

**DIVERSE HINDU PERCEPTIONS ON THE
KASHMIR ISSUE: A STUDY OF SOCIETY OF
JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "**DIVERSE HINDU PERCEPTIONS ON THE KASHMIR ISSUE: A STUDY OF SOCIETY OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR**" submitted by **MOHITA BHATIA** is in partial fulfillment of the **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** degree of the University. The work presented is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree to this or any other University to the best of our knowledge.

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

The prolonged, irresolvable and seemingly unending span of Kashmir dispute is mainly due to its complex and multifarious character. This complexity gets manifested in a wide range of perceptions, narratives and divergent opinions that surround the debate about the crisis in Kashmir. Various groups involved interpret the historical issues related to this problem differently. In this regard, Verghese Koithara has very rightly argued:

Facts are rarely in dispute; the big differences are in interpretation and interrelationships of events, and of motives. At the level of nationalistic writings, whatever suits one side is stressed and what does not is omitted or downplayed. There is contestation not only of causes and the course of development of conflict, but also of the reasons why it is eluding settlement¹.

Hence, for a holistic understanding of the Kashmir conflict, it is important to analyse it from various perspectives.

ANALYSING KASHMIR DEBATE FROM VARIOUS STANDPOINTS

The divergence of opinions is brought out clearly if we start analysing several positions on the Kashmir problem. For instance, Pakistan's stand about the Kashmir issue certainly clashes with India's viewpoint. Both these views again are different from Jammu and Kashmir's version of the problem. Again, there are both Hindu and Muslim perceptions of the issue. Each of these standpoints has its own version and perception about the problem of Kashmir.

Pakistan considers Kashmir as an unfinished agenda of partition, and that the instrument of accession was conditional and partial. Pakistan, founded on the basis of two-nation theory, considers Kashmir as a Muslim-majority territory and seeks its claim over it.

India, on the other side, argues that Maharaja representing the state of Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India legally, thus making accession complete and final. It sees

¹ Verghese Koithara, *Crafting Peace in Kashmir*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004, p. 15.

Kashmir as integral part of India. According to it, Pakistan has no claim over the state on the basis of Muslim-majority area, as India has never believed in two-nation theory.

Even in the state of Jammu and Kashmir perceptions differ. In a broader framework, this divergence can be seen in a regional context. The state can be geographically divided into three distinct regions- Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir. The Kashmiri point of view has two main shades of opinion - one, that of mainstream political party of the National Conference and other, that of separatists. The National conference argues that the problem in Kashmir is mainly due to lack of autonomy provided to the state and erosion of Article 370.² The separatists perceive that the 'right to self-determination' forms the most important aspect of the debate.

Even the separatist political discourse in Kashmir involves multiplicity of viewpoints regarding the nature of the Kashmiri movement, its various objectives and means that should be adopted to achieve them. The contradictions within All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) very rightly exemplifies the ambiguities facing the separatist discourse in Kashmir. An amalgam of various separatist and armed militants' groups, the Hurriyat conference was organised in 1993 as a political face of the Kashmiri movement. However, it has been internally divided right from the beginning between those who are oriented towards religious basis of Kashmiri politics and those who have a more secular vision of it. Because of such ideological differences, Hurriyat Conference has been split into two factions - one led by Mir Waiz, and other led by Syed Ali Shah Gilani. The splinter group led by Mir Waiz believes in indigenous and local character of the Kashmiri movement. Also it holds that the movement should neither be part of the global agenda of Jihad nor be religious in character. The other faction led by Syed Ali Shah Gilani, on the other hand holds that the movement is essentially religious in nature and part of the global Islamic struggle. Implicated in this view is the assumption that Kashmir was an unfinished agenda of partition and that Kashmir was an inevitable part of

² The article 370 provides for the separate Constitution of the state along with limited extension of the Constitution of India. It also provides for limited jurisdiction of Central laws.

Pakistan. The contradictions within APHC, thus, represent the heterogeneity and complexities within Kashmiri politics.

Sumantra Bose talks about three different political preferences prevailing in Kashmir. She argues:

In Indian-controlled Kashmir, there are three distinct political orientations... pro independence (The preference of a decisive majority in the valley and of a sizeable minority in the Jammu region), pro-India (the preference of a majority in Jammu as well as in Ladakh and of a small minority in the Valley), and Pro- Pakistan (the preference of a relatively small minority in the Valley and an even smaller one in Jammu)³.

The dominant vocal politics of Jammu and to some extent Ladakh, makes it clear that the special status provided to the state, anchored in Article 370, has obstructed the full integration of the state with the Indian union.⁴ Not only there are inter-regional variations regarding perceptions about the Kashmir issue, but intra-regional difference also exist, as there is always a possibility of dominant perception being contested.

Several other perspectives can be brought out and these various opinions may overlap, diverge or clash with each other. Some of the important issues around which the Kashmir problem gets diversified, thus producing manifold opinions include - 1) Position of accession. 2) Article 370 that provides special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. 3) Separatism and demand of Azadi. 4) Inter-regional relations between Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir. 5) Exodus of Kashmiri Pandit community.

COMPETING NATIONALITIES AND IDENTITY POLITICS

The divergence in perceptions and multiple narratives about the Kashmir issue is linked to the concept of nationalism and identity politics that makes the issue complex and

³ Bose Sumantra, 'Kashmir: Sources of Conflict, Dimensions of Peace'. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 31. No. 35-37, p. 762.

⁴ The regional politics of Jammu has been appropriated by rightist organizations such RSS, BJP etc. The upper caste Hindus, who previously constituted the feudal class, constitutes the support structure of these Hindu-oriented organisations. From the very beginning, these organizations have always supported the demand of complete merger of the state of Jammu & Kashmir with the Indian Union. The right wing politics of Jammu region views article 370 as against Hindus and Indian interest. It holds that providing Jammu & Kashmir with a status different from other federating units would encourage the separatist tendencies.

inflexible. In fact the three competing nationalisms of India, Pakistan and Kashmir have rendered intricacy and rigidity to the Kashmir debate.

Elaborating on these three types of competing nationalisms that provides the Kashmir issue with varying perceptions, Ashutosh Varshney holds:

Pakistan was founded on religious nationalism. Being a Muslim majority state, Kashmir, Pakistan believed, should have come to it at the time of partition... Led by the Congress Party, India's national movement contested religious nationalism, claiming that Muslims were as much citizens of India as the Hindus... Therefore, in order to maintain its secularism and keep Hindu nationalism at bay, Kashmir, according to the secularists, must stay in India-if necessary, by force.... Caught between the two pulls and intensifying it to a great extent is the plight of Kashmiris. A complex of emotions has marked their relationship with the two countries. This complex is clearly dominated today by a desire for independence.⁵

Not only the above three mentioned nationalisms contest each other, but all the three contestants face internal paradoxes, thus adding more dimensions to this subject.

The other factor, related to the issue of nationalism, influencing and constructing the perceptions of various groups, is the ethnic and identity politics. Due to the multi-cultural character of the state, diversity in Jammu and Kashmir is not of one kind but multiple kinds, leading to several identities - Gujjar identity, Ladakhi identity, Dogra identity, Pahari identity, Pandit identity and so on. The state has witnessed the sharpening of these various regional, sub-regional and cultural identities. Context of regionalism and regional divide plays a significant role in constructing and sharpening these identities. In a broad regional milieu, both Kashmiri and Jammu identity politics have played their respective parts in shaping and influencing various perceptions concerning the Kashmir tangle.

KASHMIRI REGIONAL IDENTITY

The Kashmiri identity politics revolves around Kashmiri regionalism that gained providence with Sheikh Abdullah's politics, whereby he mobilised the masses to fight against the repressive Dogra rule. The uniqueness of Kashmiri culture or the term 'Kashmiriat' was used to create a sense of distinct identity among Kashmiris. The secular

⁵ Ashutosh Varshney, 'Three Compromised Nationalisms : Why Kashmir Has Been a Problem' in Raju G.C. Thomas (edited) , *Perspectives on Kashmir: The roots of Conflict in South Asia* , Westview Press, 1992,pp. 196-203.

and non-religious orientation of Kashmiri nationalism is well conceptualized by Riyaz Punjabi, who opines:

Kashmir identity', which is popularly known as Kashmiriyat, is composed of varied elements, and has developed its particularism and identity over a long period of time, stretching back to centuries in the past. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and even Christians have contributed to the emergence of this ethnicity.⁶

However, it is important to note that 'Kashmiriyat' represents an intellectual concept that is invoked to represent a particular romanticised version of Kashmiri politics and society. It is important only to the extent it portrays a liberal, tolerant and harmonious character of Kashmiri society.

The historical analysis of Kashmiri identity politics reveals that it has always been in flux. Accordingly there has also been change in perceptions of the Kashmiri masses from time to time. Navnita Chadha Behera explains the manner in which Kashmiri identity has been constructed and molded to suit the political requirements. She holds:

The early construction of Kashmiri identity was built around its secular character including all communities-Muslim, Hindu and Sikh-and a wider regional dimension incorporating all state-subjects and Jammu and Kashmir. With the gradual loss of support of the Jammu Muslims, Sheikh Abdullah started articulating Kashmiri identity in a cultural sense...⁷

Thus, with change in political context, identity politics also keeps on varying, with the result that some perceptions get sharpened or institutionalised and some others get altered or flattened.

FORMATION OF A SEPARATE JAMMU IDENTITY

Jammu's identity formation process operates at two levels. First one is the regional level, where Jammu's regional identity is constructed vis-a-vis Kashmiri identity on the basis of regional distinctiveness of the Jammu region. Perceptions of hostility and contempt against Kashmiri identity are created among Jammu masses, by propagating the argument that grievances of Jammu are due to concentration of political power in the hands of

⁶ Riyaz Punjabi, 'Kashmir: The Bruised Identity', in op. cit., n. 5, p. 136.

⁷ Navnita Chadha Behera, *State, Identity and Violence: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2000, p.61.

elites of Kashmir⁸. Second level of identity construction is intra-regional one, whereby sub-regional and cultural identities like Dogra, Poonchi, Bhaderwahi, Kishtawari, Gujjar and Pahari identities are asserting themselves. Divergence of perceptions can be seen clear among these culturally distinct identities. Thus, apart from religious identities i.e. Hindus or Muslims, regional and sub-regional identities also influence perceptions of the masses in Jammu.⁹

HINDU PERCEPTION OF KASHMIR PROBLEM IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

In this above framework whereby, the multi-dimensional nature and varied perspectives of the Kashmir debate have been laid open, this research work aims at studying 'The Hindu Perceptions of the Kashmir issue'. Generally, there are prevalent notions that indicate that there exists a homogeneous Hindu perspective of the Kashmir problem as also there exists a Muslim perspective. This work seeks to question the prevalence of any such standardised viewpoint. It aims at highlighting the several contrasting and even divergent opinions within the Hindu community in the state. The study begins with the assumption that there is no Hindu monolith in Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁰ The dominant groups or organisations that claim to represent the Hindu society propagate the assumption of Hindu monolith. No doubt that these organisations are more visible and vocal, but these in fact represent only a minor elite section of Hindu community. This gets reflected in the fact that the electoral support that these political organisations get is not proportional to their propagandist voice.¹¹

⁸ Balraj Puri, 'Regional Grievances and Regional Autonomy', in Hari Om et al (edited), *Burning Issues in Kashmir*, Jammu: Jay Kay Publishers, 1999, p. 269.

⁹ Balraj Puri, *Simmering Volcano*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1993, p. v.

¹⁰ The heterogeneity in perceptions within Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir regarding Kashmir debate becomes clear from the fact that this region has witnessed political, social, cultural and economic demands of all kinds. Hindu-oriented organisations demand complete merger of the state with Indian union. The secessionists' groups demand complete independence. Eminent scholars like Balraj Puri and others have suggested regional autonomy to Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh to redress the political and economic grievances of people of all the three regions. Other academicians like Virender Gupta and Hari Om have suggested trifurcating the state to resolve the problem of Kashmir. Also various sub-regional identities are demanding political and cultural recognition for themselves.

¹¹ For instance, out of the total 37 assembly seats of Jammu region, Hindu-oriented parties get an average of 3 seats and receive an average of 12% votes.

This research work seeks to argue that the response of Hindu society varies greatly on many issues linked to Kashmir. It tries to locate and contextualise the differentiated perceptions among Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir. The division of Hindu community on the basis of caste, class, region and rural-urban differences, provides a wide spectrum of opinions on the Kashmir debate.

CASTE AND CLASS DIVISIONS OF HINDU SOCIETY

Caste division: If we analyse the caste configuration of Hindu community, it can be seen that Dalits constitute nearly 8% of the population of Jammu and Kashmir and about 18% of the population of Jammu. Besides the Dalit castes, other backward castes and low caste population are also present. The perception of this section of Hindu society may be sharply different from the traditionally privileged Hindus, mainly Brahmins, Rajput and Mahajans (Baniya caste). The dominant political opinion within the region has been to a large extent influenced by these privileged castes. This is especially true of Hindu majority regions of Jammu. However, this does not imply that other perspectives do not exist. However, greater visibility of politics representing this privileged group has marginalised the other not so visible Dalit perspective, thus silencing the Dalit and low caste voices.

Class Division: A glimpse on the class-structure of Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir reveals that the trading community, small business class, professionals and literates constitute the privileged class among Hindus. The under privileged class of Hindus comprise mainly the unorganised workers, agrarian class, small landholders, landless workers and people working in lower strata of government. The Hindus belonging to these two different classes have incompatible class-interests, as a consequence of which they mostly operate on different political platforms. However, it is the privileged class who may not be in majority, but continues to dominate the regional politics. The underprivileged class of Hindus has different problems and issues to relate with. But their voice is mostly underplayed by the upper class of Hindu society.

The overlap between caste and class factors is provided by the fact that it is mostly Dalits and other low caste population that also constitute economically backward section of the Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir. Even the redistribution of land to Dalits after the land reforms legislation did not improve their economic condition to a large extent. Also relevant is the fact that because of their low level of literacy, Dalits have not been able to take advantage of the reservation policy in government employment. It has been observed that except for certain urban pockets, rate of literacy is extremely low among low caste Hindus living in backward regions, hilly areas and border areas of the state. Consequently, Dalits and other low caste Hindus have not been able to benefit themselves from various governmental policies, and thus constitute the poorest section of Jammu and Kashmir society. However there are very few and isolated cases of very well known Dalit families who have attained a level of prosperity.

Similarly, the traditionally privileged castes of Brahmins, Rajputs and Mahajans (Baniya caste) still continue to control the economic resources, government employment, business and trading occupations. Both socially and economically, these castes are upwardly mobile.

This overlap between caste and class categories widens the gap between lower and upper strata of Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir. Because of incompatible caste and class interests, the divergence in political, social and economic perceptions of a large number of Dalits and privileged castes becomes sharper and more visible.

REGIONAL DIVISION OF HINDU SOCIETY

Regional divide: An understanding of regional differences among Hindu community helps us to contextualise the varied perceptions of Hindus concerning the Kashmir matter. To comprehend this divergence in viewpoints, two broad regions have been dealt with - the Jammu region and the Kashmir region. The perceptions of majority of Hindus of Jammu region stand in sharp contrast to those of Kashmiri Pandits. Since historical times, these two groups of Hindus have presented very dissimilar views regarding social, economic and political dimensions of the situation prevailing in Kashmir. Here, regional

identity gains prominence over religious identity, thus bringing about heterogeneity in the views of Hindus of the two regions. What accounts for variation in opinions between two regional groups sharing similar religious identity has to be delved into. It may be argued that these contrasts have to be viewed in historical contexts in which these groups have been placed. It has to be seen that how Jammu and Ladakh regions developed a sense of awareness regarding their regional identities vis-a-vis the Kashmiri regional identity. This has been dealt by Balraj Puri, who argues:

A faster and more pronounced form of growth of regional consciousness took place after 1947. Partly it was due to a reaction against the dominating position of Kashmiri leadership in the post-independence power structure of the state and the far more homogeneous and distinctive nature of Kashmiri personality with 94 percent Muslims and nearly 90 percent Kashmiri speaking population—which automatically carved out regional identities on its either side, further separating it from Jammu by geographical barrier of the Pir Panchal range and from Ladakh by the Zojila. The process of modernization, politicization and democratization was also responsible for enhancing a sense of regional self-awareness. For the same reason, there has been resurgence of sub-cultural identities within the region.¹²

The two regional groups are not only spatially separated, but also experience wide differences in terms of culture, economy and even political orientations.

Cultural and economic incompatibility between two regional Hindu groups: The Kashmiri Pandits, constituting a miniscule minority in Muslim majority region of Kashmir, have traditionally lived in a culture of harmony with Muslims of Kashmir. Both Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir have shared the common language, historical legacy and ethos, consequent upon which is the fact of their mutual emotional ties. Unlike rest of India, most of the religious practices and rituals of Hindus and Muslims are shared and common. In historical times, in Kashmir, Hindu and Muslim identities were not seen as binary opposites. Instead these identities over-lapped to form a complex whole. Navnita Chandha Behera elaborates this by arguing:

Plurality of pre-modern identity figured on a horizontal plane, while each aspect of such an identity had a distinct social role to play and did not have to be prioritized. A person was not characterized as first a Hindu or Muslim or a monk. Identity had different meanings in different situations. A Muslim king could celebrate Hindu festivals and visit Hindu shrines and a Brahmin could compose hymns and prayers of Hindu deities in the Persian language.... Muslims celebrated Hindu festivals such as Gana-chakra, Caitra, Vyethtrawah and Sripanchami, while Hindus did not

¹² Op. cit., n. 9, p. 9.

hesitate to pay homage at the shrines of Muslim pirs and rishis such as Makhudum Sabhib, Baba Rishi, Shah Hamadan and Charar-i-Sharif.¹³

Common religious traditions between Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims are also due to the fact that Muslims in Kashmir have adopted unique religious practices different from the mainstream Islam. Islam in Kashmir has been influenced by Sufism and Hindu rishism, thereby, giving rise to common religious practices of Hindus and Muslims like shrine culture, worshipping of common sufis and rishis etc. In this context, Sumit Ganguly argues that, “the physical isolation of the valley and the long standing presence of Hindus in the midst of a predominantly Muslim population had produced a variant of Islam that had little or nothing in common with various other branches of South Asian Islam”¹⁴.

In essence, because of the unique culture of the Kashmir region, the inter- community relations were more or less harmonious till recent times. This has shaped the perceptions of Kashmiri Pandits in such a manner that their attitude towards Muslims and Muslim politics were not as hostile as those found among some sections of Hindus in Jammu.

The Jammu region, on the other hand, is much more heterogeneous and diverse in nature than the homogenous Kashmiri society.¹⁵ As a result, there is no shared common culture, political response or even economic interdependency. Hindus and Muslims of this region share comfortable relations with each other. Yet, at some points of time the two religious communities may experience some tensions due to communal propaganda by the political parties. For that reason, some groups of Hindus in this area take much more hard stands on issues relating to Muslim politics, article 370, position of accession etc.

Further, it must also be pointed out here that not only Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits differ on many issues to Kashmir tangle, but in many cases they also look toward each other with enmity. Particularly, in the economic sphere Jammu Hindus feel neglected and sidelined as Kashmiri Pandits who are almost 100 percent literate, occupy

¹³ Op. cit., n. 7, p. 33.

¹⁴ Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.40.

¹⁵ Kashmir has been mostly a Kashmiri speaking Muslim dominated valley with numerically very small Hindu minority. Jammu, on the other hand has layers of diversity based on religion, language, tribes etc.

most of the government services and other professional jobs. With the exodus of Pandits from the Valley and their settlement in the Jammu region, the economic insecurity of Hindus of Jammu has even more widened.

Converging interests of Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits: Cultural and economic incompatibility between Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits provides us with only one side of the reality. There are many other shades of their interrelation. One can also visualise their converging interests on political plane. Especially after Islamisation of the Kashmiri movement, Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits have expressed similar political concerns and raised similar political demands. Appropriated by hindutva politics, both have raised demands concerning the division of state on religious lines. Also, pro-India, anti-militancy and anti-Muslim politics provides a common ground for Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits. But it is important to argue here that not all sections of Hindus adhere to such politics.

This research work aims at analysing all such internal complexities. It seeks to explore why Hindu religion has failed to act as a unifying and cohesive tool, unable to forge solidarity between Jammu Hindu and Kashmiri Pandits. This becomes clear from the fact that in spite of the crisis that Kashmiri Pandits are facing, they are being confined to margins of the society by their co-religionists in Jammu. They are being discouraged from entering the economic and social mainstream of Jammu society.

ISSUE OF EXODUS AND PANDIT PERCEPTIONS

Although, Kashmiri Pandits had adopted a comparatively broader perspective towards Kashmir debate, their perceptions have undergone some changes since their exodus from the Valley. The introduction of fundamentalist and Jehadi elements in Kashmiri struggle have produced element of distrust between Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims. This has weakened to some extent the previously established shared cultural bonds between the two Kashmiri communities.

As a result of en masse migration of Pandits from Kashmir, the new generation of Kashmiri community has not experienced common cultural bonds between Hindus and

Muslims in Kashmir. Loss of inter-community living due to absence of Pandits from the Valley has widened the differences between these two religious categories. As a result of this, both among Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir, the hardliners have gained an edge over the moderates.

Since their exodus a section of Pandits have developed hostile posture not only towards Muslim community as such, but also towards issues related to militancy and Kashmir struggle for 'azadi'. Here significant part has been played by Hindu-oriented organisations that have appropriated the issue of Pandit migration. Navinita Chadha Behera, while analysing this changed perspective of Kashmiri Pandits argues:

.... the exodus from the valley, followed by long spell of misery and suffering at migrant camps in Jammu, Delhi and elsewhere, forced the Kashmiri Pandits to think of their political interests as separate and different from those the Kashmiri Muslims.¹⁶

Such perceptual change of Kashmiri Pandits gets reflected in their demand for 'separate homeland' for Kashmiri Pandits. Panun Kashmir, an organisation having political affiliations with Hindu-oriented parties like the BJP or the RSS, has raised this demand of a separate homeland exclusively for Pandit community consisting of 8, 400 sq. km comprising portions of Baramulla, Anantang, Srinagar, and Pulwana districts.¹⁷ These Four comprise the major districts of Kashmir with considerable proportions of Muslim population living there.

The manner in which the right wing organisations have politicised the issue of exodus and exploited the miseries of the migrated Pandit community needs to be explored. Also, the way in which these organisations have reconstructed the perceptions of Pandits and reshaped their identities in a communal framework needs consideration. Selective use of history and religious symbols constitute important tools of communal groups for reframing and institutionalising the perspectives of masses, Navinita, rightly describes this process when she holds:

Describing themselves as the original inhabitants of the Valley with a distinct subculture of the purest class of the Aryans, the Pandits recount centuries of religious, linguistic and political persecution by Muslim rulers. Keeping in mind the centrality of the 'current exodus' in the

¹⁶ Op. cit., n.7, p. 226.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 229.

politicization of the Pandits, a careful choice of historical episodes is made to single out the instances of Pandits being forced into exile by tyrannical Muslim rulers over the last 650 years.... Census figures are quoted to argue that the community is facing virtual extinction... Isolated events of communal clashes, such as the riots of Anantnag in 1986 for example, were highlighted as instances of the minority community's persecution by the Muslim majority... The Kashmiri freedom struggle against the Dogra regime in which Pandits fought with Muslims was forgotten and the post-Independence history was presented as a story of subjugation, denial, deprivation and unequal opportunities by a state dominated by Kashmiri Muslims.¹⁸

However, despite this deliberate process of perception formation of Kashmiri Pandits by Hindu oriented groups, not all segments of Pandit community adhere to such communal perceptions. It is difficult to say that due to miseries faced by Kashmiri Pandits because of militancy, all traditionally established bonds and ethos of inter-communal relations between Hindus and Muslims have been totally wiped away.¹⁹ Still Kashmiri Pandits can relate themselves more closely with Kashmiri Muslims than with Jammu Hindus. O.N. Trisal expresses his optimism about sustaining the long-established bonds between Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims. He opines:

They (Kashmiri Pandit community) should stop talking of "separate homelands" for Pandits, as that would amount to accepting the stand of the enemies of Hindu- Muslim unity... The Kashmiri Pandit is at the crossroads of history today... His co- religionists outside Kashmir cannot be the substitute for his Muslim brother in the valley, who despite all that has happened... still loves and pines for the Pandit.²⁰

There are many cases that reveal that the amity between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir is still restored. For instance, both Hindus and Muslims even now commonly visit the Muslim shrines such as the shrine of Charar-e- Sharif. Also, it was seen that when Hindus migrated from Kashmir during the period of militancy, Muslims looked after the Hindu shrines such as Amarnath, and Kheer Bhawani shrine. Except for few incidents of temples being destroyed, most of the temples in Kashmir were taken care of by Muslims only.

