. Had they persisted they could have reached Srinagar in a few hours, but the tribals were blinded by their lust for loot. In her book,

*Halfway to Freedom*, (Simon and Schuster, 1949) Margaret Bourke-White describes the plunder:

Their buses and trucks, loaded with booty, arrived every other day and took more Pathans to Kashmir. Ostensibly they went to liberate their Kashmiri Muslim brothers, but their primary objective was riot and loot. In this they made no distinctions between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.

On 26 October, the powerhouse was dismantled. After that, the raiders advanced into Baramulla, the biggest commercial centre of that region with a population of 11,000, until they were only an hour away from Srinagar. For the next three days they were engaged in massive plunder, rioting and rape. No one was spared. Even members of the St. Joseph Mission Hospital were brutally massacred. This tribal invasion was no accident. It was a diversionary tactic created by the newly-formed state of Pakistan. The withdrawal of British forces from the tribal belt had left these people without any livelihood. The rulers of Pakistan feared that these lawless people may proceed to plunder Peshawar and other big cities of Pakistan. They were, therefore, asked to proceed to Kashmir, having been assured of their bounty through plunder of the countryside. Pakistani leaders were hoping to reap a double benefit—getting rid of the tribals and bringing the Kashmiris to their knees. When the tribals refused to budge from Baramulla, Abdul Qayyum Khan sent their religious leader, Pir Manki, to persuade them to advance towards Srinagar.

Sensing danger, the Maharaja collected all his valuables and fled to Jammu. We felt betrayed but had no time to contemplate our betrayal. The officials scampered to Jammu behind the Maharaja, and the entire administration was left in the hands of the National Conference. Pakistani agents in the city decided to destroy all the bridges so that if the Indian Army was despatched, its movement could be sabotaged. Our volunteers were posted at the bridges, and Hindus and Muslims alike were prepared to guard their national honour, having heard about the atrocities inflicted on the innocents by the tribal people.

The National Conference asked people to collectively donate their weapons and the use of their vehicles. Training sessions for volunteers were organized. This was the beginning of the People's Militia of



Kashmir. So far, Mughals, Pathans, Sikhs and Dogras had successfully deprived Kashmiris of military training. But when called to the front they proved unassailable. Girls also joined with the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh boys, and all were strictly ordered to guard the non-Muslim households. They declared that only over their dead bodies would the non-Muslims be attacked. During those days the only news available to the masses was my speech delivered every evening to people assembled at Pratap Park.

The new scenario compelled us to take certain political measures. We became wary of Pakistan and looked around to protect our national existence. From India, several sincere friends extended help. One such individual was Saifuddin Kitchlew. He tried to convince the Congress leadership of the imperative need to help Kashmir. But the Maharaja had still not signed the formal accession, and any movement on the part of the Indian Army was considered illegal. Mountbatten felt that the Pakistan Army may also be mobilized, and since both Indian and Pakistani army were still under British command, the officers would decline to fight among themselves. If they were ordered to fight, they would be forced to give up command. It was, therefore essential that prior to the slightest move by the Indian Army, the Maharaja should sign the Instrument of Accession. The Maharaja, however, continued his vacillation. In mid-June, Mountbatten had visited Srinagar and advised the Maharaja to accede to one of the two countries. He had given him Sardar Patel's message that were he to accede to Pakistan, it would not be considered an unfriendly act.

Now there was the problem about Gandhiji's consent. Would he agree to despatch the troops? I pleaded with Gandhiji. The war in Kashmir was not being fought for territory but for the defence of the ideals he had cherished all his life. India, therefore, must help Kashmir in this fight against oppression. Gandhiji relented. The army was allowed to proceed towards Kashmir. The confusion in the Maharaja's camp may be gleaned from the following statement of his Prime Minister as recorded in Mehr Chand Mahajan's *Kashmir's Accession to India*: 'In consultation with the Maharaja it has been decided that, if arrangements for an aeroplane can be made, immediate help may be sought from Delhi. In case it was not possible we must surrender before Pakistan.'

The Maharaja was so disturbed that he directed his courtiers wake him only if and when V.P. Menon, Secretary, Ministry of States, arrived in Jammu. That would mean India's acceptance of the accession. If not,

he should be shot in his sleep with his own revolver. The Indian Government sent the draft copy of the Instrument of Accession. Promptly signed by the Maharaja, it was returned to Delhi the same day through Mehr Chand Mahajan. Sardar Patel who was in charge of the Ministry of States personally received him and brought him to the residence of Pandit Nehru, where I was also staying. Mehr Chand told Panditji: 'The army must leave for Srinagar today otherwise I shall proceed straight to Mr Jinnah and sign an agreement with him.' Jawaharlal lost his temper. 'If you favour an agreement with Pakistan leave at once.' He stormed out of the room. I tried to soothe him by assuring him that the National Conference supported this decision. Jawaharlal shot back into the room where Mahajan was sitting and told him that Sheikh Abdullah supported the accession. Finally, the Instrument of Accession was signed. Thereby, the Maharaja agreed to transfer foreign affairs, communication and defence to India. As Governor-General, Lord Mountbatten added a proviso which internationalized the Instrument of Accession. He wrote to the Maharaja:

Under the special circumstances mentioned by you, my government accepts the accession of Kashmir to the Indian Dominion. In the case of States, where the question of accession is a controversial one, it should be accomplished according to the will of the people. My government feels, that as soon as the raiders are beaten back and peace is restored in Kashmir, the question of accession should be decided according to the will of the people.

It is interesting that Mountbatten was opposed to the idea of sending troops to Kashmir on the ground that it would lead to an international *faux pas*. He was the President of the Defence sub-committee of the Indian Cabinet, and, as such, his opposition created a crisis. But when Mahatma Gandhi affixed his seal of approval, Mountbatten could say no more. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to me on 27 October 1947: 'We have undertaken a difficult task. But, I am sure we will succeed. I felt relieved yesterday when the decision was taken; and more so today when I received the news that our troops have landed at Srinagar. This will be the trial of our future destiny.'

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On the eve of the aggression in 1947, the Centre swiftly sent armed reinforcements. Almost a hundred planeloads were despatched and the first contingent of 350 Sikhs reached Srinagar at 9 a.m. on 27 October.

When the raiders arrived in Baramulla, they abducted and took hostage a young member of the National Conference, Mohammad Maqbool Sherwani. After being tortured he was shot dead. When he visited Kashmir after Baramulla was liberated, Jawaharlal Nehru paid homage at Sherwani's grave. Gandhiji's glowing tribute to Mohammad Maqbool Sherwani was, 'His was such magnificent martyrdom, that any Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Sikh can be proud of it.'

In a similar incident at Muzzafarabad, an activist, Abdul Aziz, gave refuge to several Hindus and few Sikh women. Upon discovering their presence, the raiders killed Aziz while he was trying to protect the helpless refugees. In Uri and Baramulla, Brigadier L.P. Sen was in charge of the Indian Army. The valley as such was under the administration of the National Conference. Volunteers of the Conference were guarding important posts. An officer from the Health department was once caught with one-and-a-half lakh rupees which he claimed he had to deposit in the bank.

Pakistan's hopes of gaining Kashmir were at an all time high. M.A. Jinnah was even prepared to celebrate Eid in Kashmir on 26 October 1947! However, Pakistani invaders were completely routed by the Indian Army. An enraged Jinnah, ordered General Sir Douglas Gracey, acting Chief in the absence of General Messervey, to attack Kashmir. The latter brought this to the attention of the Supreme Commander of Indian and Pakistani forces, Field-Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, who warned Jinnah that if he invaded Kashmir the British would withdraw their command from both the countries' forces. As the Pakistani Army depended heavily upon British officers, Jinnah was forced to withdraw his orders, although he continued giving unofficial help to the raiders. In fact, Major-General Akbar Khan guided the raiders under the pseudonym, General Tariq. By the end of the year, the ranks of raiders had risen to more than fifty thousand.

After instructing his assistant, Ram Lal Batra, to make a nuisance of himself by interfering in our work, Mehr Chand Mahajan accompanied the Maharaja to Jammu. I wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru that we could not

continue under these aggravating circumstances. Jawaharlal was sympathetic to our position, but Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel wanted to keep Mahajan on the political stage. A most unusual compromise was made. While Mehr Chand Mahajan was to continue as Prime Minister, I was appointed Director-General, Administration—the first Kashmiri Muslim to hold this post. In my new position I addressed the senior officials of the government, and categorically stated that the future of Kashmir would be decided only by the Kashmiris. Our decision to accede to India was ad hoc, and would ultimately be decided by a plebiscite. If Jinnah agreed with this democratic procedure, I would personally visit Karachi for talks.

While we, in Kashmir, were busy repelling the attacks of the raiders, Maharaja Hari Singh, in Jammu, was fanning communalism. *En route* from Kashmir to Jammu, he laid the foundation stone of communalism by refusing to drink tea served by a Muslim bearer attached to the rest-house at Ram Ban. Upon reaching Jammu, Maharani Tara Devi and he distributed arms among communal Hindus and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) volunteers. The Muslims of Jammu were assured of a safe conduct to Pakistan but were massacred at a place called Saubha. No doubt, these killings were organized by the Maharaja, his bigoted wife, and Mehr Chand Mahajan. In this hateful intrigue, Tara Devi played an important role. She was under the influence of a mysterious guru, Sant Dev, described by some people as the Rasputin of Kashmir! A rabid communalist, he had a firm hold on the Maharani. News of the havoc being created in Jammu by the guru, Maharani and Ram Lal Batra was causing us great pain while, at the same time, we were defusing the communal situation in Kashmir.

As soon as the region became peaceful, we left for Jammu, where Sardar Patel had arrived with his Defence Minister, Baldev Singh, to confer with the Maharaja. The massacre at Saubha, mentioned earlier, coincided with Patel's visit. I arranged an armed escort for those Muslims who in Jammu or Kashmir had opted for Pakistan.

In Delhi, I attended a gathering of Sikhs who were celebrating the birthday of Guru Nanak Devji. Mahatma Gandhi, too, had accepted their invitation to address the meeting. It was Kashmir's good fortune that Gandhiji had openly declared that he was greatly inspired by what we had been able to achieve in Kashmir. He repeatedly referred to Kashmir in his *prarthna sabhas* (prayer meetings):

## *Flames of the Chinar*

Kashmir has become the source of light for this darkness-infested country. If both Hindus and Muslims play their roles correctly, important actors of this drama will attain eternal glory.

I will not be sorry if Sheikh Abdullah and his Hindu, Muslim and Sikh comrades are killed while doing their duty. This will be a rare example for the rest of India.

While airlifting the Indian army to Kashmir, the government has made it clear to the Maharaja that the accession of the State is conditional on a free and fair plebiscite, and that every inhabitant of the State, regardless of caste and creed, has a right to participate in such a plebiscite.

Meanwhile, a conspiracy was being hatched against me in Delhi at the very time when I was fighting in Kashmir to vindicate Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. In one of his prayer meetings, Gandhiji acknowledged: 'While in Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah is engaged in a difficult task, a whisper campaign in Delhi has been started against him.'

Pyarelal, Secretary to the Mahatma, confirmed that when Gandhiji proposed that the Maharaja be deposed, certain Cabinet members had tried to convince him that compared to the Sheikh, even the Maharaja was trustworthy. Gandhiji said it was better to take a risk for a principle than to make compromises. This stance offended my opponents who believed that I was Gandhiji's informer about the real happenings in Jammu and Kashmir. This was partially true. Only once, did Gandhiji ask me if there was any substance in the report about the atrocities inflicted by the Maharaja's armies in Jammu. Gandhiji was appalled by my answer. Contrary to his usual practice, he started shouting, 'Why don't you demand the curtailment of his powers? You are betraying your peoples' trust.'

For Mahatma Gandhi, Kashmir was a matter of principle. Once he said to me, 'India must keep the lamp lit in Kashmir for the sake of certain principles, and if a compromise on principles is inevitable, she should forego not only Kashmir but other states as well.' He believed that India was capable of becoming the cradle of non-violence and justice. But an India reconstituted through military power would be a third-rate copy of

the militarist states of the West. For him, Kashmir's special importance was that it was the only State with a Muslim majority in the country. He said, 'Kashmir is the real test of secularism in India. If India fails Kashmiris, its image in the eyes of the Islamic world will be reduced to zero. In the wake of the two-nation theory, Muslims all over the world are watching the experiment of Kashmir. Kashmir will be the title as well as the test of India's future.'

Gandhiji was aware of the delicacy of the situation. He believed that like an ember in dried grass, Kashmir could blow up with the slightest hint of a breeze. The Maharaja's fanning of communal hatred slashed the Mahatma's soul. In fact it was the presence of Gandhiji that forced my opponents into outward silence, although they continued their intrigues which culminated in the offensive of 1953. Everyone knows that the leader of this group was the Minister for Home Affairs and the Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Had the Sant of Sabarmati been alive, I am sure the incidents of 1953 could have been averted, and Kashmir could have been saved from their dreadful consequences.

The excesses of the tribals in their plunder of Kashmir created waves of indignation towards Pakistan. At the time of the tribal onslaught, the deputy commissioner of Baramulla was Chaudhri Faiz Ullah Khan, who was permitted to continue administering in Baramulla on behalf of Pakistan. When Baramulla was liberated, Chaudhri Faiz Ullah Khan was captured by the volunteers of the National Conference and brought to trial before the people at Lal Chowk. Despite the popular anti-Pakistan feeling among the people, certain individuals like Mirwaiz Maulvi Mohammad Yusuf Shah sympathized with Pakistan. On the eve of the tribal onslaught, he was whisked across the border by Pakistani agents. His twenty-two hundred followers, were left to fend for themselves. His wife and family were left behind. When we took over the administration of the valley, we arranged for their migration to Pakistan.

A few Muslim government officials tried to incite the people in favour of Pakistan but no one dared to do so openly. Some officials opted for Pakistan and were sent there via Suchetgarh. Among them was the private secretary of M.A. Jinnah.

Despite our efforts to dissuade them, the Muslims of Jammu wanted to migrate to Sialkot. Past events had terrorized them to such an extent that they were deaf to our pleas and, eventually, we had to make

arrangements for their exodus. Consequently, very few Muslims remained in Jammu.

Maulvi Abdullah Vakil, along with his family members, joined our movement. He belonged to the Lahori sect of the Ahmadiyyas. His daily discourses were popular among the youth who formed the vanguard of our movement. The first person to be arrested in Kashmir was Mohammad Ismail who regularly attended his discourses. Although they contributed much to the launching of our movement, after some time, we were forced to expel the Ahmadiyyas from the National Conference because they were merely using our platform to propagate their religion.

After the success of our defensive against the tribals, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited Srinagar. In his honour, a largely attended public meeting was held in Lal Chowk where we clasped hands and he said, 'This signifies the unity of India and Kashmir.' On behalf of India he promised that Kashmiris would be entitled to the right of self-determination and the rest of their rights would be guaranteed. I then accompanied Jawaharlal to Baramulla. In his address he spoke highly of our courageous resistance to the tribals.

Earlier, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had also visited Kashmir. At that time, the tribals were advancing towards Srinagar. He, therefore, avoided Srinagar and remained near the airport, where we met him for discussions. This was his first and last visit to Kashmir.

The British were interested in keeping Gilgit under their direct control so that they could keep an eye on Russia. The Maharaja of Kashmir was forced into ceding Gilgit on a ninety-nine-year lease. However, after independence, Gilgit was returned to the Maharaja. Brigadier Ghansara Singh was appointed the Governor of Gilgit. After Partition, the Rajas of Chitral, Hunza, Nagar Haveli, Ponial Yasin, Ashkuman and Koh Khizr, who were vassals of the Maharaja, revolted along with the Gilgit Scouts (the military power in the region, and announced their accession to Pakistan. Brigadier Ghansara Singh tried to resist, but was defeated and taken prisoner. From Gilgit the raiders reached Iskerdu, Kargil and Bhonji. They occupied the Zojila pass and the valley of Guraiz. The Indian Army, under the command of Major-General K.S. Thimayya, advanced towards this region. The raiders were routed and the Indian Army entered Kargil. Khwaja Ghulam Qadir Butt was appointed the Administrator of this region.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

From the Jammu side, the raiders threatened Poonch and Jhangar. The Indian Army defeated the raiders and pushed them back from Jhangar and Naoshera. Pakistan forces then started an undeclared war against the Indian Army. We suffered a great loss in the death of Brigadier Usman who was killed by a shell while inspecting the deployment of his troops. The raiders were entrenched on hilltops around Poonch and constantly pounded the town with shells creating panic among the people. Most Muslims had taken refuge in Pakistani territory. Although Hindus and Sikhs wanted to go to Jammu, travel was risky. We made arrangements to airlift them to Jammu.

While Pakistan wanted me dead at any cost, the situation was such that I could not avoid visiting the borders. We achieved one victory after another. The enemy's army was pushed out of a greater part of the State. Armistice was declared on 1 January 1949, without consulting us or taking the army into confidence. Moreover, when the time came for demarcating the cease-fire line, our army had to vacate certain areas which it had captured with great difficulty. Despite this, the Maharaja and his henchmen continued to fan the flames of communalism. When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948, the Maharaja openly sided with the RSS and dispersed the condolence rally organized by the National Conference. The RSS volunteers distributed sweets in Jammu. According to eye witnesses, trays full of sweets arrived at the palace gate. With the exception of Nagpur, which was the headquarters of the RSS, Jammu was the only city in the country which exhibited such depravity.



# Chapter 15

## VICTORY OF PUBLIC OPINION

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On the political front we concentrated on strengthening the administration. At the time of the tribal invasions, senior officers from Jammu had deserted their posts and returned to their hometowns. After law and order was established, we brought them back. We also raised a unified Jammu and Kashmir militia. The fact that there was no rapport between the Prime Minister and myself hindered progress on all fronts. Eventually, I informed the Central Government that this dyarchy was not feasible. After the tribal raids I started volunteer corps in Kashmir and trained them in the use of firearms. Jawaharlal Nehru sent some 300 rifles through the commander of the Indian Army stationed at Srinagar. Mehr Chand Mahajan intercepted the consignment. Later, we learnt that those rifles were handed over to the volunteers of the RSS. I spoke to Jawaharlal, who reprimanded the Maharaja as well as Mahajan.

