Prismatic Horizons
Journal of Social Science and Humanities
www.phjssh.lexarcheus.com
Vol.-01, Issue-01 (Jan-Mar, 2023)



Kashmir in the 1940s: Political Upheaval, Nationalism, and the Path to Accession

Aqib Yousuf Rather
[1] Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of History, Annamalai University, TN.

*** Corresponding Author:**
Aqib Yousuf Rather
ratheraaqib800@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article History

Received	16th Jan, 2023
Revised	21st Feb, 2023
Accepted	25, Feb, 2023
Available Online	26, Mar, 2023

ARTICLE ID
PHJSSH0101004

KEYWORDS

Quit Kashmir Movement, Sheikh Abdullah, Accession of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, Partition of India

ABSTRACT

For Kashmir, the 1940s were a transforming decade characterised by political unrest, nationalist movements, and the fight for autonomy. Under Sheikh Abdullah's direction, the National Conference aimed to challenge the feudal control of the Maharaja by putting a democratic and socialist government model into effect. Inspired by India's larger liberation fight, the "Quit Kashmir" movement of 1946 sought the hand-down of authority to the people. Jawahralal Nehru supported the ambitions of the Kashmiri people whereas Muhammad Ali Jinnah argued for a communal approach, therefore vying for influence between the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. Gandhi's visit in 1947 strengthened Kashmir's importance in the subcontinent's partition politics among this unrest. The final firing of his pro-autonomy Prime Minister by the Maharaja marked a turning point and spurred discussions on admission to India or Pakistan. The political turmoil of 1940s Kashmir, the conflicting ideas in action, and the elements guiding its ultimate accession are investigated in this study.

© 2023 The Authors, Published by (PHJSSH). This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Prismatic Horizons: Journal of Social Science and Humanities
ISSN: 2583-9284
Vol. 01, No. 01, Jan-Mar, 2023
www.phjssh.lexarcheus.com

INTRODUCTION

However, the National Conference continued to be politically active. Its objective was to implement a socialistic social structure in 1944. It established a strategy to achieve "an all-sided advance along all avenues of human activity regulated in a democratic manner on a country-wide scale." Agriculture, industry, transportation, distribution, utility services, currency, and finance were all included in the plan. The system was founded on the "democratic principle of responsible government with the elective principle applied from the local Panchayat right up to the Legislative Assembly."[1] The ordinary man's fight for independence was given purpose by the new philosophy, which also guaranteed his unwavering devotion to the Conference and its leaders. However, Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League showed there before a campaign to make it a reality could be started.[2]

In the ten years before the Second World War ended, India's political climate took a terrible turn. While the Muslim League, led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, sought to divide the nation along religious lines, the Indian National Congress, under the inspirational leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, was making headway against the forces of British imperialism. On the basis that Muslims and Hindus were two distinct nations, the League approved the Pakistan Resolution in 1940, calling for the creation of an independent state for Muslims in India. Any shared cultural history and interests between Muslims and Hindus were disregarded, if not outright rejected. The 'two-nation' theory of Mr. Jinnah was unacceptable to the National Congress, which from the beginning represented a nation with diverse classes, creeds, and interests, as it went against the nation's best traditions and the political consciousness of the Indian populace.[3]

One may have expected sectarian politics to flourish in Kashmir, where the main population was Muslim but the king was Hindu. But throughout the course of their centuries-long history, the people had come to see religious belief in a way that was both peaceful and accepting. They detested hatred between different religious communities. They had coexisted peacefully throughout their turbulent past, therefore the Muslim League's philosophy was alien to their finest customs and so did not sit well with them.[4]

People from all walks of life were enthralled by Jawaharlal Nehru's journey to Kashmir in 1940, which is understandable. The Kashmiris were won over by the Congress's interest in and compassion for the state's people's fight for independence. However, Mr. Jinnah and the League carefully avoided becoming involved in the fight of the state's citizens.[5]

With his 'two-nation' notion, Mr. Jinnah now attempted to gain the support of the Muslims in Kashmir. A handful of his employees tried to revive the old Muslim Conference, which had been kept alive by a few communal reactionaries but had little support and essentially no platform. Mr. Jinnah travelled to Kashmir in the spring of 1944, supposedly "for rest" and without any stated intention of "taking part in politics." "We Kashmiris today receive you as a prominent Indian despite the ideological differences we have with you," the National Conference remarked in their welcoming message. Together with other Indian leaders, we hope you will work to find a solution that would help free the hordes of people in India."[6]

"I am happy to see all classes and groups combined here to receive and honour me," Mr. Jinnah said in response. "Muslims have one platform, one Kalma, and one God," he responded to another event hosted by the revived Muslim Conference, only an hour later. I would want the Muslims to unite behind the Muslim Conference's flag and defend their rights. To put it another way, he was suggesting that Muslims should follow the same course of action that they had abandoned ten years before.[7]

© 2023 The Authors, Published by (PHJSSH). This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

The National Conference responded sharply, saying, "Ills of this land can only be remedied by carrying Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs together." Mr. Jinnah's'rest' now seemed to be inextricably linked to politics. In his address, he attacked the National Conference as a "band of gangsters" and chaired the Muslim Conference's annual session.[8] This was too much for the Kashmiris to handle, and when he attempted to speak at a public gathering in Baramulla a few days later, the mob's ire became so intense that he had to be taken to a safer location out of concern for his safety from the hostile, mostly Muslim, throng. Mr. Jinnah had to leave Kashmir disillusioned, and the Muslim Conference was unable to gain much support.