Nevertheless, this sense of relatedness and shared closeness between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir can be experienced mostly at socio-cultural levels. It is mostly at personal and inter-community levels that we can talk of interrelatedness between them.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 227-228.

¹⁹ Shyam Kaul, *Kashmir: Paradise Called Dispute*, 2004, pp. 174-178.

²⁰ O.N. Trisal, 'Kashmiri Pandit: At the Cross-roads of History' in Verinder Grover (edited), *The Story of Kashmir: Yesterday and Today*, Deep and Deep, 1995, pp. 739-740.

However, at political level, sharp divisions begin to surface that tend to widen the gap between the two Kashmiri communities. From the very beginning the divergent class interests between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir had given rise to different political orientations of these two religious categories. The episode of exodus has further widened the gap between the two communities has increased.

Thus, in context of the above-described framework, a complex situation gets surfaced and it needs to be analysed that whether the mindset of Kashmiri Pandits has really changed or it is a temporal phase.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

To study the differentiated responses of Hindu society, two broad groups have been focused upon in this work - Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits. These two groups have been undertaken for study because each of these represents a specific situation apart from being differently located. Their historical specifics and contextual particularities would be helpful in tracing and highlighting heterogeneous Hindu articulations regarding the issue of Kashmir.

Most of the vocal and articulated Hindu perception of Jammu region is found in urban areas of the society. The organised Hindu politics that claims to represent the mainstream Jammu perspective is anchored in the elite section of Hindu society, constituting mainly upper caste, middle class and entrenched Hindu population. This study thus takes into consideration mainly the urban Hindu perceptions in the Jammu region. This, however, does not imply that there are no other voices in Jammu society. In fact, there are many other layers of perceptions beyond urban areas of Jammu region, which includes the perceptions of rural masses, pleasantry class and low caste Hindus. However, there is till now no systematic or organised articulation of their perceptions. This section is generally voiceless, without any political representation. Those who claim to represent Hindu Politics in the State, generally neglect these rural and non-elite voices and perceptions.

In studying the varied Pandit standpoints, we need to probe the ambiguities that the Pandit community is facing due to communalisation of the Kashmir issue. The way in which the episode of exodus has affected the different sections of Kashmiri Pandit community has to be dealt with.

The fact that this study focuses on the above-mentioned Hindu groups does not indicate that there are no other Hindu voices or perceptions. However, due to non-availability of their systematic articulations in political or any other form, it is extremely difficult to gather such not so vocal perceptions. Due to inaccessibility of such voices, this study would be mostly confined to urban and systematically articulated perspectives. However, this study would try to analyse rural and unarticulated views only where it would be possible to do so.

It should also be emphasised that even in the study of these two urban groups of Hindus, there is no homogeneity in perception. This study aims at analysing the variation and internal dialogue within Hindu viewpoints in each of these regions. The Hindu viewpoint of each region may be represented by one dominant or vocal Hindu political group, but there is always a counter-politics operating in each of these regions which needs to be delved into. This study analyses complexities and internal range of perceptions of each of these groups. It also locates these various responses and opinions in its socio-economic grounds. Also, this study is a comparative analysis of these groups and their various perspectives.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Kashmir debate has been an area of grave concern not only for India and Pakistan, but also for the international community as no possible resolution can be foreseen in near future. Most of the resolutions offered have failed because of their simplistic and partial vision. In the wake of the long-standing bilateral dispute with Pakistan, the Kashmir problem is generally viewed from an India-Pakistan standpoint. The Kashmir tangle is generally equated with the Kashmiri struggle for Independence. These viewpoints

underplay the multi-dimensional character of the whole issue. This research work brings to surface the diverse perspectives that underlie the Kashmir affair.

In this study, Hindu perceptions of the Kashmir debate are focused upon because, generally, the problem is that Kashmir is equated with the political aspirations of only the majority community of Kashmiri Muslims. Hindu perceptions about the Kashmir crisis are generally excluded. Even if the Hindu perception is studied, the viewpoints of various diverse Hindu communities in the state of Jammu and Kashmir are not taken into account. Only the dominant vocal Hindu politics is viewed as representing the voice of entire Hindu community in the state. This study highlights the importance of analysing the diverse perceptions within Hindus society in the state. It questions the existence of a uniform homogeneous Hindu viewpoint representing the state of Jammu and Kashmir regarding the Kashmir crisis.

This study is sociologically relevant as it aims at exploring the complexities of various social groups and communities. Till now much work has been done to highlight political aspects of the Kashmir crisis. Most of the studies undertaken to find resolution of the Kashmir problem take into account the national and political interests of India and Pakistan. In the process, considerations of social and cultural rights as well as aspirations of the various groups and communities get neglected. Hence, the mere political channelisation of the Kashmir problem undermines the sociological perspective attached to it. This work is a sociological intervention in the study of Kashmir problem. It aims at locating the political perceptions of the Kashmir issue in the societal framework. The whole issue is also viewed from the social categories of caste, class, religion and rural-urban differences. Also, the various political perceptions regarding Kashmir debate are examined by locating it in its socio-economic grounds. It thus aims at highlighting the fact that perceptions are not purely political, but also depend upon material and social interests of various groups. This research is thus significant in determining the link between political perceptions and their socio-economic interests.

METHODOLOGY

This study relies mostly on secondary sources- books, journals and articles. Books written by various academicians and renowned scholars on political, social and cultural life of Kashmir have been quite resourceful in understanding the complexities involved in the Kashmir issue. Also, the books written by regional scholars of Jammu and Kashmir have been significant in contextualising the social and cultural dimensions of the issue. While analysing the Kashmir problem, I found a paucity of literature directly dealing with Hindu perspectives of the problem. So, the diversity of perspective had to be grasped by analysing the political articulations, social peculiarities and class interests of various Hindu communities in Jammu and Kashmir.

Also, some primary sources have been used in this research work. It includes, content analysis of various events related to the Kashmir problem in newspapers. Moreover, analysis of manifestos, pamphlets and document papers of various Hindu groups have been made to find link between political and social determinants of the Kashmir problem.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter I lays open the multiple dimensions of the Kashmir problem. It tries to contextualise the differentiated perceptions of Kashmir problem among various Hindu groups in Jammu and Kashmir society. The relevance of the study undertaken and method used for studying is also presented in this chapter.

In order to highlight the social and political discourse on the Kashmir issue, the viewpoints of various renowned academicians, scholars and experts on Kashmir will be focused upon in Chapter II. Analysis of the work done by intellectuals such as Sumantra Bose, Sumit Ganguly and Victoria Shoffield will provide with an overview of the sources of conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. Also significant is to analyse the works of Balraj Puri, Navnita Behera, Hari Om and others to get an insight into various political dimensions of the problem. The socio-cultural complexities of Kashmir tangle will be

probed into by analysing the works of intellectuals such as Shyam Kaul and Riyaz Punjabi. Writings of various other scholars will be probed into to grasp the various different Hindu perspective of the Kashmir problem in Jammu and Kashmir.

Chapter III aims to trace the various Hindu viewpoints of Kashmir conflict in Jammu region. To formulate these various Hindu perspectives, heterogeneity of Jammu society and internal differentiation among Hindus there will be reflected upon. Also perspectives of Dalits Hindus residing mainly in rural areas will be briefly traced.

Chapter IV will focus upon the fact that even in a culturally homogenous society like Kashmir, there exists divergence in perceptions regarding problem in Jammu and Kashmir among Kashmiri Pandits. Chapter IV also seeks to make a comparison between the divergent perceptions of two groups of Hindus – Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits. This Chapter will put forth the argument that religion is only one factor that plays a role in shaping perceptions. There are other factors such as ethnic, cultural and economic that also contributes in formulating viewpoints of a community. This accounts for multiplicity of opinions among members of the same religious group.

Chapter V proposes to conclude that there are no monolith blocs in the population of Jammu and Kashmir. This provides for heterogeneity of viewpoints and opinions regarding the Kashmir tangle. This chapter will also touch upon briefly the various Muslim viewpoints in the state of Jammu and Kashmir regarding the Kashmir dilemma.

CHAPTER II – KASHMIR ISSUE: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The issue of Kashmir has received considerable attention during the last 15 years due to the strategic nature of the problem. A lot has been written that deals with the Kashmir conflict from a political or security perspective. However, these studies do not look into the internal social dynamics while dealing with the conflict. How the political nature of the crisis in Kashmir is influencing the popular perceptions of people in the state is not touched upon at any length. Although some work has been done that reflects upon the Muslim viewpoints on this subject, there is a paucity of literature that focuses on the opinions and responses of the Hindu community regarding the Kashmir debate. Even these accounts tend to view Hindus and Muslims as two homogeneous communities. While my research focuses on the Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir, it aims to explore its internal structure. I will also address how the internal differences within the Hindu social structure correspond to diverse Hindu perceptions regarding the political discourse on Kashmir.

AN OVERVIEW OF KASHMIR PROBLEM

A number of scholarly accounts have tried to understand the intricacies that underlie the Kashmir dispute and how they are perceived by different groups of people involved.

Sumantra Bose (1997) and Sumit Ganguly (1997) approach the subject of Kashmir from a politico-historical perspective.¹ They point out that the mass upsurge in Kashmir cannot be located in stereotypical notions such as the inherently disloyal nature of Muslims to the Indian state. In fact, they argue, that the dispute needs to be seen in the context of political dynamics of the Indian state. Bose and Ganguly trace the historical roots of the Kashmir crisis to argue that the problem in Kashmir is not a religious matter but rather a result of the denial of basic democratic rights to the Kashmiri masses by the Indian

¹ Sumantra Bose, *The Challenge in Kashmir: Democracy, Self-Determination and a Just Peace*, New Delhi: Sage, 1997; also see Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir*, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

government. Focusing on the Centre-State relationship, these scholars hold that repeated interference by the Centre in the political affairs of Jammu and Kashmir diluted the state's autonomy. Moreover, the coercive policies of the Indian armed forces as well as the authoritarian outlook of the state nullified the relevance of democracy in Kashmir. Elections were frequently rigged and puppet governments were installed in Kashmir by the Central governments. Bose and Ganguly argue that these undemocratic practices compelled the youth in Kashmir to defy the constitutional political processes and opt for violence.

Sumit Ganguly also tries to bring in the economic aspect of the problem. He holds that increasing political and economic exposure in Kashmir due to the state policies of economic development, mass literacy and expansion of mass media could not find a proper channel of expression because of the authoritarian structure of the state administration. Therefore, according to Sumit Ganguly, this fundamental paradox of growing politico-economic consciousness on the one hand, and the institutional decay of political institutions on the other, lead to situations of conflict and violence.

Similarly, Victoria Schofield (2003) also probes into the political complexities of the Kashmir debate by tracing its historical roots.² She explains the positions of India and Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute and believes that any solution to this issue requires the incorporation of the Kashmiri masses in the negotiations between these two nations. Also, both India and Pakistan should be willing to make some compromises to reach a realistic solution to this dilemma.

A range of perceptions concerning the subject of Kashmir is also provided in the volume edited by Raju G. C. Thomas (1992).³ Scholars from different ethnic backgrounds, nationalities and religion have contributed to this piece of writing. They have shed light on the historical, social, political, domestic and international dimensions of the Kashmir

² Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2003.

³ Raju G. C. Thomas (edited), *Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia*, Oxford: Westview, 1992

tangle. The contributors have interpreted the historical facts related to this dispute in diverse ways, thus providing a broad and inclusive overview of the issue. A compilation of these various points of view provides differing images of the Kashmir crisis and the several alternative approaches of looking at it.

An important argument put forward by Raju G. C. Thomas is that multiculturalism is the predominant trait in most South Asian societies. Due to overlapping cultural, linguistic, caste and ethnic identities in these societies, religion fails to provide a homogeneous perception to any social problem. Hence, there is a need to study these problems from diverse positions.

These scholarly analyses bring into play the complexities that lie beneath the Kashmir debate, thus providing a comprehensive outline of the issue. These writings also enable us to look into the standpoints of Kashmiri Muslims, separatists' groups and political organisations. However, not adequate attention has been paid to bring to light the viewpoints of the Hindu community concerning this matter. For that reason, it is important to focus upon the perceptions of Hindus in the state on the subject of Kashmir. Since perceptions are not independent of economic and social situations in which they are placed, it is imperative to go through the texts that deal with the structure and composition of Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir.



SOCIETY AND HINDU COMMUNITY IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR

There is a paucity of literature that draws our attention towards the social structure of society in Jammu and Kashmir. Most of the studies on Kashmir have exhausted themselves by projecting it as a bilateral dispute between India and Pakistan. The obsession to view Kashmir as a political or strategic affair ignores the aspirations of people and communities and the way they interact and link with each other to create a complex social structure. Nevertheless, there are few scholars who while dealing with the political aspect of Kashmir, have also focused upon the society and culture in Jammu and Kashmir.



Navnita Chadha Behera (2000), for example, tries to bring out the profoundly plural character of the state and the divergent perspectives of the various groups of people living in Jammu and Kashmir.⁴ Behera attempts to analyse the issue of Kashmir not merely in terms of the movement for self-determination, but also seeks to highlight the stakes of various communities involved. She rightly stresses the fact that besides Kashmiri identity, there are other identities too in the state - the Gujjar, Pahari, Dogra and Ladakhi identities. These need to be studied too while discussing the Kashmir problem. She states:

The long-standing dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir has tended to distort the understanding of this issue. The world community tends to equate the state with the Kashmir Valley and the Valley with Kashmiri Muslims. The 'Kashmir issue' is thus presented as an intractable 'territorial dispute' between two belligerent neighbours, or, at best, as Kashmiris' struggle for an independent state of Jammu and Kashmir. Little is known about the plurality of the state with diverse communities such as Gujjars, Bakkarwals, Kashmiri Pandits, Dogras and Ladakhi Buddhists for whom the right of self-determination has little appeal, and even less is known about their political aspirations and political choices...(p.15)

Navnita Chadha's writing clearly points out that any political discourse on Kashmir that does not take into consideration the plural structural realities as well as the interests of several identities of the state is likely to be unidimensional. She forcefully argues that the national dialogue to address the Kashmir matter hardly addresses the demands and perceptions of several sub-regional identities in the state. Hence, she recommends refashioning of the state structures and their linkages with the group identities of the state.

A brief historical understanding of the culture and structural operation of Kashmir society is provided by Walter Lawrence (n.d).⁵ Through his insightful depiction of Kashmir society, one gets a broad image of the cultural patterns, religious practices, customs and social life that prevailed there in the near past. He describes the system of administration in the 19th century in Kashmir that favoured the interests of city people at the cost of villagers. The condition of common villagers, especially the peasantry, remained subjugated and oppressed. In this context, Walter Lawrence elaborates that, " it is no wonder that cultivation was bad, that the revenue was not paid, and that the peasants were

⁴ Navnita Chadha Behera, *State, Identity and Violence: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2000.

⁵ Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, Jammu: Kashmiri Kitab Ghar, n.d.

roving from one village to another in hope of finding some rest and freedom from oppression.” (p.3)

Walter Lawrence also brings to our notice the inter-community relations that existed in Kashmir society. He, thus, focuses on peaceful co-existence between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir as they shared certain common ideas and customs. Both Hindus and Muslims observed some common religious rituals and practices. Also annual feasts were held at various shrines where families of both these religious communities gathered to celebrate. He elaborates on commonness between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir by stating that, “Musalmans, when they were converted to Islam, still hung with tenderness to old religious (Hindu) places.” (p. 286). Not only Muslims followed religious practices different from those of mainstream Islam, but Hinduism in Kashmir also developed its own indigenous character. In this regard, Walter Lawrence writes:

They (Pandits) are said to be extremely strict in following the rules of Brahmanism when they visit India; but in their own country (Kashmir) they do things which would horrify the orthodox Hindus. They would drink water brought by a musalman; they will eat food cooked on a musalman boat; the foster-mother of Hindu children is usually a musalmani, while the foster-brother often obtains great power in a Hindu household...(p.300).

As this analytical piece of Walter Lawrence is a historical depiction of Kashmir, it needs to be supplemented with more recent texts to comprehend the complex structural relations that mark society in Kashmir.

Upendra Kishen Zutshi (1986) has provided a more recent glimpse into the social functioning of Kashmir society.⁶ Considering its plural socio-economic structure, Zutshi has made an effort to discuss the regional, class, caste and religious fragmentation of Kashmir society.

Upendra Zutshi’s account is important as it seeks to probe into the configuration of Hindu society in Kashmir. He brings to our consideration the differentiated and stratified nature of the Hindu segment in Kashmir in terms of endogamous caste groupings, occupational categories, and economic backgrounds. He has also pointed out the factors other than

⁶ U. K. Zutshi, *Emergence of Political Awakening in Kashmir*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1986.

religion, such as class, caste, and occupation that marked routine affairs of life in Kashmir. Zutshi thus argues that, “The cultural differentiation between the segments of society in Kashmir was based upon the nature of various hereditary occupational persuasions and the different occupational categories rather on faith they followed.” (p.124)

Riyaz Punjabi (1992) also traces the inter-community patterns in Kashmir since historical times.⁷ His paper presents a broad secular perception of Kashmiri society. He has dealt with the mutual reciprocity between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir and uniqueness of Kashmiri culture responsible for such inter-communal living. He opines:

The lineage of Kashmiri people had given them distinctive looks; the fusion and assimilation of varied faiths and cultures had resulted in their particular and specific ethnicity...A common language bound them closer into a distinct cultural grouping. In case religion is taken to be the main ingredient of ethnicity, then the Kashmiri people had evolved their indigenous religious practice by assimilating the religious practices of varied religions...Thus, in such a scenario, a Kashmiri Pandit, a Saraswat Brahmin, takes to the eating of mutton, and derives sanction for this practice from his scriptures...(p.137)

Riyaz Punjabi’s analysis provides a counter-perspective to the arguments put forth by many scholars who view the Kashmir debate from a purely communal point of view.

While depicting the harmonious inter-community relations in Kashmir, most of the scholars have tended to project a flawless image of society in Kashmir. In this context, it is imperative to refer to the account of Mridu Rai (2004) as it attempts to go beyond these standard representations of Kashmir society.⁸ Her study explains the complex realities that marked the structure and inter-communal relations in Kashmir. She recognises the unique pattern of interaction between Hindus and Muslims in this region and the occupational pattern of interdependence that existed between them. Rai also acknowledges the shared cultural space between Pandits and Muslims in the Valley. Yet, at the same time, she addresses the political and economic tensions that existed between them.

⁷ Riyaz Punjabi, ‘Kashmir: The Bruised Identity’, in op. cit., n. 3.

⁸ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004

An important part of Mridu Rai's text is the attention she draws to the heterogeneous character of the Hindu community in Kashmir. She also probes into the caste structure of Hindu society. Mridu Rai notices the fact that Hindus in Kashmir are represented by the single caste of Brahmins, as all other castes had historically converted to Islam. However, she argues that this does not imply that Hindus in this area constitute one cohesive unit. Even the Brahmins are subdivided into various endogamous groups, each with distinct tradition and occupation. Rai elaborates the pattern of hierarchy that existed between these several groups. This study leads us to an important conclusion that given the fragmented nature of the Hindu community in the Valley, its members do not perceive the social and political problems prevailing there in same way. Their responses on this subject differ depending on caste, regional and economic factors.

Most of these above mentioned texts are basically politically oriented, though they have partially dealt with the societal framework of Jammu and Kashmir. These literary analyses consider identities existing in the state as final and do not address in detail as to how these identities have evolved and what are the internal tensions that these identities are facing. The accounts referred above hardly elaborate on how caste-class relations operate and produce differentiated responses within a group or a community? Or how forces of modernisation have transformed these caste-class structures and other social variables? These various papers have tried to impose the political solutions on the people of Jammu and Kashmir, without understanding the internal social dynamics of the communities involved. As my research is based on secondary sources, I cannot deal with all these broader questions adequately. However, I will attempt to establish a link between political perceptions of the Hindu community and the complex structure of society in Jammu and Kashmir.

INTERNAL DIFFERENTIATION WITHIN HINDU COMMUNITY

It is inappropriate to study any religious category as a unified grouping. It is essential to explore as to how social variables such as caste, class, region and language produce divisions and factions within a community. Not sufficient attention has been paid by

scholars to stress the fragmented nature of communities in Jammu and Kashmir. However, it is important to mention the outstanding contributions of Chitrlekha Zutshi (2003) and Mridu Rai (ibid.) who have dealt with this aspect of the problem, though focusing on the Muslim community.⁹ These writings have broadly dealt with the process of identity formation of this religious group in Kashmir and the internal segregations that mark this identity. Both Chitrlekha Zutshi and Mridu Rai have shown how the Kashmiri Muslim identity evolved taking Hindus as the frame of reference. The acknowledgement of the relatively deprived economic position of Muslims as compared to Pandits in the Valley resulted in the sharpening of the Muslim identity during early twentieth century. Politically also, Muslims in Kashmir remained unrepresentative as Pandits occupied important administrative positions during Dogra rule. Thus, the growing political consciousness among Muslims of their backward status resulted in the construction of the Kashmiri Muslims identity vis-à-vis the Hindu identity. This process called for the projection of Muslims in Kashmir as a homogeneous identity. However, as these authors explain, in reality this identity was internally split in terms of the masses and the elites. They have highlighted the class-based divisions within the Muslim society in Kashmir. The intra-Muslim differences can also be seen in terms of competition and contestation for influence even among the political elite of this society.

Both Chitrlekha Zutshi and Mridu Rai are crucial for our understanding, as they have dealt with the struggles and tensions within a community in great depth. Although, these tracts have focused on the Muslim community, similar arguments can be applied while analysing the Hindu community in the state. These studies provide a basic framework for probing into the internal structure of Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, these writings are historical accounts and need to be supplemented by more recent insights.

⁹ Chitrlekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity and the Making of Kashmir*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003; also see ibid.

PERCEPTIONS OF HINDUS IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR CONCERNING KASHMIR MATTER

As already said, most authors have not sufficiently dealt with the various Hindu standpoints in the state regarding the Kashmir question. As already mentioned, although some individual scholars have looked at the Kashmir debate from the Hindu point of view, most of these writings tend to view Hindu community as a cohesive group. For this reason, these accounts have highlighted only the dominant Hindu perspective, without paying any heed to the other not so vocal Hindu opinions existing in the state. Moreover, these perceptions are studied as an independent category and are not linked with the social structure in which they are situated. Nevertheless, it is important to mention some of the contributions that have dealt with the Kashmir problem by examining the Hindu perspectives.

Hari Om (1998) and K. L. Bhatia (1997) provide a rightist perspective on this subject by focusing on the Jammu Hindus.¹⁰ They argue that the policies of the Indian government have unduly privileged Kashmir at the cost of Jammu and Ladakh. In their view Article 370, which provides special status to the state, encourages the anti-national and pro-independence propensities of the Valley Muslims. Both Hari Om and Bhatia hold that this Article helps to accomplish the communal motive of Kashmiri Muslim leadership to dominate the Hindus as well as the political scene in Jammu and Kashmir.

These authors are very critical of Kashmiri Muslim leadership and suspect its motives. According to them, Kashmiri leadership that has come to dominate the state's polity and economy is basically anti-Hindu and Valley-centric. Deprivation and discontent of Jammu Hindus, they feels, is the consequence of sectarian motives of Muslims leadership in the Valley. Hari Om has supported the view that the only way out to accommodate the aspirations of people of Jammu and Ladakh is to separate the state into three mutually exclusive parts – Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh.

¹⁰ Hari Om, *Beyond the Kashmir Valley*, New Delhi: Har Anand, 1998; also see K. L. Bhatia, *Jammu and Kashmir: Article 370 of the Constitution of India*, New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1997.

Reflecting on the perceptions of another broad group of Hindus, the Kashmir Pandits, some Pandits scholars have also have employed conservative religious vocabulary to analyse the problem. Thus, M. K. Teng and C. L. Gadoo (1994),¹¹ consider Kashmiri Muslims in general as allies of Pakistan who desire to “disengage the state of Jammu and Kashmir from India, and secure its integration with the Muslim homeland of Pakistan.”(p. 30). They argue that the demands of sub-regional autonomy and restoration of regional identity are inspired by communal and anti-national motives.