While addressing a prayer meeting on 27 December 1947, Gandhiji spoke with anguish about the massacre at Jammu:

The Maharaja was informed that a number of Muslim men had been killed and Muslim women been abducted in Jammu. He should have accepted the responsibility since the Dogra army was under his direct control. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah came to Jammu and tried to pacify the injured sentiments of the people. In view of what has happened in Jammu, the Maharaja should allow Sheikh Sahib and the people of Kashmir to rectify the situation.

The Maharaja and Mehr Chand Mahajan were guilty of such heinous crimes that they should have been tried in the manner of the Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg. Certain national and international reasons however made just atonement impossible.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel wanted to vest all power with Mahajan. But I had already informed the Government of India of the futility of this power game. Jawaharlal wrote a letter to the Maharaja advising him to take the Muslim majority into confidence. The Maharaja ignored the letter. Jawaharlal then wrote directly to Sardar Patel. After prolonged discussions, the Maharaja terminated the services of Mahajan and appointed me Prime Minister. I inducted Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Sham Lal Saraf, Pandit Girdhari Lal Dogra and Colonel Pir Mohammed Khan in my Cabinet. Colonel Baldev Singh Pathania was appointed as Vazir Huzoor.

On 5 March 1948, the Cabinet took the oath of allegiance and secrecy. The formation of the Ministries led to petty bickering. Some supporters could not be accommodated in the Cabinet. One such person was Ghulam Mohiduddin Karra, a close relative of Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq. He resigned from the National Conference and formed a new political party called the Political Conference. He is known to have made secret pacts with Pakistan and received financial help from across the border.

Pakistan had made several manoeuvres to occupy Kashmir. Their prime reason was the fear that Afghanistan may incite the tribals to attack Pakistan and, therefore, their attention had to be diverted. Abdul Qayyum Khan, the Chief Minister of the NWFP at the time, was the mastermind behind all this. He was a lawyer of Kashmiri stock, who had earlier, joined the Khudai Khidmatgars of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and had risen to become Deputy Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Central Legislative Assembly. At first M.A. Jinnah was not in favour of the tribal raids but Abdul Qayyum Khan managed to persuade him. After destroying Kashmir, when they reached Rawalpindi, the raiders started repeating their antics. When the public raised hell they were hurriedly shoved back into their mountain homes. In May 1964, when I visited Pakistan, I discussed the events of 1947 with President Ayub Khan, who sadly confessed that Abdul Qayyum Khan had dreamt of becoming the

king of Kashmir and, it was his overwhelming desire which caused this madness.

Even after independence, the British controlled certain important sectors of India's political life. Lord Louis Mountbatten, was appointed the Governor-General, and the Commanders-in-Chief of both Indian and Pakistani armies were British. When the Indian Army drove the raiders to the borders of Pakistan, Lord Mountbatten was afraid that it might provoke an Indo-Pakistan war. He tried to evolve a formula to solve this problem but failing in his efforts, appealed to the British Prime Minister for help. As a last resort, Mountbatten, in consultation with Jawaharlal Nehru, decided to refer the matter to the United Nations Security Council.

On 31 December 1947, regarding the case of the Pakistani aggression in Kashmir, the Indian Government wrote to the United Nations:

To remove the misconception that the Indian government is using the prevailing situation in Jammu and Kashmir to reap political profits, the Government of India wants to make it very clear that as soon as the raiders are driven out and normalcy is restored, the people of the state will freely decide their fate and that decision will be taken according to the universally accepted democratic means of plebiscite or referendum. To ensure free and fair plebiscite, the supervision of the United Nations will be necessary.

Sir N. Gopaldaswami Aiyangar led the Indian delegation which went to present its case. The leader of the Pakistani delegation was their Foreign Minister, Sir Mohammad Zafarullah Khan, a very competent barrister. He skilfully manipulated the scope of our discussion to include the traumatic background of the partition of the Indian subcontinent. This resulted in a chain of allegations and counter allegations. I was also invited to speak. Sir Mohammad Zafarullah Khan interrupted me and said that I was a puppet in the hands of Jawaharlal. I remember saying that I was proud of my friendship with Jawaharlal. But if I had to choose between the friendship and the interest of the people of Kashmir I knew what I would choose!

Napoleon Bonaparte had described the British as a nation of shopkeepers, never losing sight of their personal interest. They supported

Pakistan because they wanted to use it as a bridge to establish close relations with the oil rich Arab nations.

While in New York in 1948, we received news of the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi. I had met Gandhiji a few days before my departure, in January 1947, when he had undertaken a fast unto death. When I received news of his fast at Calcutta, I had left immediately for Delhi. In this regard Jawaharlal's and Maulana Azad's efforts finally bore fruit when they managed to persuade Gandhiji to break his fast. A sum of fifty-five crore rupees was paid to Pakistan.\* The fast was broken after five days.

The news of Gandhiji's death plunged our world in darkness. The Security Council held a special condolence session. This was the first time the Security Council met to condole the death of a person who had no official status. The Kashmir imbroglio was to continue as a bone of contention in the Security Council for many years. The Indian delegations were led by eminent individuals such as Gopaldaswami Aiyangar, C.L. Setalvad, B.N. Rao, Vijayalakshmi Pandit and V.K. Krishna Menon. The Security Council occasionally sent delegations and special representatives to study the Kashmir situation and submit their recommendations. But Kashmir defied all solutions. The reasons for this stalemate lie in the complexities of the Kashmir problem, and the intricate global political environment.

During this time three out of its five permanent members were in full control of the United Nations—the United States, Great Britain and China. China was represented by the tiny island of Taiwan which was under the despotic rule of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, the first President of Taiwan; mainland China which was ruled by the Communists, was ignored by the United Nations. France was torn by internal confusion and, therefore, could take little interest in foreign affairs. Britain usually followed in the footsteps of the United States. The US paid attention to the advice of Great Britain since she had ruled over India for about two hundred years and was well-aquainted with her innards. The former Soviet Union was neutral about the Kashmir problem.

Great Britain's stand was demonstrated by its representative,

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\* Under the Partition Agreement, Pakistan was entitled to the sum but India withheld the payment, because of the Pakistan sponsored tribal insurrection in Kashmir. Mahatma Gandhi, however, held the withholding of payment as immoral and fasted against the government's decision.

Philip Noel Baker who fired several embarrassing questions at me. I said that Britain was responsible for the post-Partition situation as well as for the Kashmir controversy. Baker invited me to his hotel. After keeping me waiting for quite some time he appeared and immediately stated his support for Pakistan, saying that neither her armies violated the sanctity of the boundaries of Kashmir, nor were the raiders sent by her. I contradicted him and explained that Aiyangar had lodged a protest against the raids carried out by the tribals through diplomatic channels and subsequently Jawaharlal Nehru had brought it to the attention of Clement Attlee and Stafford Cripps.

One reason why I joined the Indian delegation was that I hoped to find an opportunity of privately talking to the members of the Pakistan delegation. I thought that it would help in removing misunderstandings and pave the way for a mutually acceptable compromise. Unfortunately, the Pakistanis refused to talk to me.

The news of Gandhiji's assassination hastened our return to India. During my short stay, I had a first-hand experience of the operations of the United Nations. I was not very hopeful of receiving justice from that organization. This was verified by the Soviet representative, Yaqub Malik, who said that in international politics decisions are not based on justice and fair play, but on vested interests: 'You support us, we will support you. You safeguard our interests and we will safeguard yours.'

Later, I went again to New York to attend a session of the Security Council. This time I got an opportunity to meet Chaudhri Mohammad Ali and Dr Mohammad Din Tasir. I told them about the situation in Kashmir and explained our viewpoint. I said frankly, that they could neither depend on the support of the United States nor Britain, nor separate Kashmir from India by force. A mutually acceptable formula had to be evolved. I also had the opportunity of a frank discussion with the representative of Saudi Arabia who tried unsuccessfully to arrange a meeting between Sir Mohammad Zafarullah Khan and me.

Pakistan committed some serious blunders regarding the Kashmir issue and lost many opportunities for a settlement. I am not sure whether it was due to a lack of understanding or politicking. I do believe that the rulers of Pakistan did not want an accord. They probably thought that their own existence depended on keeping this issue burning. In a letter to me,

*Flames of the Chinar*

dated 25 August 1952, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: 'The ruling élite of Pakistan are on a burning bicycle. They believe that if the fire extinguishes the cycle will stop and they will topple.' Meanwhile, the Security Council continued to send representatives who permeated the valley and submitted reports. Reports on Kashmir were stacked in several rooms in the United Nations building but the UN agents and their reports, could not slow the tempo of events in the valley. We continued to mould our country according to our own principles and ideologies.

# Chapter 16

## REVOLUTIONARY STEPS

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As soon as the boom of guns died down we set about putting our state in order. Our peasantry was the living symbol of the oppression of our common people. The jagirdars and chakdars exploited them to such an extent that just to stay alive during winter, they had to migrate to the plains. We decided that no one individual should be permitted to hold more than 182 Kanals of land. Rest of the land should be distributed among the peasants free of cost. In this manner we abolished 396 big jagirs and took away four lakh acres from a little over nine thousand land owners. Some two lakh peasants were given property rights over their lands. Only groves were exempted.

To understand the revolutionary nature of these reforms, the special rights and privileges of the Maharaja should be recalled. When the British sold Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846, they also declared that all the cultivated land of the State was his personal property. The successor Maharajas, granted big jagirs and chaks to their relatives and courtiers. The peasants could not depend on their land for subsistence for more than three or four months. They spent the rest of the year in the plains of Punjab where they were treated worse than beasts of burden.

It was not easy to abolish the monopoly of the jagirdars and landlords, without offering compensation, and to distribute their lands among peasants. Whenever they demanded compensation, we produced the manifesto of 'New Kashmir' which clearly stated that if the National Conference came into power it would abolish the jagirdari and chakdari

systems and distribute the lands among the peasants. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was against these reforms but Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, supported them.

The other problem was that of rural indebtedness. We decided that if the debtor had paid, in cash or kind, one and a half times the original debt he would have cleared off the dues. I knew that these reforms would create personal animosities. The trap laid by my enemies stretched from Srinagar to Jammu till Delhi. Authorities turned away from me in disgust, and I was branded a rabid communalist. Forced labour without payment was prevalent in the urban and rural areas of the State. Thousands of Kashmiris had fallen prey to this oppressive system in Iskerdar, Bhonji and in the inhospitable area of Ladakh. Not only did we abolish forced labour but also declared it unlawful.

Kashmir was the first state where a movement was started, in 1931, against a ruler who happened to be a Hindu. The Maharaja, his relatives and henchmen branded our movement as communal. For the last hundred and fifty years Kashmir was under the rule of non-Muslims who had reduced Muslims to the level of dumb beasts shorn of every right. Their portraiture by Sir Albion Bannerji accurately reflected their backwardness. When we came into office we were determined to improve their conditions. But the Hindu vested interests regarded our stand as an attack on their monopolies. Being well-aware of the weakness of their case, they suppressed the real issue and approached Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who demanded an explanation. Our reply was based on hard facts that I had collected. Following this, Patel commented that the Muslims had a real cause for complaint.

In government service the number of Muslims was very small, particularly in the departments which were still under Central control. The Muslims of Kashmir had begun to doubt the Indian declaration of secularism. The difference between the words and deeds of the Indian leadership has always been a great tragedy. In fact, many leaders have admitted to the dangerous consequences of this discrepancy.

After about four hundred years Kashmiris had attained independence. For the first time they saw their Prime Minister touring the far-flung rural areas on foot or on horseback. A self-sufficient Kashmir was our goal, and we were prepared to work hard towards it. We did not want to extend a begging bowl towards the Centre. This was our greatest



challenge. During the years 1947 to 1953, we had several success stories, which can be read like news headlines:

Hereditary rule abolished.

Constitutional Head of the state elected. Hari Singh leaves Kashmir never to return again.

Jagir lands confiscated without compensation. Distributed among peasants. Rural debts waived.

First university established in Kashmir.

After four centuries the National Militia of Kashmir raised and allowed to use fire arms.

Kashmiris, including Muslims, get a major share of key gazetted posts.

Kashmiri script evolved, suitable for type.

Schools imparting education in Kashmiri and Dogri. (This was abolished after 1953 by the new government. Lakhs of text-books published by us were sold as waste-paper.)

1947 migrants rehabilitated.

Kashmir Government Arts Emporium established. Handicrafts such as shawls, carpets, papiermache, and studded utensils of silver and gold supplied all over the globe.

Over and above everything, we secured a special status for Kashmir under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution which entitled us to have our own constitution, our own flag and our own Legislative Assembly, under the overall sovereignty of India. To please Delhi, however, many of these rights were diluted after 1953.

Our struggle to make Kashmir self-sufficient was reflected in the

‘Grow More Food’ campaign launched by us to make Kashmir independent of the Centre. After 1953, however, when Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad introduced the subsidized rice system, it proved to be a *coup-de-grace* to self-help. Later, this subsidy depleted a large portion of our exchequer and also confounded all our dreams of self-sufficiency. Ultimately, we had to depend on markets outside the State for almost every item of food.

My insistence on family planning, to save Kashmir from the consequences of a population explosion, was considered a joke by my successors. But when the Central government included it in its priority programme, they had to stop laughing.

To fully understand the politics of Kashmir, it is necessary to cast a glance at the causes of the vilification campaign started against me. The major charge was that I was the founder of the liberation movement in Kashmir. The majority of Hindus and even some Muslims were not happy with me. The Hindus had their backs up not only because they wanted the Dogra rule, but also because I had introduced reforms which were beneficial to the majority and hurt the exploiters. Since I had helped in the revolt against a Hindu ruler, the Hindu communalists considered me a nuisance factor.

All my opponents grouped together to remove me from power. They tried to win over my close confidant, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. Over the years, I had developed a close friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru, but he, too, was carried away by this wave of opposition. Rumours were doing the rounds that important changes were forthcoming. My most ardent enemy was Pandit Dwarika Nath Kachru, Nehru’s private secretary. Other detractors were Pandit Kashi Nath Bomzai and Brigadier B.H. Kaul. These men knew that they could not succeed unless they distanced Nehru from me. Therefore, they started poisoning his mind. The rivalry between Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel resulted in the latter joining the above group. To begin with he started harassing my brother-in-law Colonel Ghulam Qadir, who was a minister in Indore state. Strange tactics were used to convince Panditji about the ‘risk’ involved in my continuing as head of government in Kashmir. Sardar Patel, as Home Minister, ordered reports from Central Intelligence which had its branch offices in Srinagar. Thus came about the discovery of Hasan Walia’s treachery, mentioned in an earlier chapter.

To Sardar Patel's list of grievances was added our insistence that we set up our own university instead of affiliating with the Eastern Punjab University which was his preferred alternative. We stuck to our guns and appointed Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai as the new registrar. I wanted an honest implementation of the agreements between us and the Central government. But the Indian leaders had certain reservations. Instead of treating us as comrades they tried to dominate us and interfered in our internal affairs. We were resentful, I was not a favourite in the Delhi circles. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel used Central Intelligence and Army Intelligence to create suspicion against me in Jawaharlal's mind. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Karan Singh, and D.P. Dhar lent him every support. They managed to win the sympathies of Indira Gandhi, Feroze Gandhi, Vijayalakshmi Pandit and M.O. Mithai.

In the Cabinet, we took every decision unanimously. But whenever Jawaharlal Nehru disagreed with our decision my Cabinet colleagues put the entire blame on me. Jawaharlal Nehru was told that I behaved like a dictator. All these factors resulted in the traumatic episode of 1953. Colleagues who had never tired of swearing their loyalty to me changed their colour.

# Chapter 17

## ARTICLE 370 AND THE DELHI AGREEMENT

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The constitution was being written for a newly independent nation. Much of the work had been completed when the Centre decided to invite our participation. We were using the Maharaja's constitution, after having introduced the requisite amendments and alterations. It was now necessary to establish our special status within the Indian Constitution. Negotiations began with the Central leadership. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Beg Sahib, Mir Qasim, D.P. Dhar and I constituted our team. We did not want to exceed the items which had been transferred to the Centre under the Instrument of Accession. The Central leadership, however, wanted our complete merger. But our special circumstances and the objectives of our movement could not allow it. In the UN in 1947, India had formally committed to holding a plebiscite in Kashmir, a complete merger was, therefore, out of the question. Consequently, Article 370 was added to the Indian Constitution.

As stated above, when we started a dialogue with the Central leadership regarding Article 370 we realized that it was not easy to persuade them to accept our point of view. N. Gopalaswami Aiyangar, while moving a resolution regarding Article 370, could not hide the true sentiments of the Indian leaders:

This article proposes a special status for Kashmir because of its special circumstances. The State is not in a position to merge

## *Flames of the Chinar*

with India. We all hope that in future the State of Jammu and Kashmir will get over the hurdles and completely merge with the Union, like the rest of the states.

In undivided India, the rulers of the states, after protracted negotiations with the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League, had arrived at an understanding regarding their status. Principles on the basis of which the rulers could opt for accession to India or Pakistan were clearly stated. It was agreed that the states would transfer only communications, foreign affairs and defence to the Centre, and would retain their autonomy in the rest of the areas. Sardar Patel assured them that they would be exempt from defence expenditure. But once the Congress came into office, it changed its stand, and, by stages, persuaded the rulers to accept privy purses and completely abdicate power. Later, the government of Indira Gandhi deprived them of the privy purses and all other privileges. Frankly, I had no sympathy for the rulers of the states, still I believed that the measures taken against them were not morally justifiable.

The circumstances in Kashmir were very different. Its future was pending in the United Nations. The Centre wanted us to grant a purse to the Maharaja but we refused. Meanwhile, the Maharaja started interfering in our day-to-day administration. We, therefore, demanded his dethronement. That was the end of the Maharaja's rule.

New problems cropped up after his departure. My colleagues started plotting against each other. Some of them became critical about the number of ministers in the Cabinet. After much bickering, a consensus was reached on the following individuals, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, Girdhari Lal Dogra, Sham Lal Saraf and myself.

The others, Colonel Pir Mohammad, Sardar Budh Singh, Colonel Pathania and Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq were asked to submit resignations. After resigning from the Cabinet, Sadiq restarted his legal practice and, joining hands with his cousin Khwaja Mohiuddin Gare, started conspiring against me. As an armchair politician he usually spent his time in academic discussions. In 1953, he joined hands with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. This alliance was broken by internal discord and,

once again, he became a political destitute. The rulers of New Delhi, however, rehabilitated him.

