

Jammu and Kashmir on the Eve of Partition- A Study of Political Conditions

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ABSTRACT

With the partition of the Indian Subcontinent Jammu and Kashmir presented a very chaotic and confusing picture. It was a Muslim majority state ruled by a Hindu monarch. Both India and Pakistan wanted to control Kashmir because of its strategic location and geo-political importance. Geographically, economically and demographically, Kashmir was contiguous more to Pakistan than India. However, events moved with lightening rapidity and the state ended up being part of India by virtue of the controversial accession. This paper is an attempt to understand the political conditions and loyalties of Kashmir at the time of partition. An endeavour has been made to understand the background of the tribal invasion and the accession of the state to India.

Key Words Partition, Kashmir Dispute, National Conference, Poonch Uprising, Tribal Invasion.

Historical Background

The state of Jammu and Kashmir as a single contiguous unit was formed as a result of the Treaty of Amritsar, signed between the British East India Company and Gulab Singh on 16th of March 1846, under which Kashmir and its adjoining territories were transferred to Gulab Singh and his male heirs on the payment of Rs 7500000 (Aitchison, 1983). The Dogra rule was characterized by despotism, autocracy and sectarianism. They always considered Kashmir as their purchased property and Jammu their homeland and discriminated against Kashmiris in general and Muslims in particular. The state functioned and legitimized itself in terms of Hindu idioms, customs, scriptures and identity. Nomenclature of various Muslim places was changed and Muslims were discriminated against in every aspect of life which led to their marginalization. The people were denied even the basic freedoms of press, speech and expression and the right to form political associations. It was only lately, in 1930s, that a new trend of politics emerged in the state as a result of many factors (Saraf, 2005) and the harbinger of this new trend was All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference which was formed in 1932 with Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as its first president.

The meeting of Sheikh Abdullah with Jawaharlal Nehru in 1937 and conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference in 1939 to enable non-Muslims to join the organization (Abdullah, 1993) proved to be significant events in the history of the state. The conversion paved the way for the increasing association of National Conference with the Congress and subjected it to the

vagaries of subcontinent politics, the fact which had been feared by Chaudhary Abbas while opposing the conversion (Abbas, 2001) and it can be argued that the Kashmir Dispute is one of the legacies of this historical decision.

Central Theme of the Paper

The politics of Kashmir in early and mid-1940s was marked by controversies, contestations and dissensions. Both the National Conference and Muslim Conference claimed to represent the majority of the people. Both the parties got embroiled in the Sub-continental politics by closely associating themselves with the Indian national parties and lost their independent standing to a large extent. While Sheikh Abdullah maintained close ties with Nehru and Congress, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas declared that 'Muslim Conference is part and parcel of Muslim League' (Khalid, 1943). The popularity of National Conference was dwindling among the Muslims of the Valley due to its increased association with the Congress (Zutshi, 2003). This was the time when the identities in the Subcontinent had been clearly demarcated into Hindu and Muslim, with Muslim League considered as representing the interests of the Muslims against the majoritarian communalism. It was therefore easy to propagate that the National Conference's close ties with the Congress were hampering the interests of the Muslims.

The rift between the Muslim League and National Conference proved detrimental to the interests of the state. Sheikh had strongly denounced Mohammad Ali Jinnah's advice to keep Kashmir aloof from the Congress by saying that they cannot ally with those who were the friends and protectors of princes (Khan, 1980). National Conference had denounced Pakistan Resolution and Two-Nation Theory of Jinnah as an emotional slogan. The opportunity to reconcile their differences came in 1944 on Jinnah's visit to Kashmir. Sheikh had welcomed him as a 'beloved leader of the Muslims of India'. However unable to reconcile the differences between the two, Jinnah called upon Muslims of Kashmir to rally behind Muslim Conference and called National Conference a 'band of gangsters' (Akbar, 1991). This was sharply retaliated by Sheikh in one of his meetings at Srinagar on June 20, 1944, 'If Jinnah does not give up the habit of interfering in our politics it will be difficult for him to go back in an honourable manner' (Bazaz, 2009, : 180). The tactical blunder committed by Jinnah and Muslim Conference in the state was that they called upon Sheikh to dissolve the National Conference and join along with his supporters with Muslim Conference which was loosely organized and had a strong presence only in the Jammu region. While National Conference was ready to accept Muslim League's leadership in case of all-India matters (Saraf, 2005) but to demand liquidation of National Conference was totally impractical and egoistic on part of Muslim Conference as it would have been a great setback to Sheikh's ego and personality. He was a hero of the masses and the second rung leaders of Muslim Conference were no match for

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his popularity. The more practical solution was that Sheikh be impressed upon to sever his links with Congress and get closely associated with Muslim League. The opportunity of reconciliation was thus lost forever due to the haughtiness of Muslim Conference leaders and resulted in the upheavals of 1947.