On a similar note that views Kashmiri Muslim upsurge as a Muslim conspiracy, D. N, Raina (1994)¹² suggests that Muslims in Kashmir have not in the least suffered from militancy in the Valley. In his opinion, Hindus are the only ones to have suffered the militant violence of Muslims, which is why they chose to leave their homes. According to him, Kashmiri Muslims, in fact, benefited from the terrorism in Kashmir. To quote Raina:

The insurgency and terrorism has not affected the prosperity of the Muslims of the Kashmir Valley. In fact their prosperity has increased due to their having taken away immovable assets and agricultural property as also business establishments of the Hindus worth thousands of crores of rupees.... Only sufferers have been 3 lakhs of Hindus, who had to run away...(p. 48-49)

Santosh Kaul (1998) also has a similar perception on the subject. For him “the exclusion of the state from the Constitutional organisation of India gave a free hand to the National Conference to accomplish total Islamisation of the State.”¹³ He argues that in the name of economic reforms, land reforms policy in this province actually aimed to marginalise the Hindu community and empower Muslims.

These scholars have clearly failed to address the complexities that Kashmir society has been confronting ever since the post-accession period. Moreover, their use of religious categories to interpret the problem tends to provide a simplified and partial vision of the Kashmir issue. As they proceed with a unified notion of Hindus and Muslims as two

¹¹ M. K. Teng and C. L. Gadoo, *White Paper on Kashmir*, New Delhi: Joint Human Rights Committee, 1994.

¹² D. N. Raina, *Kashmir: Distortions and Reality*, New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 1994.

¹³ Santosh Kaul, ‘Article 370’, in Shyam Kaul and Onkar Kachru (edited), *Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh: Ringside views*, New Delhi: Khama, 1998.

undifferentiated antagonistic categories, these scholars do not see any possibility of common meeting point between the two communities, nor the diverse political and social forces that have set them apart. Furthermore, other than the urban-centric conservative Hindu perspective no other opinion of Jammu Hindus or Kashmiri Pandits is dealt with.

Balraj Puri (1993) provides a secular alternative to the vocal pro-Hindu perspective regarding the Kashmir affair.¹⁴ He denies the argument that the struggle in Kashmir has a communal framework. Though religion has its role to play, the assimilationist and authoritarian propensities of the Indian government have done much harm in aggravating the grievances of the people of Kashmir. Puri brings into play the deeply differentiated character of the Kashmir crisis. In his book, he emphasises the need to respect the regional identities and democratic rights of the people. Thus, he recommends the decentralisation of powers in both Jammu and Kashmir regions.

Balraj Puri (1993) describes the right-wing politics as sectarian and negative in character.¹⁵ He blames these groups for channelising the legitimate grievances of Jammu Hindus in communal directions. Politics of such organisations such as the Praja Parishad and the RSS has influenced the mindset of a section of Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir to develop an anti-Kashmiri and anti-Muslim perspective. But more importantly, they also facilitated alienation and separatist tendencies among Kashmiri Muslims.

Balraj Puri in his account makes an important point when he argues that the Jammu perspective on Kashmir should not merely be viewed in terms of narrow Hindu-oriented politics of right-wing groups. He points out that a secular movement that views the Kashmir affair from a broad perspective has always been active in Jammu. This movement demanded regional autonomy or devolution of political power on the basis of its equitable distribution among the three regions of the state. Elaborating on its secular framework, Puri historically traces its sources of origin in the following words:

The proponents of regional autonomy...draw their inspiration from and had participated in the freedom movement in the State which was directed against the authoritarian rule of the Maharaja

¹⁴ Balraj Puri, *Kashmir: Towards Insurgency*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993

¹⁵ Balraj Puri, *Simmering Volcano*, New Delhi: Sterling, 1993

and supported by the Indian National Congress. They opposed the concept of an independent Hindu State and demanded accession to the State to the Indian Under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah in 1947, thereafter they demanded equitable share in political power for the people of all the three regions. For achieving this objective, they believed, abolition of monarchy and a secular democratic organization were indispensable. They drew their ideological inspiration mainly from the Indian Socialist Movement...(p. 67)

These views of Balraj Puri represent the opinions and standpoints of a liberal section of Jammu Hindus.

Similarly, some Pandits scholars have also presented a broad and non-communal Kashmiri Hindu perspective concerning the Kashmir dilemma. Here, it is worth mentioning the writings of Prem Nath Bazaz. Instead of looking at Kashmir as either a case of extreme antagonism between Hindus and Muslims or even as a case of perfect harmony between them, he tries to look at how their complex relations have changed over time. The interaction between multiple factors is taken into consideration while dealing with the Kashmir crisis. Also taken under consideration is the incompatibility between the Indian state and the aspirations of the Kashmiri masses who want sufficient space and autonomy.

Prem Nath Bazaz (1992a) provides interesting insights into the political leadership of Kashmir society.¹⁶ He appreciates the National Conference for undertaking socialist reforms in Kashmir society. But at the same time he is critical of this political organisation for its authoritarian tendencies and repressive policies as well as for the rampant corruption in the administration during its regime. According to him, the suppression of free public opinion and urges of Kashmiri masses both by the Centre and the state governments frustrated the Kashmiri youth. He believes that the issue of accession is still important for Muslims, not because of their religious affiliation with Pakistan or their anti-Indian tendencies. It has remained important for Muslims because the Indian state denied civil liberties and basic political rights to them. And also because Hindu-oriented organisations repeatedly questioned their loyalty towards the Indian nation thereby, raising the demand of abrogation of Article 370.

¹⁶ Prem Nath Bazaz, 'Kashmir problem Reconsidered', in op. cit., n. 3.

Prem Nath Bazaz probes into the popular aspirations of a large number of Kashmiri Pandits who feel that their community is not getting adequate share of government and state jobs. They feel that they are being discriminated against in favour of the Muslim majority community. Bazaz contradicts this perception of Pandits by objectively assessing the economic situation in Kashmir. He strongly holds:

.... the Pandits are getting much more than their numbers entitle them to have... it can be asseverated that Pandits were never so well represented, so far as state services are concerned, as they are today. The National Conference has been liberal to them. Attempting to understand the real mind of the Pandits, I observed that what they in fact dislike is the speedy growth of the Muslim representation in the state services; the Pandits fail to recognize that this is inevitable in the changed national and international circumstances.... (p. 220-221).

Regarding Article 370, Prem Nath Bazaz (1992b) holds the view that contrary to what Hindu extremists argue this Article is in no way disintegrating the Indian Nation.¹⁷ In fact, he feels that “ this article is functioning as a safety valve (p. 266) Thus Bazaz believes that removal of Article 370 would not integrate the Nation, but this would only increase and solidify the hostility of Muslims against the Indian State.

In a complementary fashion, Shyam Kaul (2004) penetrates into the ambiguous and uncertain mindset of the Kashmiri people.¹⁸ Kaul argues that the political circumstances in Kashmir along with the impact of militancy have resulted in contradictory attitudes among the Kashmiri masses. When these factors are combined with the painful experience of exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits it is easies to contextualise their perceptions and social behaviour. Kaul’s study enables us to empathise with the viewpoints and responses of various Pandit groups and associations.

On the one hand, Shyam Kaul appreciates Kashmiri Muslims for rejecting the two-nation theory. But on the other hand, he talks about the duplicity of Kashmiri Muslims, which Kaul holds responsible for aggravating the Kashmir problem. On this aspect, Shyam Kaul writes:

¹⁷ Bazaz, ‘Problem of Kashmir Bequeathed by Nehru’, in *ibid*.

¹⁸ Shyam Kaul, *Kashmir: Paradise Called Dispute*, New Delhi: Om, 2004

The paradox of the Kashmiri Muslim is his two-mindedness...In spite of having been Indian citizens all their lives Kashmiris (Muslims) in general are not Indians at heart. Their loyalties, allegiances, aspirations and dreams are almost always linked with Pakistan and not with India. The religious affinity, which the Kashmiri Muslim has with Pakistan, overrides every other consideration when it comes to the crunch. Touch the core of his heart and you will find no warmth for India. (pp. 21-25)

All the above-mentioned tracts represent a wide variety of views and opinions. For instance, Balraj Puri is an activist who puts forward his personal opinions to analyse the intricacies surrounding the Kashmir debate. Similarly, M. K. Teng represents the political ideas of Hindu rightist organisations. The standpoints of all these scholars mentioned above are not wholly guided by a sociological enquiry into the Jammu and Kashmir society. They represent, at best, the perceptions of the urban upper middle class Hindu society to which they themselves belong. These elite-centric positions exclude the voices of rural, lower caste and poorer sections of society in Jammu and Kashmir who constitute a large proportion of the Hindu population. There has been no objective academic study of the cross-section of the Hindu community in the state to bring out multiple perceptions that prevail among them in the context of the Kashmir matter.

There, therefore, is a clear need for a holistic academic analysis to impartially explore the diverse opinions of Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir regarding the problem in the state. The present research is an effort to unravel these various viewpoints and situate them in the structure of the society in this geographical region. Also the reasons as to why certain sections of the Hindu community perceive the issues related to Kashmir in a particular manner are examined by relating them to the differentiated and stratified arrangement of this community. For instance, the impact of caste, class and regional factors on heterogeneous political responses of Hindus is analysed. Apart from the vocal urban Hindu perceptions, this study has tried to make visible the other not so clearly articulated Hindu perceptions concerning this subject. It has attempted to link the political issue of Kashmir to the economic and social dimensions of Jammu and Kashmir society.

CHAPTER III – VARIOUS HINDU PERCEPTIONS REGARDING KASHMIR PROBLEM: JAMMU REGION

INTRODUCTION

An attempt to unravel various perceptions of Hindus in Jammu regarding the Kashmir issue underlies the assumption that Hindus in Jammu do not form a unified group. As elsewhere, Hindus in this part of the state form a composite mix due to which they show differentiated responses and viewpoints as regards the Kashmir debate. An appropriate understanding of diverse perceptions of Jammu Hindus becomes possible if these are located in the social structure of the Jammu region.

Jammu, representing a case of deeply plural and fragmented society, refuses to be placed in any kind of monolithic framework. The plurality of this area gets reflected at multiple levels in terms of region, religion, caste, class, language, culture, and rural and urban factors. This fragmented and mixed makeup of Jammu society, in turn, deeply influences the perceptions and opinions of Hindus of Jammu. Religion is only one identity that defines society in Jammu. Several ethnic and sub-regional factors operate here to mark its many overlapping identities. To cite an example, a Hindu Pahari has more in common with a Muslim Pahari than with his co-religionists elsewhere in this area. Similarly, Gaddis who while sharing their religion with Hindus of the region have cultural linkages with Muslim Gujjars. Various other identities such as Mirpuri, Muzzafarabadi and Punjabi operate in the Jammu society.¹

As elsewhere in India, Hindu society within this geographical area is not a cohesive unit.² This produces a differentiated response and multiple viewpoints among Hindus on various issues and problems. A large part of the Jammu's Hindu population comprises the

¹ Balraj Puri, *Simmering Volcano: Study of Jammu's Relation with Kashmir*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1983, pp. 3-5.

² To quote Balraj Puri, "It (Jammu) is not a compact area and the extent of its homogeneity has to be looked into. Historically speaking this region had many separate principalities which were joined together by a common ruler. But the common ruler did not, rather could not, bind them together. The tribal and the clannish loyalties remained. The common interest of ruling Kashmir forged some links but the common man continued to adhere loyalty to sect, tribe or clan, for purposes of having a sense of security, which is a *raison de'tre* for such loyalties." *Jammu: A Clue to Kashmir Tangle*, New Delhi: Balraj Puri, 1966, p. 48.

Dalits as they number nearly 18 percent of the population of Jammu. The viewpoints of this section of Hindu society, in many cases, may be sharply different from the upper caste Hindus, mainly the Brahmins, Rajputs and Mahajans (Baniya caste).³

The difference in opinions and responses between low caste Hindus and upper caste Hindus, on account of economic and social factors, can be traced historically. Before 1947, power was located in the hands of Hindu Dogra rulers in Jammu and Kashmir. In Jammu, the main beneficiaries during Dogra rule were upper caste Hindus who appropriated major economic and social resources including land, employment and education.⁴ The interests of these upper caste Hindus were commonly allied with the Dogra regime. During this period, education was mainly the monopoly of Brahmins and they constituted the scholarly class. The Rajputs were associated with the royal class and were recruited to the army. Baniyas were another entrenched class who were associated with trading and money lending professions during this period. A small section of Muslim Rajputs were also part of this privileged classes of Jammu society. But generally, the peasantry class comprising the Muslims, low caste Hindus and Dalits remained oppressed and marginalised.⁵ The economic, social and political interests of this underprivileged class differed from the better off classes in Jammu society.

After 1947, changes in the power structure took place with the abolition of Dogra monarchy. As a consequence of secular democratic movement launched by Sheikh Abdullah and other liberal leaders, the feudal Dogra rule gave way to the democratic participatory politics in the state.⁶ The effect of change in power was deeply felt in the Jammu region in form of initiation of land reforms and the beginning of democratic politics in the state. Land reforms empowered Dalits and poorer sections of the society to some extent, as in some cases people from these categories became owners of land.

³ One gets a clear picture in this connection when one analyses the electoral response of the Dalit voters, especially in the reserved constituencies.

⁴ This point has been very elaborately made by Mridu Rai in her recently published book, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights and the History of Kashmir*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp 1-18

⁵ Vijay Kumar, 'Rise of Hindu Fundamentalism in India: With Special Reference to Jammu Region', Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, University of Jammu, 1997.

⁶ For details see, Zutshi, Chitralekha, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity and the Making of Kashmir*, Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003, pp.259-322

However, due to a number of reasons these poorer classes could not benefit much from the land reform policy. Other government policies such as reservations in education and employment created opportunities for elites among Dalits and other unprivileged sections of the society. But most of the Dalits, Muslims and other backward classes remained unaffected by the change in the power structure of the state.⁷

The shift in power from Dogra regime to Kashmiri leadership challenged the privileged position of upper caste Hindus of Jammu and attempted to empower the Dalits and poorer masses. Thus, since historical times this privileged class of Hindus in Jammu society has perceived changes in power structure and attempts to diversify the resource base as antithetical to their interests. *Searchlight on Jammu agitation* reports on these radical changes and the insecurity felt by these privileged classes:

The radical agrarian reforms announced by Sheikh Abdullah ...dispossessing the big landlords in Kashmir Valley and Jammu province of their vast estates, are beginning to operate in the new era. The arbitrary monarchial system has given place to a Parliamentary government and an elected headship. There are controls on essential commodities to ensure equitable distribution among the community...All this is perhaps too big a dose for landlords and other privileged sections to gulp...⁸

In order to uphold their privileged position in the economic and social scenario in Jammu's society, upper class Hindus have always pursued conservative Hindu politics. The pro-Hindu and anti-Kashmiri ideology of RSS that aims at maintaining the supremacy of upper caste Hindus is a reflection of this phenomenon.⁹ It is, thus, mainly the landed elites, upper caste and economically privileged Hindus that constituted the support structure of the RSS and other rightist organisations.

⁷ According to Balraj Puri, Muslims, Sikhs and Harijans form sixty percent of Jammu's population. See, *Jammu: A clue to Kashmir Tangle*, Op. cit., n.2, p.31.

⁸ 'Search Light on Jammu Agitation' (document), Nehru Memorial Library, n.d., pp.1-2.

⁹ According to Subhadra Joshi, "The RSS found its based in Jammu's landed aristocracy. Under the Maharaja's rule, the people of Ladakh and Kashmir valley could not enter the army and it became a monopoly of Jammu Dogras & Rajputs, who also developed vested interests in its economy. They were granted jagirs not only in Jammu but also in the other two parts for their meritorious services to the monarchy. It came to be vested with special privileges and prerogatives. The RSS could find easily its base in this Hindu landlord section of the population. It supported not only their privileges and rights but also supported the autocratic rule of the Maharaja, on the continuance of which they depended to retain their rights and privileges." Subhadra Joshi (Edited), *RSS: A Danger to Democracy*, New Delhi: Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, n.d., p.72.

Although land reforms, democratisation of politics and other post-1947 changes altered the upper-caste monopoly in Jammu's economy and other resources to some extent, the low caste Hindus could not benefit much from these changes. As a result, the prosperous Hindu class still continues to occupy the privileged position in Jammu's society. Even in contemporary times, the dominance of Rajputs, Brahmins and Baniyas is quite apparent.

The continued dominance of this class and its association with the RSS and the BJP politics has resulted in its claim of representing the mainstream political and social aspirations of the Jammu region. Being the most dominant class it has greater visibility and greater political voice. But it certainly does not represent the mainstream Hindu opinion, as this class comprises a minority population. Their perception is urban-centric, elitist and media-based. It extends itself only upto urban centers of Jammu city, Kathua, and most of Udhampur. It excludes the social, cultural and political aspirations of a large number of rural masses and poorer people, who form a large section of Jammu society. This exclusive character of their politics is reflected in the fact that the electoral support that they get is not proportionate to their political voice. Invariably they have failed to enter into the state legislation in any substantial strength. Out of the total 37 assembly seats of Jammu province, Hindu-oriented parties have been getting an average of three seats and receive an average of 12 percent votes.¹⁰

Thus, although the vocal upper caste politics attempts to portray a homogeneous structure of Hindu society in Jammu, many prominent scholars such as Balraj Puri have rejected this argument by laying open the widely fragmented divisions within Hindu society. It can be argued that the perceptions and standpoints of a huge section of rural masses, peasantry class and low caste Hindus may differ in various ways from those of urban-centric vocal upper class Hindus. However, it is difficult to probe into their perspectives and opinions, as there is no organised articulation of their social, cultural and political aspirations. This section is generally voiceless, without any proper political representation.

¹⁰ Election Commission Reports related to various Assembly Elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

The heterogeneity within Hindu society also gets reflected in the fact that even Brahmins, Rajputs and Baniyas do not form a uniform category. Even these castes arrange themselves in a hierarchical fashion, as each is an endogamous group. These castes seek to maintain their distinctiveness by grouping themselves into their respective caste-groups or sabhas.¹¹ Within Hindu society in Jammu, the displaced communities, as a result of partition, also constitute distinct Hindu groupings. These communities include mainly the Mirpuris and Muzzafarabadis. These groups seek to maintain their exclusive culture and tradition by forming their respective associations, living together in clusters and observing endogamous rules of marriages. To a large extent, these groups consider themselves culturally as well as linguistically different from other Hindus in the region.

These diverse groupings within Hindu society correspond to the differentiated Hindu responses and viewpoints. Despite these varied positions, there is a homogenised political projection of Hindu society. At the national level, while discussing the issue of Kashmir the politics of Jammu is generally equated only with Hindu politics of the RSS and the BJP. In a similar manner, the politics of Kashmir is generally associated with Muslim politics represented by the National Conference. A range of differentiated perspectives and viewpoints which although present but in an unarticulated form are generally silenced by the dominant voices. It is thus important to understand in this perspective the position of the RSS regarding the Kashmir dispute and the way it projects itself in the Jammu domain.

PERSPECTIVE OF RSS – IN CONTEXT OF JAMMU

The RSS was established in 1925 and has now come to be regarded as a radical Hindu-oriented organisation. The Hindu nationalist discourses, ideology of ‘Hindu Rashtra’ and vision of a homogenised Hindu nation constitute the core essence of this organisation. The RSS started functioning in 1937 in Jammu and thereafter it expanded its influence in all major Hindu dominated areas of the region. It has played a vital role in influencing the Hindu perceptions in this part of the state.

¹¹ Among the prominent caste associations in Jammu include, the Mahajan Sabha, the Rajput Biradari, the Khatri Biradari, and the Brahman Sabha.

The constituency and space that was created for the RSS in Jammu has to be seen in the context of social and political happenings taking place in Jammu during the early decades of 20th century. During the 1920's a process of political and social awakening was going on in Kashmir and particularly among the Muslim population of the state. With the establishment of the Muslim Conference, the Muslim community in Kashmir became aware of their socially oppressed, economically backward and politically unrepresented status in the state ruled by Hindu Dogra regime. Kashmiri Muslims held Dogra regime responsible for their marginalised position.¹² However, they were unable to understand the fact that only the Muslim community did not comprise the oppressed section of society. In fact, power was not dispersed even among the rural Hindu peasantry and low caste Hindu population due to feudal character of Dogra rule in the state. The Muslims of Jammu also associated themselves with Muslim politics. The organised Muslim response in the state demanded their equal share in terms of political representation, education and employment.

This increasing influence of Kashmiri politics in the state as well as the emergence of political consciousness among Muslims evoked strong hostile reactions from entrenched Hindu classes in Jammu. These well-established Hindu classes (mainly upper caste Hindus) started perceiving the rise of Muslim consciousness in communal terms. The Muslim demands for equal opportunity created a competitive milieu, which tended to threaten the political and economic monopoly of privileged Hindu classes. This section of Hindu population raised anti-Muslim and anti-Kashmir slogans and thus created sufficient space for the RSS in Jammu. The RSS's ideology of 'Hindutva' has always functioned to sustain the interests of middle class and upper caste Hindus. As in Jammu, elsewhere also the RSS's support base has always comprised upper caste and economically privileged Hindus. Tapan Bose, Sumit Sarkar and others argue that, "the RSS, from its inception down to today, has been overwhelmingly middle class Brahmin or Bania in composition, drawn together on the basis of fear psychosis directed against

¹² Op. cit., n. 4, pp. 270-274.

other social groups: Muslims, most overtly, but by implication also lower caste Hindus.”¹³

In communalising the social set-up in Jammu, not only entrenched Hindus but also the elite Muslim section of Jammu had an equal role to play. This further reinforced the importance of the RSS in this part of the state. Unlike the Kashmiri Muslim leadership, which represented the interests of poor masses and peasantry, the Muslim leadership in Jammu represented the feudal interests. It also lacked the secular ideological orientation of Kashmiri leadership. Unlike Muslims of Kashmir who could hardly identify with the conservative politics of the Muslim League, a large number of Muslims in Jammu were affiliated with it at a later stage. This further strengthened the position of the RSS among the Hindu population in Jammu. With this background, both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism was able to nourish their roots in the Jammu region.¹⁴

Even after the transformation of the Muslim Conference to the National Conference in 1939, which secularised and broadened the political movement, the RSS continued to portray it as a communal and anti-Hindu organisation. The mass based movement of the National Conference attempted the percolation of resources and facilities downwards so as to benefit the common people of the state. The RSS viewed such changes as a challenge to the hegemonic position of upper caste Hindus. It, therefore, started equating the National Conference with pro-Muslim, pro-Kashmir and anti-Dogra organisations.

The RSS invokes and sustains a strong sense of Hindu identity by engaging in the construction of a demonised non-Hindu ‘Other’. Its vision of Indian nation as essentially a Hindu nation challenges the secular agenda of India. Thomas B. Hansen discusses this vision of the RSS in following words:

...According to this view (RSS’s view), India was and will remain fundamentally Hindu in a civilizational sense, just as (it implies) Muslims and other non-Hindus always were alien to India and will remain so forever. The secular Indian nation state is in the Hindu nationalists’ view a

¹³ Tapan Bose, Pradip Dutta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar and Sambuddha Sen, *Khakhi Shorts Saffron Flags*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993, pp 16-17.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, n. 5, p.57-58.

political fiction that conceals real cultural incommensurabilities or in their words, a “culturally alien” construction imposed on India by anglicized intellectuals.¹⁵

In the case of Jammu, the RSS has assigned itself the task of defending and protecting the Hindu community from the ‘Muslims Other’ in the state. This organisation considers entire Hindu community of the state as a monolithic identity and seeks to unite them against what it presumes to be the Islamic onslaught on the state. R. Upadhyay, a supporter of the RSS, opines:

...The basic idea behind the formation of RSS was to unite the fragmented Hindu society, which had to suffer for about 800 years due to imperial imposition of Islam on the Hindus and their Vedic culture...The Kashmir issue has therefore been its first regiment in its ideological battle right from the day of the state’s accession to India...With its full conviction that “Hindutva is the soul of this country and it is absolute truth, the RSS has been awakening the people against the onslaught of “Islamic imperialism” on the centuries old glorious past of Hindu Kashmir....¹⁶

The RSS views Hindus and Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir as two homogenous and antagonistic categories, incapable of peacefully coexisting with each other. As the RSS views Kashmiri Muslims, as anti-Hindu, it strives not only to alter relations between Hindus and Muslims, but also to reorganise the state itself. It demands reorganisation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir according to its principle of “cultural nationalism” or “Hindu nationalism”. Considering Hindu culture as the original culture of the state, the RSS demands that the Kashmiri Muslims of the state should fully submerge their identity into the Indian mainstream.