Not hopeful about the resolution of the Kashmir problem by the United Nations, we started preparing ground to convene the Constituent Assembly. Our move was opposed in Delhi. Even Jawaharlal was hesitant. But the National Conference was firm, in 1950 we adopted the following resolution:

So far the Security Council has adopted a vacillatory and unrealistic attitude which has resulted in the people of this state facing the tortures of an uncertain future. National Conference is not prepared to allow this uncertainty to continue. We believe that the time has come when people should take the initiative. We appeal to the people to convene a Constituent Assembly on the basis of adult franchise which should include the representatives of every section and class of the people of the State, as well as its every unit.

Eventually, the circles in Delhi agreed to our convening the Constituent Assembly, but it created a furore in the United Nations. The Anglo-American bloc submitted a draft resolution in the Security Council which was critical of our action. We bitterly opposed this draft and called it an attack on the sovereign rights of the people of Kashmir.

Next, we started preparing for the election. One hundred constituencies were identified of which twenty-five were reserved for Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). Elections were held in September 1951. The National Conference captured 100 per cent seats. The first session of the Constituent Assembly was convened the following month. Maulana Mohammad Said Masoodi presided over the opening session. I proposed the name of G.M. Sadiq who was unanimously elected as the permanent President of the House.

There were four important items before the Assembly: framing a constitution in accordance with the aspirations of the common people; confirming the measures adopted to abolish the jagirdaris, chakdaris, and big land ownerships; bringing to an end the autocratic rule in Jammu and Kashmir; and deciding about the accession. The first decision taken by the Assembly was to abolish the autocratic rule of the Maharaja. We were

not in favour of a 'governor' as head of the State. Maulana Azad proposed that the head may be called 'Sadr-e-Riasat'. The term of office was fixed at five years. The first 'Sadr-e-Riasat' was Karan Singh, who continued to hold this office for about twenty years.

The work of the Constituent Assembly was beleaguered by many difficulties. The Central Government kept a close watch. They felt that the constitution should not be framed only on the basis of the Instrument of Accession. It should include questions such as the Supreme Court jurisdiction over the State, Kashmir joining the monetary unit of the Union, status of the union flag, and powers enjoyed by the Central Election Commission. We pressed our views on these questions, for example, the national flag. We said that it would be shown respect and be hoisted at ceremonial occasions along with the State flag. Jawaharlal basically agreed with us, but thanks to N. Gopaldaswami Aiyangar and few others, further consideration was postponed. Subsequently, there was a consensus on most of the questions which were being negotiated. The result of these negotiations was called the Delhi Agreement, and was an important milestone in our constitutional relations with the Union.

When we took the initiative to convene the Constituent Assembly, Pakistan was most uncomfortable. It complained to the Security Council in 1948 that India was violating the resolution regarding plebiscite in the State. Sir B.N. Rao, head of the Indian delegation, strongly refuted these allegations. Gopaldaswami Aiyangar insisted that the Constituent Assembly should adopt a resolution reiterating its accession to India. But taking the morally correct stand Jawaharlal ruled it out. This episode immensely increased my respect for him. On 16 May 1953 he visited Srinagar and, to my utter amazement, suggested summoning the Constituent Assembly to ratify the accession to India. I reminded him of our public and formal commitment regarding plebiscite. I stated that there were only two ways to solve the Kashmir problem. First, give them an efficient and sympathetic administration and, second, remove their extreme poverty. I told him that some of my close comrades were corrupt, and I had decided to drop them from the Cabinet. Jawaharlal advised me to wait until his return from the Commonwealth conference. I noticed that Jawaharlal was not the same man, clearly, his confidence was shaken. I

was amazed to see him speaking quietly with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and his friends. Whispering in corners had started.

After his return from Kashmir, Jawaharlal wrote to me asking that my colleagues and I communicate to him, before his departure to London, about our proposal regarding the future of Kashmir. The National Conference Working Committee appointed a working group to study the Kashmir problem. Its members were Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Maulana Mohammad Said Masoodi, Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Girdhari Lal Dogra, Pandit Sham Lal Saraf and myself. It was a committee formed of top ranking leaders of the National Conference. They were asked to place proposals before the working group for a permanent solution. The proposals would then be placed before the General Assembly of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. A month long discussion resulted in the following consensus:

- A plebiscite would be held in accordance with the conditions agreed upon at the meeting of 4 June 1953.
- Autonomy would be obtained for the entire state.
- Foreign affairs and defence would be placed under the joint control of India and Pakistan.
- The Dixon Plan\* would be implemented along with the autonomy of the region where plebiscite was to be held.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was the only member of the working group who was in favour of the Dixon Plan. Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq wanted plebiscite under the supervision of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China, or, alternatively, all the members of the Security Council. I was greatly disturbed at the changed attitude of Jawaharlal. I expressed this in a letter I wrote in July 1951:

Doubtless, there are certain forces at work who are out to

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\* Named after Sir Owen Dixon, UN representative, who visited India in 1950. After consultations with Indian and Pakistani leaders, Dixon put forward proposals, under which overall plebiscite could be held in the state. But no agreement could be reached on them as they were unacceptable to both India and Pakistan. For details see Surendra Chopra, *UN Mediation in Kashmir: A Study in Power Politics* (Kurukshetra: Vishal Publications 1971), pp.79-115.



sabotage your dream of a secular India and your Kashmir policy. They want to denigrate all your loyal supporters. I will gladly lay down my life for the cause but I cannot barter the rights and aspiration of forty lakh Kashmiris. As I have said repeatedly, we acceded to India because of such kindly lights as Mahatma Gandhi and yourself. Despite many similarities we did not accede to Pakistan because we realized that our programme will not coincide with their policies. If pushed to the wall, we will not be able to face our people.

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Communal elements did not like the Delhi Agreement. The Indian media was also critical. Some newspapers went to the extent of writing that instead of Kashmir acceding to India, in fact, India had acceded to Kashmir. In Jammu, the Praja Parishad started a movement which was financed by Maharaja Hari Singh and his coterie. They wanted a complete merger of the State in the Indian Union. Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad were interested in the proposition but did not agree with the strategy. A confidant of Jawaharlal, the head of the Intelligence Department, B.N. Malik, confirms in his book, *My Years with Nehru*, that Jawaharlal told him that he had every sympathy with the Jana Sangh and the Praja Parishad's demand for a complete merger of Kashmir with India but was worried that it would create a furore in the Security Council. Other leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Kripalani also supported the Praja Parishad. Jawaharlal had to ask them to wind down their support and not allow the situation to get further complicated.

The Central Department of Defence had introduced a permit system for entry into and exit from certain specified areas in Kashmir. This system adversely effected tourism which was the largest natural industry of Kashmir. Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, founder of the Jana Sangh, demanded the repeal of the permit system. When the Defence Department refused, Dr Mookerjee announced his intention to defy the government order and enter Kashmir without a permit. As soon as he crossed the bridge at Madhopur on the Jammu border on 8 May 1953, he was arrested. He was brought to Srinagar and lodged near Nishat Bagh.

While Dr Mookerjee was in prison, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad visited Kashmir but neither of them bothered to meet him. When I learnt that he was sick of his solitary confinement I ordered that Pandit Prem Nath Dogra, who was arrested in Jammu in connection with the agitation of the Praja Parishad, should be brought to Srinagar and lodged with Dr Mookerjee. One morning I was informed by Pandit Shayam Lal, Minister for Jails, that Dr Mookerjee had suffered a massive heart attack. I was shocked. He died during the night of 23 June 1953. News of his death spread like wild fire. His dead body was flown to Delhi. From the start, I was not in favour of detaining him in Srinagar. But the Home Minister, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad had his own reasons, plus the nod from Delhi. I could not do much. Pressure mounted for an inquiry into the circumstances leading to Dr Mookerjee's death. I asked the Centre to appoint a committee, but no one paid attention. The Praja Parishad insisted on my removal, using the death of Dr Mookerjee as the compelling reason.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru became the target of communal anger and was threatened with physical harm. His supporters tried to defuse the tension. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai contacted Pandit Mooki Chand Sharma, President of the Punjab Jana Sangh, who insisted that I be removed from office. I found myself in an untenable situation. Not only were the ruling circles and the communalists of India against me, but Pakistan and its Anglo-American supporters were also bent upon my removal. But, at that moment India was not prepared to remove me because, as Jawaharlal said, it would amount to a surrender to Pakistan, and would strengthen her position in the psychological war against India.

Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, a close confidant of Jawaharlal Nehru, was aligned with the Russian lobby. Communist leaders like Z.A. Ahmad, K.M. Ashraf, Rama Murti, Harikrishan Singh Surjeet formed the inner circle of his confidants. They wanted to promote the interests of their protégés including G.M. Sadiq. Therefore, they supported Kidwai's efforts to topple me. Kidwai, assuming responsibility for tackling the Kashmir problem, informed us about his intended visit to Srinagar. Sickened by the double-dealings and changing loyalties of Indian leaders, I informed Rafi Sahib, that the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that it would defy all his efforts to improve it. Still, we would welcome him in Kashmir.

The Jana Sangh and the Praja Parishad were demanding my arrest

as the price for changing their hostile attitude towards Jawaharlal. It was, therefore, agreed that I be made the scapegoat. Ajit Prasad Jain and B.M. Kaul were given the responsibility to prepare the ground for 'Operation 9 August'. The conspirators, surpassed the expectations of their masters in cruelty and vindictiveness. Those who believe that the episode of 9 August 1953 had not received the blessings of Jawaharlal, should be referred to the statement of B.N. Malik, who says that Jawaharlal wanted a strong police officer to deal with the imminent situation. Malik recommended D.W. Mehra who had become famous for crushing the tribals in the North-West Frontier Province:

Mehra and I met the Prime Minister at his official residence on July 31, 1953. We talked for about two hours. Explaining the background of Kashmir problem, the Prime Minister said there was no alternative but to remove Sheikh Abdullah and appoint Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the transition would be peaceful. He warned us to be prepared for the worst because of Sheikh Sahib's popularity and that the pro-Sheikh elements would be supported by pro-Pakistan elements. Mehra should be prepared to head the Jammu and Kashmir police force and, if necessary, perform the duties of Chief Executive. He would work under the 'Sadr-e-Riasat'. Never before had we seen Nehru in such a furious mood. It seemed he was bent upon destroying that which he had himself nurtured. When Mehra was about to leave, Nehru asked him to keep him briefed about the latest developments, and, if need be, to ring him up even at night. Along with that a secret message was sent to Srinagar Commander, Lt. Gen. Atal, 'To alert the army and to keep an eye over the undependable elements in the Militia.'

I deputed Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg and D.P. Dhar to apprise the Centre about the decisions of the eight-member high-power committee. Beg Sahib returned after two or three days but Bakshi and D.P. stayed on. Later, leaders of the Jana Sangh and the Praja Parishad said that Bakshi and Dhar were engaged in a dialogue with them. On their return to Srinagar, instead of conveying the result of their

meetings in New Delhi to me, they began organizing their supporters in different parts of the valley. I confronted Bakshi Sahib with the text of his speeches published in *Khidmat*, an organ of the National Conference. He promptly denied their accuracy and pleaded his whole-hearted support for the referendum.

Kashmir has always been the cradle of love, peace, humanism and tolerance which was created by Buddhism, and which flourished in the valley for about a thousand years! Subsequently the Islam that was preached by the dervishes and Sufis, refurbished these values. Our movement was characterized by secularism, socialism and democracy and because the Indian independence movement also enshrined these values, we were drawn near each other. Although after Partition, the country was thrust into the mire of hatred and hostility, the National Conference stuck to its tradition and provided light at the tunnel's end. At that time, the leadership of the National Conference consisted of Bakshi, Beg, Masoodi and Sadiq. However, the enemies of Kashmir disapproved of this unified leadership and tried their best to create disunity. One can say without fear of contradiction that the two-nation theory suffered its first severe defeat in Kashmir. Kashmir played a vital part in keeping the torch of secularism lit in India. I pointed this out in the inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly:

On the basis of our experience of the last four years, I believe that Kashmir is the touchstone for creating good relations between the Hindus and the Muslims of India. Before his death, Gandhiji had rightly said that his eyes were focussed on mountains of Kashmir from where he expected moral and spiritual support.

It is equally true that Kashmir's presence in India has strengthened its secular character. Mahatma Gandhi made his supreme sacrifice for communal harmony. We expected the leaders of India to follow his footsteps. That was not to be. The majority of Kashmiri people were Muslims, ruled by a non-Muslim monarch. They were, therefore, denied government jobs and were especially debarred from military service. We justly demanded the restructuring of the military so that all classes and sections of society would receive proper representation. According to the

Instrument of Accession, defence was transferred to the Centre. At the time of accession, a tacit agreement had been reached in which the Kashmiris were to be given representation in the army. How shocked we were to discover that a secret circular had been issued directing the officers not to recruit Muslims in the army. We brought it to the notice of Gopaldaswami Aiyangar, Home Minister, who promised to look into it. The re-organization of the militia was left under our control but its operational part was under Central control. At that time, General K.M. Cariappa was the Commander-in-Chief to the Indian Army. I asked him why the Muslims of Kargil were not given representation? The General replied that their loyalty to India was doubtful.

Prejudice was prevalent in all the Central departments as well. Muslims were almost entirely debarred from working in postal services. Instead of striving for secularism, the officers of this department did just the opposite! I brought this to the notice of Maulana Azad. Communal minded officials painted me in alarming colours and no one paid any heed to me. I addressed a public meeting in Ranbirsinghpura on 11 April 1952 and related some bitter episodes. *Inter alia* I referred to the communal feeling in India. The Central Intelligence submitted an exaggerated report of my speech with the result that a friend like Jawaharlal Nehru questioned my secular credentials in a letter dated 28 June 1953:

My government is committed to secular democracy. You, too, have been working for this sacred cause. I am at a loss to understand your present attitude. I am afraid Kashmir is heading in an adverse direction. Unfortunately, it is going to effect the Indian situation in the same manner as the Indian situation effects Kashmir.

This accusation by a dear friend upset and irritated me. Jawaharlal was fully aware that for me secularism was an article of faith. Nevertheless, to support his new friends in Kashmir, he had to resort to this defamation. I wrote to him to explain my position. I reminded him that it was I who converted the Muslim Conference into the National Conference, and, in 1947, started living in defence of my principles. My belief in social justice for all classes and creeds was based not on wishful thinking but on the realities of life.

Once, while attending a meeting of the Central leaders in Delhi,

which included Jawaharlal, Sardar Patel and Maulana Azad, I said that no one should or could subjugate a people by force. Sardar Patel was annoyed. Arguments of an opponent are never credited with reasonableness. Doors for further dialogue were closed. The circles in Delhi expected me to carry out their orders without a murmur. The corner into which I was pushed reminded me of this philosophical couplet of Ghalib:

*Hareef-e-matlab-e-mushkil nahi fusoon-e-niyaz  
Dua qubool ho yaarab ke umr-e-Khizr daraz.*

(The magic of humility does not  
grant a difficult prayer  
Therefore, O God, I pray that may  
Khizr have a long life.)

It was most annoying to see that those who accused me of communal thinking were doing as they pleased.

A Kashmiri Pandit, member of Lok Sabha, gave vent to his feelings in the House:

Mr Jinnah, who was let down by the Kashmiri Muslims in 1944, wanted to achieve two objectives regarding Kashmir. Firstly to separate Kashmir from India, and, secondly, to purge Kashmir of Abdullahism. What Jinnah could not achieve in his life time, what Muslim League and Pakistan failed to grab even after the birth of a new nation is now being presented to Pakistan on a platter and that, too, in the name of democracy! This is a glowing tribute to the soul of Mr Jinnah. Perhaps it was for such an occasion that the poet said:

*Dil key phapoley jal uthe seene ke daagh sey  
Is ghar ko aag lag gayee ghar ke chirag sey.*

(The blisters on this heart  
Broke open with the blow on this chest  
This house caught fire  
with its very own lamp.)

# Chapter 18

## REIGN OF ERROR

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In 1944, when Mohammed Ali Jinnah visited Kashmir, he showed great annoyance at my opposition to the two-nation theory. When Pakistan came into existence, however, Sajjad Zaheer, Communist leader, writer and poet, who went to Pakistan to propogate Communism, was dissillusioned and had to return to India empty-handed. At the same time, the manifesto of the National Conference called 'New Kashmir' was published. Our red flag was displayed on the title. One day, while I was sitting with Jawaharlal Nehru, his sister Vijayalakshmi Pandit, who was the Indian Ambassador to the United Nations, asked me if our flag had anything to do with the Communists. She said that the Americans had expressed certain doubts. Here I was, sandwiched between two great powers.

When we liberated the area which was temporarily captured by the tribal invaders, we discovered that all the moveable property from the hotels and government offices in Gulmarg had been removed. Somehow we managed to recover a few things and deposit them at the police station at Baramulla. Later, I learnt that all the property was misappropriated by the police officers. I, therefore, appointed an enquiry committee which dragged its feet on the matter. When I asked about the cause for delay I was given to understand that some 'high-ups' were involved, obviously Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. Innumerable instances may be cited about the corruption which prevailed among the higher echelons, including among the ministers.

In Delhi, preparations to overthrow my government and arrest me

were now complete. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and B.N. Malik were in charge of the *coup d'etat*. Rusi Karanjia, editor of *Blitz*, wrote an article stating that Rafi Ahmed Kidwai had invited him to Delhi in August 1953 and spoke about the anti-national activities of Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg. The government wanted *Blitz* to influence public opinion in favour of its intended strategy. It is significant that N.B. Khare, a leader of the Hindu Mahasabha, had suggested just a week before my arrest that I should be dismissed and arrested, and the Indian press had given this wide publicity. On 27 July, Karan Singh had received a secret message from Jawaharlal. Zero hour had been announced.

After the heat of June and July, I met the 'Sadr-e-Riasat' at about 6 p.m. on a pleasantly cool Saturday, 8 August 1953, to apprise him of the proceedings of the Cabinet meeting. He advised me to call a Cabinet meeting after one week. I then left for Gulmarg with my family and my private secretary, R.C. Raina. A few days later, at 4 p.m., there was a loud knock on the door. When I opened the door I saw Raina standing there who informed me that my house was surrounded by the State army. The Superintendent of Police, L.D. Thakur, accompanied by an ADC of the 'Sadr-e-Riasat', entered the room. The ADC handed me a sealed envelope from Karan Singh which contained the order for my dismissal. Then he handed me another envelope containing a memorandum, signed by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Pandit Sham Lal Saraf and Pandit Girdhari Lal Dogra in which they had expressed 'No Confidence' in me. The next item presented to me was the warrant for my arrest.