As against the dillydallying attitude of Muslim League, the Congress played an active role in Kashmir and devoted time and energy to Kashmir affairs. Jawaharlal Nehru maintained close ties with Sheikh and adopted a well-defined policy vis-à-vis Kashmir. He along with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan visited Kashmir in 1940 which was followed by the National Conference joining All India States' Peoples' Conference in 1941 (Akbar, 1991). National Conference supported Quit India Resolution of Congress and condemned the "reign of terror which the Government of India have launched" (Akbar, 1991, pp. 84-5). One of the important tactics used by Nehru to generate support among the Muslims of the Valley was that whenever he visited Kashmir he was accompanied by 'Muslim' Nationalist (Congress) leaders like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Molana Abul Kalam Azad, Mian Iftikhar-ud-din Ahmad, Asaf Ali and others. This was to impress upon the people that Congress is not a 'Hindu' party and is supported by a large segment of enlightened Muslims. The case of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was significant as he despite being a leader of Muslim-majority area supported Congress. An analogy was drawn, albeit inadvertently, between Sheikh and Ghaffar Khan to impress upon the former that his interests lay with the Congress.

The most decisive moment in the history of the state was the Quit Kashmir Movement launched by Sheikh Abdullah in May 1946. He declared the Treaty of Amritsar a 'sale deed' and challenged its 'moral and political' validity (Abdullah, 1993). British Resident, W. F. Webb described it as having the attributes of a rebellion (Lamb, 1994) which unnerved the administration and Sheikh was arrested. Although many Congress leaders and Hindu press had criticized the movement in vehement terms (Vashishth, 1968), Nehru immediately rushed to Kashmir but was detained by the Maharaja's govt. This action endeared Nehru to Kashmiris and quite often Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah mentioned his debt to Nehru on supporting him and his people in their struggle against autocracy (Hindustan Times, 1951; Hitvada, 1948; National Herald, 1948). On the other hand, Muhammad Ali Jinnah called the movement as 'foreign-inspired' and advised Muslim Conference to keep aloof from it. This was Jinnah's tactical blunder as the common Kashmiri Muslims failed to understand why a movement aimed at breaking their chains of slavery was opposed by the person who claimed to be representing the interests of the Muslims. Both India and Sheikh could advertise Jinnah's stance as an anti-Kashmiri ploy. Sheikh consistently spoke that, "Mr. Jinnah vehemently opposed us. How can Muslim League turn around and say that they are the champions of the people of Kashmir" (Hitvada, 1948). National Conference was also able to draft a Social and Economic Plan, called Naya Kashmir in 1944 which, though criticized as 'un-Islamic' by Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and resented by Pandits (Khalid, 1945), created enthusiasm among the

people in general and peasants in particular and strengthened the social base of National Conference.

By terms of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 India was to be partitioned into two Dominions of India and Pakistan. With the lapse of the Paramountcy, the 562-odd princely states were told to join either Union while keeping in view the composition of the population and geographical contiguity. Kashmir was the largest princely state with an area of 84,471 sq. miles (218,800sq.km) (Sufi, 1949). Kashmir was geographically, economically and demographically contiguous with Pakistan. Lord Mountbatten visited Kashmir in June 1947 and tried to impress upon Maharaja Hari Singh to accede to the either Dominion. But the indecisiveness of Maharaja complicated the matters and by August 15 he had not acceded to any of the Dominions, though he entered into a Standstill Agreement with Pakistan whereby the various essential services were to be continued. India procrastinated, urging the Maharaja to send an official to New Delhi for negotiations (Lamb, 1991). Maharaja was thinking in terms of making Kashmir an independent country, a Switzerland of the east. In this he was well supported by his Prime Minister, R. C. Kak. As late as October B. L. Batra, Deputy Prime Minister of Maharaja was publicly touting the idea of independence (Hindustan Times, 1947). The fact that Maharaja was aware of the demographic composition of his population and in his inner self he knew that this meant that he had to accede to Pakistan but practically how could a Hindu Maharaja accede to a Dominion which had been founded in the name of Islam. He could not accede to India either as he despised Nehru and Congress who were supporters of his biggest enemy, Sheikh Abdullah and had always advocated against feudal levies. The alternative, therefore, was to declare independence. However, as the later events showed Maharaja did not use his independence card well, otherwise he would have been successful in getting a semi-independence status for the state recognised by both the Dominions (Noorani, 2013).