The struggle led by Kashmiri leadership for preserving Kashmiri identity and the restoration of autonomous status of the state was seen by the RSS as against the national and Hindu interests. R. Upadhyay, writes:

In his fight against Raja Hari Singh, Abdullah raised the cry of Kashmiri nationalism due to which RSS suspected him to be a force against Indian Nationalism. Kashmiri nationalism- the call of Sheikh Abdullah was linked with Islamic imperialistic design of the Muslim invaders by the RSS.¹⁷

The conditional accession of the state to the Indian Union and the special status provided to the state in 1947 did not fit in the RSS’s ideological framework of ‘One Nation One

¹⁵ Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, London: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.11.

¹⁶ <http://www.hvk.org/articles>

¹⁷ Ibid.

State'. Treating the instrument of accession as complete and total, it stood for the cause of full integration of the state into the Indian mainstream.

Under the popular Kashmiri leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, the Kashmiri masses rejected the two-nation theory of Pakistan. They joined the secular Indian State that promised to restore the distinct identity and autonomy of Kashmiris. To accommodate Kashmiri nationalism into the Indian nationalism, Article 370 was provided to Jammu and Kashmir. The main purpose of this Article was to assure that it would be able to retain its distinctive culture and political space within the Indian Union.

Rejecting the thesis of pluralism, the RSS gave full support to the process of assimilation and dilution of various identities into a common national identity. In this context it strongly opposed the provision of Article 370 in the Constitution that grants special status to the State.¹⁸ The RSS thus did not appreciate the logic of special status for Jammu and Kashmir, as it considered it at par with other federating units of the nation. It totally rejected the ground that there existed special circumstances that made it necessary to provide different status to the state. The RSS, instead, opined that such a differential treatment interrupted the unification process of the nation. Article 370, thus, was seen by this organisation as a way of appeasing Muslims of India in general and Kashmiri Muslims in particular.

Adhering to its principles of uniformity and homogeneity within the federal structure, the RSS even today stands for the cause of full integration of the state. It views the Kashmiri movement for self-determination and retaining its Kashmiri identity as anti-national, communal and separatist. This organisation senses an erosion of Hindu interests in context of secessionism and separatism in Kashmir. Hence, a pro-Kashmiri attitude is understood as simply pro-Muslim and anti-Hindu. Holding Muslims in suspect, *Tawi Deepika*, a RSS magazine state, "The majority of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir want

¹⁸ Article 370 provides for separate Constitution of the state along with limited extension of the Constitution of India. It also provides for limited jurisdiction of Central laws.

the merger of Kashmir Valley with Pakistan and want the assistance of Muslims of other parts of the country in this respect.”¹⁹

With these pro-Hindu and anti-Kashmir agendas, the RSS has been trying to increase its base in Jammu. Due to the absence of any organised movement of Dalits or other marginalised sections of society, this organisation claims to represent the entire Hindu community in this part of the state. The Kashmir-centric policies of Kashmiri leadership and its sidelining of Jammu’s demands have also strengthened the hold of the RSS in this region. In the absence of any other local party, the RSS was not only able to address these local grievances but also to give them a religious outlook.

However, the actual agenda and ideology of the RSS are based on empowering the already privileged upper caste Hindus and maintaining the oppressive status quo. To gain its influence among other sections of Hindu society, the RSS invokes the notion of a monolith Hindu identity and flattens all divisions present within Hindu community. Reflecting on this tendency of the RSS, Tapan Bose and others opine that, “the multiple identities within this category, of caste, sect, region, gender, class or belief, are sought to be erased, and the organized forces of Hindutva arrogate to themselves a proprietorial right to define what Hinduism means...”²⁰

This reflects the hegemonic and majoritarian tendencies of the RSS. Without addressing caste, gender and other structured inequalities, it seeks to define Hinduism in elitist and Brahminical terms. This tendency of the RSS is well elaborated by Thomas B. Hansen who holds:

They (Hindu nationalists’) created a form of public culture marked by radical rhetoric and high idealism, but more enduring social structures such as caste hierarchies, family structures, upper-caste norms of public behaviour, and so on, were rarely challenged...²¹

¹⁹ Tawi Deepika, February 1986, p. 3

²⁰ *Op. cit.*, n. 13, p. 1-2.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, n. 15, p. 7.

Thus, though claiming to represent the entire Hindu community of Jammu region, the RSS excludes the interests of the majority of rural, underprivileged and low caste Hindu population.

A CRITIQUE OF RSS PERSPECTIVE

The RSS's way of looking at the Kashmir problem has been criticised by many scholars. This organisation has frequently been blamed for exploiting the grievances of the people of Jammu and channelising them in communal directions. Instead of demanding similar safeguards for people of Jammu, whether Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, the RSS created an anti-Muslim and anti-Kashmiri psyche among the Dogra Hindus. The discontent of Jammu masses was used to further widen the gulf between the two regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

The RSS's viewpoint stresses exclusively on the religious identity of Muslims, considering it to be primary and that cannot be transcended by any other identity including the national identity. Muslims are seen not only different from Hindus but also incapable of being loyal towards the nation. In this context, Indresh Kumar, the local chief of RSS holds that, "the moral and religious teaching in Islam does not create openness in Muslim mind. The basis of Islam is intolerance towards other religions. Hence a Muslim looks at Hindu as a 'Kafir'. It is a reality that he cannot tolerate the government or rule of Hindus."²² The RSS's imposition of ideas such as 'everyone is a Hindu in India' has created apprehensions in the minds of Muslims in general and Kashmiri Muslims in particular.

It has been argued by many scholars that the RSS's ideology of 'Hindutva' has retarded the process of emotional integration of Kashmiri Muslims into the Indian Union. It has taken a very clear and rigid position on certain issues like the uniform civil code and Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Thus, Kashmiri nationalism became sharpened and could not be accommodated within Indian nationalism. It needs to be mentioned that

²² Op. cit., n.5, p.89.

Sheikh Abdullah had taken a conscious decision to join India and negotiated an autonomous space for Kashmir, and that was the purpose of Article 370. But the RSS repeatedly questioned it and viewed it as an instrument of appeasement of Kashmiri Muslims.

The RSS has failed to expand its base in the state, as its homogenised context of nationalism has no space for difference. Homogenised unity is simply unacceptable in Jammu and Kashmir where so many diversities cut across each other. Diverse social, political, economic and cultural aspirations of people in the state cannot be defined in terms of a monolith elite Hindu perspective. In this regard Navnita Chadha Behera provides a critical perspective of the RSS:

Kashmir has always been central to the Hindu notion of *rashtra-rajya*. And yet, the proponents of Hindutva have consistently failed in securing their political objectives because their ideological and political tenets are at variance with Jammu and Kashmir's deeply plural social realities....The sangh parivar is trying to transform the multifaceted religious system of Hinduism into a monolithic brand. It seeks to subsume different layers of community identity in terms of culture, language and caste into a single overarching category of religion. In Jammu and Kashmir's context, this is doomed to failure because there are no cohesive or monolithic political groupings of Hindus and Muslims at grassroots level whose political affiliations cut across ethnic (Dogra, Gujjars and Bakkarwals), linguistic (Pahari, Gojri, Kashmiri and Dogri), caste lines and religious differences.²³

Thus in a multicultural society like Jammu and Kashmir, any approach to the Kashmir debate that does not address the aspirations of all the ethnic, regional, cultural or caste group is bound to fail. There is a need to adopt a pluralistic rather than an assimilationist approach to tackle the Kashmir crisis. The RSS's agenda of propagation of a uniform culture brings into play the majoritarian tendencies that require submission not only of Muslims but also of low caste and under privileged Hindus to the Brahminic and elitist culture.

Despite, its exclusive character, the RSS has been trying to expand its support base in Jammu mainly by operating at two levels – the ideological level and the political level. At the ideological level, the RSS itself functions to influence the perceptions of the masses through its cultural propaganda. At the political level, various political parties that are

²³ www.dailytimes.com.pk

closely affiliated with the RSS function to create constituencies for 'Hindutva' ideology. In this context, it is essential to discuss the perspectives of political parties such as the Praja Parishad, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the political affiliates of the RSS. These parties have evolved in continuity and have played an important role in influencing the perceptions of Hindus in Jammu.

PERSPECTIVES OF THE PRAJA PARISHAD, THE BHARATIYA JANA SANGH AND THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

The Praja Parishad has been the only party of Jammu that had a local origin and represented the sentiments of a section of people there in an articulated form. Since the activities of the National Conference were confined to Kashmir, a political void was created in Jammu. The Praja Parishad took advantage of this situation and developed its organisational structure in Jammu.²⁴ The dissatisfaction of the masses in Jammu due to Kashmir's authoritarian and dominating politics needed some political outlet. In the absence of any other political party to reflect the restlessness of the masses there, the Praja Parishad was able to fill the political vacuum.

Identified as the political face of the RSS, this party was founded by Balraj Madhok to articulate the demands of Jammu Hindus. The Praja Parishad's role in shaping the political perspective of a section of the Jammu masses into the mould of 'Sangh' ideology is significant. It was able to gain the popular urban support in Jammu area. Although the party reflected feudal interests and was backed by wealthy and prosperous Hindus, it claimed to represent the whole of Jammu region.

This party not only made vocal and visible the regional deprivation of Jammu, but also invoked the concept of 'Dogra nationalism'. Launching an anti-Kashmiri campaign

²⁴ To quote Navnita Chadha Behera, "The exodus of Muslim Conference cadres and the deportation of key leaders after the raiders' attack had left a political vacuum in Jammu. No alternative Muslim leadership emerged to articulate their political aspirations either by joining hands with Sheikh Abdullah or in becoming an effective political force. The National Conference did not fit the bill, partly owing to the inherent limitations of a Kashmiri bias..., and partly because of Sheikh Abdullah's distrust of Dogras...The political vacuum was filled by Praja Parishad..." see Navnita Chadha Behera, *State, Identity and Violence: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2000, p.84.

against the demand for abolition of Monarchy by the Kashmiris, the Dogra nationalists viewed this demand as against the interests of Hindu Dogras. Just like the RSS, it also raised demands for complete integration of the state with the Indian Union, along with abrogation of Article 370. The Praja Parishad looked at Kashmiri assertion as essentially a Muslim assertion that has deprived the Dogra Hindus of its dominant position in the political, administrative and economic spheres of life. As stated by Balraj Madhok, it was the main objective of the Praja Parishad “to achieve full integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India like other acceding states and to safeguard the legitimate rights of the people of Jammu from anti-Dogra government of Sheikh Abdullah.”²⁵ The party blamed Sheikh Abdullah for altering the political and economic structure of the state to their disadvantage by initiating agrarian reforms and transferring power from Dogra regime to Kashmiri Muslims.²⁶ A Praja Parishad pamphlet observed that the Jammu and Kashmir constituent assembly consisted of 75 members of which 50 were Muslims.²⁷ The only way to end Jammu turmoil, according to the Praja Parishad was to achieve the complete merger of the state with the Indian Union.

Criticising Sheikh Abdullah of his ambitions to retain the autonomy of the state, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, a supporter of the Praja Parishad argued:

There cannot be a republic within a republic.... Consciously or unconsciously, you are creating a new sovereignty for Jammu and Kashmir.... India has been torn into two nations by the two-nation theory. You are developing a three-nation theory, the third being the Kashmiri nation. These are dangerous systems.²⁸

Hence, Kashmir retaining its independent identity was seen by the Praja Parishad as against the principles of nationalism. It was in this context that the Praja Parishad launched a massive agitation in 1952 against the Delhi agreement signed between Sheikh Abdullah and the Government of India. The Delhi agreement agreed to the concept of restoring autonomy of the state, having a separate Constitution of the state and its own

²⁵ Balraj Madhok, *A Story of Bungling in Kashmir*, cited in op. cit., n.5, p.125.

²⁶ Sisir Gupta, *Kashmir: A Study in India-Pakistan relations*, cited in Navnita Chadha Behera, Op.cit., n. 23, p. 85.

²⁷ A Praja Parishad pamphlet, cited by Sheikh Abdullah to Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee dated 4 february 1953, cited in Behera, ibid, p 85.

²⁸ Mookerjee's letter to Abdullah dated 13 February, 1953, cited Behera, ibid, p 86.

flag in addition to the Union flag that was to remain supreme.²⁹ The Praja Parishad perceived this agreement as encouraging the separatist politics of Kashmir. Pt. Prem Nath Dogra, head of the Praja Parishad, argued:

A separate flag, a separate constitution for our state, are steps that will lead us in a direction opposite to that of our objective of complete and unqualified accession. We are bound, therefore to oppose all such measures. We believe that people of the state are behind us in this desire and that the present trend of the Kashmir government policy is highly dangerous not only for this state but also for whole of India.³⁰

The party thus raised the slogan of 'Ek Pradhan, Ek Nishan, Ek Vidhan' (One Head, One Symbol and One Constitution of the state). In almost all issues regarding Kashmir crisis, Praja Parishad shared the perspectives of RSS as the former only reflects the ideology of the latter. Praja Parishad, in accordance with the ideology of Hindu nationalism, also raised the demand of separate home for Dogra Hindus. It demanded separation of Dogra Hindu majority areas of Kathua, Jammu and half of Udhampur district from the rest of Jammu and Kashmir.³¹

Although it was the only regional party to make visible the grievances of the Jammu masses, the Praja Parishad was not able to work in the long term for interest and advantage of the people. The obvious reason for this was its singular Hindu perspective that channelised the discontent of the Jammu people in communal directions. Due to the Praja Parishad's over emphasis on the issues related to the special status of the state as well its anti-Muslim outlook, the real cause of Jammu's discontent got diluted. Nehru was aware of the growing dissatisfaction of the Jammu people due to centralizing tendencies of Kashmiri politics. But he rejected the Praja Parishad agitation on the grounds that its narrow approach would further complicate the problems in the state. Thus, Nehru rightly remarked:

It would appear... that the real objective of this agitation is something other than what has been proclaimed. The leaders of the Praja Parishad have been in constant touch with leaders of some

²⁹ Delhi Agreement agreed upon between Sheikh Abdullah and Indian government, laid down the basis of Constitutional relationship between the Centre and the State.

³⁰ Durga Das Verma, Secretary, All J & K Parishad (a pamphlet), 1953.

³¹ Piyar Singh, *Praja Parishad Movement in Jammu: A Stab in India's Back*, Jammu: National Publishing House, p.2.

organisations in India...These organisations are the Bhartiya Jana Sangh, the RSS, and the Hindu Mahasabha....The RSS has taken a special interest in their agitation³²

The Praja Parishad movement failed in Jammu because of the exclusive character of its politics. It was unable to incorporate the popular sentiments of the whole region. The Praja Parishad perspective excluded not only the Muslims of Jammu but also marginalised poorer sections of the Hindu population in this region. It failed to share the vision of backward and low caste Hindus. Regarding the failure of Praja Parishad movement, *Searchlight on Jammu Agitation* reports:

The reasons why the present Praja Parishad agitation against the Abdullah government is not able, after its first flush, to rally any appreciable support is that the masses – the tiller, the Harijan and the underdog – consider it against their interests and that in the new set up they see a new hope and a break from their miserable past.³³

Besides religion, the caste-class basis of its politics also limited its worldview. In its approach towards the Jammu and Kashmir issue, it represented only the urban privileged and wealthy class Hindus, mostly Rajputs and Brahmins.

It is argued that instead of dealing with the actual problems of the Jammu region, the Praja Parishad leaders exploited the grievances of masses for their vested interests.

Hindustan Standard reports:

The Praja Parishad has exploited the sentiments of the people; its speakers and propagandists have monopolized the platform, posters and other means to drive home the view that all the grievances of the people would vanish as soon as 'full integration' with India was achieved by a 'struggle'. The landlords were told that full integration with India would mean payment of compensation for their confiscated lands...the Rajputs...came to believe the Parishad propaganda that application of India's constitution might help restore the monarchy.³⁴

The Praja Parishad's politics led to a situation of confrontation and unending hostility in the state. Just like RSS its rigid stand on unconditional and complete merger of the state with the Indian Union threatened Kashmiri identity. The provocative and pro-Hindu politics of the Praja Parishad further weakened the process of integration of Kashmiris

³² "Pundit Nehru's statement in Lok Sabha", *The Statesman*, December 13, 1952, cited in Op. cit., n. 5, p.133.

³³ Op. cit., n. 8, p.2.

³⁴ *Hindustan Standard*, December 8, 1952.

with the Indian Union. Piyar Singh nicely elaborated the dangerous implications of the Praja Parishad movement:

Sheikh Abdullah cannot tell Muslims of Kashmir to vote for India when Hindus of Jammu...will be demanding his overthrow, and planning for separation. He cannot maintain his stand against the two-nation theory when his Hindu neighbours of the Dogra desh will be preaching hatred against the Muslims....So India's cause and Sheikh Abdullah's cause will be stabbed in Kashmir.³⁵

The Praja Parishad movement was seen as communal and negative in character. This is so because instead of demanding more political and economic privileges to address the discontent of the Jammu masses, it strived to curb the privileges and autonomous status of Kashmir. This resulted in alienation of Kashmiri Muslims and decelerated the process of their emotional integration with the Indian nation. Regarding the Praja Parishad movement, Balraj Puri holds:

...the Sangh Parishad agitation marked the beginning of the end of Kashmir's emotional relations with the rest of India. It hit at the most sensitive point of the Kashmiri psyche as it threatened the autonomy and identity of Kashmir for the protection of which the Kashmiris had fought against their co-religionists in Pakistan and had opted for India. Moreover the agitation even made the issue of accession controversial by projecting the degree of centralization of power as a measure of patriotism...³⁶

Since the Praja Parishad represented upper class Hindu interest in general and feudal interest in particular, it was not able to expand its popular support beyond particular sections of society. Its limited support base can be seen from the electoral performance of this party. In the 1957 elections, the Praja Parishad contested 21 seats, but it got elected in only in five seats. Out of total votes polled in the elections, it could get 26.09% votes.³⁷ In 1962, it contested 25 seats and could secure only 3 seats. It got 14.4% of the total votes polled in the elections.³⁸ This reveals the dwindling mass support of the Praja Parishad in each successive election.

Thus, it was mainly the Praja Parishad's agitational politics that provided continuous visibility to its demands and agenda. But in actual terms, the Praja Parishad had a limited

³⁵ Op. cit., n. 31, p 5.

³⁶ Balraj Puri, *Kashmir: Towards Insurgency*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993, p29.

³⁷ "The election result provoked angry protests from the party, Pt. Prem Nath Dogra, President of Praja Parishad, complained that the ruling party had rigged the elections and manipulated the results", in Renu Bala, 'Regional Political parties and Constitutional development of Jammu and Kashmir : a Study of Praja Parishad', M. Phil dissertation, Jammu University, June 1990, p. 45.

³⁸ Election Archives, March 1972, Vol. 13 (3), p. 1974.

sphere of influence. Its political visibility did not match up with its electoral representation. However, despite these limitations, the perspective of the Praja Parishad has an important influence on the future political discourse of Jammu. The issues raised by the Praja Parishad regarding complete accession of the state and abolition of Article 370 became the core issues for upcoming pro-Hindu politics in the Jammu region. To that extent, the Praja Parishad played a formative role in determining the future course of Hindu perception in Jammu. The Praja Parishad merged into the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1964, thus giving a further impetus to the rightist politics in the State.

PERCEPTION OF BHARATIYA JANA SANGH

With the merger of the Praja Parishad into the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the conservative pro-Hindu politics further consolidated itself. As a result of this merger Jammu became part of the mainstream politics of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. For all practical purposes the Bharatiya Jana Sangh represented the ideology of the RSS. In this context, Geeta Puri argues that “whether it was the theme of ‘Nationalism’ or the subject of ‘minorities’, or the plea of ‘revivalism’, in all these matters, as well as organisational behaviour, the importance of the RSS is crystal clear.”³⁹ Asserting the idea of a strong nation with a homogenised culture, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh did not believe in maintaining plurality or differences within a society. Thus, for the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the ‘composite’ basis of culture was not only a false representation of true Indian culture but it also had the tendency of weakening the process of national unification.⁴⁰

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, reflecting the ideology of the RSS, considers Indian nation as one indivisible unit. It does not attach any consideration to various federating units of the nation. This tendency gets reflected in the statement of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, who strongly criticises the federal basis of our Constitution. He holds:

It runs counter to the unity and indivisibility of Bharat. There is no recognition of the idea of Bharat Mata... According to the first para of the Constitution, India that is Bharat will be a federation of states, i.e., Bihar Mata, Banga Mata, Punjab Mata, all put together make Bharat

³⁹ Geeta Puri, *Bharatiya Jana Sangh: Organisation and Ideology*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1980, p. 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 19.

Mata. This is ridiculous. We have thought of the provinces as limbs of Bharat Mata and not as individual mothers. Therefore our Constitution should be unitary instead of federal.⁴¹

With such ideological background, the merger of the Praja Parishad with the Bharatiya Jana Sangh did not mark any major break in the conventional Hindu politics of Jammu region. In fact, the merger further reinforced the pro-Hindu sentiments among Hindu society in Jammu. The theme of special status provided to the state of Jammu and Kashmir has remained one of the key issues of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh. It, thus, throughout the period of its existence in the state demanded the abolition of Article 370 and complete merger of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian mainstream.

The Bhartiya Jana Sangh was opposed the idea of internal autonomy within the State. The All India Janasangh Working Committee in a resolution strongly denounced the demand for regional autonomy on the ground that it would benefit only the supporters of Sheikh Abdullah and pro-Pakistani elements.⁴² Due to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh's over emphasis on abolition of Article 370 and complete integration of the state with the Indian Union, it failed to address other regional issues in Jammu region. Instead, it argued that special status provided to the state was responsible for all regional grievances and problems.

Like all other rightist organisations, the BJS vision about the Kashmir issue received opposition from various quarters because it was critical of any tendency reflecting the plurality of society. Its political conservatism and obsession with the nationalist nature of politics influenced its narrow perspective regarding the Jammu and Kashmir matter.

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh was one of the key organisations which occupied a political space in Hindu dominated area of Jammu. However, due to its narrow political perspective, it failed to effectively reflect the regional deprivations and discontent of the Jammu people. Despite its visibility, it failed to make a mark in the politics of the state due to its limited support structure. As discussed earlier, the plural and composite

⁴¹ Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, *The Organiser*, Diwali issue, 1964, p. 31.

⁴² *Indian Express*, August 19, 1967.

character of the Jammu region needed a broad-based political vision that the Bharatiya Jana Sangh failed to provide.

However, with the re-emergence of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in form of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) a new thrust was given to the conservative Hindu perception in Jammu.

PERCEPTION OF THE BHARTIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP)

The Bharatiya Janata Party, while gaining popularity in Jammu in the late eighties, kept the conservative Hindu perspective regarding the Kashmir turmoil alive. In the period after 1987, Jammu and Kashmir witnessed political crisis on one hand, and increasing militancy, secessionism and fundamentalism, on the other hand. This situation resulted in communal polarisation of the society in Jammu. It was in this context that a renewed space was created for 'Hindutva' ideological perspective of the BJP in Jammu. With militancy and separatist politics gaining ground, the BJP dealt more aggressively with the question of accession and integration of Jammu and Kashmir. The communal division of society during this period was interpreted by the BJP as the consequence of the Islamisation of the Kashmir movement. The exodus of Kashmiri Pandits and rising militancy in the state was traced to the increasing separatist tendencies of Kashmiri Muslims.

One of the reasons that helped the BJP to consolidate its position in Jammu was its continuous political presence throughout this period of rising militancy in the state. Due to political crisis in the state after 1989, the parties like the National Conference had gone into a state of political hibernation. Due to acute factionism in the Congress party at local level, it also failed to show its presence during this period of increasing militancy.⁴³ This created a political vacuum in the state, which was filled by the BJP. This paved the way for increased communalisation of politics by pro-Hindu forces in Jammu. The Hindu

⁴³ Op. cit., n. 5, p. 179.

perception in this region has been influenced to a large extent by anti-Muslim and anti-Kashmir propaganda by the BJP.

However, it needs to be emphasised that after situation improved in the state and political parties resumed its functioning, the wide space that BJP had created for itself reduced to a large extent. However, the role played by its assertive politics in influencing the minds of a large number of Hindus in Jammu cannot be ignored.