Later, I learnt that Jawaharlal was given to understand that I was going to Gulmarg to meet an emissary from Pakistan. The 'Sadr-e-Riasat' was told to dismiss me and invite Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad to form the government. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad took the oath of allegiance and secrecy and the news was conveyed to the Prime Minister at 4.30 a.m.

At 8 a.m. the next day I surrendered to the State army. Before that I handed over all the official files to my private secretary. I was taken to Srinagar in a closed car. From there I was taken to the dak bungalow in Banihal where we had lunch. In the afternoon we reached Udhampur and I was informed that, under orders of the government, I was to be detained at Tara Nivas Palace. The same evening Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad broadcast a message to the people and repeated his baseless allegations against me.



## *Flames of the Chinar*

There was no physical discomfort in the prison but my heart was heavy with the burden of the sorrows of Kashmir. I was not receiving news, but I knew that, once again, a river of blood would pass through Kashmir. When my family reached Srinagar they found my official residence barricaded. It had been searched at night and everything had been confiscated. After spending a few days at the house of a friend, they rented a small house and shifted there. Mridula Sarabhai, the scion of a powerful family of Gujarat, was fully aware of the conspiracy. After the episode of 9 August, she raised her voice in protest and tried her best to expose the truth.

After my arrest, people were given to understand that I had been deprived of the support of the majority of the National Conference. This was a false allegation. They could not face the accepted democratic method of asking me to prove my majority support on the floor of the House. On 17 March 1955, at the Constituent Assembly, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad said that he had approached Nehru for permission to publish my letters written to him, to Maulana Azad and to Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. 'People should find out for themselves what were the real intentions of Sheikh Abdullah and in which direction was he leading the state,' he said. I requested Jawaharlal, again and again, to grant the required permission, but it was no use.

Another factor given wide publicity was my meeting with the US Democratic Party Presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson. He visited India and included Kashmir in his itinerary. Since he was an honoured guest I invited him for lunch. When he reached Delhi the correspondents asked him if he had met me. In his garrulous manner he said, 'Of course, three times.' This was enough for the press, and particularly for the Left to raise hell.

Radio Kashmir, was then under the control of the government. It was customary for me to broadcast an annual Eid message. That year Eid fell during the month of August. I sent my message for broadcast, with a copy to Maulana Masoodi for publication in Delhi. But I got arrested just before Eid. My enemies asserted that my message contained the declaration of independence of Kashmir and an appeal to the United Nations and the US to send their troops to bring about the separation of Kashmir from India. The veracity of this allegation is nil, and is evident since its text has been published several times.

Regarding Russian diplomacy, in 1948 I met the Russian Foreign

## *Flames of the Chinar*

Minister, Yaqub Malik, in New York. From his remarks I gathered that the Russians had pinned their hopes on Sadiq Sahib. The Communists hated me, wanting to see one of their own members in power. Consequently, they played a significant role in my arrest. The Communists had used the attractive veil of the right of self-determination to create a favourable atmosphere for Pakistan.

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The news of my arrest spread like wild fire. Violent demonstrations were held all over Kashmir. Many Kashmiris were killed in police firing. Thousands were arrested. Several members of the Assembly were bought over and the remainder were thrown in prison. In this bloody drama, D.P. Dhar acted as the special agent of Delhi.

Throughout India, this episode created a sensation. How did a patriot, praised by Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi for his straightforwardness, turn into an enemy of the country? It was repeatedly claimed that I had gone to Gulmarg to meet an emissary of Pakistan. But this cooked up charge did not say that all the officers who accompanied me were Hindus. Another story doing the rounds was that I had entered into a conspiracy with the United States for the independence of Kashmir and wanted to turn Kashmir into another Korea. The Communist Party of India played an important role in perpetuating this lie.

In Parliament, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru delivered an emotional speech and expressed his anguish and sorrow over these developments. He said that he had no alternative but to arrest me. Besides being Prime Minister of Kashmir, I was also the President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. After my arrest Bakshi usurped that post also. Maulvi Saeed continued as General Secretary. He was invited to attend the meeting of the General Assembly but was detained at Ram Ban because D.P. Dhar wanted the field free for the Communists to take control of the National Conference.

In a very sagacious move, the Communists supported Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. They wanted to use him to achieve their ends. They were aware of Bakshi's weaknesses, and hoped that at an appropriate time they would be able to install Sadiq Sahib. As it happened, they had failed to fully assess the cleverness of Bakshi. He gradually consolidated his position and dealt them a stunning blow. He tightened his hold on the

government and planted his nephew, Bakshi Abdul Rashid, in the National Conference.

Durga Prasad Dhar played a disgusting role in my arrest and the consequent atrocities on the Kashmiris. He was my deputy Home Minister, but because Bakshi was not happy, I had shifted him to another ministry. I could never imagine that one day both of them would unite against me. Dhar belonged to a well-known family of Kashmir, and was a good-looking specimen at that! But he had many moral weaknesses, he was the moving spirit, behind the atrocities inflicted on the Kashmiri Muslims.

Lavish amounts of money were distributed by India to appease the Kashmiri Muslims. Rice was freely supplied. Soon people realized that Bakshi was trying to buy their loyalty. Dhar's theory in this regard was that the people of Kashmir were not interested in politics, their only interest was to get enough rice to keep body and soul together. A deliberate campaign of character assassination was started against me by the local and the Indian media. It was suggested that I had led the life of a debauched Mughal king. Fortunately, all this slander caused no lasting damage. Over time, people lost confidence in my enemies and realized that I was the victim of a sinister conspiracy. In prison, I patiently watched the developments. Undoubtedly, D.P. Dhar proved the correctness of an old Kashmiri saying that, 'when Dhars thrive Kashmir declines'.

After establishing himself, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad expanded his ministry and inducted into it, Mir Qasim and Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq. Although D.P. Dhar continued as the deputy Home Minister, he virtually controlled the Home Ministry. Ghulam Rasool Rinzu became the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

In the name of peace, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad organized a corps of lumpens under the control of the Superintendent of Police, Ghulam Sheikh. They perpetrated atrocities against the people, and my family and I being at the receiving end of his attacks, suffered greatly. Bakshi Abdul Rashid dominated the government. He was surrounded by anti-social elements and spent most of his time boozing. Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, not only distributed largesse to his supporters, he filled his own coffers as well. His excesses finally reached Jawaharlal Nehru via Prem Nath Dogra who complained that Bakshi was obsessed with money. Jawaharlal

replied, 'After all it is only property! And property is located between the heaven and earth of one country. Where can he run away with it?'

It is possible that Jawaharlal may have thought about my complaints about Bakshi's corruption. And to make amends for his mistake he sent his old friend, P. Subhayan to meet me. In those days, I was in Kud jail. Subhayan asked me to forget the past, and, once again, take up the reins of the government. He sadly admitted that a large part of funds, supplied for the purpose of development were being misappropriated. I told him that I had informed Panditji about this but he was deaf to my pleadings. Now he would have to stand by the consequences of his decision. Time was the greatest arbiter and I would wait for its verdict.

During Bakshi's stewardship, some positive steps were taken as well. For the first time a medical college and a regional engineering college was set up. From primary to university level, education was made free. Bakshi oversaw the construction of a new Secretariat, a tourist reception centre, a stadium, Tagore Hall and some other important buildings in Srinagar. The city of Jammu was extended, its lanes and by-lanes were widened and new roads were constructed. In Jammu, as well, a new Secretariat and Assembly Hall were constructed. In rural areas new roads and bridges were made. Preliminary work was started with the intention of converting Kashmir University into a residential institution.

Bakshi was a mixture of opposites. On the one hand he was very hard-hearted and merciless but, on the other, he was extremely generous. During his tenure as Prime Minister, he amply demonstrated this characteristic. He extended a helping hand to many, lavishly providing for the needy. This created goodwill between him and the people who still remember his good deeds.

I was leading a solitary life in the Tara Nivas Palace at Udhampur. A radio and a newspaper were all I had for company. Although with the exception of Radio Kashmir, all the other stations were sealed off, I managed to break the seal which enabled me to listen to several stations. My wife was offered an allowance which she rejected initially, but was compelled to accept because of Jawaharlal's insistence.

After some time, the government allowed a few other friends like Ghulam Mohammad Shah and Ghulam Mohammad Butt to allieviate my solitude. My family members were also allowed to visit me occasionally.

Jawaharlal's changing attitude was evidence of his regret for all that had happened.

Besides a few bureaucrats, those who strengthened Jawaharlal's hands at the political level were, Maulana Azad and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. Despite their great qualities both of them failed to command respect and influence in their own community and probably did not like my holding sway over them.

I was in the Tara Nivas Palace Jail at Udhampur when Pandit Jia Lal Kilam visited me. Although he offered his good offices to intervene for my release, I refused. I said that time would tell who had been disloyal to India. At Udhampur, the heat of summer gripped the countryside and I demanded a transfer to a cooler spot. Consequently, I was transferred to Kud. Subsequently Beg Sahib, Mirza Ghulam Mohammad Beg, Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, Sufi Mohammad Akbar, Khwaja Habeebullah Zargar and Khwaja Ali Shah were also transferred to Kud.

My son Farooq visited me in Kud, with his spirits low and his clothes tattered, he asked me, 'Papa what are we to do?' The only solace I could offer was to have faith in God.

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In the detention camp we were cut off not only from our people and our families but from the entire world. We kept ourselves busy with reading, writing, answering letters, and sporting activities. I experimented with poultry farming and raising sheep. Very soon I had collected a family of these beautiful animals. After my release, I took a few of them home. My two sons Farooq and Mustafa were studying at the Jaipur Medical College. Once Farooq came to visit me, carrying a few golf balls. The security personnel mistook them for bombs and started harassing him. This matter was brought to the notice of Jawaharlal Nehru who ordered the security contingent to be transferred without delay.

Having usurped the stewardship of the State, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad had no idea what the future held for him. How was he to know that one day history would repeat itself and he would be answerable to the Aiyangar Commission? In the words of Mirza Ghalib:

*Flames of the Chinar*

*Ek ek qatre ka mujhe dena para hisaab  
Khoon-e-jigar wadeeat-e-mizgaan-e-yaar tha*

(The blood of my heart  
Had to be accounted for  
Each drop was reserved  
For the thrust of the beloved's eyelash.)

Bakshi's government was illegal and unconstitutional. If any of my colleagues had been dissatisfied with my policies they could have tabled a resolution of 'No Confidence'. But violating the principles of parliamentary democracy, the 'Sadr-e-Riasat' dismissed me without any constitutional authority. It was evident that he had acted not as an independent head of the state, but as an ally of conspirators. The demonstrations and protests which followed my arrest were a clear indication of the popular sentiments.

The session of the Assembly was convened in September 1953. From prison, I sent the following telegram to the Speaker:

Since questions will be raised about my status and stand, please make arrangements so that I and other detainees can attend the session. This request to you is in your capacity as a protector of the privileges of the members.

Telegrams along similar lines were also sent to the President of India and the Prime Minister. My efforts proved useless. They were aware that my presence in the Assembly would embarrass them. Therefore, my request was summarily dismissed. Taking recourse to money and muscle power, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad created an artificial calm until Kashmir felt like a graveyard. He hurriedly completed the work of framing the constitution. A session of the Constituent Assembly was convened and all its members were released from the various prisons, all except me! I wrote, once again, to Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, President of the Constituent Assembly, not to frame the constitution without creating a proper democratic environment:

From the media news which occasionally trickles to us, I learn

that soon the Constituent Assembly will be convened to frame a constitution for the state of Jammu and Kashmir. No doubt it will have a far-reaching impact on the history of the state. It is, therefore, incumbent upon me, on behalf of our oppressed people and our glorious popular movement of a quarter century, to warn you of its dangerous consequences. No doubt, the framing of the constitution has been inadvertantly delayed. Still I hope that instead of taking hasty measures, you will review the factors that have paralyzed the public opinion and damaged the growth of genuine democracy. I do not want to go into the details of what the people are facing at the moment. Please think. Under these circumstances can you make a constitution in accordance with the aspirations and hopes of the people?

I requested Sadiq Sahib to allow me to attend the session of the Constituent Assembly. After a long delay I received his reply which, I believe was drafted by the high command in Delhi, and was only rubber-stamped and signed by him. This correspondence has been published in the form of a booklet.

My request for permission to attend the session of the Constituent Assembly was not granted. Subsequently, in his book entitled *My Years with Nehru*, B.N. Malik made the baseless claim that as President of the Constituent Assembly, Sadiq had spoken to me at the Jammu jail regarding his current problems. The fact is that Sadiq never felt the need nor had the courage to speak to me.

The Bakshi group completely dominated the National Conference. Some of our sympathizers wanted to set up a separate organization to carry the movement further. The question was what to call this organization? When he was first released Beg Sahib founded the Plebiscite Front\* on 9 August 1955. Some other leaders signed up. By this time, I was so disgusted with organizations that I could not bring myself to participate in any.

At the Constituent Assembly, Beg Sahib and his comrades pleaded

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\* A new opposition party formed in protest against the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly's decision (in 1954), to introduce and adhere to a new constitution which confirmed the legality of accession to India.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

that the framing of the constitution be deferred for a while. But the ruling party was in a hurry. Consequently, Beg Sahib and his group boycotted the Constituent Assembly, which resulted in his arrest. Beg Sahib and Bakshi Sahib had been rivals from the very start of their political careers. Both had their strengths and weaknesses. Bakshi Sahib was an expert organizer. He understood popular psychology and, despite a lack of formal education, he was excellent at public relations. Mirza Afzal Beg was a lawyer and a good Parliamentarian. He was comfortable with finance and certain aspects of governance. Both loved power. Bakshi tried several times to politically terminate Beg, but failed. While writing these lines, I recalled that all the characters of the 1953 conspiracy, i.e. Bakshi, Sadiq and Dhar were dead. Only Beg was alive.



# Chapter 19

## UNNERVING THE OPPRESSORS

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International politics had developed a new orientation; rivalry increased between the superpowers—The United States and the then Soviet Union. The then US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, was in full control of the American foreign policy. He was the author of ‘brinkmanship’ and formulated the principle that whoever was not a friend of the United States was its enemy. Contrary to this principle, Jawaharlal Nehru founded his foreign policy on non-alignment and treaded the path of equidistance from both. There is no denying that he was mentally inclined towards socialist countries. Naturally, the United States was not too thrilled. Pakistan’s policy was based not on ideology but on hatred and contravention of Indian foreign policy. It, therefore, entered into military alliances with the US and its allies. This led the Soviet Union to support India at the United Nations.

The process of de-Stalination had started in the then USSR. On the invitation of Jawaharlal Nehru, the head of the then Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Nikita Khrushchev, and Prime Minister of the erstwhile Soviet Union, Nikolai Bulganin, visited India in December, 1955 and were given a rousing reception. They also visited Kashmir. At a reception given for him, Khrushchev stated, ‘Kashmir is an integral part of India.’ He also said, ‘We are so near that if ever you call us from your mountain tops we will appear at your side.’ Khrushchev’s declaration became important global news. Later, it was learnt that Pakistan had invited the Soviet leaders for a visit on their way back from India but Khrushchev had rejected the invitation.

The visit of the Soviet leaders not only signified a sharp turn in the Kashmir policy, but the entire political situation of the subcontinent had changed. Without doubt, their visit constituted part of the psychological warfare against the people of Kashmir and was a calculated move to overawe them. Jawaharlal Nehru had undoubtedly succeeded to a certain extent and India became more resolute on the Kashmir issue.

Furthermore, India wanted to wriggle out of her commitment regarding the right of self-determination. Time and again, Nehru had assured not only the people of Kashmir but other countries as well that India had no intention of grabbing Kashmir. The troops had been sent to Kashmir only to defend the people's right of self-determination. The backing of the Soviet Union, however, encouraged India to the extent that she announced that Pakistan's involvement in military treaties had vitiated the atmosphere to the extent that India was no longer bound by its international pledges to the people of Kashmir. This was strange logic. Kashmir had done nothing to deserve it. Instead of Pakistan being penalized for its acts of commission and omission, the Kashmiris were penalized.

Jawaharlal, to use his own words had a split personality. Ideologically he was democratic, enlightened and left-leaning. He agreed with the Fabians but favoured the practical experiments of Lenin. He was brought up in comfort and was amenable to sycophancy. He could not stand opposition. He preached respect for democratic values, and when his conscience was clear, he avoided trampling over these values. Often he transgressed his own standards. He announced that due to the changed international situation, India was no longer bound by her former pledges and commitments regarding Kashmir. Regardless, he did not close the door. When China attacked India in 1962, Nehru, once again, extended friendship to Pakistan. As a matter of fact at the time of the Chinese aggression, Pakistan missed the opportunity to establish cordial relations with India. She may have been able to achieve her objective, but Ayub Khan developed cold feet! Once again, at the Security Council, Pakistan raised the Kashmir issue. V.K. Krishna Menon, who was leading the Indian delegation, delivered a marathon speech pleading the case of India. It was a dramatic speech in which he derided the members of the Security Council. Unfortunately, it did not have the desired effect. A resolution

was moved in the Security Council which was supported by nine out of eleven members. The Soviet Union, however, vetoed it.

While in prison, I was told that Jawaharlal wanted to meet me. I was also informed that while on his way to Kashmir, the President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, wanted to set aside a few moments to visit me at Kud. But I was in no frame of mind for entertaining such visitors. I had had enough of character assassination inflicted by the President, so I politely declined. It was the old story related by Ghalib:

*Ki mere qatl ke baad usne jafa sey tauba  
Hai us zood pasheman ka pasheman hona*

(It was only after my murder that  
she swore to kill no more  
Alas, why not repentance earlier,  
Why not remorse before.)

Dr Rajendra Prasad was not pleased about the special status given to Kashmir. He was in agreement with Vallabhbhai Patel, the man who had helped him to become the President of India, despite Jawaharlal Nehru wanting Chakravarti Rajagopalachari. Nehru had no rapport with Dr Rajendra Prasad and did not bother to listen to his suggestions.