Congress had adopted an active policy towards Kashmir as it was well aware of the geopolitical significance of the state. Writing in 1946, British Resident in Kashmir, Colonel Webb said that Nehru had already developed his policy for Kashmir as early as 1946 (Lamb, 1994). Often it is said that Nehru had a personal affection for Kashmir because his ancestors were from Kashmir, but the most important factor for his interest in Kashmir was its strategic importance. Kashmir had contiguous borders with USSR, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and was part of the prestigious Silk Route. Kashmir could give India the privilege of having a scientific frontier and secure her North-Western Frontier which had made her vulnerable in the past. Second, accession of Muslim-majority Kashmir, practically a 'miniature Pakistan' to India would strengthen Nehru's ideals of secular nationalism and would have a 'powerful effect on communal elements in India' (Gopal, 1980). It was these considerations in mind that Nehru, in a note to Mountbatten on the latter's visit to Kashmir tried to strongly impress upon him that the interests of the state lie in joining the Constituent Assembly of India and if

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any attempt is made to push the state to Pakistan it will have serious consequences (Transfer of Power, Vol. XI, No. 229. p. 443-4 as cited in Lamb, 1991). Though Nehru based his case on Sheikh Abdullah's aversion to Pakistan, in reality he was trying to force Maharaja to accede to India keeping in view the state's geographical location. Pertinently, 'Hindu' Maharajas of Patiala, Kapurthala and Faridkot and the president of Congress, Acharya Kripalani visited Kashmir in 1947 (Korbel, 1954). They could have no other purpose in Kashmir other than to influence Maharaja, a Hindu to accede to India. Anxious that the Maharaja would declare accession to Pakistan or independence, Nehru was very impatient to visit Kashmir. However keeping in view the Maharaja's hostile attitude to Nehru, it was decided to send Mahatma Gandhi, "in view of the religious aura around him" (Bhattacharjea, 1994, pp. 108-110). This was a sort of 'political launch' of Mahatma Gandhi who, though, had declared his journey to Kashmir to be apolitical but the timing of his visit, his meeting with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Lord Mountbatten and Nehru prior to his departure and the sequence of events which followed his arrival in Kashmir clearly lay bare the political motives of his visit (Bhat, 1981). He persuaded Maharaja to refrain from declaring independence. R C Kak was replaced first by Janak Singh and then by M C Mahajan as Prime Minister who had worked as Hindu member of Radcliffe Commission and was a staunch Arya Samajist. He adopted a harsh attitude towards Pakistan and a conciliatory tone towards India, signaling what laid in the future. Commenting on Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Kashmir, Shahid Hamid, P.S. to Lord Auchinleck said, "Before his departure from Delhi the Apostle of truth announced that his tour was absolutely non-political, in reality it was to pressurise the Maharaja to accede to India and to remove Kak" (Schofield, 2003, : 32). After the appointment of Mahajan as Prime Minister, Kashmir maintained close ties with India and high-level officials of the state visited Delhi frequently and maintained close correspondence with Nehru and Patel. On the other hand, very little, if at all, correspondence was maintained with Pakistan. Patel was directly consulted in the appointment of Lt. Col. Kashmir Singh as Commander-in-Chief of State Armed Forces and efforts were made to link the state with the Indian Dominion by means of telegraph, telephones, wireless and roads (Das, 1971).