CONSERVATIVE HINDU RESPONSE: CURRENT PHASE

Fifteen years of militancy in Jammu and Kashmir have reinforced the conservative Hindu response in Jammu. Its impact can be seen in the way the pro-Hindu forces such as the RSS and the BJP have now evolved a different approach on Kashmir. Earlier, these forces emphasised mainly on two issues of complete integration of the state with the Indian Union and abolition of Article 370. But now in response to the secessionist movement in Kashmir, focus has shifted to delinking the Jammu and Ladakh regions from Kashmir. Although earlier demands are still there in the agenda of the RSS and the BJP, a change of paradigm can be seen with more emphasis being made on disintegration of the state into three parts – Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir. Rather than problematising Kashmir, now focus is more on the political aspirations of Jammu and Ladakh regions. These conservative Hindu forces have undertaken a deliberate process of building a Hindu constituency by connecting Hindus of Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmiri. In response to militancy in the state, an attempt has been made to bring Hindus of all three regions on a common platform of anti-Kashmiri politics. In this regard, Hindu organisations have raised the demand of a separate state for Jammu Hindus, a Union Territory of Ladakh, and even a separate homeland for Kashmiri Pandits. The RSS has played an active role in articulating and propagating these demands. It has even launched a party in Jammu, The Jammu State Morcha (JSM), which fought elections in the 2002 assembly elections.

Unlike the RSS, the BJP has not openly endorsed the demand for division of the state. But, local cadre of the BJP identified itself with this demand and has been actively

supporting it. Even before the RSS openly supported the demand for division of the state in 2002, it had encouraged individual demands of trifurcation of the state made by few regional scholars. It is important to mention here the perceptions of scholars who believe that regional grievances of Jammu can be removed only by division of the State and separating its parts, which they believe, are mutually exclusive. Separating Jammu and Ladakh from Kashmir, they assert, is the only way out. The problem confronting the state, they believe, is only due to the separatist Kashmiri campaign, which in turn is the result of treating Kashmir differently from other States through Article 370. Pampering and privileging Kashmir at the cost of Jammu as well as Ladakh, is the crux of the problem.

One such view is articulated by Hari Om, who rejects the thesis that the inability of the Indian State to accommodate democratic aspirations of the Kashmiri masses is at the root of the secessionist movement in Kashmir. In fact, he holds that Kashmiri Muslims have received more than their due and this has encouraged them to feel superior and separate from the rest. The whole problem, thus, lies in the appeasement policies of the State as well as of the Centre, which have always neglected the urges of Jammu and Ladakh. He says that:

The fact is that right from October 26, 1947, political power, decision making, administration at higher levels, better deal in matters relating to employment, location of prestigious institutions and factories and funds for development have become the privileges of Kashmir alone with the people of Jammu and Ladakh becoming "hostage" to the fickle leadership of the Valley.⁴⁴

Hari Om is infact very critical of Kashmiri Muslim leadership. He suspects their motives and argues that their struggle from the very beginning was meant not only to overcome their oppression or to safeguard their rights, but to gain dominance over Hindus of the state and serve sectarian interests. Thus in Hari Om's opinion, tendencies towards secessionism was rooted among the Kashmiri leadership right from the pre-independence period. In this whole process, he says, the people of Jammu and Ladakh have suffered whose interests are strikingly different from that of Kashmir. In this context Hari Om states:

⁴⁴ Hari Om, *Debacle In Kashmir*, Jammu: Jay Kay publishers, 1992, p 194

...the real motives behind the emergence of Muslim Conference/National Conference was not merely the question of civil rights and responsible government but the Sheikh Abdullah's desire to organise Kashmiri Muslims against Jammu and the Hindu Maharaja and to establish in Kashmir Muslim rule headed by him.⁴⁵

Considering the accession of the State as complete and absolute, he finds no logic behind various agreements signed to provide special treatment to the State. Further, he opines that Article 370 assured the Kashmiri dominance over the Jammu region. Hari Om, thus, argues:

Armed with absolute political powers under Article 370 Kashmiri rulers followed policies which created a situation in which no one from Jammu or Ladakh could reside and serve in Kashmir or become the Chief Minister of the State. It was not a mere lapse on their part. This was part of a grand design to exact revenge against people from Jammu...⁴⁶

Within this broad framework, Hari Om calls for the reorganisation of the State, or its 'trifurcation' so that the regions of Jammu and Ladakh can come out of the Kashmiri hegemony and evolve according to their own desires and interests. Separate statehood for Kashmir and Jammu and providing Ladakh with the status of a Union territory is suggested as the basis of reorganising the State. The reason given for this division of the state is that the three regions of the state are drastically dissimilar in terms of their geographical features, composition of population, culture, language, history, or even political aspirations of the people. Due to these sharp differences, the interests these regions are mutually exclusive. Without division of the state, interests of Jammu and Ladakh would continue to be sacrificed to please Kashmiri Muslims. So, it is believed that the discontent of the people of Jammu and Ladakh can only be addressed and removed if and only if these regions are separated from Kashmir. Only through this solution, the discriminatory practices of the Central and the State governments against Jammu and Ladakh can be put to an end. The views of Hari Om perfectly reflect this vision:

It needs to be emphasised that the State of Jammu and Kashmir is an accident of history. It has no inherent unity. The compulsions, interests and the needs of the people of Jammu and Ladakh are totally different from those of the Kashmiris. Infact they are conflicting and mutually exclusive. The people of Jammu and Ladakh want full integration with India. They not only welcome but also advocate extension of the Central laws to the State. They advocate the importance and necessity of one constitution and one flag. They see in the Indian constitution provisions which

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p 2

⁴⁶ Dev P. Kumar, *Kashmir: Return To Democracy*, New Delhi: Cosmo, 1996, p 95.

can satisfy their legitimate politico-administrative and social aspirations. They believe that the accession of the State to the Indian Union is final and irrevocable. They, in addition, are rapidly opposed to the restoration of the pre-1953 political set-up and the Kashmiris' fight for 'Azadi'... To keep together such people under a single State must lead to a growing discontent and ultimate destruction of any system that may be so built for the governance of such State.⁴⁷

Arguing within the same perspective, the Jammu Mukti Morcha, a new organisation of Jammu, has also raised the demand of a separate state of Jammu in view of the continuing domination of Kashmir in all spheres over Jammu. This regional party has rejected the options like internal autonomy, sub-statehood and has radically declared that nothing except statehood to Jammu would fulfill the social and political aspirations of Jammu. About the JMM'S vision, Navnita Chadha Behera, writes:

Their demand was also rooted in political and economic regional imbalances favouring Kashmir Valley at Jammu's cost... Successive Valley-dominated state governments were blamed for Jammu's poor share in state services... the JMM activists argued that in view of the successive state governments' total neglect and discrimination against Jammu's political and economic development and centre's Valley-centric thinking, a separate state for Jammu was the 'only way out' for meeting its political aspirations.⁴⁸

Virender Gupta, an active member of JMM and an academician, also believes that the trifurcation of the state is necessary as the process of integrating the three regions of the State is an artificial and unnatural one. This is bound to create problems, as there is no inherent point of intersection between them. Keeping the three regions intact provides the communal elements opportunities to feed on the mutual distrust prevailing among the regions.

Virender Gupta criticises the Kashmiri leadership for its communal and separatist tendencies. As against the prevalent notion of Kashmiri identity being eroded, he feels otherwise. He feels that Kashmiri identity is posing threat to the Jammu and Ladakh identity. He points towards the threat to Hindu identity in the State from Kashmiri Muslim leadership. He points out thus:

The idea that Kashmiriat and the Kashmiri identity has been eroded in the past 45 years that all the agitations in Kashmir have been aimed at protecting this identity, is merely a farce. Infact there has been no erosion of the identity of the Kashmiris except that of Kashmiri pandits who have been forcibly uprooted from their homeland. For the rest the question of erosion of their identity does not arise. It is the Kashmiris who have been administratively, politically and culturally

⁴⁷ Ibid, p 199.

⁴⁸ Op. cit., n. 24, p 219-221.

dominant in the State. The reality is that the identities of Jammu and Ladakh Regions are under constant threat due to the Kashmiri influence. Because of this reason there have been political simmerings both in Jammu and Ladakh.⁴⁹

Thus, he suggests 'trifurcation' of the State to free Jammu and Ladakh region from the supremacy of Kashmir and to save them from the secessionist forces of the Valley.

This demand for division of the State is being criticised for its exclusive character. Not taking into account the diversity of the communities and interlink ages between them, these forces build artificial boundaries between different communities. The propagators of this demand claim that the basis for trifurcation is regional, but in fact their underlying basis, which is clearly reflected in their ideologies, is religious. This demand is coming from the people and groups who view Kashmir issue from pro-Hindu and communal perspectives. Without objectively situating historically the Kashmir struggle to safeguard their identity, these voices desire the complete integration of the State through coercion and abrogation of Article 370.

OTHER HINDU RESPONSES

The pro-Hindu organisations have played a vital role in influencing and articulating the viewpoints of a large number of Hindus in Jammu society. However, the importance of these organisations lies mainly in their being the only visible groups in Jammu. The hold and influence of these conservative groups cannot be said to have spread over the entire Jammu area, but has remained concentrated to the Hindu dominated urban centres of the region. The society of Jammu comprises of a number of sub-regional identities. These identities have their own aspirations and demands and thus, do not share the dominant perception of elite Hindu society of Jammu. These perceptions, though difficult to grasp, have made their presence felt in the society at various points of time. Thus, it is wrong to argue that the conservative Hindu position is the only response that represents the Jammu region. Since historical times, many alternative and secular perceptions have been raising their voices in Jammu society. However, these secular forces have never found an

⁴⁹ Ibid, p 273.

organised space for themselves in this society due to various reasons discussed later in this section.

To begin with, in the pre-independence period the left movement in Kashmir for abolition of Dogra feudal monarchy and initiation of land reforms was supported by many Hindu youth of Jammu. These youth realised that feudal monarchy had resulted in oppression of the general masses in Jammu society. They also felt that poverty among Hindus and Muslims in Jammu region can be removed only through initiation of popular rule in the state as well as implementing a socialist agenda of economic reforms.

Not only Hindus but also a large number of Muslim youth in Jammu shared the aspirations of liberal Kashmiri leadership to broaden the horizon of the Muslim Conference and convert it into a more secular party of the National Conference. Many liberal youth from Jammu represented the National Conference after 1938 to undertake the agenda of secular democratic reorganisation of the state. The All Jammu National Youth Conference, for instance, which was formed in 1948, demanded the transfer of power from autocratic Dogra ruler to the people of Jammu. The communal perceptions of pro-Hindu organisations, though vocal, remained confined to the urban centres of Jammu. A large number of Hindus were unable to identify with the upper-caste and elitist demands of these organisations. For, instance the people of Mirpur who formed a distinct cultural sub-group of Jammu were against the pro-Hindu demand of restoring feudal Dogra rule. This group, in fact, revealed their desire for democratic governance and thus, participated in anti-Maharaja movement in the state.⁵⁰

The above background reflects that socio-political scenario of Jammu society had ample scope for growth and articulation of secular ideological perceptions. However, due to various reasons these secular perceptions were never able to organise and articulate themselves. This can mainly be attributed to the fact that the existing national parties of left or Centre could not expand their activities in this part of the state. Also, unlike Kashmir, Jammu could not evolve its own regional party that could channelise the

⁵⁰ Op. cit., n. 5, pp.60-61.

regional discontent of the Jammu people in a secular and rational manner. In these circumstances a political vacuum was felt in Jammu region that was filled by the communal and conservative forces in this area. In the absence of any other regional political party, these conservative forces appropriated the discontent of Jammu Hindus and channelised them in a narrow perspective. The perceptions of a large number of rural masses, peasantry class and low caste Hindu never got a platform to assert themselves. Due to dominance of communal perceptions, these various other Hindu voices are generally silenced. Although these diverse Hindu perceptions have not been able to vocally assert themselves, their existence can be proved by looking into the electoral results in Jammu. An analysis of electoral results shows that a major chunk of Hindu society is voting for parties other than the BJP. This will become clear from the analysis of electoral performances of different parties in Jammu in following section.

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCES IN JAMMU: REFLECTION OF OTHER NON-COMMUNAL HINDU VOICES

The fact that the conservative perspective of the RSS/BJP has never been able to represent the mainstream Hindu perception in Jammu can be revealed from their poor electoral performance during the decade of eighties. A large number of Hindu votes have always been polled in favour of other parties including the Congress and the National Conference. The Congress has been representing a large number of Hindus and Dalits in this part of the state.

In 1983, the BJP contested 28 seats of the legislative assembly, but failed to secure even one seat. However, 7 seats were won by the Congress and 23 seats by the National Conference in Jammu. In 1987, the BJP contested 28 seats but won only two seats. Again the Congress and the National Conference were able to secure 7 and 20 seats respectively. These elections revealed the limited electoral support of the BJP. Most of the votes gained by the BJP were mainly from the Hindu dominated urban centres of Jammu district, Kathua district and Udhampur district. It was unable to perform well in other regions of Jammu region.

However, in post-1987 period, the BJP was able to resume its importance in Jammu. This was mainly due to the communal polarisation of Jammu society as a result of increasing impact of militancy in the state. Three factors were mainly responsible for the polarization of Jammu society on communal basis – Islamisation of the separatist movement in Kashmir, en mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley and extension of militancy to Doda district. All these factors helped create an extended electoral constituency for the BJP.⁵¹

In these circumstances, the BJP made an impressive victory by securing 8 seats in Jammu during the Assembly elections of 1996. During these elections, Congress secured only 4 seats and National Conference got 14 seats.

During this period the militancy-affected areas were witnessing an increasing split between Hindus and Muslims. This helped create a new space for conservative Hindu ideology of the BJP in Jammu. In this situation the BJP has continued its political success in the post-1996 period also. In the 1998 and 1999 parliamentary elections, this party not merely won both the seats of Udhampur and Jammu constituencies but also recorded a rise in its share of votes.⁵²

Although during this period of communal polarisation of society ‘hindutva’ ideology of RSS/BJP was getting an extended support for itself, it was unable to gain the votes of Dalits in Jammu society. Most of the Dalit vote was in favour of either the BSP or the Janata Dal. As against the 1987 Assembly elections when the BSP could poll 5.42% of the votes in the Jammu region, its share of votes had increased to 11.23% during the 1996 Assembly elections. Thus, it could poll 18.96% votes in Doda district, 12.88% votes in Jammu district and 11.97% votes in Kathua district. Voter turnout in its favour was much more impressive in those constituencies having a large number of dalit votes– 51.23% in

⁵¹ Rekha Chowdhary and V. Nagendra Rao, ‘ Jammu and Kashmir: Political Alienation, Regional Divergence and Communal Polarisation’, in *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, Vol. 15 NOS. 1&2, p. 205.

⁵² Election Commission of India, Reports of Parliamentary Elections, 1998 and 1999.

Baderwah, 42.08% in Samba, 38.07% in R.S.Pura, 35.30% in Vijaypur, 22.93% in Ramnagar, 21.89% in Bishnah, 18.24% in Akhnoor, 16.47% in Suchetgarh, 16.17% in Rajpur Domana, 15.24% in Marh, 13.73% in Jammu west, 12.74% in Hiranagar and 12.05% in Chenani.⁵³ On the whole, BSP was able to register its victory in 4 seats during the 1996 Assembly elections.

During these elections, besides the BSP a large number of Dalit votes were polled in favour of the Janata Dal. Its performance was impressive in those constituencies that had a greater concentration of either Dalit or Gujjar population. These constituencies included Doda, Poonch-Haveli, Bani and Nagrota where the Janata Dal gained 26.66%, 22.45%, 20.68% and 20.68% votes respectively.

This analysis reveals that although Dalits were out of the influence of the BJP, still it was able to increase its base in Jammu during the post-1987 period. But this situation of increasing base of the BJP continued only for a short period of time. As soon as the political situation normalised in this region and communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims lessened, the BJP lost its influence in Jammu to a great extent. This can be seen from the electoral performance of the BJP in the 2002 Assembly elections in Jammu. The BJP was the party that suffered the most during this election. As against eight seats in 1996, it was able to win just 1 seat during this election. The National Conference also suffered to some extent because of its alliance with the BJP. As against 15 seats in 1996, it could win only nine seats in 2002. The parties that gained most were the Congress and the Panthers party. The Congress increased its tally from 4 seats in 1996 to 15 seats in 2002. The Panthers Party got 4 seats as against 1 in 1996 elections.

⁵³ Op. cit., n. 51, pp. 205-206.

Table 1.1

**Performance of various political parties in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Elections
(Jammu Region)**

Name of the Party	1983		1987		1996		2002	
	% of votes polled	Total number of seats	% of votes polled	Total number of seats	% of votes polled	Total number of seats	% of votes polled	Total number of seats
BJP*	8.11	-	12.37	02	22.0	08	12.31	01
INC	29.51	07	37.24	20	20.02	04	29.79	15
NC	45.30	23	14.78	07	23.72	14	23.95	09
JD					7.84	04		
BSP			5.42	-	11.23	04	6.83	1

*BJP = Bharatiya Janata Party, INC = Indian National Congress, NC = National Conference, JD = Janata Dal, BSP = Bahujan Samaj Party

(Source- Department of Information, Government of Jammu and Kashmir.)

This electoral analysis provides an insight into the plural responses of Hindus in Jammu. They do not form one homogenous unit as they differ in their interests and perceptions. That is the reason why they do not uniformly vote for any single party. Their electoral responses differ depending on the social categories of caste, class and region to which they belong. Also, this analysis reveals the fact that assertive and vocal perspective of conservative Hindu forces such as the BJP is not shared by large number of Hindus in Jammu.

Other than the communal perception of pro-Hindu organisations such as the BJP, various other non-communal Hindu perspectives exist in Jammu society. Though in an unarticulated form, these secular viewpoints have shown their presence at various moments of time, mainly at individual levels. Balraj Puri in Jammu shares one such view. Although Balraj Puri does not represent any political party, his viewpoint is important as he represents the alternate societal perspective.

PERSPECTIVE OF BALRAJ PURI

Balraj Puri's ideas represent that section of opinion that approach the Jammu and Kashmir issue from a rational, empathetic and balanced vision. Instead of viewing the issue as a Hindu-Muslim dispute, he brings to our notice the varied and multifaceted nature of the whole crisis. Rejecting the merely religious basis of the problem, Puri argues:

Jammu is not an exclusively Hindu region. Nor are Hindus always exclusively motivated by Hindu sentiments...Again, the population of Ladakh is evenly divided between Buddhists and Muslims who have dual identity i.e. religious as well as regional. It is an extremely complex interplay of religious and ethnic factors, inter-regional relations and national and subcontinental developments that have impacted on and influenced the Kashmir mind which in turn is a product of a peculiar history, geography and culture of the valley...To those who are used to viewing every political development from an exclusively Hindu-Muslim angle, the wide ethnic spectrum would appear in black and white colours alone..."⁵⁴

Balraj Puri highlights the failure of the Indian government to accommodate the Kashmiri aspirations of restoring their identity and freedom within the broad framework of democratic federal structure. Instead of a gradual process of emotional integration of Kashmiris into the fold of the Indian Union, a process of ruthless coercion, destruction of democratic aspirations and authoritarianism has been used to produce what is merely a constitutional integration of the state. Due to the absence of any political outlet for expression of dissent, secessionist movements were the only way that Kashmiri youth found to express their long accumulated anger. Puri expresses his views regarding political blunder in Kashmir by the Indian government in following words:

...Jammu and Kashmir is the only part of India where people were never allowed to choose their own government, except in 1977. One-party rule was almost always imposed. Civil liberties were denied most of the time and cultural and regional identities were never recognised as all its three regions had to submerge their regional identities within a unitary state...Every voice of dissent and discontent was called secessionist in Kashmir and communalist or regionalist in Jammu. Yet the myth spread that Kashmir was the most favoured and privileged part of India, causing heartburn and jealousy against its people in the rest of the country.⁵⁵

Balraj Puri stresses that uniqueness of each and every identity should be recognised and nurtured. Their inter-play rather than absorption into a common mould is required for the

⁵⁴ Balraj Puri, op.cit. n. 36, p2.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 85.

integration of the nation. Puri holds that the homogenising tendencies of the Indian state angered the Kashmiris as they perceived it as an assault on their identity and freedom.

Adopting a sympathetic approach towards Kashmiri Muslims, Puri argues that they are always seen from suspicion as being disloyal to the country, especially when they protest against the Centre or the state government. He adds "...Unlike other Indians, a Kashmiri was required to prove his patriotism not only by being loyal to the country but also to the governments in the State, at the Centre and to the parties in power at both places. For the Kashmiris, anti-Pakistani is an additional compulsory test of loyalty..."⁵⁶

Balraj Puri sees the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley as arising not simply due to the insurgency in Kashmir, but also initiated and encouraged by the government. This situation was exploited by various vested interests to divide the Kashmiri community on communal lines. He argues that, "...The communal elements in both the communities seized the opportunity to make a desperate bid for enlarging this distance into an unbridgeable gulf. Hindu communal forces exploited the plight and frustration of the migrants to effectively whip up an anti-Muslim frenzy amongst a section of Pandits..."⁵⁷ However, Puri finds this process of Hindu-Muslim divide as a superficial one as at the community level sentiments of affinity were restored between them. Puri writes:

...at scores of meetings to which we were invited ...,Kashmiri Muslims expressed a genuine feeling of regret over the migration of Kashmiri Pandits and urged to stop and reverse it...A number of Muslim leaders and parties, including militant outfits, also appealed to the Pandits not to leave their homes...many Muslims took pains to guard the houses left vacant by their neighbouring Kashmiri Pandits...⁵⁸

Puri also reveals other illuminating facts, which otherwise have never been highlighted by the government. He informs us that "An officially estimated 20,000 Muslim families from the valley had been forced to migrate, and a large number of Muslims had been killed by security forces and militants. It was time to realise that suffering ought to unite

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.85

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.65.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.65

those who suffered, not divide them against each other.”⁵⁹ The analysis done by him helps in viewing the whole problem in a much more logical and realistic manner so that many unexplored aspects of the problem can be further brought into the framework of the Kashmir dilemma.

Besides tracing the Kashmir crisis to the non-accommodation of Kashmiri interests, Puri also brings into focus the inefficient and inadequate Jammu-Kashmir relations. For him, efforts towards solution of the Kashmir turmoil cannot take a positive turn unless there is an improvement in the inter-regional relations between the elementary units of the state i.e. Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. He explains:

Jammu is neither an appendage nor an extension of Kashmir, the better known region of the state of Jammu and Kashmir...What is more, it is as remote-culturally, politically and emotionally from other two regions of Kashmir nor Ladakh as it is contiguous to them. Jammu’s distinct personality, therefore, entitles it to be studied as an independent subject ⁶⁰

He further elaborates that “until Jammu and Kashmir draw closer, settle their differences and agree to operate as equal partners, there will never be a stable basis upon which relations with India can be satisfactorily settled.”⁶¹

Balraj Puri feels that discontent in Jammu is due to its neglected status within the state, low proportion of representation in the power structure of the state, economic imbalances and domination of Kashmiris in all these spheres. Whether real or imagined, these grievances of people have obstructed the way to find any settlement towards the Kashmir issue. Before taking any bigger steps at governmental level to address the subject of Kashmir, these grievances need to be taken into account to initiate inter-regional dialogues at the non-official levels. In this context he suggests, “...for any break-through in ending Kashmir’s alienation with the rest of India, one of essential prerequisites is to strengthen Jammu’s identity...”⁶²

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.68

⁶⁰ Balraj Puri , op. cit., n. 1, p.v.

⁶¹ *The Times* London, cited in ibid, p. vi

⁶² Balraj Puri , ‘Regional grievances and Regional Autonomy’, in Hari Om etal (ed.), *Burning Issues In Jammu And Kashmir Politics*, Jammu: Jay Kay publishers,1999, p269

Considering these issues into account, Puri has been constantly pursuing the demand of 'regional autonomy' among the three regions of the state so that there can be more balanced distribution of political and economic power. He argues that, "The idea of regional autonomy rested on principles accepted all over the country. It was one of the basic principles of a federal and democratic country like India that each distinct cultural entity should be recognised and provided with opportunities of full growth...."⁶³

Pointing towards the diversity in the Jammu region, Puri argues that this geographical area is far more differentiated and multi-layered than Kashmir. Thus, integration of such a vast diversity of Jammu is not possible through monolithic forms of political organisation but through providing regional autonomy. He holds:

...Constitutional recognition of regional personalities of Jammu would help in integrating its various communities in particular the most numerous of communities of Jammu like Gujjars, Harijans and other backward communities would get their real due and be able to secularise the politics of the region....Regional autonomy would also considerably help in improving administrative efficiency....⁶⁴

Thus Puri believes that unless the distinct status of Jammu as well as Ladakh is given constitutional recognition, no amount of political process at the national level or at the level of Kashmir only can find a stable resolution.