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The circumstances under which I was arrested in 1953, caused great harm to the international credibility of India. The fact that I was detained without trial and kept in jail year after year, brought great disrepute to the country. Those days, whenever Jawaharlal Nehru or any other national leader went on a foreign tour he was asked to speak on the subject of my detention. No satisfactory answer was given. Most foreign dignitaries advised Nehru to either release me or to bring regular criminal charges against me. He, therefore, announced at a Security Council meeting that criminal proceedings would soon be started. On his return, he began working towards this objective.

To start this campaign, 'Kashmir Committees' were formed in various cities of India. These committees comprised Muslims and adopted

resolutions supporting the Indian stand. It was amazing, that people living at a distance of thousands of miles from Kashmir, and suffering from a minority complex, were made to testify about Kashmir. This exercise was meant to build world opinion that Indian Muslims supported the policy of the Indian Government. An all India Conference was held at Lucknow which was attended by the Muslim Members of Parliament and of the State Assemblies, and also included Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and his supporters. This too failed to achieve its desired objective.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was not happy at my continuing detention. He often advised Bakshi Sahib to release me. On one pretext or another, however, Bakshi managed to avoid it. Being basically fair minded, Jawaharlal realized that my captivity was due to no fault of mine. On 11 January 1957, he wrote to Karan Singh:

My conscience revolts against detaining anyone without trial. In the past I have often expressed my resentment against it. It goes without saying that I dislike it.

At the same time, he wrote to Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad:

The detention will itself become a strong factor for destabilization, and will create an unpleasant reaction against us inside as well as outside India. Besides, it will also have an adverse effect on Kashmir.

In late December 1957, Jawaharlal visited Srinagar for the first time since my arrest. Addressing a meeting at the residence of the Prime Minister, he said that he had not visited Kashmir since 1953 because he was pained at the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. On 8 January 1958, the Inspector-General of Police, D. W. Mehra, came to meet me and asked me to prepare to leave. He said that orders had been issued to transfer me to the jail at Srinagar. I informed Mehra that under no circumstances would I go beyond Banihal. If he did not want to keep me in Kud he could transfer me to any other jail in Jammu. Mehra threatened to use force! I told him that he was welcome to take my dead body to Srinagar. Mehra reported the situation to the authorities who passed the information to Jawaharlal. Back came the order that I should be set free at Kud. Khwaja Ali Shah,

Sufi Mohammad Akbar and I were released from the jail and shifted to the dak bungalow. Addressing a largely attended press conference, I said that the charges levelled against me should be investigated. If any of the charges was substantiated, I would offer an unconditional apology. I also demanded an inquiry into the sudden death of Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. My old friend Rusi Karanjia, editor of *Blitz* who also came to the press conference, advised me to proceed to Delhi and meet Jawaharlal.

Our release was the result of a well-considered plan. Bakshi wanted us to reach Srinagar in the evening when the city was in the grip of intense cold weather, and so people could not come out of their homes. This would demonstrate to the media, that people had forgotten us. But my refusal to go to Srinagar upset Mehra's carefully wrought plan.

My nephew, Abdul Rasheed, who was travelling from Jammu to Srinagar, met me at Kud. I asked him to send us transportation from Srinagar. On 11 January we left for Srinagar. We spent the night at the Varinag dak bungalow. On our way to Srinagar we were greeted by thousands of people. The Indian press tried to water down the account of their zeal. But the weekly tabloid *Blitz*, of Bombay, gave the lie to them and wrote that Sheikh Abdullah was given the reception of a Roman hero.

During my absence, Bakshi Sahib and Sadiq Sahib had parted company. As a matter of fact, except for the lust for power, they had nothing in common. Along with Sadiq Sahib his comrades D.P. Dhar, Mir Qasim, and others also left the National Conference and set up another party called the Democratic National Conference. Their basic aim was to assume power in Kashmir and gradually extend their influence to the rest of the country. But Bakshi was an expert in upstaging everyone. The Communists broke with him and openly made preparations for a showdown. But they realized that Bakshi would manipulate their departure. Therefore, through the good offices of Jawaharlal, they made up with him.

Sadiq wrote me a letter suggesting that we should unite and forget our differences. One of his sentences was, 'We may have differences regarding details, which can be sorted out in a democratic manner by mutual consultation and frank and free discussion'. Just after my release, Sadiq sent one of his comrades, Moti Lal Misri, who offered me the leadership of a united front against Bakshi. I turned down his offer. At about the same time, Dr Z.A. Ahmad, a Communist leader, arrived in

Srinagar and asked for an appointment. Since he had played a sinister role in 1953, I refused to see him. After three months, in April 1958, I was again arrested. Sadiq condemned my arrest in the following words:

The arrest of Sheikh Sahib has further complicated the Kashmir issue, particularly at a time when he was trying to pacify the people of Kashmir and there was definite improvement in the political situation. This measure is neither just nor fair during peaceful and normal conditions.

Right after I was released, I realized that this was a prelude to a new and prolonged detention. But I could not bring myself to surrendering to oppression. I addressed myself to the people of Kashmir and said that their fate could not be decided either by Karachi, Delhi, Moscow, or Washington. They, the people, were the real masters of Kashmir and only they would decide its fate! I used to hold meetings at different localities. People complained about the autocratic government of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and the high-handedness of the Superintendent of Police, Ghulam Qadir Ganderbali. I advised them to form Civil Defence committees in every locality.

At this time, the martyrdom day of Mahatma Gandhi was observed. Despite the atrocious attitude of India towards me, I held Mahatma Gandhi in the same respect and reverence as before. On the occasion of his death anniversary, I issued a statement in which I said that he was one of the greatest human beings of the modern age who had devoted his life to the struggle for human dignity, truth and non-violence. He showed to the entire world that supreme sacrifice was concomitant to true values. At the end of my statement, I appealed to millions of his devotees to solve the Kashmir problem on the basis of truth and non-violence.

# Chapter 20

## ON A FRAGILE BRANCH NO NEST WILL REST\*

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Much to the dismay of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the people's morale was boosted by my activities. He retaliated by first circulating the rumour that I was enrolling volunteers to stage a rebellion in Kashmir. This was corroborated by the director of the Indian Intelligence and some hired scribes of the Indian press.

On the very day that Maulana Azad, great theologian and freedom fighter, was taken ill, we held a meeting at Hazratbal in which we adopted a resolution to wish him a speedy recovery. Bakshi organized another meeting at the place where the university stands today. This was clearly meant to create tension which could result in a skirmish. As I started speaking at the Hazratbal gathering, a few people tried to create trouble but were promptly chased away. On my way home, I learnt that one of Bakshi's men was stabbed at Hazratbal. The police woke up from their apathy and arrested several people. Government promulgated Section 144 and other punitive laws in the city.

On the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr I left for the *Idgah* in the open jeep. On the way, I was greeted by thousands of people. Despite the intense cold, about three lakh Muslims, including many ladies, congregated at the *Idgah*. Addressing the gathering, I asked them to pray for the safe return

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\* The original line from the couplet by Iqbal is, *Jo shaakh-e-nazuk pe ashiana banega napaayedar hoga.*

of our comrades who were languishing in prison. This popular upsurge compounded the agony of Bakshi, who accelerated his campaign of vilification.

Having consulted my comrades about this situation. I asked Maulvi Mohammad Saeed to proceed to Delhi to release my statement to the press and to meet Jawaharlal Nehru. In a letter, I informed Jawaharlal about the vilification campaign. I wrote that Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was intentionally misrepresenting my activities. Under Article 50 of the Defence of India Rules, all public meetings had been banned and the entire valley had been turned into a graveyard. 'In 1953, he misled you,' I wrote to Nehru, 'which resulted in the traumatic episode of 9th August. Then too, I was accused of plotting with a foreign power to make the State independent but the charge could never be substantiated.' I wrote that I was opposed to the Kashmir policy of the Government of India. I believed, the only correct procedure of solving this problem was that the people of Kashmir should be allowed to use their right of self-determination. I appealed to him to be wary of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad's machinations, which were likely to be disastrous for one and all.

A few days after writing this letter, Vijayalakshmi Pandit visited Kashmir. Some people thought that Jawaharlal had sent her to make an on-the-spot study of the situation. She expressed her wish to meet me at the houseboat where she was staying. When Bakshi got wind of it, he upstaged everyone and arrested me on 29 April 1958.

Maulvi Mohammed Saeed disregarded my instructions by not calling a press conference. He released my statement to the press but did not apprise me about the reactions of Jawaharlal and Maulana Azad. I was lodged at the Kud prison where, a few days later, Maulvi Sahib joined me. I learnt that Maulana Azad had told him, 'Sheikh Abdullah must be helped.' Probably, like Rafi Ahmad Kidwai Sahib, he too was sorry for what had been done. Unfortunately, he died before he could make amends.

Before my arrest, it was rumoured that the government was making preparations to start a conspiracy case. In my speeches, I made several references to this as also to the physical injuries caused to our comrades in detention camps, so that criminal proceedings may be started against them.

After my arrest began the terrorization of ordinary Kashmiris. My comrades were implicated in the Hazratbal murder case. The State



government, with help from the Central Criminal Investigation Department (CID), started preparing a fictitious conspiracy case against us. Jawaharlal called for the conspiracy case file which was examined by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and officials of the CID. Eventually, they gave their permission to file the case. A case was filed under Section 121(A) and 120(B) of the Ranbir Penal Code and under Section 32 of the Security Rules, against Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg and his twenty-five comrades in the court of the Special Magistrate, Jammu—under these sections, life imprisonment and capital punishment were permitted. Pir Maqbool Gilani, one of the twenty-five accused, escaped to Pakistan. First the authorities wanted to implicate both my wife and me in this case, later, they filed an additional charge-sheet against me on 23 October 1958. My wife was not included.

The conspiracy case was started in Jammu. The department's garages were converted into temporary jails. Pandit Nilakanth Hak was appointed as the special judge, and a Calcutta barrister, one Mr Mitra, was appointed the Public Prosecutor. We tried to engage top lawyers for our defence but, under pressure from the government, they all refused. I asked Jawaharlal for help, but nothing was forthcoming. Eventually, we had to engage one Mr Dinglefoot, a famous barrister from London. The prosecution levelled various charges, such as, that we established contact with Pakistan to procure money, arms and bombs and that this was done to start a bloody revolution in Kashmir. Fictitious documents were presented and large sums were paid to individuals who came forward to give false evidence. We attached very little importance to this prosecution because it was based on falsehood and perjury. But it appeared to be a Godsent opportunity to expose the double-dealings of the Indian leaders. As we opened our defence, the political events in India took a sharp turn. The Chinese invasion of 1962 caused India heavy casualties.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was greatly perturbed by the Chinese aggression. The premise of his foreign policy was completely demolished. India's international prestige was tarnished and her integrity questioned. Jawaharlal sought help from various quarters. The United States came to his rescue, and, together with Britain, persuaded Pakistan to desist from any unseemly act. China declared a unilateral ceasefire. When news of the Chinese aggression was received at the Kud prison, I addressed a letter to Jawaharlal, saying that this sudden aggression on our northern borders

had created a critical situation. To meet the challenge, we must be prepared for hardships and sacrifices. Freedom is indivisible, and must be preserved for the entire subcontinent. India must win the confidence of her neighbouring countries.

In jail we made arrangements for sports and played a regular game of badminton every day. But my health did not allow me to continue the sporting activities. In the prison, Eid was an occasion for big celebration. I personally took charge of the kitchen, and invited the entire jail staff to a sumptuous spread. Trays of specially prepared delicacies were distributed among the prisoners. My birthday was celebrated by my friends in the same spirit as the Eid celebration! On that day we all became very emotional. Often I was the one who wiped off their tears and consoled them.

Once, I was visited by the Inspector-General of Police, who asked if I would consider making up with Jawaharlal Nehru. Politely but firmly, I told him to mind his own business and not meddle in affairs that did not concern him. When he insisted I lost my temper and told him off. The subject was never broached again.

In the Jammu jail we heard of Maharaja Hari Singh's death in Bombay. In accordance with his will, his ashes were scattered over Jammu. In his will, he showed a preference for Jammu, the Maharaja forgot that his family and he had ruled over Kashmir for about one hundred years. Not only had they enjoyed its scenic beauty but also exploited its wealth! I was reminded of another great ruler of Kashmir, Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen, who was married to two daughters of the Raja of Jammu. During Dussehra, they expressed their desire to place a tilak on his forehead. Despite being a devout Muslim, the king graciously conceded the Ranis' request—a gesture that projects him as an exemplary secularist.

During our trials we met several interesting people. Once during the interrogations, a prosecution witness, who was a Gujjar from Poonch, was asked which country was dearer to him—Pakistan or India? He replied that to him his buffalo was the dearest! The people in court burst out laughing. In the special jail, time was flying past. My comrades felt that we could not continue to hitch our wagon to a country in which we were treated so badly. I told them that we were wedded to certain ideals, so long as India propagated those we could not snap our ties. The ideals of

socialism, secularism and democracy have no place in Pakistan. We must stay with India and continually work towards our goals.

Some of our comrades had been arrested only due to Bakshi's personal anger. Their only fault was that they had refused to side with him. Cruelly tortured during interrogations, they finally broke down. There is, after all, a limit to human endurance! They were released after tendering their apologies. Later, not only were they reinstated, but were paid all the arrears.

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To produce the drama of the conspiracy case on the Kashmir stage, the two players, 'Bakshi' and 'Delhi' displayed their best talent. It took five years and cost two and a half crore rupees. But falsehood has a rotten core. Their vile accusations were fully exposed before the public, and the case became a joke. The global mood was reflected in the following headline which appeared in the *Observer* (published from London) dated 16 December 1963:

#### Sheikh Abdullah on Trial But India in the Dock

Notwithstanding our differences with Jawaharlal, it must be conceded that he was surrounded by difficulties. He was, in the words of C. Rajagopalachari, 'The most cultured and decent Indian politician of his age.' He was unhappy with the way things were and wanted the conspiracy case to be dropped. In July, during his Kashmir visit, he made his views known to the concerned people. Bakshi's fraud and deceit, however, outwitted Jawaharlal's aspirations.

After the Chinese aggression of 1962, Jawaharlal's health sharply deteriorated. He was witness to the disastrous results of his wrong policies. In foreign affairs, India had been humiliated, and, on the domestic front, his personality was losing its charisma. He tried to turn the tide by sacrificing both V.K. Krishna Menon and General B.N. Kaul. Eventually, he took recourse in a strategy which paid good dividends. He proposed that some senior Cabinet ministers, as well as Chief Ministers should resign from their posts and start working at the party level in order to revitalize the Congress. K. Kamaraj, a Congress leader from Madras,

## *Flames of the Chinar*

presented the formula under which all the Central and State senior ministers were required to hand over their resignations to the Prime Minister of India and the latter was authorized to take appropriate decisions regarding these resignations. Accordingly, Bakshi handed his resignation to the Prime Minister which was promptly accepted.

Bakshi did not want his old rival, G.M. Sadiq, to become the Prime Minister of Kashmir. He, therefore, nominated an unknown puppet, Shamsuddin, for this position and himself continued as Chairman of the Planning Board. The new Prime Minister worked under his instructions. His nephew, Bakshi Abdul Rashid, still ruled the roost and operated the official machinery. Shamsuddin's rotten administration was conducted under their despicable guidance. No one was happy. Neither the Centre nor D.P. Dhar, nor G.M. Sadiq.

On the morning of 27 December 1963, the people of Kashmir received the news that the sacred hair of the Prophet kept at Asaar Sharif at Hazratbal was missing. It happened on a freezing winter night when no one was outside to witness the sacrilege. It was only the next morning that the Imam found the lock broken and the relic missing.

News of the loss spread like wild fire. Despite the harsh winter, thousands of people congregated around the mosque. Protest demonstrations paralysed the government. Bakshi Abdul Rashid tried to stem the tide of fury, but the frenzied mob burnt down a cinema hall and a hotel owned by the Bakshi brothers. They also burnt down the radio station which had been transmitting disinformation about Kashmir to the Indian public for the last ten years. In Delhi this ominous situation created panic. Nehru was distraught. He sent Bakshi to take control of the situation, but when the people found out that he had reached Srinagar they attacked his residence. The Indian Army rushed to his rescue. Several people were killed in the fray.

Nehru tried his best to tackle the worsening situation. He seriously thought about imposing President's Rule, but deferred the idea because it would have meant installing the 'Sadr-e-Riasat', Karan Singh, which would have been unacceptable to the people. On 4 February 1964, B.N. Malik, Nehru's representative sent to report on the situation, announced that the sacred relic had been recovered. The sacred relic agitation strained the already over-wrought nerves of Jawaharlal. He knew fully well that the factors behind this agitation were not just

religious, but predominantly political. The relic agitation swept away not only Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad but also his puppet Shamsuddin. Jawaharlal sent his envoy Lal Bahadur Shastri to Jammu, who removed him from the post of Prime Minister. A meeting of the ruling party was held at the residence of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, and G.M. Sadiq was elected leader of the Parliamentary Party. Delhi was satisfied with the new dispensation and wanted to be credited with our release. One day after the sacred relic was recovered, Nehru suffered his stroke in Bhubaneswar where he had gone to attend a Congress session. He never fully recovered from this stroke, although he lived for five more months. At the end he was a shadow of his former self.

People had serious doubts about the genuineness of the recovered relic. It was a volatile situation. Fortunately, Maulana Saeed Masoodi saved the situation by producing the testimony of Syed Mirak Shah Kashani and some other theologians who testified to its genuineness. The Central Government announced in the Parliament that the real culprits had been identified, Mujawer Rahim Shah Bande, and a petty government servant, Abdul Rasheed. To this day nobody knows what really happened!

From behind the bars we were watching these tragic incidents. From its very inception, I was associated with the construction of Hazratbal. I knew that it was the symbol of the unity of the Muslims of Kashmir and any harm to this sacred edifice would amount to their disintegration. We, therefore, protested against these incidents, and sent a telegram to Jawaharlal Nehru requesting him to order an inquiry into the whole affair and bring the guilty to book. I also wrote to the President of India, Dr S. Radhakrishnan:

Maulvi Mohammad Farooq appeared for the first time on the political scene, in connection with the sacred relic incident. Two years prior to this incident, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, in a political move, had elevated him to the position of Mirwaiz. Now, Maulvi Mohammad Saeed formed an action committee to channelize the popular upsurge and appointed Farooq as its chairman. He believed that Kashmir should be led by the theologians, but the theologians were themselves disunited. Maulvi Farooq wanted to use the theological platform for personal glory. When he failed in his efforts he formed another organization called Awami Action Committee.