Nehru was anxious that Sheikh Abdullah should be released as he was the only person who could steer Kashmir to India. Writing to Nehru on May 14, 1948, Indira Gandhi said that "they say that only Sheikh Sahib is confident of winning the plebiscite" (Gandhi, 2004, : 517). Since Patel had good relations with the Maharaja, Nehru wrote to him on 27 September to persuade Maharaja for the release of Sheikh Abdullah and impress upon him the importance of the 'early' accession of the state to India (Chopra, 2002). Interestingly on September 29, Sheikh Abdullah was released while the Muslim Conference leaders who had done 'lesser crimes' were still behind the bars (Birdwood, 2005). Sheikh had been unconnected with the developments in the state and his release, therefore, did not lead to the end of the political stalemate. He did not declare his support to either

accession with Pakistan or India. Speaking at a rally at Hazuribagh Srinagar on October 2, he raised the slogan of freedom before accession and supremacy of the will of people (Abdullah, 1993). However, the tone of his speech in which he criticized the Two-Nation theory clearly pointed out that his preference was not for Pakistan. Though Sheikh consistently mentioned his aversion to Two-Nation Theory and believed in the separation of religion and politics but the larger question in 1947 was not whether he believed in it or not but the question of the fate of the state which was contiguous to Pakistan geographically, economically and above all demographically. He was criticizing a theory which had practically succeeded with the creation of Pakistan. Sheikh resorted to political maneuvering as during his speeches and press reports he praised Nehru and Congress and indirectly criticized Jinnah. During most of the days of the fateful month of October he camped in Delhi and was absent from the state. He did not show statesmanship by trying to engage with different shades of political opinion or study the mood of people since he was cut off from them for more than a year.

While Congress took an active interest in Kashmir affairs, the Muslim League did not devote much time and energy to Kashmir. One possible reason could be that they thought that keeping in view the demographic composition of the State, it was natural that Kashmir becomes part of Pakistan. In fact, the word PAKISTAN itself being an acrostic in which K stands for Kashmir (Snedden, 2015). Jinnah had said that Kashmir will fall into his lap like a ripened fruit (Ali, 1968). Muslim League vacillated in its stand on Kashmir, first advising Muslim Conference to support independence of the state and then accession to Pakistan. Jinnah's indifference to Kashmir is evident from his message to Kak that as long as the state did not accede to India, he would not mind if it did not accede to Pakistan either (R. C. Kak, Jammu and Kashmir State in 1946-47: Dilemma of Accession-The Missing link in the story, as cited in Noorani, 2010). It was only lately that Jinnah on July 11, 1947 urged Maharaja to consider the composition of his population in deciding the accession of the state. Pakistan sent Mohammad Din Taseer and Sheikh Sadiq to negotiate with Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh reiterated that freedom before accession was their goal and only after getting freedom from the Dogra rule can they decide on accession (Abdullah, 1993). The indifference on the part of Jinnah and Muslim League in Kashmir affairs was a tactical blunder and they failed to match the diplomatic efforts and personal attention of Nehru to woo Sheikh Abdullah and through him Kashmiri people. Nehru used his personal relationship with Sheikh Abdullah for the furtherance of national interests of India. On the other hand, Muslim League showed an ignorance of the popularity of Sheikh. Jinnah's aversion to Sheikh Abdullah was well known and the latter could not imagine an honourable position for himself and his people in Pakistan which according to him would be dominated by feudal elements and would stand in the way of implementing Naya Kashmir (Abdullah, 1993). Further the current rumours that Pakistan would not last long and will soon merge with India had also its influence on Sheikh. Doubts were implanted in the mind of Sheikh Abdullah

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that Pakistan will not last long and would soon merge with India. Nehru wrote to him on 10 October, 'I doubt very much of it (Pakistan) can survive at all' (Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, 1987). Although Muslim league had, of late tried to use its diplomatic channels by sending Col. A. S. B. Shah to Kashmir for negotiating with Maharaja, it proved of little help as Mahajan, the new Prime Minister was decidedly pro-India and anti-Pakistan. Pakistan also resorted to an unofficial economic blockade of the state which further embittered the relations between the two. The blockade would have forced Maharaja to succumb to the Pakistan pressure and come to the negotiating table but for India's consistent backing and moral and material support.