Puri argues that those who criticise the idea of regional autonomy are in fact, viewing the problem through narrow lens of 'local nationalism'. He opines, "Kashmiri leadership has not been able to come out of the orbit of narrow local nationalism of the valley and extend its influence of other parts of the state, despite wholehearted support of the progressive elements of these regions (particularly Jammu)."⁶⁵ He has expressed his concern over the imposition of authoritarian and monolithic political systems in Jammu by Kashmiri leadership and the consequent neglect of urges of the people there. Kashmiri leaders while struggling for their political freedom and safeguarding their identity, in the process denied the same to the masses of Jammu. He very precisely puts forward his views that:

⁶³ Ibid, p44

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.56

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.37

There are indeed striking parallels between the way New Delhi ruled over the State, and the way Kashmiri leaders ruled over Jammu. New Delhi failed to realise that Kashmiri identity is a source of strength for the national identity, nor did the Kashmiri leaders realise that a composite and harmonised identity built on the basis of regional characters was the surest guarantee of the overall Kashmiri identity...⁶⁶

Balraj Puri has also criticised the parties like the Jana Sangh (now BJP), for demanding complete merger of the state, abrogation of Article 370 and opposing the demand for regional autonomy. Puri argues that these parties are against the interest of the Jammu people. Puri opposes these parties as they are dividing the society on communal lines instead of serving Jammu's interests. He strongly holds that the urges of people of Jammu should be satisfied by demanding equal privileges for them and not by suppressing Kashmiri aspirations. One regional urge should not be achieved by suppressing the other regional urges. But a process of decentralisation should take place.

Puri's perspective is significant as it stands out from other narrow and pre-conceived ideas represented by conservative Hindu groups. Though very rightly taking into account the multi-layered diversity of the regions, Balraj Puri views the Kashmir problem exclusively from the angle of Jammu's discontent. No doubt he takes into view both Kashmiri as well as Jammu's urges, but somewhere he puts more stress on this singular issue of addressing Jammu's discontent as the only way out.

Apart from these individual perspectives, it is important to highlight the perception of Dalits in Jammu area. Although Dalits comprise a large section of Hindu society in Jammu, they largely remain unrepresentative. Due to the absence of any organised movement of Dalits in Jammu, it is very difficult to delve into their opinions and viewpoints. However, an attempt has been made to grasp the responses of Dalits in briefs.

DALIT VISION

Negotiations regarding the social and political aspects of the Kashmir crisis and its possible alternative solutions hardly take into account the viewpoints and aspirations of

⁶⁶ Op. cit., n.36, p.40

Dalits in Jammu. Dalits have a significant presence in the state, as they comprise about 8% of the population in Jammu and Kashmir and 18% of the population in Jammu. Despite their large numbers, there are no articulated or organised perceptions of Dalits in this area. Yoginder Sikand, while highlighting on the marginalisation of Dalit voice, argues:

Dalits account for almost a tenth of the population of Jammu and Kashmir or about a third of the population of the Jammu province, but in discussions about the Kashmir question the Dalit voice is almost completely absent. Typically, the Hindus of the state are treated as a homogenous whole, although sometimes a distinction is made between the Pundits of the Valley and the Dogras of Jammu. It is, however, crucial to bring in the Dalit perspective when examining inter-community relations in Jammu and Kashmir, not only because of the numerical importance of Dalits but also because they are among the most marginalized communities in the state.⁶⁷

Everywhere else in North India, Dalits have been mobilised and have been asserting themselves. But there is no such Dalit mobilisation in Jammu. This ironical situation of complete absence of Dalit voice, despite their large numbers in Jammu province can be largely attributed to the dominance of upper caste Hindus who are also economically privileged. This privileged position of upper caste Hindus has historically led to the deprivation of Dalits in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres. The upper caste Hindus (Brahmins, Rajputs and Baniyas) not only appropriated economic, educational and cultural resources but also dominated the political affairs of Jammu. The politics of this privileged section of Hindu society being elitist and homogenised in nature, strived to maintain the status quo in order to restore its position. As already discussed this elite class of Hindus in Jammu formed the backbone of the RSS politics that viewed Hindu society in the state as a monolithic community. This homogenisation agenda of the RSS politics strived to ignore the structured inequalities of the caste system and aimed at restoring the upper caste dominance.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the social forces have not been able to assert themselves sufficiently and only one issue and that of the Kashmir dispute has overtaken the politics in the state. In Jammu area, where most of the Dalit population is concentrated, there is only one kind of politics, that is, in response and reaction to Kashmir's identity politics. The organisations like the RSS view Jammu Hindus as deprived of political and

⁶⁷ www.countercurrents.org

economic power due to the Kashmiri domination in these spheres of the state. These organisations do not take into consideration the intra-regional inequalities prevailing in Jammu. The widening gap between elite and rural poor in this region remains sidelined by these organisations. Due to the singular obsession of Jammu's polity with Kashmiri identity politics, the social forces in the Jammu have remained subdued. Neither the issue of Dalits, or of women, or of backward classes (which have been asserted very intensely in rest of India) has been sufficiently politicised.

Although there is no proper articulated or expressed form of Dalit perception, it can still be argued that the viewpoint of a large section of Dalit population marks a departure from elite Hindu perception in Jammu. This departure can be traced historically, when a large number of Dalits in Jammu supported the National Conference's movement for abolition of Dogra monarch and redistribution of land under the land reforms movement. The Praja Parishad, representing the interest of the elite section of Jammu Hindus, not only condemned these reform movements for empowerment of lower classes but also launched an agitation against them. Even in contemporary times, divergent class interests between the upper and lower strata of Hindu society in Jammu and Kashmir is very much apparent. That is the reason why the viewpoint of a large section of Dalit population not only departs but also sometimes clashes with the perception of upper caste and economically privileged Hindu section of society in the state.

Dalits in Jammu are more anxious about getting rid of their low economic and social status. Rather than questioning the purpose of Article 370 or demanding complete merger of the state with the Indian Union, Dalits are more concerned about getting political representation in the state. This section of society strives for better employment, health facilities and educational provisions for their community. As the interests of this section of the Hindu population are different from privileged Hindus, Dalits have not been taking extreme positions regarding the Kashmir problem.

The divergence of perspectives between Dalits and privileged section of Hindus can be seen not only in political and economic terms, but also in cultural terms. A significant

proportion of Dalits in Jammu have culture and folkways of their own. Many of the traditions followed by most of the Dalit population in the state diverts from the Brahminical traditions and are more egalitarian. Sharing this point of view, Yoginder Sikand argues:

...Many Dalits who are today counted as Hindus follow sectarian traditions that are markedly egalitarian and anti-Brahminical, such as the Ravidasi panth and Kabir panth. These traditions obviate the need for the Brahmin as an intermediary, and also stresses the equality of all human beings. In the case of Kabir panth, inter-communal harmony, between Hindus and Muslims is also stressed. Rituals, while not denied, are seen as ultimately of little value, with the focus instead placed on individual morality and devotion to one formless God.⁶⁸

However, depicting an image of complete divergence between Dalits and Brahminical classes can distort the real complexities underlying their relations. A large number of Dalits not only imitate upper caste Hindus but also seek their acceptance in order to be upwardly mobile in the Hindu social strata. A section of Dalit population and Dalit leaders strongly support the RSS politics as they perceive that their economic and political interests can be easily achieved in this way. They believe that they can get rid of their low caste and low class status only by claiming an upper caste status. In order to establish vote bank among Dalits, many Hindu-oriented organisations have been working among Dalits. These factors are responsible for the fact that despite their large numbers, there is no strong Dalit movement in the state. Elaborating on this context, Yoginder Sikand opines:

...the vast majority of Dalits here continue to identify themselves as Hindu. A number of Hindu religious organisations are active in the area, working also among the Dalits, while, unlike in several other parts of India, Ambedkarite Buddhist groups have only a marginal presence here....many Dalit leaders are said to be associated with BJP, which is generally seen as an anti-Dalit party.⁶⁹

Another noteworthy fact regarding Dalits is that they do not comprise a homogeneous category. Internally they are divided into a number of castes that makes it difficult for them to work together. Some of these castes operate on the basis of Brahminical principles of caste hierarchy, thereby, claiming superiority and discriminating against those who are placed lower in this hierarchical system.⁷⁰ In this way, many Dalit castes

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

remain divided among themselves not only on caste lines but also in terms of their ideological principles as well as their political and class interests. This internal division among Dalits has also been responsible for the absence of a strong Dalit movement. A section of Dalits have not been able to free themselves from the Brahminical notions of Hindu society. Due to this reason, a section of Dalits are ardent supporters of hindutva ideology of RSS\BJP in Jammu.

But at the same time, identification of a section of Dalits with RSS does not imply that all Dalits strongly identify themselves with hierarchical notions of Hindu religion. Majority of Dalits in Jammu see themselves not only as different but also in opposition to upper caste Hindus. They strongly oppose the concept of 'Hindu Rashtra', which they feel has no place for low caste Hindus. Also a large number of Dalits feel closer to Muslims than to upper caste Hindus, as the former did not discriminate against them. This view is also shared by Yoginder Sikand who opines that, "relations between Dalits and Muslims in Jammu were fairly cordial, noting that while many 'upper' caste Hindus treated Dalits as untouchables, the Muslims, in general, did not."⁷¹ Thus, as regards the Kashmir issue, most of the Dalit population does not view the problem from anti-Muslim perspective. However, as already said, it is difficult to grasp the viewpoints of Dalits regarding the Kashmir debate in detail due to the absence of any articulated form of their perceptions.

This chapter has attempted to provide an overview of complex and diversified Hindu social structure in Jammu area. This complexity corresponds to the varied and plural responses of Hindus regarding the Kashmir issue in Jammu. To unravel this diversified perceptions of Hindus, an attempt has been made to locate the responses of Hindus within a broad social, economic and political framework. The general tendency to equate Hindu perceptions in this region with pro-Hindu organisations has been contested in this chapter.

⁷¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV – VARIOUS HINDU PERCEPTIONS REGARDING KASHMIR ISSUE: KASHMIR REGION

INTRODUCTION

The Pandits comprise the Hindu community in Kashmir. Various differentiated and complex shades of opinion have been manifested by different sections of Pandit community concerning the Kashmir issue. Also, the way in which the episode of en masse exodus of Pandits from Kashmir has influenced the Kashmiri state of mind needs to be studied.

A section of Pandit community considers religion as the dominant factor in defining conflict in Kashmir. They equate the separatist agenda in Kashmir with essentially fundamentalist and anti-Hindu character of Islam. However, this point of view is contested by other Pandit groups who opine that the Kashmir crisis is not religious but political in nature, arising out of the denial of basic democratic rights to the Kashmiri masses. Yet, there are other Pandit groups who believe that the role of religion in formation of identities in Kashmir cannot be denied, even though this does not imply that Kashmir problem is determined primarily by religious factors. They believe that the political and economic factors have to a large extent shaped the present volatile situation in Kashmir. They argue that the association of the separatist movement with one religion only, that is Muslims, does not make the movement communal in nature. Apart from these broad perceptions, a range of views can be traced among Kashmiri Pandits regarding issues relating to the secessionist movement in Kashmir, Article 370, Constitutional status of Kashmir and various other such issues.

Before laying open these perceptions, it is essential to grasp objectively the socio-political and historical changes that Kashmir society has gone through. Any interpretation of the Kashmir problem that is delinked from its past has the chances of being biased. A historical sketch of the social structure of Kashmir society, the process of identity

formation in Kashmir, and the political mobilisation of these identities are essential to probe into the reasons as to why different segments of Pandit community are reacting in diverse ways.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF KASHMIR SOCIETY

At the time when Kashmir got incorporated into the state in 1846, it had acquired a plural character with people belonging to diverse racial systems, following different customs and traditions and adhering to various religious faiths. Despite its geographical insularity, Kashmir had acquired the political and cultural characteristics of the subcontinent.¹ Like rest of the subcontinent, the society in Kashmir was internally fragmented in terms of region, religion, caste and class. Three religious segments – Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam – coexisted in Kashmir and that too without any rigid boundaries.² In fact, religious identities in pre-modern period were fluid, flexible and fuzzy (at a later stage, however, these identities became more concrete and crystallised due to a number of factors). U. K. Zutshi notes that these religious segments did not constitute cohesive communities. He argues that, “the members of the three segments...did not form a homogenous mass but were stratified into various occupational categories based on terrain or geographical factors, economic production and the socio-historical and political background”.³ Hence, in religious terms, though there were two dominant communities in Kashmir, Muslims and Hindus, but neither of these were homogeneous social entities. Both the groups were internally fragmented on the basis of caste or clan with marriages outside these categories being forbidden.

An analysis of Hindu caste structure in Kashmir reveals that far from being homogenous, Hindu society there was divided in terms of occupation, region, and cultural practices.

¹ The defeat of Sikh regime by the British and the transfer of Kashmir to the Dogra Maharaja of Jammu in 1846 resulted in doing away with whatever kind of exclusivity the Valley enjoyed till that time. It not only became part of the newly evolved princely state of Jammu and Kashmir but also joined the other princely states of the subcontinent in accepting the overall supremacy of the British in its territories.

² Navnita Chadha Behera, *State, Identity and Violence: Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2000, p. 32.

³ U. K. Zutshi, *Emergence of political awakening in Kashmir*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1986, p. 105.

Focusing on the caste structure, Mridu Rai notes that all Hindus in Kashmir belonged to a single caste of Brahmins as all other castes had undergone conversion to Islam in an earlier period. Even this single caste of Brahmins was further subdivided into two endogamous subcastes – the Gors and the Karkuns. The Gors were mostly priests, while the Karkuns provided the clerical services. They were linked together in a hierarchical relationship as the Karkuns acted as patrons of the Gors. Another smaller endogamous group of Brahmins were called the Buher who constituted a community of grocers.⁴

Even Muslims in Kashmir were internally stratified and did not form an undifferentiated unit. Regarding Kashmiri Muslims Mridu Rai observes that:

The Muslims of Kashmir, forming about 95% of the population, were also a less- than-cohesive category. The Sunni Muslims were divided into Shaikhs, Saiyids, Mughals, Pathans, Gujars, and Bakarwals, and the lower stratum, comprised of the Doms and the Watal – regarded as ‘untouchables’ both by Hindus and Muslims....Quite evidently, then, neither the Hindus nor the Muslims of Kashmir formed homogenous social entities...⁵

Thus, the political, social and cultural trends in Kashmiri society resembled the characteristics of the subcontinent in many ways since middle of the nineteenth century. However, Kashmir had retained its uniqueness in one major way, that is, in its distinctive pattern of inter-community relations.

INTERACTION PATTERN AND ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE

The pattern of interaction among Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir makes Kashmiri society unparalleled and different. In this context, Mridu Rai holds that, “there seems little to distinguish Kashmir from other regions of the subcontinent. However, what made Kashmiri social structure so singular was the pattern of interaction between the Hindus and the Muslims...”⁶ Many scholars such as Walter Lawrence have noted the mutual bond that existed between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir.⁷ Since historical times Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir have shared common cultural and social spaces. They

⁴ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, pp. 37-38.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 38-39.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 39-40.

⁷ See Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, Srinagar: Kesar Publications, 1967, pp. 286-300

have not only coexisted peacefully but also mutually identified with each other. They shared a common language, historical legacy, sartorial styles and cultural practices. This enabled Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir to identify closely with each other. Up to early years of the twentieth century and even a little later, Hindu and Muslim practices often overlapped, instead of forming a duality. Although in the modern period identities did not remain so elastic, many shared traditional practices of historical times continued to provide for mutual reciprocity between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. They continue to share common religious practices such as the shrine culture, worshipping of common ancestors, deities, sufis and rishis. This intermixing of religious practices is made possible due to the fact that Islam in Kashmir operates in a manner different from the way it operates elsewhere. Kashmiri Muslims have developed their own indigenous religious practices, distinct from mainstream Islamic practices. Even Hindus in Kashmir have acquired some of their own peculiar traditions, markedly different from their co-religionists elsewhere. Appreciating these indigenous practices, Riyaz Punjabi argues:

...the tradition followed by Kashmiri Muslims, the indigenous method of practicing their faith, and following the customs, sometimes to the extent of modifying the rules of Islamic jurisprudence make them distinct from their co-religionists elsewhere. In the same manner the Hindus of Kashmir, popularly known as Bhattas or Kashmiri Pandits, developed their own symbols, and created their own traditions, which makes them markedly different from the preponderant majority of their co-religionists in the sub-continent...⁸

The social structure of Kashmir society permitted a unique pattern of interaction and economic interdependence between Hindus and Muslims. In the single Brahmin caste Hindu society in Kashmir, the Brahmins had no other option but to rely on Muslims for doing jobs that they were not allowed to do according to their caste ideals of purity and pollution. Mridu Rai elaborates on the relationship of ritual and economic interdependence between Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir. She observes:

...In the absence of the full panoply of jatis that characterized Hindu society elsewhere, the Pandits, whose caste status excluded them from either manual labour or work deemed polluting, relied heavily on Muslim specialist groups for the provision of essential services and liturgical goods...Kashmiri Muslims, for their part, viewed Pandits as valuable patrons and the relationship as a 'traditional economic transition'...⁹

⁸ Riyaz Punjabi, 'Kashmir: The Bruised Identity' in Raju G. C. Thomas (ed), *Perspectives On Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia*, Westview press, Oxford, 1992, p. 137.

⁹ Op. cit., n. 4, p. 40.

Thus, not only shared cultural patterns but also economic interdependence between the two groups produced a harmonious relationship between them. Except for the two riots in 1931 and then in 1986, the two communities did not experience much antagonism between them. However, the event of the mass exodus of Pandits from Kashmir changed the situation to some extent. The issue of exodus will be dealt separately in the chapter.

However, it must be emphasised that presenting an exclusively harmonious image of Kashmiri society may lead to idealism. It is necessary to point out the economic or political differences between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. In this context, it is also essential to draw attention to the process of identity formation of Hindus and Muslims in this geographical area.

CLASS STRUCTURE IN KASHMIR SOCIETY

The mutual bond between Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims has been a social reality in Kashmir. However, many scholars have tended to present a romanticised version of Kashmir society without referring to the moments of strain between the two communities. They have used the word ‘Kashmiriyat’ to present an idealised version of Kashmir society. In this context Chitralekha Zutshi has rejected the simplified notion of ‘Kashmiriyat’ reflecting the notion of Kashmiri nationalism based on perfectly harmonious relationship between religious communities. She highlights the complexity underlying the relationship between ‘region’ and ‘religion’ on the one hand and the religious context of identity, on the other.¹⁰

It is important to focus upon the fact that while Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir shared close bonds with each other, they diverged from each other with regard to their economic and political interests. There existed strong political differences between them. The

¹⁰ See Chitralekha. Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004.

twocommunities continued to live side by side, engaging each other at the cultural level but totally disjointed at the political level.¹¹

During the period of Dogra rule, the only people who were benefited in Kashmir were the urban Kashmiri Pandit population. As Pandits were mostly the literate section of Kashmiri society, they were needed by the ruling regime to handle administrative jobs. However, among Muslims only a small section of Sayyid and Pir families were employed in administrative jobs. The rural masses in Kashmir, most of whom were Muslims, constituted the oppressed section of Kashmir society.¹² Describing the economic set up of Kashmir society, Chitrlekha Zutshi notes:

It is important to differentiate between the ranks of the bureaucracy, and the Pandit community in general, since the greatest beneficiaries of the system were the wazir-wazarats and the tehsildars. [highest officials] The lower ranks of the bureaucracy, including the patwaris, kardars and shakdars, most likely did not benefit as much from the system as British representations would have one believe. Furthermore, many Kashmiri Pandits in rural areas were simply cultivators with no connection to the revenue administration. Additionally, there was an important Kashmiri Muslim element in the revenue administration, drawn mostly from Sayyids and Pirs¹³.

Thus, the class structure of Kashmir society reveals that it was mainly the Muslim community that comprised the most underprivileged and deprived section there during the Dogra regime. Along with economic backwardness, Muslims also suffered from illiteracy and social exploitation. In this regard, Chitrlekha Zutshi observes that:

Even at the beginning of 1910, there were only 15 educated Muslim males as compared to 453 Hindu males per thousand of population in the Jhelum Valley. By the census of 1921, this number had jumped to a mere 19 for Muslims, while going up to 508 for Hindus. Even among the few Muslim literates in the Valley, the largest number was of the Babazadas, or the mullahs and pirs, the traditionally educated class among the Muslims of Kashmir who were associated with shrines and mosques across Kashmir. ... the second most educated caste among Kashmiri Muslims was the Sheikhs, i.e. the converts from Hinduism at the advent of Islam. The Muslim agricultural castes had no representative among the educated in the census of 1911. Kashmiri Pandits were the most educated social group in the Valley, and the state as a whole...¹⁴

Thus, as compared to Kashmiri Pandits, Muslims in Kashmir remained a politically unrepresentative and marginalised category, especially till early part of the twentieth century. The awareness of their relatively disadvantageous position in society at a later

¹¹ Rekha chowdhary, 'Religion, Violence and Peace', unpublished article.

¹² Op. cit., n. 10, p. 62.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 63-64.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 182.

stage led to the sharpening of Muslim identity in Kashmir. In this context, Mridu Rai observes that:

...the Dogra rulers, looking for allies within Kashmiri society, drew primarily on the Pandits. This enhanced the power of the latter, dominant in the administrative structure of the state and especially its revenue department, to bear down on the rural population, the vast majority of whom happened to be Muslims. An awareness of the privileged position of the Kashmiri Pandits in the Dogra state, and the exploitation this enabled, was never far from the minds of the Kashmiri Muslim villagers...¹⁵

The perceptions of Hindus in Kashmir need to be traced alongside the process of sharpening of Muslim identity in Kashmir. It is essential to emphasise that although religion was an important marker in this process of identity formation, the sharpening of religious identity had political and economic reasons rather than purely religious aims.

PROCESS OF IDENTITY FORMATION AND HINDU PERCEPTIONS

The process of identity formation and the sharpening of Muslims identity in Kashmir has been the outcome of the political and economic realities in which Muslims were placed. The initiation of reforms by the British government in Kashmir, the establishment of political resident, along with the processes of urbanisation and the rise of educated middle class brought about awareness among Muslims in this region regarding their impoverished conditions.¹⁶ The acknowledgement of their relative economic and political deprivation as compared to Pandits sharpened Muslim identity in Kashmir. Sir Albion Banerji, Foreign and Political Minister of the State, refers to this discontent among Muslims in Kashmir when he argues:

Jammu and Kashmir state is labouring under many disadvantages with a large Mohammadan population absolutely illiterate, labouring under poverty and very low economic conditions of living in the villages and practically governed like dumb driven cattle. There is no touch between the Government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances and the administrative machinery itself requires overhauling from top to bottom to bring it up to the modern conditions of efficiency. It has at present little or no sympathy with the people's wants and grievances...¹⁷

¹⁵ Op. cit., n. 4, pp. 40-41.

¹⁶ See Ravinderjit Kaur, *Political Awakening in Kashmir*, New Delhi: APH Publishing House, 1996), p.10; for a detailed understanding of the impact of the process of urbanization, see, Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar 1846-1947: A study in Socio-cultural Change*, Srinagar: Gulshan, 1983.

¹⁷ cited in P. N. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, Srinagar: Gulshan Publishers, p. 135.

This accumulated discontent of Kashmiri Muslims found its outlet in the riots of 1931, which are characterised by many scholars as communal in nature. Regarding the episode of 1931, Chitralkha Zutshi argues that, “In fact, 1931 inaugurated the emergence of the much-dreaded term ‘communalism’ in the political discourse of hitherto ‘non-communal’ Kashmir.”¹⁸ However, the 1931 violence had roots in economic rather than in religious reasons. On this subject Zutshi opines:

...the Kashmiri Muslims, tired of being excluded from education, the government, and the lower rungs of the administration, rallied around the cry of Islam in Danger raised by youth recently returned from British India with professional degrees....the rioting on July 13, 1931 was not that of a frenzied mob looking to kill in the name of religion, but one intended to redress the immediate economic grievances of Kashmiri Muslims.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the communal appearance of the whole episode of 1931 reinforced the religious divide between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir. In response to this event, Hindu Pandit identity was also heightened and this also influenced their perceptions regarding Muslim demands. Pandits started viewing Muslim demands as communal and against their interests. The demands of Kashmiri Muslims for equal share in economic and political representation increased the competition and threatened the interests of Pandits.