As stated earlier, the sacred relic agitation in Kashmir had shaken the seat of power in Delhi. Jawaharlal Nehru had realized that the people of Kashmir could neither be bought nor intimidated. He, therefore, wanted to apply a healing touch at the political level. B.N. Malik while narrating the proceedings of the meeting of an emergency sub-committee of the Central Cabinet, described the feelings of Pandit Nehru:

The Prime Minister said that after being associated with us for a period of over fifteen years, if Kashmir is so destabilised that an ordinary incident of the theft of a relic provokes the people to the extent of trying to overthrow the government, it is time to adopt a new approach and to bring about a revolutionary change in our viewpoint. He ruefully admitted that even after having done so much for the people of Kashmir, they were not satisfied. The PM stressed that Sheikh Abdullah was still popular, and in the changed situation of Kashmir no political accord was possible without his participation.

Meanwhile, several Members of Parliament pressed for my release. One day, Jawaharlal called the Home Minister, Gulzari Lal Nanda, and inquired about the conspiracy case. Gulzari Lal Nanda did not want the case withdrawn. Jawaharlal lost his temper, and, throwing the case file at him, said, 'Let the file go to hell. I want Sheikh Abdullah to be released.'

When we reached the court on 8 April 1964 we were informed that the conspiracy case had been withdrawn and we were honourably acquitted. When Beg Sahib, Sufi Mohammad Akbar, Khwaja Ali Shah, and others, stepped out there was a change in the scenario. Friends from Jammu and other far-off places had gathered to welcome us at the prison gate. A special emissary of Jawaharlal Nehru's gave me his letter in which he had invited me to Delhi as his personal guest. But I first wanted to visit Srinagar.

From the prison we were taken in a procession to the dak bungalow. That evening, the new Prime Minister, Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, called on us. This was the first time we met him after 1953. People were celebrating our release by lighting diyas in the city. The changed attitude of the Indian Government was reflected in the news broadcasts from the Delhi and Srinagar stations of the All India Radio.



## *Flames of the Chinar*

**In Jammu, I visited Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad to condole the death of his mother. It was our first meeting after eleven years. Next day, the citizens of Jammu gave me a reception which was attended by Sadiq, Bakshi, Pandit Prem Nath Dogra and many other old friends and acquaintances. I said:**

**Forgetting our past differences let us start a new phase in Kashmir and try to bring India and Pakistan nearer each other. The well-being of India, Pakistan and Kashmir depends on our mutual good relations.**

**A thaw set in in the frozen political situation of Kashmir. Old bitterness was forgotten in an effort to usher in a new phase. From Jammu we returned to the valley on 17 April. Newspaper correspondents, photographers and television teams accompanied us. In the evening, when I reached Mujahid Manzil, there was a huge crowd of men and women who had gathered to welcome me. Next day, a reception was organized at Huzoori Bagh. Addressing the gathering I said:**

**So long as India and Pakistan do not resolve their differences, the Kashmir skein will remain tangled up. It is, therefore, in the interest, not only of the people of Kashmir, but those of India and Pakistan as well, that they should learn to live like good neighbours. I believe nature has preserved me for this purpose.**

# Chapter 21

## THE MULLA AND THE MUJAHID

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The family of Mirwaiz had differences with me at a personal level as well as with our liberation movement. This family became prominent at the end of the nineteenth century, when two emigrants from Taral, started sermonizing at different mosques and shrines of Srinagar. One of them settled in Razverikadal and came to be known as Mirwaiz-e-Kalan or Senior Mirwaiz and the other at Kallashpura and was referred to as Mirwaiz-e-Khurd or Junior Mirwaiz or Mirwaiz-e-Hamadani. The followers of Mirwaiz-e-Kalan were known as Kota and those of Mirwaiz-e-Hamadani as Kozika, both were at loggerheads regarding the most trifling matters. The Mirwaiz of Razverikadal started calling himself Mirwaiz of Kashmir but, for all practical purposes, his influence was limited to certain suburban localities. The first member of this family, deserving mention, was Mohammad Yahya. His son founded the Nusrat-ul-Islam School. His successor Mirwaiz Ahmadullah was universally respected, and had access to the Maharaja. Yusuf Shah became the next Mirwaiz after the death of Mirwaiz Ahmadullah. He was a good simple-hearted man who turned against me thanks to the influence of his companions.

In 1931, when I was arrested a second time by the Dogra government, the people of the valley raised their unified voices in protest. Raja Hari Krishan Kaul had taken over as Prime Minister just a few days before. He did not arrest the Mirwaiz, instead he employed the time-tested strategy of sycophancy, assuring Mirwaiz that next to the Maharaja he was the



most respected person. He succeeded in obtaining his signature on a telegram sent to the Viceroy, expressing the full confidence of the Muslims in the rule of the Maharaja. When I was released from prison, the Mirwaiz advised me to keep my lips sealed. My refusal to do so made him very angry.

In October 1933, the first session of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was held at the Pather Masjid, where I was elected President. Friends and companions of the Mirwaiz described it as an affront to him. He dropped out of the Muslim Conference, and, at the behest of the Dogra government, organized the Azad Muslim Conference, to safeguard the interests of the Maharaja and his coterie.

In 1947, after the partition of the country, when Pakistan was making plans for the invasion of Kashmir, some emissaries of Pakistan met the Mirwaiz and asked him to welcome the Pakistani armies in Srinagar. He was also advised to migrate to Pakistan so that he could return along with the Pakistani troops. Under cover of darkness, Maulvi Sahib fled to Pakistan. But his family was left behind in Srinagar. Later, we permitted his wife and children also to emigrate to Pakistan.

To win popular support, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad appointed Maulvi Farooq, a young boy who was about fourteen years old, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir. He was given government patronage and lavish financial assistance. By the year 1953, Maulvi Masoodi was also hand in glove with Bakshi. Not only did he support him in the matter of my arrest but also advised him regarding the formation of the new ministry. When not inducted in the Cabinet he became angry with Bakshi, and to spite him, appointed Maulvi Farooq as the President of the Awami Action Committee. Some circles in Delhi also supported the Maulvi, who responded by showing abject obedience.

When we entered into the Kashmir Accord in 1975 with the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, Maulvi Farooq, at the behest of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, took part in organizing and leading a strike. When power was returned to us, he forgot all about the Accord, and joined the Congress leaders in their campaign of character assassination. His statements were given wide publicity by Delhi and Srinagar radio stations, and ultimately he came very close to the Congress circles. In 1977, however, when the Congress was wiped out in north India and removed from the Centre,

*Flames of the Chinar*

Maulvi Farooq felt no twinge of conscience in joining the Janata band-wagon! Without going into the details of his nefarious activities, it suffices to say that Maulvi Farooq more than fulfilled the expectations and hopes of his political tutors, Bakshi and Masoodi.



# Chapter 22

## LAST MEETING WITH JAWAHARLAL

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After spending a few days in Srinagar, Beg Sahib and I visited Delhi on the invitation of Jawaharlal. We were received by Indira Gandhi and others at the Palam airport and from there were directly driven to the Teen Murti Bhavan where Panditji cordially received us. I was meeting him after about eleven years. He was a changed man. The stroke he had suffered in Bhubaneshwar had left a lasting effect on him.

*Koi dam ka mehmaan hoon ahl-e-mehfil  
Chirgah-e-sahar hoon bujha chahta hoon*

(Oh people of the mehfil, I have a few breaths remaining  
Like the lamp of the dawn, I want to be extinguished.)

After posing for a few photographs in the veranda, we returned to his room on the first floor. Panditji expressed his deep anguish and sorrow at the past incidents. I also became very emotional and told him that I was glad to have convinced him that I was not disloyal to him personally or to India. 'India is facing huge problems which, if not resolved in your lifetime, will become excessively complex. Let us, therefore, devote the remainder of our lives to finding solutions.' I drew his attention towards improving our relations with our neighbours, particularly Pakistan, I implored him to take the initiative in resolving the Kashmir problem. Panditji agreed and asked me to visit Pakistan and try to persuade the

## *Flames of the Chinar*

President, Ayub Khan, to enter into negotiations with his Indian counterpart. Since his health did not permit him to visit Pakistan he wanted Ayub Khan to visit Delhi. I was convinced of Panditji's sincerity and forthrightness and so, I agreed to go.

While we were engaged in talks at Delhi, Ayub Khan's telegrams were received by Jawaharlal and myself stating that Pakistan was still a contender for Kashmir and any decision taken without his being party to it would not be binding on Pakistan. This was an indirect invitation which removed all impediments and I started preparing for the trip.

Before that, however, I visited Madras to seek the blessings of C. Rajagopalachari for my highly sensitive mission, and the Poona Ashram to meet Acharya Vinoba Bhave. I also saw my old friend Jayaprakash Narayan, President Dr Radhakrishnan and, Vice-President Dr Zakir Hussain. Meanwhile, Panditji continued his heavy schedule of engagements. He attended and addressed the session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) held in Bombay on 15 May 1964. It was his last speech. I met him again after his return from Bombay. He wanted to proceed to Dehradun to rest. We went to see him off at the airport and the next day I left for Rawalpindi. Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, Maulvi Mohammad Saeed Masoodi, Khwaja Mubarak Shah (Baramulla), Khwaja Mubarak Shah Naqshbandi, Chaudhri Mohammad Shafi Beghseri and my son Farooq, plus a few journalists, accompanied me on this mission. Before leaving for Pakistan I issued a press statement:

Deterioration in the relations between both countries has resulted in permanent tension which at times assumes the proportions of a collision course and fratricidal conflict. The minorities of both countries are the worst sufferers. India and Pakistan are rapidly distancing themselves from each other. If this trend is not arrested, it will upset the balance of power in Asia and the whole of the subcontinent will be engulfed in flames. We are faced with an alarming situation. If we fail to remedy it our future generations will never pardon us. The leaders of both countries should not only arrest the deterioration in our mutual relations but should also seek and act upon measures to improve them. In this context, the Kashmiri problem is a long-standing bone of contention. We must

endeavour to defuse the situation and find a mutually acceptable solution of this problem. It goes without saying that the solution should be such that neither country should have the feeling of being outmatched nor should it weaken the foundations of Indian secularism. Further, it should bring about complete freedom of the people of state and grant them a respectable status. I will carry this message to President Ayub Khan and other leaders of Pakistan.

A crowd had assembled at the Chaklala airport of Rawalpindi. I spotted Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah who cordially embraced me. There were some other friends like Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas Khan. To represent him, the President of Pakistan, Ayub Khan had sent his young Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. After driving along roads which were lined with cheering crowds we reached the government guest-house. In the evening, our first stop was the Presidential Palace where we called on Field Marshal Ayub Khan. I presented him with a musical instrument called santoor which has a hundred strings and was introduced in Kashmir by the Muslims.

President Ayub Khan gave a patient hearing to my account of the Kashmir problem, and conceded that his country had made some mistakes, but at the same time, stressed that Confederation was no remedy. I was startled by his remark and said, 'I have said nothing about Confederation. I only want you and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to sit together and exchange views regarding all those proposals that have been put across to resolve this problem including the one about Confederation.' But President Ayub Khan continued to harp on Confederation. Later in his book published in 1967, he misrepresented my views. I, therefore, wrote him a letter dated 1 September 1967, setting the record straight.

The views expressed in your book regarding Confederation contain certain contradictions. May I request you to recall the conversation that I had with you . . . . We had not taken with us any cut and dried proposal regarding Kashmir, and as a matter of fact, Jawaharlal Nehru had not asked us to put across any particular proposal. I wanted to stress the fact that both the

parties should abstain from rigid attitudes and sympathetically consider each other's viewpoint.

Reverting to the above account of my talks with President Ayub Khan, I asked him to consider the proposals and select the ones that, after proper amendments, could be included on the agenda. I added that this exercise, may lead to the lessening of tension. President Ayub Khan agreed with my suggestions and decided to visit Delhi. The date of the summit was fixed. Immediately, I informed Delhi that the meeting was tentatively fixed for June. Having successfully completed my mission, I could now look forward to the summit meeting.

In Rawalpindi, I addressed a press conference and explained the *raison d'etre* of my visit. I announced that the President of Pakistan had accepted the invitation to visit Delhi and meet the Prime Minister of India. While I was there, I called on Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah. It seemed that he was not happy in Pakistan. I also called on Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas. Since there was no time for political discussions, we had to be content with formalities.

Meanwhile, I had received several invitations from various cities of Pakistan, but my first priority was Muzaffarabad because it was the headquarters of the Kashmiri refugees. I left for Muzaffarabad on 27 May 1964. Several Pakistani friends and press reporters accompanied me. On our way to Muzaffarabad we received the devastating news of the death of Jawaharlal Nehru. The same evening we returned to Rawalpindi and met Field Marshal Ayub Khan. I advised him to send a high-ranking official delegation to represent Pakistan at Jawaharlal Nehru's funeral. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was deputed by him, and he flew with us to Delhi. President Ayub Khan had a magnetic personality. I felt that he was destined to lead Pakistan out of turmoil, but with the passage of time he became surrounded by sycophants who distanced him from the common people. This led to his downfall and the fragmentation of Pakistan.

On the contrary, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was brought up in a different environment. His father was a seasoned politician, whose entire life was spent in tackling moves on the political chessboard, his influence had filtered downward to his progeny. Whenever we met he gave the impression of being a very quiet person but that was a mask he had drawn over his real face to hide his own aspirations.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

From Palam airport we drove straight to Teen Murti Bhavan. The place was full of mourners. I went to the room where the mortal remains of Jawaharlal Nehru were wrapped in the tri-colour—I broke down. With his death a glorious chapter in Indian history came to an end. I was present in Shantivan where his last rites were performed. Britain was represented by Lord Mountbatten, and the Soviet Union by Alexei Kosygin. Bakshi and Sadiq had come from Srinagar. Many other world dignitaries were there. As per his desire I brought a few of his ashes with me to Srinagar and immersed them at the confluence of the Indus and the Jhelum. I also addressed a well-attended condolence meeting at Pratap Park.

After the death of Jawaharlal, a senior minister, Gulzari Lal Nanda, was sworn in as caretaker Prime Minister. But ultimately the die was cast in favour of Lal Bahadur Shastri. He was a gentle person and a moderate statesman. Like Jawaharlal, he also wanted to improve relations with Pakistan but Gulzari Lal Nanda was apparently not in favour of this as he wanted to accelerate the process of accession of Kashmir to India and this process was therefore slowed down.

Meanwhile, the struggle for power between Sadiq and Bakshi became more acute. Bakshi, once again, tried to gain power. He exhibited his extraordinary skill at political manoeuvring by winning, overnight the majority of the members of the State Assembly. His intention to move a motion of 'No Confidence' against my government was forestalled by D.P. Dhar, Dr Karan Singh and Vishnu Sahay. Early next morning, he was arrested and confined in the Tara Nivas Palace of Udhampur where eleven years ago he had interned me.

*Uljha hai paon yaar ka zulf-e-daraz mein.  
Lo aap apne daam mein saiyaad aa gaya*

(Caught in the tangles of her own tresses  
Behold! The hunter has fallen into her own snare!)

The very same morning the session of the State Assembly was prorogued and a commission was appointed to inquire into the charges of corruption and maladministration levelled against Bakshi. In prison, Bakshi Sahib suffered a heart-attack and was promptly released. He spent the remaining

## *Flames of the Chinar*

few years of his life as a broken-hearted recluse and eventually died a tormented and bitter man.

A few months after the death of Jawaharlal, when the government was once again firmly in the saddle, I visited Delhi and met the Prime Minister and some other Central leaders. The atmosphere at Delhi had changed and the Kashmir issue was, once again, pushed to the background. Shastri was very cordial and it seemed he was keen to complete the work initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru. But he lacked Nehru's popular appeal, and did not have the strength to bring his colleagues round to his viewpoint.



# Chapter 23

## BANISHMENT AND RETURN

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Meanwhile, my wife and I decided to fulfil the tenets of Islam which have been ordained for all Muslims—the performance of Haj. We left Srinagar in the first week of February 1965. The party consisted of my wife, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, Pir Abdul Ghani and a cook, Ghulam Mohammad. After *Tawaf-e-Kaaba* we wanted to visit some of the Islamic countries. Our itinerary included Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. We also wanted to tour Britain and France. I was most gratified that despite the efforts of the Foreign Ministry we were courteously received in all the countries and all the facilities meant for official guests were made available to us. In this context, I vividly remember my meeting with the then President of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who expressed his surprise at the fact that the Indian diplomats had tried to persuade him not to meet us. President Nasser had a simple but most attractive personality. We also met Anwar Sadat, the Speaker of the Legislature, and Sheikh-Azam of the Al Azhar University. We called on Mohammad Hussain Haikel, chief-editor of Egypt's most popular paper, *Al Ahrām*, regarded the top journalist in the Arab world. In Saudi Arabia we had an audience with the late King Faisal, who frankly expressed his support for the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people. One of the most important Haj ceremonies is the washing of the Kaaba. King Faisal gave special permission for us to be present at the time.

We also met some of our Pakistani friends. One of our old friends, Pir Mohammad Gilani came especially to meet us. He expressed his

intense desire to be back in his own homeland. This was to be our last meeting with him since he died shortly afterwards. During our stay in Mecca we also attended the International Islamic Conference. Although we had no official status we were still invited as freedom fighters. The conference was inaugurated by King Faisal and presided over by Prince Abdul Aziz. When the problems of the Indian Muslims were discussed, I intervened and asserted that the Indian Muslims wanted their complete involvement in the affairs of their country and had consistently supported secularism. Although it was resented by the representatives of certain countries, the conference accepted my suggestion that no reference regarding the Indian Muslims be made. A sub-committee was formed to strengthen the liberation movement in various countries and I was appointed one of its members.

In Algeria, we were given an official status. We met various leaders including the then President, Ahmad Ben Bella. The day after our arrival in Algeria, the Prime Minister of China, Chou-En-Lai, cordially shook hands with me and asked us to visit him that evening. When we met later, we asked him certain questions regarding China's understanding with Pakistan *vis-à-vis* Gilgit which was a part of Kashmir State. His only answer was, 'China wants to have good relations with the neighbouring countries. It therefore wants to settle all disputes, including the border ones, amicably. At present, Gilgit is under the control of Pakistan and, therefore, we entered into an agreement stipulating that the agreement shall remain valid only as long as Gilgit is under the control of Pakistan. In case the situation changes and India or any other country gets control over Gilgit the treaty can be suitably modified.'