Most of the narratives on Kashmir have focused on Sheikh Abdullah as representing the majoritarian opinion of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to the exclusion of others. However, his leadership did not go uncontested. Among the 77.06% of the total Muslim population in the state, around 37% lived in Jammu and Frontier Provinces. These people did not like the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah and were strongly pro-Pakistan. Further in the valley itself, his leadership was contested by Muslim Conference and Kisan Mazdoor Conference. Muslim Conference had a large number of supporters in Baramulla and some localities of Srinagar which were under the influence of Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah. Hindus of Jammu province, mainly comprising of Dogras formed 18.32% of the total population of the state and were loyal to the Maharaja and staunch opponents of Sheikh Abdullah. These were the same people who later launched Praja Parishad agitation in the State. Most of the Kashmiri Pandits who formed 4.95 % of the population of Kashmir Province were also loyalists, barring a few who had joined National Conference. They were represented by All State Kashmiri Pandit Conference and opposed anti-Maharaja attitude of Sheikh. Among those who had protested at the entry of Nehru to Kashmir on the eve of Quit Kashmir Movement were Kashmiri Pandits. These facts clearly point out that Sheikh Abdullah was the leader of Kashmiri Muslims alone and not of the entire Muslim community or state as a whole. Since Kashmir was the pivot of the politics of the state, it naturally got more publicity than other provinces. This is probably also one of the reasons why the Jammu massacre and Poonch uprising did not get much attention in the state. If the Hindus of Jammu and Kashmiri Pandits supported Sheikh Abdullah in 1947, it was only to reiterate their support for his pro-India leanings as both the Dogra Sabha and Pandit Conference had called upon Maharaja to declare accession to the Indian Union as early as June (Khalid, 1947).

The second misconception about the state in 1947 is that had a plebiscite been held in 1947, India would have easily come out victorious. This is also based on the notion of Sheikh's popularity in the entire state. The Muslims of Jammu and Frontier provinces, most of which later formed Azad Kashmir comprised 37% of the total population of the state. They were geographically, ethnically and economically linked to North-Western areas and were supporters of Muslim Conference which was strongly pro-Pakistan and were against any association

with India. Further in the Kashmir Valley itself, there were a good number of people who were against accession of the state to India. Significantly on August 14, Pakistani flags were hoisted on the General Post Office building in Srinagar which outraged the administration and were ordered to be torn down by Janak Singh (Bazaz, 2009). If the percentage of these Muslims who supported Pakistan is taken to be 10% (The calculation is not arbitrary as first, Muslim Conference had pockets of support in Srinagar Baramulla and was strong in Muzaffarabad. In Anantnag, Kisan Mazdoor Conference, which had as early as April 1947 called upon Maharaja not to join Indian Constituent Assembly (Bazaz, 2009) had a good support among the peasants. Second, those remote areas have to be included which were isolated from the political currents happening outside and might well get carried away with religious emotions), the percentage of pro-Pakistan people rises to 47% which shows that India might well have faced a tough competition. Even Sheikh Abdullah mentions that he had a 'subconscious sympathy' for Pakistan Slogan (Abdullah, 1993). If sheikh as the great stalwart of Nationalism and open supporter of Congress sympathized with the Pakistan Demand, what about the common Muslims of Kashmir? Pakistan Slogan could well have appealed to their emotions also as it had done in Bengal and Punjab which otherwise were anti-Muslim League provinces. A good example (though of a later date) is provided by poet Mehjoor who was a National Conference supporter and an icon of *Kashmiriyat*. He wrote "To buy salt, I went to a National Conference shop; He set a condition, first join India; Hearing this, I started trembling; I could sacrifice my life for India but my heart lies with Pakistan" (Bazaz, 2009, : 298). Further the massacre of Muslims in Jammu and Punjab would not have remained hidden from the people keeping in view that a large number of Kashmiri people worked in Punjab. Rumours were also afloat which helped in the dissemination of news. These killings would have forced people to give second thoughts to their supposed association with India. Even Sheikh Abdullah admits 'There isn't a single Muslim in Kapurthala, Alwar or Bharatpur. Some of these had been Muslim majority states. Try to symbolically understand the Kashmir Muslims. They are afraid that the same fate lies ahead for them as well" (Abdullah, 1993, : 90). When the religious and political affiliations collided with each other, it was the religion that prevailed. North-West Muslims had shown that when asked to choose between a 'Hindu' India and a 'Muslim' Pakistan, they chose the latter. It is significant to note The Times London (1947) report, "it is possible that Sheikh Abdullah has lost ground during the past 16 months and the rallying cry 'Islamic India' may defeat him. If a plebiscite were held the simple Muslim hill man might well forget newly found political theories and allow the dictates of religious and communal prejudice to influence his vote" (10 October). In most of the narratives much less importance has been given to the loyalties of the common masses. The center-stage has been taken by the leaders with people relegated to the background. Very less attempts have been made to figure out what was going on in the minds of the common people vis-à-vis partition and accession, though it is difficult to say in the absence