To attract the attention of the British government, Pandits started portraying themselves as a non-communal community, which is being threatened by the communal claims laid by Kashmiri Muslims. Chitralkha Zutshi opines that Pandits recognised that the only means through which they could get special attention from the British was to declare themselves to be a beleaguered minority. To establish this status, they had to separate themselves from Kashmiri Muslims, which they did by stating that their community was the first to gain education and serve actively in the service of the state. Hence, they deserve better treatment than they had received from the government.²⁰

The statements of the Kashmiri Pandit Sudhar Sabha and the Sanatan Dharma Youngmen’s Association after the 1931 events made selective use of history to portray

¹⁸ Op. cit., n. 10, p. 211.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 224.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 222.

themselves as an endangered religious minority. The pamphlets issued by these Hindu associations claimed that, “the majority of them [Kashmiri Pandits] were converted to Islam at the point of the sword, and large numbers had to leave hearth and home”.²¹ These organisations argued that, “the Muslims, with the sole object of obliterating the community, carried this historical tradition forward into 1931 with the loot, murder and rape of Kashmiri Pandits. The statements included meticulous lists of Kashmiri Pandits materially and physically injured during the disturbances.”²²

Thus the heightened Muslims identity in Kashmir initiated a reaction from the Pandit community and reinforced the process of identity formation on both sides. However this process is not to be seen as merely a case of religious conflict. Economic and political realities guided this process of identity formation and also the consequent perceptions of Hindus in Kashmir. Chitralkha Zutshi, thus holds:

Despite the communitarian rhetoric in the aftermath of the 1931 crisis, which flourished the bogey of the “other” religious community in order to paper over its own fractured reality, the tensions were far from motivated by religion. There is no doubt that the leaders of both communities claimed to represent issues specific to their own community while labeling the other side communal. And that the avowedly “Muslim” and “Hindu” elements from British India jumped in the fray to support their respective Kashmiri brethren. However, the tussle between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits in and after 1931 was more about political and economic representation than religious antagonism.²³

Thus, the changed political and economic structure of the state, due to Muslims agitation, influenced the perception of the Hindu community in Kashmir regarding Kashmiri Muslims and their demands. The Pandits perceived their interests as separate from Muslims not due to religious antagonism but because of increasing competition for jobs and political space from Muslims in the Valley.

MUSLIM IDENTITY POLITICS AND HINDU PERCEPTIONS

The early 1930's was marked by demarcation of Hindu and Muslim identity in Kashmir. However the period after 1931 saw moments of convergence as well as divergence of

²¹ Ibid, p. 222-223.

²² Ibid, p. 222-223.

²³ Ibid, p. 223

Hindu and Muslims politics. Muslims politics got a momentum with the active involvement of Sheikh Abdullah and other educated Muslim Conference leaders who strived to fight for the rights of oppressed Muslims. Although the activities of the Muslim conference revolved around Muslim identity politics, there were several occasions when many of its leaders, including Sheikh Abdullah, appealed to the Kashmiri masses to dissolve religious differences and build a strong mass movement for emancipation of underprivileged classes. It requested the Hindu community in Kashmir to join their movement for the establishment of a responsible government in Jammu and Kashmir. To bring about economic changes in Kashmir it became necessary for the Muslim Conference leaders to broaden the base of their movement. Elaborating on this issue, Zutshi notes:

The articulation of a socialist economic program...required the conception of Kashmir as a unified entity with horizontal class divisions as opposed to vertical sectarian\communitarian ones. This shift was clearly discernable in Sheikh Abdullah's rhetoric. In his presidential address at the annual session of the Muslim Conference in December 1933, he exhorted all Kashmiris to come forwards and support the movement...²⁴

Many Pandit leaders such as Prem Nath Bazaz supported the Muslim Conference in its endeavor to bring about economic reform to improve the oppressed condition of the Kashmiri masses. He refused to perceive Muslim politics as entirely operating on a religious and communal basis. Bazaz argued:

One need only patiently go through the records of this organisations (Muslims Conference) to conclude that most of the leaders and workers of the party disliked communalism and religious basis of politics. Repeatedly were the non-Muslims invited to participate in the struggle for freedom and assured of honorable place in the social and political life. In the presidential address of the first session of the Muslim Conference we find this unequivocal declaration: "The Kashmir movement is not communal but has come into existence to get the grievances of all classes of people redressed. We assure our Hindu and Sikh brothers that we are prepared to help them in the same manner as we do the Mussalmans."²⁵

However, most of the Pandit leaders and organisations perceived the Muslim Conference as working mainly for Muslim interests. They argued that this political party marginalises the interests and voices of the Pandit community. Even though Sheikh Abdullah and other Muslim leaders attempted to broaden the horizon of their movement, many Pandits

²⁴ Ibid, p. 246.

²⁵ Prem Nath Bazaz, 'Secular Concept in Kashmir Traditions', in Verinder Grover (edited), *The Story of Kashmir: Yesterday and Today*, New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1995, p. 493.

viewed Muslim politics as evoking religious sentiments to strengthen their struggle. Many Pandits organisations such as the Sanatan Dharma Yuvak Sabha took an extremist stand and labeled the Muslim Conference as exclusivist and antithetic to Pandit interests. Though, Jia Lal Kaul Jalali, a Kashmiri Pandits bureaucrat, and many other Pandit leaders did not present extremist views regarding Muslim politics in Kashmir, they, however, argued that the minority communities were feeling alienated from the political sphere in Kashmir.²⁶

The awareness that was generated among Muslims in Kashmir and the consequent Muslim politics that was taking shape there had strong influences on the perception of Kashmiri Pandits during the 1930's. They started perceiving themselves as a minority community and a feeling of insecurity engulfed their minds.

However, many prominent Pandits in the forefront of Kashmiri politics argued that the divergent political interests of Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir did not penetrate into the everyday community levels. At the cultural level, the Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir continued to share their common social and local traditions. This shared cultural principles of Kashmir society necessitated the broadening of political boundaries to some extent in Kashmir. Prem Nath Bazaz opined that since the religious divide in the political arena was coming in conflict with the pluralistic and secular traditions of Kashmir society, it became inevitable for Muslim leaders to secularise their politics. These factors, in his view, guided the conversion of the Muslim Conference to the National Conference in 1939. In this regard, Bazaz holds:

...the idea that mundane interests of the Muslims and the non-Muslims are inseparable and that the two communities should share joys and sorrows was not conceived all of a sudden for the first time in 1939 but had deep-rooted traditions in the past. Through centuries the idea of unity in diversity formed the fundamental principle on which the culture of Kashmir people was built....²⁷

Many Pandits viewed the National Conference as a secular organisation that stood for empowerment of the poor and underprivileged masses. However, a large section of elite Pandits held a different perception about the National Conference. The class interests of

²⁶ Op. cit., n. 10, p.256.

²⁷ Op. cit., n. 25, p. 491.

this section of Pandits clashed with those who supported the mass movement of the National Conference. The economic reforms and socialist agenda introduced by the National Conference aimed at redistribution of land, economic, educational and employment resources. These structural changes threatened the previously privileged and dominant position of Kashmiri Pandits that they enjoyed during Dogra rule.

The demand for the abolition of Dogra monarchy and the initiation of land reforms by Sheikh Abdullah leadership was strongly condemned by a large number of Pandits. Pandits were the main beneficiaries in Kashmir, both economically and politically, during Hindu Dogra regime. The abolition of monarchy and the redistribution of land undermined the monopoly of Pandits in terms of land held and other economic facilities. In this regard, Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal elaborates:

Sheikh Abdullah's land reforms had mainly affected the Pandits or the upper caste Hindus of Jammu province in whose hands the major portion of landholding was consolidated. A mere two per cent of Pandits owned 30 per cent of all landholdings in the Valley. The land reforms introduced by Sheikh Abdullah from 1948 to 1953, together with the spread of free primary education, had created a new class of ambitious Kashmiri Muslims.... Even as Muslims started making indents in various fields, taking a share of what was otherwise a monopoly of the Pandits, during the 1960s and '70s, the Pandits gradually began to slip into a syndrome of insecurity. They were aware of their minuscule minority and their history of monopoly, educational, professional and economic.²⁸

The elite class of Pandits, thus, started portraying themselves as a minority community that is being overshadowed by political majoritarianism in Kashmir. Many of them joined pro-Hindu organisations like the Praja Parishad and the RSS in projecting the Muslim demands for economic reforms and the establishment of a responsible government as communal and anti-Hindu.

The diverging class interests of Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir led to the alienation of many Kashmiri Pandits from Muslim politics in Kashmir. In this context Rekha Chowdhary observes:

The political movement of Kashmir led firstly by the Muslim Conference and later by the National Conference, gave rise to a politics with which not many Pandits could identify. In fact, they were quite uncomfortable with that politics and saw it aimed against their privileged position – whether it was the demand for educational and employment opportunities under the banner of the Muslim Conference or the demand for Land Reforms under the National Conference. Anathema towards

²⁸ <http://www.indianet.nl/indpk146.html>

this politics was quite inevitable among the educated Pandits who were till now almost monopolizing the jobs and holding land.²⁹

POST-INDEPENDENCE DEVELOPMENTS AND HINDU PERCEPTIONS

During 1947–1989 period, the structural changes that took place in Kashmir in the form of land reforms and the provision of educational and employment facilities to Muslims reduced the domination of Pandits in Kashmir society. Also the two communities of Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir identified themselves with different political standpoints. However, despite these changes there were no major instances of communal tensions between these two religious groups during this period. The only exception to this was the Anantnag riots in 1985.

Nevertheless, political polarisation between Pandits and Muslims was quite apparent during this period. The Muslim politics of conditional accession of the state and the provision of article 370 was opposed by a large number of Kashmiri Pandits. Pro-Hindu groups attempted to create a Hindu constituency by repeatedly questioning the purpose of Article 370. These organisations took a rigid position on the issue of partial integration of the state into the Indian Union and aggressively demanded complete merger of the state. A large population of Kashmiri Pandits supported this pro-Hindu politics. Even those sections of Kashmiri Pandits who empathised with the Muslim demand for restoration of autonomy of Kashmir were unable to identify with Muslim politics.

However, as in the earlier period, despite the divergent political interests of Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir, the two groups continued to engage with each other at the cultural level. However, the situation changed remarkably after 1989 with the rise of militancy in Kashmir. The upsurge of secessionism in Kashmir, the involvement of fundamentalist groups and the eventual mass exodus of the minority Pandit community increased the gap between Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits. These factors influenced the Pandit consciousness in complex ways and these need to be analysed.

²⁹ Op. cit., n. 11(unpublished).

THE SITUATION OF EXODUS AND HINDU PERCEPTIONS

The upsurge of insurgency in Kashmir and the mass exodus of the minority Pandit community from the Valley influenced the perceptions of Pandits in a significant manner. The accumulated frustration of Kashmiri youth with the authoritarian practices of the Indian State found its outlet in the form of an eruption of militant violence in Kashmir in the late 1980's. The denial of basic democratic rights to the Kashmiri people, the installment of puppet governments by the Centre and the rigging and manipulation of elections in this region led to disillusionment among Kashmiri masses. Any popularly elected government in the Valley that chose to stand for the autonomous status of Kashmir and questioned the interventionist role of the Central government was dismissed by the Indian state on account of a number of reasons. Also the coercive integrative measures adopted by the Indian State in silencing all kinds of dissenting voices in the Valley blocked all forms of democratic channels for the redressal of grievances of the Kashmiri people. The upsurge of militant movement in this region has to be seen in the context of these above-mentioned factors.

These were long-term reasons for the upsurge of insurgency in Kashmir. However, the immediate reasons were the incidents that took place in the late 1980's. First, the elected Farooq Abdullah's government was dismissed in 1984 due to intervention of the Congress party in the Centre. This angered the people of Kashmir as they felt that their franchise had little relevance. Second, in 1986 Farooq Abdullah came under the pressure of the Centre and made an alliance with the Congress. That was totally against the aspirations of the Kashmiri masses. Third, there was large scale rigging of the 1987 election by the National Conference-Congress combine. These incidents in the 1980's led to spontaneous reactions among people and gave reasons to some of the Kashmiris to opt for violence. To begin with violence was used against all those who were seen to be associated with the Indian state. Kashmiri Pandits who were killed were mainly government bureaucrats, high officials and some right-wing leaders. In these

circumstances a situation of panic gripped the Valley and led to the exodus of almost entire community of Pandits from the Valley.

The exodus of the minority community has been seen from a religious standpoint by a large number of Pandits. This section of Pandits attribute this violent upsurge in Kashmir and the mass exodus that followed to a pre-planned agenda of 'Pan-Islamic fundamentalism' aimed to target the vulnerable religious minorities in Asia. They argue that terrorism in Kashmir is a form of communal aggression by extremely intolerant Kashmiri Muslims intending to destroy the lives, property and places of worship of the minority community of Hindus in Kashmir.³⁰ The views of M. K. Teng and C. L. Gadoo represent the views of this section of Kashmiri Pandits. Teng and Gadoo label the secessionist movement in Kashmir as a religious crusade or jihad with the motive of establishing an independent state for Muslims. They hold that Muslim unrest has nothing to do with the denial of civil liberties or erosion of their identities. It can only be seen in terms of the inherently pro-Pakistani and anti-Indian outlook of Muslims. Teng and Gadoo have articulated their views in following words:

The terrorist violence is not a local eruption of political dissent or discontent, nor it is a political movement geared to the objectives which involve change in the instruments of power or processes of political participation. It is a religious crusade, the continuation of the Muslim struggle of the separate Muslim homeland in India, to complete the partition of India by securing the Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir for the Muslim state of Pakistan. While terrorism took its toll in Kashmir, the leaders of Pakistan demanded that the India be divided again and partition be carried to its logical conclusion by ceding Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan.³¹

Teng further believes that terrorist violence in Kashmir involves terrorists' commitment to four major objectives:

1. assisination of Hindus.
2. Torture and Abduction.
3. Mass extermination of Hindus as an ethnic denomination.
4. Forced exodus of Hindus from Kashmir.³²

³⁰ Sumantra Bose, *The Challenge in Kashmir: Democracy, Self-Determination and A Just Peace*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1997, pp. 71-72.

³¹ M. K. Teng and C. L. Gadoo, *White Paper on Kashmir*, New Delhi: Joint Human Rights Committee, p. 31.

³² M.K. Teng, 'Violation of Human Rights – Whose?', in Verinder Grover (edited), op. cit., n. 26., p. 709.

Similar views are shared by Utpal Kaul who also holds that other than sectarian motives no other political, social or economic reasons can be attached to this movement.³³

Panun Kashmir, a political organisation of Kashmiri Pandits, also views the exodus as the culmination of a long process of Muslimisation of the state that started taking roots in the state in 1947. It states that since accession of the state to the Indian Union, Hindus in Kashmir have suffered discrimination and deprivation at the hands of communal Muslim majoritarianism. The convenor of the Panun Kashmir movement, Aswani Kumar argues:

The accession of Jammu and Kashmir State to the Union of India in 1947 brought in the sustained influence of Muslim majoritarian politics in the State patronized by the 'Soft-State' perceptions of the subsequent governments at the Centre. Special status became a bargaining chip for the political elite of Kashmir through political machinations strengthening the Muslim precedence. It developed into a Muslim monolithic political culture and reaction over the period giving rise to the secessionist movement in Kashmir. The forced mass-exodus of three lakh Kashmiri Hindus from Kashmir Valley was the logical culmination of the militarized form of pan-Islamic fundamentalism bringing turmoil in this region.³⁴

Panun Kashmir holds only one factor responsible for the migration of Pandits, that is, the movement for self-determination in Kashmir. This organisation argues that this movement had a pre-designed grand plan of eliminating Hindus in Kashmir and uses terms like 'genocide' and 'ethnic cleansing' to describe this phenomenon. Panun Kashmir in its December 1991 convention passed a resolution that stated:

Terrorism in Kashmir is a Muslim religious crusade aimed at the secession of the State from the Republic of India and its merger with Pakistan. It is founded on an ideological struggle of which the main tenets are:

- i. That Kashmir which has a majority Muslim population should become a part of Pakistan on the basis of religion;
- ii. That all institutions which stand for secularism and democracy are destroyed and all individuals or groups that vouch for equality, justice and religious tolerance are eliminated;
- iii. That the rich cultural traditions of Kashmir hallowed over more than five thousand years of the history be demolished and replaced by Islamic fundamentalism.³⁵

This association of Kashmiri Pandits also evokes selective historical memories of the past to argue that Hindus in Kashmir have been facing atrocities and persecution at the hands of Muslim rulers, leaders and fanatics. These selective events are repeatedly drawn attention to prove the impossibility of peaceful co-existence between Hindus and

³³ Utpal Kaul, 'Kashmiriyat: A Hindu Heritage', in *ibid*, p.722-726..

³⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi of 7th January 1996.

³⁵ www.panunkashmir.org/margdarshan.html.

Muslims in Kashmir. This group of Pandits holds that constitutional rights and security to the life of Pandits can only be assured if Pandits are granted a separate homeland to live in Kashmir. In this context, Panun Kashmir in its December 1991 resolution demanded:

The establishment of a Homeland for the Kashmiri Pandits in the Kashmir Valley, comprising the regions of the Valley to the East and North of river Jehlum;
That the Constitution of India be made applicable in letter and spirit in this Homeland, in order to ensure right to life, liberty, freedom of expression and faith, equality and rule of law;
That the Homeland be placed under the Central administration with a Union territory Status, so that it evolves its own economic and political infrastructure.³⁶

However, a wide section of the Pandit community has contested the opinions shared by Teng, Gadoo and even organisations such as the Panun Kashmir. This section of Kashmiri Hindus argues that the extremists beliefs held by few Pandit scholars and Pandit organisations on the issue of exodus has been influential in shaping the communal and anti-Muslim perceptions of a large number of Hindus. The nationalist discourses and the propaganda machinery used by local Pandit elite and organisations such as the BJP have further penetrated the myth of Hindus as being the victims of Muslim fundamentalism in Kashmir.

This moderate section of Pandits further argue that the militancy that started in the late 80's was not intended to target any particular religious community. But it was against the Indian state and those associated with its undemocratic practices. However, the role of fringe fundamentalist militant elements that made use of mosques to threaten the minorities and attack innocent civilians cannot be denied. Yet, the mass exodus of almost the entire community of Pandits cannot be attributed to this factor alone. This group of Pandits blames the communal politics of conservative Hindu organisations and the unresponsive role of the Centre in providing security to Pandits in the Valley that created a fear psychosis among them. Hence according to this segment of Kashmiri Pandits, there was no systematic pattern of abuse of Hindus in particular. Also, the number of Muslims killed due to militancy was much higher than the number of Hindus who were killed.

³⁶ Ibid.

While condemning the centralising tendencies of the Indian State, O. N. Trisal also criticises the role played both by militants as well as the communal organisations such as the BJP in communally polarising the situation in Kashmir. He holds:

...the Kashmiri Muslim, throughout the long course of history, thwarted every attempt to deprive him of his identity...He never accepted fundamentalist standpoint. Religion to him was a message of love and sympathy and respect for other faiths. Militancy towards the end of 1989 was an attack on this Kashmiri identity which took the common man by surprise. But the real culprit was the Government at the Centre which failed to fulfill the urges and aspirations of the people of Kashmir, resulting in their alienation from the national mainstream. The rabid, fundamentalist elements channelised the people's discontent along communal lines, forcing the mass exodus of Pandits and even a large number of Muslim families. The militant attack was not merely aimed at Pandits, but on all those who believed in secular values, communal harmony and amity....³⁷

Many Kashmiri Pandits while accepting the fact that the Indian government encouraged the exodus refer to the role played by the then governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Jagmohan. These Pandits believe that it was Jagmohan who engineered the mass exodus by creating fear among Pandits. According to them, Jagmohan with his anti-Muslim approach tried to communally polarise Kashmiri society. These views also became evident from the two letters written by migrant Pandits living in Jammu camps to an Urdu newspaper in Srinagar, *Alsafa*, published on 22 September and 18 October 1990. They also stated that the exodus was encouraged through various incentives provided by Jagmohan in the form of government transport, promises of free accommodation in Jammu and guaranteed salary-payments for government employees.³⁸

These views of Pandits regarding their exodus being instigated by Jagmohan can be proved to some extent if one analyses the statements made by Jagmohan himself. His repressive and anti-Muslim approach not only reinforced militancy in Kashmir but also gave Kashmir problem a communal profile. In an interview to *Current*, May 1990, Jagmohan stated, "Every Muslim in Kashmir is a militant today. All of them are for secession from India. I am scuttling Srinagar Doordarshan's programmes because

³⁷ O. N. Trisal, 'Kashmiri Pandits - at the Crossroads of History', in Verinder Grover (edited), op. cit., n. 25, p. 739.

³⁸ Op. cit., n. 30, p. 76.

everyone there is a militant... The bullet is the only solution for Kashmir. Unless the militants are fully wiped out, normalcy can't return to the Valley."³⁹

Although appeals were made by many indigenous militant groups to Kashmiri Pandits to return to the Valley, no effort was made on the part of the government to undo the migration of Pandits. However, on repeated requests of a large section of Muslims in Kashmir as well as of many militant groups to undo the migration of Pandits, a joint committee was formed with the Kashmiri Pandit leader H.N. Jatto as the vice-president. Jatto recalled that the Pandits had reversed their decision to migrate in 1986 after the success of the goodwill mission led by him. A number of Muslim leaders and parties, including militant outfits, also cooperated with this mission to convince the Pandits not to leave their homes. However, Jatto himself was forced to migrate to Jammu by the governor Jagmohan. He recalled that, soon after the joint committee was set up, "the governor [Jagmohan] sent a DSP to him with an air ticket for Jammu, a jeep to take him to the airport, an offer of accommodation at Jammu and an advice to leave Kashmir immediately".⁴⁰

Many Kashmiri Pandits concede to the fact that when some extremist groups were targeting Pandits, the Muslim community condemned these killings. A large number of Muslims offered shelter and protected their Pandit friends and neighbours from militants' attacks. And it is only when the situation became very tense and Muslims were themselves being threatened and targeted by the fundamentalist militant groups that they advised their Pandit friends to migrate to a safer place. The common Pandits also acknowledge the fact that Muslim neighbours offered them all support. O. N. Trisal elaborates this:

In late 1989, when militancy surfaced in the Valley, the Muslims in general, whether as a neighbour, friend or a colleague, asked the Pandit brothers not to leave their homes and provided security to them. Many Muslims accommodated Pandits families in their houses to save them from militant attacks. There are instances when Muslim ladies, at the risk of their lives, stood at the doors of Pandit houses, to stop militants from entering their houses. Not only this, but when

³⁹ Victoria Schoffield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2003, p. 154.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, n. 30, p. 76.

militancy gained the upper hand and the common Muslims himself came under the threat of the gun, timely information was provided to the Pandits so that they could flee to safety...⁴¹

In an interview undertaken by Indian Civil Liberties team of many Pandits still living peacefully in Kashmir, a Kashmiri Pandit argued, “ if anyone has to run away from the Valley, it will be the Muslims...the way they are being killed”.⁴² A large number of Pandits agree to the fact that a large number of Muslims were targeted and massacred by militants in Kashmir. These Pandits realise that not only Hindus but also Muslims in Kashmir have suffered equally during the period of insurgency. Also many of them sensibly agree to the fact that especially after Pandits left the Valley, it is mostly Kashmiri Muslims, who are being massacred and tortured by the extremist militant organisations. It is the women folk of this community who are being raped and harassed. Kashmiri Muslims have to live in conditions of constant insecurity and fear not only from militants but also from the Indian security forces.

The moderate segments of Pandits including some Kashmiri intellectuals have been able to free themselves from interpreting the episode of exodus in merely communal terms. Even after the exodus of Pandits from the Valley, they have expressed their faith in their traditionally established bonds with Kashmiri Muslims. They do not deny the fact that there can be seen some tension existing between the Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims. But they attribute this strained relationship between the two communities not entirely to the exodus of Pandits but to the propaganda machinery used by the state as well as by several right wing organisations against the so-called Islamic jihad. Many Pandits believe that even after strains of apprehension that have come to exist between Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir, one can still find mutual relatedness and bonds of affection between them. A large number of Pandits who have migrated from the Valley still feel nostalgic about the common space they used to share with Muslims in Kashmir. The experiences of Amitabh Matoo, who returned to visit Kashmir in 1992, reinforce the beliefs of large number of Pandits regarding the still existing ties between them and the Muslims. Matoo argues that:

⁴¹ Op. cit., n. 37, p. 738.