We discussed China-India relations. He accused India of expansionism, asserting that China was not expansionist. It was a huge country which had no desire or inclination to grab fresh territory. He also quoted certain excerpts from Nehru's writings and said that Nehru clearly upheld expansionism and wanted to revive old Hindu imperialism—extending upto Java and Sumatra. Chou-En-Lai was a very intelligent person, and at this point changed the topic and asked us if we had ever visited China. Surprised that we had not, he cordially invited us to visit his country.

I sent the summary of our conversation with Chou-En-Lai to the Indian Ambassador to China. Meanwhile, the media persons had

transmitted the news of Chou-En-Lai's invitation to visit Peking which was broadcast by the Peking radio and splashed all over newspapers by the Western media. This was resented by the Indian authorities. Many charges were levelled against us inside and outside the Parliament and we became the butt of every kind of fulmination.

In London we made no effort to meet the Prime Minister or any other dignitary. But many receptions were organized for us by various institutions and organizations. The British press highlighted our visit. There are thousands of Kashmiris in Britain who went there in search of employment or higher education. Through their hard work they have gathered wealth and are very influential in Birmingham, Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester, and other industrial towns. They invited us to visit various cities and gave us rousing receptions.

Meanwhile, the extremists in India had fabricated baseless stories about us. The Indian High Commissioner, Dr Jivraj Mehta summoned us to his office and told us that we were running a campaign against India. I told him that our daily activities had been reported in the press and our meetings were covered by the Indian correspondents. We wanted him to provide some proof for this accusation, which he could not furnish.

In India, a vilification campaign was started against us under a well-planned conspiracy with a view to distorting our image and creating a psychological environment in which harsh measures may be used against us. In Kashmir, police action had started against the Plebiscite Front. Before leaving for Haj I had asked the people for a social boycott against the black sheep of the State who were a parasitic species. People carried out my directions and these individuals were ostracized. This movement was identical to the Non-cooperation movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi and was therefore essentially non-violent. Gulzari Lal Nanda however, was reportedly not in favour of the movement as a result of which it faced problems.

The Indian Embassy informed us that unless we returned to India immediately our passports would be cancelled. We, therefore, decided to return. The moment we landed in Delhi we were surrounded by a police party and Beg Sahib and myself were whisked away to Bangalore in another plane. My wife and two friends were allowed to enter Delhi. At the same time harsh orders were promulgated in Kashmir. A dozen newspapers were banned and a number of people arrested. The protesters

## *Flames of the Chinar*

were beaten up and fired upon. Maulvi Mohammad Saeed Masoodi and Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra were badly injured and had to be hospitalized.

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From Bangalore we were driven to Ootacamund. *En route*, we visited Tipu Sultan's grave and by evening we were in Ooty. I was permitted to move about within the Ooty municipal limits. A minister suggested that I be moved to Kodaikanal for maximum security. In Ooty, a Kashmiri was arrested for greeting me. I was moved to Kodaikanal and lodged in a bungalow called 'Kohinoor'. My wife was permitted to join me, and our children were also allowed to visit us occasionally.

During the second week of August 1965 we received the news that Pakistan had sent raiders to Kashmir. The State was in turmoil and the Government of India had to rush armed forces to curb the insurgency. Luckily I was away, otherwise my detractors would have accused me of fomenting trouble. I spent about three years in Kodaikanal. An important visitor who came to see me was Jayaprakash Narayan. Kodaikanal is a beautiful, small town. Teachers of a convent located near 'Kohinoor' were very helpful but I was not allowed to meet anybody. Once the famous filmstar, Dilip Kumar, spoke to me at a function but he had to answer for it. Due to lack of exercise my blood sugar shot up and I had to be rushed to Delhi to be hospitalized. After being discharged, I was once again detained in 3 Kotla Lane, New Delhi.

Meanwhile, war had broken out between India and Pakistan. In 1966, through the good offices of the erstwhile Soviet Union, the Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri and the President of Pakistan, Ayub Khan agreed to negotiate for peace in Tashkent. At long last an agreement was reached but soon after, Lal Bahadur Shastri suffered a massive heart attack and died. After his death, Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister of India.

In 1967, a farce called 'general elections' was staged in Kashmir. After the elections, on 2 January 1968, I was released from detention and a few days later I called on Indira Gandhi whom I had known as the daughter of my friend, Jawaharlal Nehru. Within two years she had created an impact on the nation. She had an independent temperament, excellent administrative ability and political sagacity. I had a detailed discussion with her about my view of the Kashmir problem. I was

prepared to take up where Nehru had left off. But the Government of India did not seem interested. On 4 March I left for Srinagar. The people of Kashmir extended the usual warm welcome. I started a tour of Kashmir and assured the people that the time was not far when we would hold regular elections and the real sovereign power would devolve on them.

A new phase of our liberation movement had begun. We revamped our organization and I attended to the reconstruction of Hazratbal. On my birthday, I was presented with a purse which I earmarked for the construction of a hospital in Srinagar. The master plans for a medical institute were approved, for which the government gave us full support. Charitable endowments in the urban and rural centres, needed to be reorganized. Several mosques, shops, and residential quarters were constructed in Kashmir. In the political arena, besides strengthening the Plebiscite Front we convened a People's Convention in which intellectuals and representatives of various parties were invited. Jayaprakash Narayan inaugurated the Convention at which I was elected President. This Convention resulted in lessening the social and personal tensions prevalent among the people. That night, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad invited all the delegates to dinner. Next day, a public meeting was held at Huzoori Bagh. Addressing the meeting, I expressed my support for the people's right of self-determination, a stance which was resented by Jayaprakash Narayan.

Meanwhile, mid-term elections were announced amidst the usual unrest and turmoil. Civil war had broken out between East and West Pakistan. In East Pakistan the Indian Army was fighting face to face with Pakistani forces. We decided to jump into the election fray.

I was almost killed because the plane on which I was to travel from Delhi to Srinagar had a bomb planted. The flight was duly cancelled. The next morning, we were informed that there was a ban on our entry into Kashmir. The Home Ministry declared the Plebiscite Front unlawful, and a number of its workers were arrested. Beg Sahib was exiled from the State. It was obvious that their real objective was to exclude the Plebiscite Front from contesting the elections. We were keen to contest and still tried to persuade our sympathizers to jump in. We helped Shameem Ahmed Shameem to contest against Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. It was symbolic that Bakshi Sahib, who had ruled Kashmir for seventeen years and basked in the support of the Centre, was badly beaten.

# Chapter 24

## THE SECOND ASSAULT

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The situation in Pakistan further deteriorated and a new phase of detention and banishment commenced. A civil war had started in East Pakistan in which India was fully involved. Meanwhile, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was visiting some of the places in India where communal violence had erupted and I met him for the first time since Partition. Although he had become very frail, his mind was still very alert. Wherever he went he was accorded a hero's reception. At a public meeting in Delhi, he expressed his grief and sorrow at the corrupt practices of the politicians. Inspired by his words, a new organization was formed with Jayaprakash Narayan as President and myself as Vice-President, in the hope that it would expunge the society of communal poison. Unfortunately, all of this was wiped out by the war of 1971. After spending a few weeks in India, Badshah Khan returned to Kabul.

Communal disturbances are offences against all humanity in which mostly innocents are killed. In 1931, the Kashmir movement was essentially a Muslim movement but we did not allow it to disturb our communal harmony. In 1947, we protected the Kashmiri Pandits and other non-Muslims. After 1953, I worked hard to maintain cordial relations among various communities. Mahatma Gandhi's supreme sacrifice temporarily improved the communal situation in the rest of the country. But it was to recur again and again. We strove to save Kashmir from the inevitable fallout of the two-nation theory. Even Mohammed Ali Jinnah, chief torch-bearer of the two-nation theory, was aware of the dangers of

this campaign of hatred. The day after Pakistan came into existence, he announced that there would be no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. Obviously, Jinnah had to accept the truism that mutual hatred cannot form the basis for national reconstruction.

The crisis in East Pakistan in 1971, led to a horrific shooting match between India and Pakistan in which Pakistan was routed. President Yahya Khan of Pakistan stepped down and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto assumed power. Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, Chief Minister of Kashmir, died the same year and was succeeded by Syed Mir Qasim. At Shimla, Indira Gandhi met Bhutto and signed the Shimla Agreement in 1972. Elections were held for the Kashmir State Assembly. Since our organization, the National Conference was still considered illegal, we could not contest.

I assured the Centre that we had no differences with them regarding accession. We only wanted Article 370 to be maintained in its original form. I said I was prepared to enter into negotiations with Indira Gandhi. Her Principal Secretary, P. N. Haksar, came to see me and fixed a date for our meeting. Our talks proved most useful. Restrictions were removed from the Plebiscite Front, and my wife and Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg were allowed to enter Kashmir. On 5 June 1972, I was released from prison. Several meetings were held between Indira Gandhi and myself. Arriving in Srinagar on 19 June I addressed a public meeting at Huzoori Bagh, at which I informed the people of my talks with Indira Gandhi. The meeting nominated Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg for further negotiations with the Prime Minister's representative, G. Parthasarathi.

Our readiness to come to the negotiating table did not imply a change in our objectives but a change in our strategy. During the course of our prolonged discussions, I held several meetings with the Prime Minister and other important leaders. It pained me that the Prime Minister was not prepared to dissolve the State Assembly and hold fresh elections. Our talks ended in February 1975, with both representatives reporting back to their principals. After that I had another meeting with Indira Gandhi and signed the 'Kashmir Accord'. This moment marked the beginning of a new phase in our political movement. On 24 February 1975, I left Delhi for Jammu. A large crowd had assembled at the railway station to welcome me. That same evening, a special meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party was held in the office of the Chief Minister, at which

I was unanimously elected leader. Dev Kant Barooah, President of the Indian National Congress, also attended the meeting.

During negotiations for the Kashmir Accord I had made it clear to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that our new political phase demanded fair and free elections. She was unwilling to give her consent, and, for the time being, only wanted the Congress Parliamentary Party to elect me as its leader. Forgetting my past experiences I agreed to cooperate with the Congress, but soon had to regret my decision.

Documents of the Kashmir Accord were presented in the Parliament and approved by the House. The All India Radio viewed this as a great achievement of the Congress Party, an angle which was rather disquieting. Still, Mirza Mohammed Afzal Beg and I, took an oath of allegiance. On the very same day a meeting of the new Cabinet was held in which we decided to reorganize the administrative set up. After a few days in Jammu, a few members of the Cabinet and I, left for Srinagar. On 3 March we crossed Banihal. A well-attended public meeting was held at Lal Chowk which was described by the local press as the 'greatest gathering'.

After taking stock of the existing situation, we decided to introduce certain reforms. A Development Review Committee was set up under the presidentship of the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Laxmi Kant Jha, and some eminent economists as its members. In the light of the arrest, the system of subsidized rice had been introduced in the State. The Government of India supplied rice to the State at rates lower than the purchase price. I considered this subsidy both apolitical and amoral, and decided to put an immediate stop to it. We consulted all the political parties, including the Congress, and all of them were supportive. But the local Congressmen did their best to incite the people against us, even after they learnt that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had put her stamp of approval on our decision.

After some time, I expanded the Cabinet, inducting some ministers of state and deputy-ministers. We decided to revive the National Conference and invited Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, the President of Plebiscite Front, and the leader of the Provincial Congress, Syed Mir Qasim to join it. Activitists of the Plebiscite Front responded positively and joined the National Conference. But the leaders of the Provincial Congress saw this arrangement as a passing phase, and turned down my invitation. During this time, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Srinagar



and advised the local Congress leaders to keep the organization alive and functioning.

The reorganization of the National Conference perturbed the workers of the Provincial Congress and they intensified their campaign against the government and the National Conference. Echoes of this activity were heard in Delhi. The Congress high command tried to resolve it by shifting some leaders of the Congress to Delhi and inducting them into the Central Cabinet. It was also agreed that some leaders of the National Conference would be inducted into the Central Cabinet and I, in return, would include some selected Congress leaders in my Cabinet. But the Congress leaders of my choice were not allowed to join my team of ministers. Another reason for the inter-party dispute was the Srinagar Municipal Corporation election. We offered five seats to the Congress but they were not satisfied. On 24 October, a meeting was held in Delhi under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister and included Dev Kant Barooah, Om Mehta, Mir Qasim and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. Certain decisions were taken which amounted to a volte-face. I refused point blank to compromise my position. On 30 October a public meeting was held at Charrar Sharif. While addressing the meeting, I warned the Government of India that neither would we allow anyone to tinker with our destiny in the name of an 'accord', nor would we permit ourselves to be pressurized into wrong decisions. I further declared that, as a gesture of goodwill, I had agreed to include some Congress leaders in the Cabinet. But in view of their obstinacy, I said that the Cabinet would not be expanded.

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When Justice Jagmohan Sinha of the Allahabad High Court delivered his judgement against Indira Gandhi on 12 June 1975, President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was in Srinagar. The same day news was received of the death of Durga Prasad Dhar, the Ambassador of India to the erstwhile Soviet Union, and that his dead body was being flown to Srinagar. After attending his last rites, when I reached Delhi on 14 June I felt the full impact of the Emergency. Indira Gandhi told me that the Opposition had been playing an anti-national role. Despite my political differences with Jayaprakash Narayan and Morarji Desai, I could never regard their roles to be

anti-national. To my mind their arrest and detention was a traumatic episode in Indian history.

In Kashmir, the impact of the Emergency was marginal. Although as a unit of the federation we had to fall in line with the rest of the country, still Emergency was not strictly imposed in Kashmir, particularly censorship of the print media. This was resented by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting at the Centre. Shameem Ahmed Shameem represented Srinagar in Parliament, and was considered my spokesman. He vehemently opposed Emergency; the Central Government wanted to lock him up but when they consulted me I staunchly opposed the idea.

In May 1976, when I reached Delhi, the Chairman of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), Mr Jagmohan, took me to several rehabilitation colonies. In Khichripur I saw hundreds of homeless people huddled together in inhospitable open grounds. Jagmohan could not give me any plausible explanation for these deplorable conditions. In Khichripur some people told me about the atrocities they had suffered at Turkman Gate. I then visited Turkman Gate where a crowd assembled around me, I heard their stories and tried my best to offer consolation. At the time of the Emergency, Indira Gandhi had said that a bitter medicine was needed to restore the political health of the country. But with the passage of time the atmosphere became more and more vitiated. Mr Shashi Bhushan, MP, came to Srinagar, and, in a meeting of Congress workers, advised me to condemn Jayaprakash Narayan. I not only refused to do it but expressed my admiration for his role in our liberation movement. This was greatly resented by the torch-bearers of the Emergency.

In January 1977, Indira Gandhi dissolved the Parliament and announced fresh elections. I heard her announcement in Patna where I had gone to take part in the 400th celebration of the coronation of the last independent king of Kashmir, Sultan Yusuf Shah Chak. I also called upon Jayaprakash Narayan and discussed the political situation with him. From Patna I went to Delhi to meet Indira Gandhi who proposed an electoral understanding between the National Conference and the Congress. There were six Parliamentary constituencies in the State. We agreed to allot three seats each to the National Conference and the Congress. My wife was selected as the National Conference candidate from Srinagar. The Congress workers, however, were secretly against all the National Conference candidates including my wife.

In the elections, the ruling Congress party suffered a crushing defeat, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, her son Sanjay, and many other stalwarts were routed. In north India the Congress was almost wiped out. When it became obvious that the Janata Party would form the government at the Centre, the leaders of the State Congress party conspired to capture power in Kashmir. A petition was submitted to the governor declaring that they had lost confidence in me. At that time I was in Delhi, where I then approached the new Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, and asked him to dissolve the State Assembly and hold fresh elections. After prolonged discussions he agreed, and, on 27 March 1977, the governor dissolved the Assembly and called for another election.

For the first time the State came under governor's rule. What strange means nature uses to balance itself! It was the chicanery of the Congress leaders which paved the way for the elections. As I have indicated earlier, I had often asked Indira Gandhi to call for elections but quickly she had turned me down. In the election which was now called, not only were the State Congress stalwarts thrown out, the fake organization called 'State Congress' was entirely wiped out.

After the imposition of governor's rule we had to face enormous difficulties. I had ideological differences with certain important members of the Central Government. When I visited Delhi, I proposed an electoral understanding with the National Conference. Not only did the Central leadership turn down my suggestion, but asked me to disband the National Conference. Naturally, I refused. On 7 April 1977, when I returned to Srinagar, a public meeting was held at Lal Chowk. While addressing the meeting, I exposed the hypocrisy of the Congress workers and declared that only the National Conference formed a united front. To organize a State unit of the Janata Party, a Central delegation, consisting of Ashok Mehta, Nanaji Deshmukh, Bhanu Pratap Singh and others, arrived in Srinagar. On 18 April, Ashok Mehta announced that Maulana Saeed had joined the Janata Party. Many other opponents of the National Conference also jumped in. At about the same time, Atal Behari Vajpayee, George Fernandes and other members of the ruling party arrived in Kashmir. They expressed their opposition to the Kashmir policy of Jawaharlal Nehru as enshrined in Article 370 of our constitution. In a letter addressed to Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra, even Jayaprakash Narayan opposed the policy which he had consistently supported till 1968.

## *Flames of the Chinar*

Meanwhile, the administration extended full support to our opponents. A retired officer, Mr Sitarawala, was appointed adviser to the governor. He openly supported members of the Janata Party, while controlling all matters pertaining to information and publicity. We had no resources to draw upon; luckily the political awareness and conscientiousness of the people came to our rescue.

In May we started our election campaign; I was contesting from Budgam. During the campaign I had a heart attack, which meant bed-rest for about six weeks. On the other hand, the Janata Party moved its heavyweights to the front line, and threw its best intellectual weaponry into the battle of votes—Atal Behari Vajpayee, Charan Singh, Jagjivan Ram and Prime Minister Morarji Desai addressed election meetings and took a whirlwind tour of the valley by helicopter. He addressed the last meeting in Srinagar.

On 3 July it rained heavily. Still humanity poured into the polling booths all day. The results were announced on 5 July. The Janata Party suffered a crushing defeat. Many of its stalwarts forfeited their securities. Our victory at the hustings was celebrated throughout the State. In my frail condition, I was carried to the victory stand on a bedstead.