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of any reliable poll. Indeed there were many voices among the people who called for their right to self-determination and criticized the political leadership for aligning with Congress and Muslim League. They warned against sidelining the interests of the people. Most of the newspapers, including pro-National Conference advocated against accession to India or Pakistan. Instead, they called for an Independent Jammu and Kashmir recognized by both the countries (Zutshi, 2003). Khalid (1947) in its editorial page while discussing the partition and the fate of States peoples writes that the majority of the people of Kashmir wish to remain independent and form their own federation. Even Khidmat (1947), the official organ of National Conference wrote, “Attempts are again being made to extend the period of the contract. So there may be another auction for Kashmiris in Delhi” (July 7). Major General H. L. Scott, Commander of the state forces till September 1947 told British diplomats in October 1947 that “vast majority of Kashmiris have no strong bias for either India or Pakistan and prefer to remain independent of either dominion and free to earn their living” (Whitehead, 2007, : 26-7).

Two oft neglected important events which helped in shaping the future of the state to a great extent were the Poonch Uprising and the Jammu Massacre. Both these events started within the jurisdiction of the state boundary but ended up involving the non-state subjects in a significant manner. The Kashmir valley did not witness the Communal holocaust that accompanied the partition. Peace Committees were formed by National Conference to help refugees and protect the life and property of minorities (Khalid, 1947). However, the communal question was very much present in Jammu region and the influx of a large number of Sikh and Hindu refugees from West Punjab complicated the situation. There began a systematic massacre of Muslims aided and abetted by the Dogra administration with the intention to change the demography of the region (Carter, 2011). Even Gandhi admitted that thousands of Muslims were killed and held the Maharaja responsible for that (Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, 1958). Tales of repression, killing and looting of Muslims by Hindus and Sikhs were circulated in tribal areas which aroused the emotions of Pathans and they decided to take revenge. Meanwhile tension was brewing up in Poonch Jagir against the harsh taxation policy and repressive tactics of Maharaja. Richard Symonds wrote that there was a tax on every hearth and every window (Statesman, 1948). Local civilians most of whom had participated in World War II were ordered to return their weapons to the state. However the same were distributed among the Dogras and Sikhs (Thomas, 2000). The Poonchis resented this with an armed revolt which the state tried to crush ruthlessly- whole villages were burnt where only a small family had participated in the revolt (Statesman, 1948). It was this revolt which ultimately paved the way for the tribal incursion into the valley as the Poonch Muslims had historical, geographical, familial, ethnic, economic and religious links with North Western Frontier Muslims. This is quite significant as it shows that the Kashmir Dispute was instigated not by the tribals but by the people of J &

K (Snedden, 2015). The tribal invasion ultimately 'eased' the way for the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India on 26/27th October. An important question is that had Maharaja any moral right to decide the fate of his population given the fact that a majority of them were in revolt against him and had, only a year early, launched a movement strongly questioning his right to rule and asking him to 'Quit Kashmir'. In a certain way, the Accession of the state to India resembled the Treaty of Amritsar. In both the agreements, people of the state had no say and their wishes were not ascertained. If in the latter case a provision was made to ascertain the wishes of the people, that has not been fulfilled even after the lapse of 69 years.

Conclusion

On the eve of partition the people of Jammu and Kashmir were politically divided. There was no all-out support for either India or Pakistan and strong voices advocating independence of the state for different reasons existed. It is a tragedy that very less interaction took place between the leaders of two major political parties and a lack of conviction to arrange meetings between Sheikh Abdullah and Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas made a united stand on the question of accession impossible. Congress backed Sheikh Abdullah, projected him as representing the majoritarian opinion, played the religious card with Maharaja and utilised every possible means to secure accession of the state to the Indian Union well before the tribal invasion of the state and out-witted and out-maneuvered the Muslim League. Sheikh Abdullah was not able to rise to the occasion. This was the time when political differences had to be tolerated and instead of seeking vengeance, a meaningful dialogue with all the stakeholders had to be initiated and deliver an alternative which could have helped in breaking the ice. He allowed himself to be used as per the whims and wishes of Nehru in the guise of personal relationship and failed to deliver. It was all high politics, played between leaders and leaders and in which common people were neglected. Nobody asked them what they wanted.

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