⁴² People's Union for Civil Liberties, 1991, Report On Kashmir Situation, 1990, op. cit., n.30, p. 76.

Our mohalla (neighbourhood) ...had not changed except for... two CRPF bunkers... I was amazed at the friendliness and warmth with which I was greeted. Muslim neighbours turned up with mithai (sweets) and blessed me...as soon as word got around that I was in town and invited me to their house to celebrate the reunion ... there was not a single Muslim friend or acquaintance ... who did not greet me as he would have ... before the troubles began...⁴³

Many Pandits who are still living in Kashmir reflected upon the absence of rigid boundaries between Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir at the inter-community level. In an interview taken by Sumantra Bose in 1995, Lalit Kumar Chukku, a Kashmiri Pandit living in Kashmir stated:

I have spent my whole life in Kashmir... not once, since 1990 or before that, have I ever had any problem with my Muslim brothers. They always give me full izzat (respect). Infact, we are just not used to thinking in terms of Hindus and Muslims here. We consider ourselves part of the same community.... During Eid (Muslim festival), I invariably visit the houses of (Muslim) neighbours and friends to offer mubarak (greetings), and they inevitably show up with sweets and dood wishes at my door Shivratri (a Hindu religious event). In fact, during hartals (strikes) and curfews, local (Muslim) shopkeepers and vendors have insisted that I take their fruits and vegetables for free.⁴⁴

Sumantra Bose records many other Kashmiri Pandits living in the Valley who hold similar views. Reflecting upon these opinions of Pandits, Bose argues that, “ their experiences completely contradict the lie that Kashmiri Muslims have undergone a collective, Kafkaesque metamorphosis into fundamentalist fanatics.”⁴⁵

Thus, although the incidence of exodus of Pandits from the Valley has communalised the minds of Pandits, a large number of moderate Pandits have been able interpret the episode of the exodus in non-communal ways. They have been able to free themselves from pro-Hindu politics and contextualise the issue of Pandit migration in a more logical and rational manner.

ANALYSIS

An analysis of both the extremist as well as moderate standpoints of Kashmiri Pandits reflects their complex mindset. The painful experiences of exodus and cultural uprootedness have had a deep impact on the mind-set of Kashmiri Pandits. As already

⁴³ The Illustrated Weekly of India, 1992, 10-16 October, cited in *ibid*, p. 77.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 78.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 79.

discussed in this chapter, a large number of Pandits attribute the migration of Pandits to a single solitary factor, that is, the Islamic crusade aimed at ethnic cleansing of Hindus from the Valley. Underneath this standpoint is the tendency not only to demonise Islam but also to perceive the whole crisis in Kashmir in religious terms. Rejecting the principles of plurality and diversity traditionally enshrined in Kashmir society, these conservative views tend to depict Hindus and Muslims as two dichotomous and distinct groupings that have nothing in common. Many scholars have contradicted these standpoints by providing strong evidence of the fact that since historical times a lot of inter-mixing of communities used to take place in Kashmir society.

It has been observed that a few thousand Kashmiri Pandit families that still chose to live in Kashmir after the exodus of the community at large, did not feel any threat to their lives from their Muslim neighbours. In fact, their existence in Kashmir after 1990 has been possible mainly due to the protection given to them by the Muslim community and the trust that existed between the two communities

The views put forth by some Pandit organisations such as the 'Panun Kashmir' that insurgents in Kashmir targeted only Pandits and that too on communal basis cannot be fully sustained. Although in the first phase of militancy a large number of Pandits were killed, but not due to purely communal reasons. The economic and political reasons can also be seen behind the targeting of Pandits associated with the Indian state or bureaucracy. In this context Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal rightly holds:

Though in proportion to their population a larger number of Pandits were killed in this first phase of militancy, they were not killed because of the community they belonged to. There were other reasons behind the killings. The Kashmiri Pandits formed a kind of elite in the Valley; they had a large presence in the bureaucracy, both in the Valley and in Delhi, where government policy on Kashmir was often dictated by the fears and concerns of this tiny minority. Their connections with India and their relative affluence made them highly visible targets during the first few months of the insurgency in 1990.⁴⁶

Sumantra Bose also supports the view that some of the killings in Kashmir by the militants had political reasons behind. In this context, he elaborates:

⁴⁶ <http://kmrtimes.com/archive/0502/050203/feature.htm>

...the first assassination, in September 1989, claimed the life of Jammu and Kashmir's BJP president; the second, two months later, was a (Hindu) Judge who had years earlier sentenced Maqbool Butt to death. JKLF, which took responsibility on both occasions, was at some pains to emphasise that the two were not targeted because of religion. In February 1990, the respected Pandits director of the Srinagar station of India's state owned television was shot by JKIF gunmen for the 'offence' of implementing the government's media policy of suppression and disinformation. Indeed, the first major political assassination, in August 1989, claimed a Muslim NC official, and over the next several months, up to a hundred Kashmiri Muslims were killed for collaborating.... Other Hindu victims included Indian intelligence officials.⁴⁷

While trying to scrutinise the logic behind these militant killings in Jammu and Kashmir, Bose puts forth a very relevant argument. He observes that, "the relatively high proportion of Pandits among targeted collaborators can to some extent be explained by the disproportionately high Pandit representation in the government services."⁴⁸

Further, not only Hindus but also Muslims associated with the Indian State were killed in large numbers and were forced to migrate from the Valley. A large number of political activists of the National Conference have been killed during the last fifteen years. In any case the militants have killed more Muslims than the Pandits. The evidence is provided by statistics from various resources. For example, regarding Government of India figures (1989-2000), Prem Shankar Jha reports that, "of the 28,000 Kashmiris killed, 9,800 were killed not by the security forces but by the militants. Of these, 1,180 were Hindus, but more than 8,600 were Muslims."⁴⁹

Similarly, according to research by the 'Strategic Foresight Group', 29 Muslims were killed in 1988 in militancy related violence. There was no Hindu killing. In 1989 and 1990, 6 and 177 Hindus respectively were killed, as against 73 and 679 Muslims, besides 6 Sikhs. In 1991, the killings of Hindus are recorded at 34 and those of Muslims at 549. These killings are not Valley specific but hold good for the entire state. Moreover, these figures also include Hindu pilgrims or tourists killed in the state. The statistics reveal that

⁴⁷ Op.cit., n.30, p.74.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 74.

⁴⁹ Prem Shankar Jha, 'Is This a Freedom Struggle', The Hindustan Times, July 27, 2001.

more Muslims were killed than Hindus during militancy period. In fact, except for in 1990, Hindus formed a very small percentage of the total killings.⁵⁰

However, it will be erroneous to argue that the upsurge in Kashmir was entirely untouched by communal reasons. The role of fundamentalist militant groups who tried to give an extremist colour to the Kashmir crisis cannot be denied. Pandits became soft targets for these militant groups and were massacred a number of times by the militants. The first of such massacres took place in 1997 in the Sangrama village of Badgam district. Seven Kashmiri Pandits were killed at that time. This was repeated in 1998 when 26 Pandits were killed in Wandhama on the eve of India's Republic Day. Nevertheless, these fanatic militant groups were fringe elements and were marginalised even by the main separatist groups in Kashmir. Some of these extremist militant groups were foreign-based and had little to do with the urges of people in Kashmir. These groups targeted not only Hindus but also liberal Muslim segment of society in this region. This led to the migration of even a large number of Muslim families and this remained largely unnoticed.

The brutal killings and harassment of innocent Kashmiri masses by these groups have been strongly condemned by many indigenous separatist groups. These local separatists groups argue that the foreign-based and other communal militant groups in Kashmir have not only ignored the aspirations of the Kashmiri masses but also in the process diluted the real cause for struggle in Kashmir. This can be confirmed from the statement given by Abdul Gani Lone who was a dynamic leader of All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and represented a moderate separatist voice. He strongly believed that foreign militants should quit the Valley, as they don't stand for common Kashmiri masses. He asserted that, "they (foreign-based militants) are not for azadi. They are for international jihad and they have their own global agenda.... Non-Kashmiri elements are creating problems for us. Their presence is a distortion of Kashmir's freedom struggle. They should leave Kashmir"⁵¹.

⁵⁰<http://kasmirtimes.com/archive>.

⁵¹ Kashmir Times, January 4, 2001

Furthermore, strong resentment was expressed by the Muslim community in Kashmir against the killings and harassment of innocents by these fanatic elements. For example, the rape and killing of two Pandit women angered the Muslims community in Kashmir. In reaction to this incident, large-scale Muslims women in the Valley held protests and demonstrations.⁵² Similarly, after the Nadimarg Killing of Pandits, Kashmiri Pandits gathered in large numbers to hold protest rallies. Akhila Rehman describes this incidence in the following words:

It is heartening to note that thousands of Kashmiris rallied in support of the Kashmiri Pandits and held protest demonstrations. The entire Valley shut down on March 25 in response to a call for a strike by the Hurriyet, thus sending a clear signal to the killers that Kashmiri Muslims do not approve of killings of their Hindu brethren and that Kashmiriyat — the composite culture with the glorious traditions of communal amity, tolerance and compassion — is still flourishing.⁵³

Thus, the crisis in Kashmir represents a complex reality that has to be viewed from a broad spectrum. Though, the role of religion cannot be denied, several other factors operate to complicate the problem in Kashmir.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTIONS OF JAMMU HINDUS AND KASHMIRI PANDITS

The assumption that there cannot be any standardised or homogeneous Hindu viewpoint gets further reinforced if we compare the viewpoints of two regional groups of Hindus – Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits. Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits, while belonging to the same religion, share divergent standpoints as regards the subject of Kashmir. The historical, political, cultural and regional differences separate the two groups of Hindus in significant ways. The points of divergence and convergence that reflect the viewpoints of two Hindu groups need to be contextualised. Also the shades of grey that mark their perceptions need to be elaborated upon.

⁵² Op. cit., n. 30, p.74.

⁵³ <http://www.countercurrents.org/kashmir>

Unlike Jammu society, Kashmir represents a comparatively homogenous society. Kashmir has been mostly a Kashmiri speaking Muslim dominated society with a miniscule Hindu minority. Though in a minority, Pandits in Kashmir had been a privileged and influential class since historical times. Due to their powerful position in Kashmir society, Pandits had never felt acutely threatened by an overwhelming Muslim majority. On the other side, the Muslims also never felt seriously insecure from Pandits owing to their miniscule number. Consequently, there were no major communal clash between Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir.

Further, the unique pattern of interaction between the two religious communities in Kashmir, as discussed earlier in this chapter, created a mutual bond of interrelatedness between them. Kashmiri language has also been a unifying factor that tied Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir together. As previously stated, the interdependence between Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir was mainly due to the single caste structure of Hindu society in Kashmir. Since all Hindus in Kashmir belonged to the Brahmin caste, they had to depend on Muslims for performing polluting jobs. Also, as Pandits were mainly the literate class in Kashmir, Muslims also had to depend on Pandits for scholarly services. This further increased the interaction between Hindus and Muslims in the Valley. However, it must be restated that the class differences frequently led to tensions between two religious groups. Nonetheless, there were no major communal clashes before the episode of the exodus of Pandits from Kashmir.

This kind of social and cultural setting necessitated the growth of Kashmiri politics in a more or less secular manner. Communal politics could never gain popularity in this region in the long-term. Even though a large number of Pandits could never identify with Muslim politics here, they did not seriously follow anti-Muslim politics as regards the Kashmir crisis. Although they could never appreciate the Muslims demands of restoring Article 370 or retaining an autonomous status of Kashmir, they did not pursue a systematic politics to rigidly oppose these demands. Thus, the politics of Kashmiri Pandits was more or less centrist rather than extremist in character.

As a result of this social, economic and political milieu in which Pandits were placed, the responses of a majority of them towards the Kashmir issue were not strictly communal till recent times. This situation changed to some extent with the migration of Pandits from the Valley.

However, in contrast to Kashmir, Jammu represents a deeply plural society. This is reflected in its layers of diversity in terms of language, region, caste, tribe, and culture. Several languages are spoken in this area including Gujjari, Pahari, Dogri and Punjabi. Also many identities overlap in Jammu to produce a unique kind of heterogeneity. The communal harmony in this part of the state is produced by these multiple overlapping identities.

However, religion has played an important role in Jammu in sharpening of identities. This gets manifested when at times the Jammu society gets communally polarised, thus producing conservative responses among a section of Hindus there. Nonetheless, this religious divide of society remains at superficial levels and does not penetrate beneath. Hence, although religion assumes important role in Jammu, its influence gets restricted due to various factors. One of the reasons for its limited impact lies in the fact that various other identities cut across religious identity in this area due to its plural cultural framework. Thus, unlike Kashmir, Jammu represents a complex social reality. Therefore, Hindu perceptions in Jammu are also more varied and complex.

At the political level, as compared to Kashmir, no secular political party has evolved in Jammu that could channelise the discontent of people effectively. The political vacuum in this region has been filled by 'Hindutva' politics of the RSS or the BJP. Although representing the minority upper caste Hindu population, these parties have been able to create a space for anti-Muslim politics in Jammu. This politics of privileged class of Hindus has been repeatedly questioning the purpose of Article 370. Thus, unlike Kashmir, Hindu vocal politics in Jammu takes more inflexible and extreme forms. This sort of political propaganda influences the perceptions of a section of Hindus, mainly in

the urban areas of Jammu. This group of Hindus in this region approaches the Kashmir issue from a rigid and communal perspective.

However, there have been some common meeting grounds between the viewpoints of Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits. But, it needs to be emphasised that these commonalities are not simply because these two regional groups shared the same religion. In fact, the similarities in perspectives between Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits had roots in their common economic interests. Since earlier times the upper caste Hindus in Jammu and the Brahmins (Pandits) in Kashmir have opposed the mass-based politics of the National Conference. Due to their privileged position during Dogra regime, both these groups supported the movement for restoration of monarchy in the state. They systematically supported the pro-Hindu politics of RSS to oppose these economic reforms undertaken by the National Conference. The episode of the exodus of Hindus from Kashmir has brought the upper caste Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits on a common platform of pursuing the anti-Muslim and pro-accession politics.

The episode of the exodus and its politicisation has influenced the Hindu consciousness in the state. The appropriation of the issue of Pandit refugees by the BJP has tended to restructure and communalise the viewpoints of the Valley Pandits. Especially the privileged class of Pandits has joined hands with 'Hindutva' politics of upper caste Jammu Hindus in interpreting the Kashmiri movement as communal. They have not only developed hostile posture towards the Muslim demands of self-determination, but are also strongly supporting the demand of complete merger of the state into the Indian Union. Thus, the response of Pandits has taken an extreme form. This gets reflected in the demand for a separate homeland for Pandits raised by the Panun Kashmir. Panun Kashmir is a Pandit organisation with political affiliation to Hindu-oriented parties such as the RSS and the BJP. This demand for a homeland exclusively for Pandits reflects the communal nature of the demand.

Due to the politicisation of the Kashmir issue and disillusionment faced by Kashmiri Pandits consequent upon their experience of unending exile, a section of Kashmiri

Pandits have demarcated themselves as an identity separate from Kashmiri Muslims. A large number of Pandits have started perceiving themselves as a victim of the Islamic onslaught. Also, it needs to be noticed that before the episode of exodus, Pandits considered their Kashmiri identity as primary. But in contemporary times, a large section of Pandit community have started considering their Hindu identity as the most important.

Although the episode of exodus has increased the gap between Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir, it is mainly the political elite that has drawn a rigid line between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. The communal division between Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits operate mostly at the political plane. There is not much of hostility between Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits at the inter-community level. Also it needs to be reemphasised that all close bonds traditionally established between them have not vanished.

Although, a large section of upper caste Jammu Hindus and Kashmiri Pandits have been influenced by pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim politics, the two groups of Hindus cannot relate culturally with each other. Even today Pandits feel closely related to Kashmiri Muslims than to Jammu Hindus. A large section of the Pandit community feel culturally and emotionally alienated in Jammu, despite the fact that it is a Hindu dominated region. This community still craves to return back to the Valley and live peacefully with their Muslims neighbors. They are being forced to live in a situation of apparently unending exile by both Hindu and Muslim political elite. There is a need to differentiate between response of the political elite section of Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir from that of the common Kashmiri people.

To, conclude we can argue that as elsewhere, Hindu society in Kashmir cannot be dealt as a unified category. Despite Kashmir being a single caste Hindu society, the viewpoints of Pandits regarding the Kashmir crisis are complex and varied. The endogamous caste sub-groups, occupational differences and urban-rural factors produce diversified responses within Hindu society in the Valley. Therefore, these perceptions have to be viewed in a broad social, economic and political framework peculiar to Kashmir.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSION

The Kashmir matter is not just related to matters such as Article 370 of the Constitution, the separatist movement in the Valley or providing autonomy to the state. In fact, it is crucial to take a more inclusive perspective by linking these themes with the needs and interests of a number of communities in Jammu and Kashmir. Given the plural cultural framework of the state, there are numerous ethnic groups in this province whose problems extend beyond the issue of self-determination in Kashmir or special status provided to the state. These groups have other items on their agenda such as the demand for political recognition and better employment, health and educational facilities for themselves. Negotiations regarding the Kashmir conflict must integrate these aspirations with the question of special status for Kashmir or of the nature of Indian Union. However, not much attention has been paid to these dimensions so far. To this end, this research analyses the Kashmir debate from several Hindu viewpoints within the framework of the Hindu social structure.

The major arguments of the study have revolved around the fact that Hindu society in the state is internally fragmented in terms of caste, class, region and culture. For that reason, all Hindus do not perceive the Kashmir crisis in a uniform way. In fact, their political perceptions regarding the subject of Kashmir differ depending on the social and economic categories to which they belong. In spite of this diversity of opinions, most Hindus have much in common when it comes to identification with the nation. They do not relate to the separatist politics in Kashmir nor do they have any confusion regarding their nationalistic orientations. Unlike Muslims, they do not strongly contest India's relation with Kashmir. Yet while sharing this common platform of pro-India politics, they diverge on many other themes related to the Kashmir problem. Even though Hindus in this region do not associate themselves with Muslim separatist politics, some of them empathise with the problems Muslims are facing in the state. Many of them do not agree with the integrationist agenda of the Indian state and also critically view the non-accommodative nature of its project of nationalism.

Even though I have tried to show the presence of some of the perceptions of the rural underprivileged class of Hindus, most of the political opinions dealt in the previous chapters represent elite Hindu views. The reason for this is that political articulation is mainly a function of vocal and agitational strategy of the elite. It is difficult to clearly identify the political views of the masses as they are mainly influenced by the elite. The genuine and actual opinions of the masses remain politically unexpressed and unstated. A scrutiny beyond the elite perceptions requires rigorous research tools such as the participatory method that can be used at a later stage of this research. Nevertheless, even while confining this study to mainly secondary sources, many relevant conclusions can be drawn and several new areas of investigation can be marked out.

This study enables us to reach an important logical conclusion regarding Hindu-Muslims relations in Jammu and Kashmir. It can be noticed that social relations between these two communities and their political perceptions do not go together. This implies that despite intermingling at the cultural level, Hindus and Muslims in the state diverge at the political level. This points towards the tendency of the politics of the state to divide the communities which otherwise are comfortable with each other at the societal level. Since 1947, pro-India or anti-India politics and issues related to nationalism have dominated the political scenario in this region. Such provocative and confrontationist politics have the propensity to communally polarise the communities.

However, these above-mentioned arguments also raise some very important questions that need to be studied further. First, is political polarisation confined only to superficial levels or has it deeply influenced the consciousness of the common masses? Second, has the process of political divide overshadowed the cultural space that Hindus and Muslims share or have inter-communal bonds been resilient enough to survive in spite of political segregation between these communities? Third, to what extent has the political split between Hindus and Muslims affected their inter-communal relations? Another point that has been stressed in all the chapters is that religion has a limited role to play in influencing the political perceptions of the people in the state. Even so, it has been one of

the prime factors for political identification and motivation of the masses. The state has witnessed a communal division at various moments of time. In the 1980's when the rest of the nation was facing political polarisation on the basis of religion, Jammu and Kashmir was not untouched by this strain of politics. Other than the national reasons, some local reasons have also been responsible for providing communal politics a space in this state. These local factors include the situation of rising militancy and the migration of Pandits from the Valley. As emphasised in preceding chapters, it was on these grounds that the BJP was able to create a Hindu constituency in Jammu.

It was in these circumstances that society in Jammu and Kashmir had to deal with communal tensions. Even so, despite several provocations by the political elite and other fundamentalist groups, there have not been any major communal clashes in this geographical area. It must be noted that during 1990's when major communal violence took place in Gujarat and Bombay, no serious riots occurred in Jammu and Kashmir even though society there was witnessing communal tensions.

Hence, although religion has been one of the key markers in defining the identity of the people in the state, it also has its inherent limitations. This implies that several other factors also operate that divide people belonging to the same religion. Other than religion, social background and cultural milieu are also very important variables that influence the opinion of the masses. Political identification is also the outcome of the social and cultural contexts in which people are placed. As these contexts vary, the political perceptions of people belonging to the same religion also differ. Apart from these markers, members of the same religious community may also have divergent economic interests. The class differences may also divide religious communities. In Jammu and Kashmir, diversity can be seen operating at multiple levels. Here, both Hindu and Muslim communities are internally divided in terms of regional, geographical, linguistic and cultural factors leading to diverse political perceptions within both communities.

Another distinct feature of this state is that no religious group can claim an absolute numerical majority here. For instance, Hindus who comprise a majority community in

India form a minority position in the state. Further, although they are numerically preponderant in the Jammu region, yet, in Kashmir they are in a minority. Even within Jammu province, Hindus are a minority in areas such as Doda, Poonch and Rajouri. Similarly, Muslims who form a numerically small community nation-wide assume a majority position in the state. Again, there are differences within the state - although Kashmir has an overwhelming Muslim population, Muslims constitute a numerical minority in Jammu. As a result, there is no predominant majority group across regions in the state. Due to this complex situation in which the religious communities are placed, absolute religious polarisation is not an easy possibility.

The Muslim perceptions on the subject of Kashmir have not been touched upon in this study. Even so, it can be argued that just like the Hindu society in the state, the Muslim community is also internally fragmented in terms of economic, regional and cultural differences. As a result of these divergences, several Muslim opinions can be highlighted in this region. Here, however, I will briefly draw attention to only some of the broad Muslim perspectives as regards the Kashmir dilemma.

Unlike Hindus, the project of Indian nationalism is problematic for Muslims of the state. However, they confront this issue of nationalism in different ways. Kashmiri Muslims who associate themselves with the separatist politics strongly challenge India's claim on Kashmir. The separatist politics has been operating in Jammu and Kashmir since the post-accession period, though its nature has changed from time to time. In 1947, this politics had a minimal role to play because Sheikh Abdullah had negotiated an autonomous position for Kashmir through Article 370 and asymmetrical federal relations. However, with the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah from 1953 till 1975, the Indian government adopted coercive practices to integrate Kashmir within the Indian fold. Therefore, separatist agendas again dominated the political scene during this period and pro-independence slogans were raised. This got reflected later in the demand for plebiscite under the auspices of the Plebiscite Front. With the return of Sheikh Abdullah to the mainstream politics in 1975, the pro-self-rule politics got marginalised once again for a while. But, in the face of repeated atrocities by the Indian security forces and coercive

policies of the Indian state, separatist politics again assumed predominance in the form of militant violence from 1983 onwards.

However, all Muslims in the state do not strongly contest India's claim on Kashmir but they question the way in which the Kashmir issue is handled by successive Indian governments. For instance, the mainstream political parties such as the National Conference are in dispute with the policies of the Indian government that have diluted the provisions of Article 370 or eroded the Kashmiri identity.

There are other groups of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir who may not fully identify even with mainstream Muslims politics. These groups include the Pahari Muslims, Kargil Muslims, Gujjars, Dogra Muslims and Punjabi Muslims. Though they support mainstream Muslim politics in many ways, for most of these groups the major concern is to deal with the problems related to their development, backwardness and illiteracy. Also there are contradictions between Kashmiri elite Muslims and non-Kashmiri elite Muslims. The several perspectives of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir need to be studied further in much greater detail.

Apart from focusing on the internal dynamics of religious communities, researchers should also take other sub-regional, cultural and linguistic groups in the state as their object of investigation. These specific studies are absolutely essential to understand how different groups of people view the situation in Kashmir. The linkage of these micro accounts with the broader political studies on Kashmir is crucial for negotiating any viable solution to the Kashmir crisis.

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