Having been elected leader of the parliamentary party, the governor invited me to form the government. On 9 July, I was sworn in as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Once again I braced myself to meet the challenge of the future. During this time the following lines from Iqbal kept coming to mind:

*Safar zindagi ke liye barg-o-saaz  
Safar hai haqeeqat hazar hai majaz.*

(The essence of life is movement  
Motion is reality  
The rest is illusion.)

# Chapter 25

## THE ROLE OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

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On Kashmir's political canvas, the Kashmiri Pandits occupy a prominent place; no description of Kashmir can be complete without an account of their achievements. Although they constitute a microscopic minority, their influence is widespread. In fact, during different periods of history they were used as instruments of tyranny. Before the advent of Islam, Kashmir was torn by inter-religious strife between the Buddhists and the Brahmins. During the reign of Harsh Dev this strife led to civil war. Meanwhile, a Kashmiri Pandit, Seh Butt embraced Islam and gave his daughter in marriage to a Muslim king, Sultan Sikander (who was ruler of Kashmir when Taimurlane raided India in 1398). The newly converted Pandit committed atrocities against the Kashmiri Brahmins, many of whom migrated from Kashmir and settled in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. When Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen, son of Sultan Sikander, came to the throne he reversed the anti-Brahmin policy by sending missions to different parts of the country to persuade the migrant Brahmins to return home. He was a true liberal, in fact, he was the builder of genuine secularism in India. According to Jia Lal Kilam, he assumed the title of 'Batta Shah' (the king of Pandits) which in course of time was shortened to Bud Shah. He strictly prohibited cow slaughter.

The Mughal rulers of India won over the loyalty of the Kashmiri Pandits and used them as informers and spies against the Muslim nobility. Emperor Akbar participated in their festivals and gifted jagirs to them. Even Aurangzeb continued this policy. The Afghan period in the

eighteenth century, (the Afghans invaded Kashmir under Ahmad Shah Durrani in 1753) was the darkest in the history of Kashmir. As usual, the Kashmiri Pandits sided with the oppressive rulers. They invited Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the ruler of Punjab, who invaded Kashmir, and annexed it to his kingdom. After the downfall of the Sikhs, the Kashmiri Pandits sided with the raja of Jammu, Gulab Singh and were richly rewarded by him.

In 1931, when the movement for an independent Kashmir began under the aegis of the Muslim Conference, the Maharaja's *riyasat* was dominated by Kashmiri Pandits. When the people of Kashmir revolted against the totalitarian rule, the Dogra maharaja used the Kashmiri Pandits against them. The National Conference did its best to assure the Pandits that the movement was not anti-Hindu. It was basically anti-oppression, of which the Pandits and other non-Muslims were an integral part. When the Muslims were recruited for government jobs, the Kashmiri Pandits were alarmed and started the 'Roti Agitation'. They also submitted a memorandum to the Maharaja, requesting a separate homeland in the Kolgam region. Gradually, some young, enlightened Kashmiri Pandits changed their attitude and joined the mainstream. But the process of alienation from the National Conference began, once again, when they realized that the Muslims, being the majority, would benefit more than they would from a democratic government. Pandit Nehru personally visited Sheetal Nag, the meeting place for Kashmiri Pandits, and tried to reason with them. He asked them to join the ranks of the National Conference, but it was a wasted effort. In 1945, the Maharaja appointed Ram Chandra Kak as Prime Minister. This emboldened the Pandits and they bitterly opposed the 'Quit Kashmir' movement against the Maharaja. In 1947, when Jawaharlal Nehru visited Kohala to support the Kashmiri people's cause, the Pandits, along with a band of Maulvi Yusuf Shah's men, and the Hindu Mahasabha volunteers from Jammu, obstructed his path and raised the slogan 'go back'. In 1977, they supported the Janata Party which, on the one hand, comprised the Jana Sangh, and, on the other, the followers of Maulvi Farooq. But the situation changed when the tribal raiders, aided by Pakistan, invaded Kashmir. Under the cover of darkness the Maharaja left for Jammu. At that time there was a terrible holocaust in the entire country. In keeping with our avowed principles, we gave priority to the defence of the Kashmiri Pandits and their shrines. This

## *Flames of the Chinar*

move of the National Conference created some harmony among various sections of the people.

Kashmiri Pandits have made their mark in several fields. Ratan Nath Sarshar (writer), Brij Narain Chakbast (poet), Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Pandit Motilal Nehru (lawyers), and a host of others have carved niches for themselves in Indian history. With their superb capabilities, the Pandits can serve as a bridge between Kashmir and the rest of the country. The old prejudices are dying and the environment is undergoing a rapid change. Let them step out of their ivory tower of exclusiveness and walk into the mainstream. Unity of the country and State should be their all-pervasive goal. In the words of Maulana Rumi:

*Tu bara-e-wasl kardan aamdi  
Nai bara-e-fasl kardan aamdi*

(You have entered this world to unite  
Not to divide mankind.)

# INDEX

- Abbas, Chaudhri Ghulam, 22, 29, 35, 36, 37, 41, 42, 59, 60, 154, 155  
Abdullah, Farooq, 45, 130, 153  
Abdullah, Kemal Mustafa, 45, 130  
Abdullah, Tariq, 45  
Achakzai, Abdul Samad Khan, 64, 66  
Afzal-ul-Haq, Chaudhry, 31  
Aiyangar, Sir N. Gopalaswami, 50, 62, 71, 104, 105, 113, 116, 122  
Aiyangar Commission, 130  
Ali, Asaf, 64, 81  
Ali, Ghazanfar, 60  
Ali, Mistri Yakub, 22, 35  
All India Jammu & Kashmir Muslim Conference, 35 (*see also* Muslim Conference)  
All India Kashmir Committee, 35  
All India Majlis-e-Ahrar, 31  
All India States' Muslim League, 63  
All India States' Peoples' Conference (1939), 19, 51, 55, 61, 63  
Anjuman-i-Islamia, 80  
Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam, 26  
Article 370, 110, 113-114, 164, 168  
Asaar Sharif, 53  
Ashai, Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad, 18, 22, 27, 29, 36, 88, 112, 130  
Attlee, Clement, 78, 106  
Auchinleck, Field-Marshal Sir Claude, 96  
Awami Action Committee, 146 (*see also* Farooq, Maulvi)  
Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, 26, 64, 66, 70, 73, 74, 80, 105, 109, 116, 118, 119, 123, 126, 130, 140, 141  
Azad Muslim Conference, 40-41, 45, 150  
Bannerji, Sir Albion, 16, 109  
Barooah, Dev Kant, 165, 166  
Batra, Ram Lal, 90, 96, 97  
Bazaz, Pandit Prem Nath, 29  
Beg, Mirza Ghulam Mohammad, 130  
Beg, Mirza Mohammad Afzal, 41, 45, 57, 59, 62, 71, 103, 113, 114, 120, 125, 130, 133, 142, 152, 153, 158, 160, 162, 164, 165  
Bhave, Vinoba, 153  
Bhutto, Zulfikar Ali, 150, 154, 155, 164  
Bomzai, Kashi Nath, 111  
Bose, Subhas Chandra, 55, 63  
Butt, Ghulam Mohammad, 129  
Butt, Khwaja Ghulam Qadir, 100  
Bux, Elahi, 37  
Cabinet Mission Plan, 67, 77-78, 80  
Cariappa, General K.M., 122  
Chakbast, Brij Narain, 172  
Chattabal, 64  
Mosque, 40  
Chou-En-Lai, 159-60  
Civil Defence Committees, 139  
Colvin, Colonel A.G.D., 37, 38, 45, 50  
Constituent Assembly, 92, 115, 121, 126, 131-132  
Cripps, Sir Stafford, 55, 77, 106  
Cripps Mission, 56  
Dalal, Sir Burjor, 29  
Dar, Pandit Raja Kak, 2  
*Defence of India Rules*, the, 141  
Delhi Agreement, the, 116, 118  
Desai, Bhulabhai, 81  
Desai, Morarji, 166, 168, 169  
Deshmukh, Nanaji, 168  
Development Review Committee, 165  
Dhar, D.P., 113, 120, 127, 128, 133, 138, 156  
Dixon Plan, 117, 117n  
Dogra, Girdhari Lal, 103, 114, 117, 125  
Dogra, Prem Nath, 119, 128, 148



## *Flames of the Chinar*

- East Pakistan (now Bangladesh)  
Civil War in, 162, 163, 164  
Emergency (1975), 166, 167
- Faiz, Faiz Ahmad, 68  
Farooq, Maulvi, 146, 150, 171, (*see also* Awami Action Committee)  
Fotedar, Shiv Narain, 48, 80
- Gandhi, Indira, 102, 111, 114, 152, 161, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168  
Gandhi, Mahatma, 15, 44, 56, 67, 68, 70, 73, 76, 77, 80, 82, 84, 94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 101, 105, 106, 118, 121, 160  
Gare, Khwaja Mohiuddin, 114  
Gilgit, 47, 84, 100, 159  
Scouts, 100  
Glancy Commission, 29-30, 33, 36, 37-38  
Gracey, General Sir Douglas, 96  
Gulkar, Khwaja Ghulam Nabi, 23, 33
- Haksar, P.N., 164  
Hamadani, Mirwaiz Ahmadullah, 13, 22, 27, 28, 40, 149  
Hasan, Sheikh Sadiq, 87-88  
Hazratbal Murder Case, 141  
Theft Case, 145, 146  
Hindu Mahasabha, the, 38, 170  
Hussain, Agha Syed, 17  
Hussain, Sheikh Ahmed, 43  
Hussain, Dr Zakir, 153
- Ibrahim, Sheikh Mohammad, 3  
Iftikhar-ud-Din, Mian, 64, 66  
Indian Army, 94, 96, 98, 100-01, 104  
Indian National Army (INA), 81  
Indian National Congress, 31, 47, 49, 51, 56, 60, 63  
Indo-Pak Relations, 135, 153-54  
Confederation, 154-155  
Simla Agreement (1972), 164  
Tashkent Agreement (1966), 161  
Indo-Pak War (1965), 161  
Instrument of Accession, 47, 72, 91, 94, 95, 113, 116, 122  
Iqbal, Shaikh Mohammad (also called Allama Iqbal), 8, 19, 21, 24, 32, 41, 49, 52, 62, 74  
Islamic Endowments Committee, 53, 54  
Jahan, Begum Akbar, 43, 84  
Jalali Agha Syed Hussain, 13, 14, 22  
Jana Sangh, the, 119, 120, 171  
Jha, Laxmi Kant, 165  
Jinnah, Mohammad Ali, 47, 48, 56, 59, 60, 61, 64, 67, 68, 70, 72, 77, 79, 82, 89, 91, 92, 96, 97, 103, 123, 124, 162, 164  
Jung, Nawab Khusro, 23, 27, 91
- Kachru, Dwarika Nath, 111  
Kak, Ram Chandra, 66, 79, 80, 84, 87, 91, 171  
Kamaraj, K., 144  
Plan, 144-145  
Karra, Ghulam Mohiuddin, 103, 161, 168  
Kashmir Accord, the (1975), 150-51, 164-65  
Kashmir Conspiracy Case, the, 144  
Kashmir issue, the,  
in the UN Security Council, 107, 135-136  
Plebiscite, 98, 113, 117  
Kashmiri Pandits, 13-14, 16-17, 26-27, 28-29, 66, 170-72  
Kaul, Raja Hari Krishan, 25, 26, 28, 31, 37, 149  
Kausar Nag, 66  
Khan, Khan Abdul Ghaffar, 49, 51, 52, 61, 64, 66, 73, 103, 162  
Khan, Abdul Qayyum, 61, 93, 103  
Khan, Ayub, 103, 135, 153, 154, 155, 161  
Khan, Chaudhri Faiz Ullah, 99  
Khan, Liaquat Ali, 87, 91  
Khan, Major-General Akbar, 96  
Khan, Sir Mohammad Zafarullah, 104, 106

## *Flames of the Chinar*

- Khan, General Samandar, 8, 9, 17  
Khan, Yahya, 164  
Kidwai, Rafi Ahmed, 119, 125, 126, 130, 141  
Kilam, Pandit Jia Lal, 39, 60, 66, 130, 170  
Kitchlew, Dr Saifuddin, 46, 94  
Kripalani, Acharya J.B., 79, 84, 118
- Ludhianvi, Maulana Habeeb Ahmed, 72
- Mahajan, Mehr Chand, 85, 90, 91, 94, 95, 96, 97, 102, 103  
Mahmood, Khalifa Mirza Basheeruddin, 25  
Majlis-e-Ahrar, 27, 37, 51  
Malik, B.N., 72, 118, 120, 132, 145, 147  
Mamdot, Nawab Iftikhar Husain, 92  
Masjid-e-Ahrar, 32  
Masood, Sir Ross, 9  
Masoodi, Maulana Mohammad Saeed, 41, 115, 117, 126, 146, 153, 161  
Mehr, Ghulam Rasool, 19, 33, 51  
Menon, V.K. Krishna, 75, 135, 144  
Menon, V.P., 94  
Middleton Commission, 30, 33  
Mohammad, Bakshi Ghulam, 26, 27, 40, 41, 44, 60, 64, 71, 72, 75, 76, 79, 80, 103, 111, 112, 113, 117, 119, 124, 125, 126, 127, 130, 131, 133, 137, 139, 140, 141, 145, 146, 148, 150, 156, 162  
Mookerjee, Dr Shyama Prasad, 118-19, 138  
Mountbatten, Lord Louis, 76, 84, 89, 91, 94, 95, 104, 156  
Munshi, K.M., 74  
Muslim Conference, the, 36, 39, 41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 53, 59, 64, 171  
Muslim League, 31, 47, 51, 56, 59, 61, 63, 67, 72, 73, 77, 79, 82, 83, 88, 114  
Governments, 59
- Naidu, Padmaja, 75  
Naidu, Sarojini, 15  
Nanda, Gulzari Lal, 147, 156, 160  
Naqshbandi, Khwaja Noor Shah, 24  
Naqshbandi, Khwaja Hasan Shah, 13, 14  
Naqshbandi, Mubarak Shah, 153  
Narayan, Jayaprakash, 118, 161, 162, 166, 167, 168  
National Conference, the, 50, 51, 55, 56, 57, 58, 65, 66, 88, 90, 93, 108, 115, 117, 121, 124, 165, 166, 167, 168, 171, 172  
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 46, 49, 51, 57, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 86, 95, 96, 97, 100, 102, 103, 106, 107, 109, 112, 115, 116, 118, 119, 122, 123, 125, 127, 128, 129, 134, 135, 136, 141, 147, 152, 154, 171  
Nehru, Motilal, 46, 171, 172  
Nizamuddin, Mian, 14
- Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (Pok), 115  
Pakistan resolution, 51  
Pandit, Vijayalakshmi, 105, 122, 124, 141  
Parthasarathi, G., 164  
Partition Agreement, the, 105n  
Patel, Sardar Vallabhbhai, 67, 71, 72, 79, 84, 91, 95, 97, 99, 100, 103, 109, 114, 123, 136  
Pathar Masjid, 31, 53  
Plebiscite Front, 132, 164, 165  
Praja Sabha (Assembly elections), 42, 43, 45-46, 49, 115, 164, 168-169  
Prasad, Dr Rajendra, 67, 136
- Qadir, Abdul, 22  
Qadir, Colonel Ghulam, 111  
Qasim, Syed Mir, 13, 128, 138, 164, 165, 166  
Quit India movement (1942), 56  
Quit Kashmir movement (1946), 44

## *Flames of the Chinar*

- Qureshi, Abdul Majid, 19
- Radhakrishnan, Dr S., 146, 153
- Rahim, Maulvi Abdul, 23
- Rai, Lala Lajpat, 15
- Rajagopalachari, C., 136, 144, 153
- Rao, Sir B.N., 58, 62, 105, 116
- Rashid, Bakshi Abdul, 128, 138, 145
- Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), 97, 101, 102
- Reading Room Party, 17-18
- Reddy, G.K., 92
- Rehman, Sardar Gauhar, 22
- 'Responsible Government Day' (8 May 1936), 47-48, 50
- Rinzu, Ghulam Rasool, 128
- Rizvi, Syed Qasim, 61
- Roti Agitation, 38, 171
- Sadiq, Ghulam Mohammad, 41, 57, 79, 88, 92, 103, 114, 115, 117, 119, 128, 131, 132, 133, 145, 146, 147, 148, 156, 164
- Saeed, Maulvi Mohammed, 127, 141
- Sahay, Baldev, 81
- Sapru, Sir Tej Bahadur, 62, 172
- Saraf, Sham Lal, 103, 114, 117, 125
- Sen, Brigadier L.P., 96
- Setalvad, C.L., 105
- Shah, Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad, 45, 129
- Shah, Maulvi Yusuf, 26, 27, 28, 29, 37, 39, 40, 48, 60, 171
- Shah, Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf, 22, 24, 27, 28, 35, 39, 40, 59, 99, 149, 154
- Shastri, Lal Bahadur, 146, 156, 157, 161
- Shawl, Khwaja Saduddin, 13, 22, 27, 29
- Sindhi, Maulana Obaidullah, 72
- Singh, Baldev, 97
- Singh, Brigadier Ghansara, 100
- Singh, Raja Gulab, 2, 78, 108, 171
- Singh, Maharaja Hari, 7, 14, 16, 20, 21, 27, 33, 37, 38, 39, 44, 45, 47, 57, 62, 64, 72, 81, 82, 84, 89, 90, 97, 118, 143
- Singh, General Janak, 9, 19, 33, 87, 91
- Singh, Dr Karan, 112, 116, 125, 137, 145, 150
- Singh, Sardar Budh, 48, 52, 103, 114, 117
- Singh, Thakur Kartar, 18
- Sino-Indian relations, 159-160
- War, 142-143
- Standstill Agreements, 90
- Tara Devi, Maharani, 84, 97
- Thakur, L.D., 125
- Thimayya, Major-General K.S., 100
- Treaty of Amritsar (1846), 2n, 33, 78, 85
- Trilok Chand, Raizada, 21, 22
- Vakil, Maulvi Abdullah, 24, 27, 33, 36
- Vakil, Munshi Asadullah, 40
- Vatil, P.K., 18, 19
- Wahab-ud-Din, Khwaja, 37, 41
- Wakefield, G.E.C., 18, 21
- Yahya, Mohammad, 149
- Young Men's Muslim Association, 21, 22, 41
- Zain-ul-Abideen, Sultan, 1, 53, 64, 143, 170
- Zargar, Khwaja Habeebullah, 130
- Ziauddin, Mufti, 17, 43

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