The Congress had come to appreciate Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference by the conclusion of World War II.[9] Sopore, 30 miles north of Srinagar, hosted a special session of the National Conference in the summer of 1945. One significant aspect of the session was the gathering of the All-India States Peoples' Conference Standing Committee, which Jawaharlal Nehru presided over. Many state representatives participated in the discussions, and significant decisions were made to end the feudalistic system of princely states that the British administration had established and fostered in India. Congress leaders Maulana Azad, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and others were there as well. The politically aroused Kashmiris' young imaginations were stimulated by speeches given throughout the session that placed a strong focus on the political and social ideas of the Kashmiri people and those of the rest of India.[10]

N. Gopalaswami Aiyangar gave up his position as prime minister when the Second World War was at its height and the Maharaja had complete authority free from interference from the British Indian administration. An orderly but strict governance came to an end when he left state employment. The Maharaja then swiftly selected Sir B.N. Rau, Colonel Sir K.N. Haksar, and Raj Sir Maharaj Singh to the position. None of these guys attempted to comprehend the state's issues or help find solutions. The populace desired significant change and had made quick progress in political education.[11] Additionally, the Maharaja named Ram Chandra Kak, a Kashmiri, to replace Sir B.N. Rau as prime minister of the state when he handed over the position in the summer of 1945. After joining the state as a librarian at a nearby institution, Kak's exceptional work ethic eventually led him to be appointed Minister-in-Waiting to the Maharaja. With two well-liked members of the Council of Ministers, Sir B.N. Rau's departure allowed him to win the desired prime ministership.[12]

The Maharaja declared his intention to appoint two popular ministers to the Cabinet from among the elected members of the Praja Sabha during the National Conference's 1944 annual session in Srinagar, where the conference adopted the program of a socialistic pattern of society and democratic government. The National Conference chose its own candidate for the Cabinet and embraced the changes, despite their limited scope, as a first step towards future collaboration between the ruled and the ruling. However, the popular minister faced administrative non-cooperation and apathy from non-elected ministers in his day-to-day job, and he was even unable to control the way his own departments operated. Thus, he resigned on March 17, 1946. The National Conference began its 'Quit Kashmir' campaign for the people's takeover of power a month later, in May 1946.[13]

Supported by Nehru and the Congress, Sheikh Abdullah resorted to his previous strategies to challenge the Maharaja's reign. He started the 'Quit Kashmir' campaign against the Maharaja and his family, giving it a look similar to the Quit India movement. Kak took harsh action against Sheikh and the other leaders, and the movement quickly died down. However, Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad and G.M. Sadiq had already left the state to lead the movement from the rest of the nation before Kak's iron

© 2023 The Authors, Published by (PHJSSH). This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

hand could strike. They kept the public fully informed about the movement's true goals and objectives thanks to their unwavering efforts.[14]

Jawaharlal Nehru, who was currently having crucial discussions with the Cabinet Mission, hurried to the aid of the Kashmiri people upon learning that they were being singled out for ruthless persecution. However, he was apprehended by the authorities after entering the state's territory. India was rocked by the news of his detention, and Congress leaders summoned him back to Delhi for talks out of concern for the consequences. Mr. Jinnah made a speech at the time Jawaharlal Nehru hurried to Kashmir and disregarded the prohibition on his entrance into the state, calling the "Quit Kashmir" campaign "an agitation carried on by a few malcontents who were out to create disorderly conditions in the state."[15]

In the meanwhile, the nation was experiencing significant changes. The handover of whole authority to Indians was declared by the British administration. India was on the verge of division. Due to their intense battle with the forces of feudalism, the people of Kashmir were unable to consider these important issues. Gandhiji made time to go to Kashmir in July 1947 despite the difficult circumstances and the escalating tensions in the rest of India. The stressed individuals found solace in his presence. The communal unity that pervaded the state thrilled him, and he said that Kashmir was the sole hope in a darkened India. When he returned in August 1947, he spoke at a prayer meeting in Wah, Pakistan, saying that among the vast crowds he saw, "it was very difficult for me to know whether it was predominantly Muslim or Hindu." When word spread that the Maharaja had fired Ram Chandra Kak and replaced him with General Janak Singh, a former Revenue Minister, the visit of Mahatma Gandhi was still being discussed in Srinagar's homes and streets. They now turned to the National Conference for a clear direction on the most crucial issue: whether the state should join India or Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

For Kashmir, the 1940s defined itself with political activities, ideological disputes, and the unresolved issue of accession. The goal of a democratic and socialist future of the National Conference ran against to the feudal control of the Maharaja, leading to the "Quit Kashmir" campaign. While Sheikh Abdullah and his allies yearned for more people's authority and autonomy, the Congress and the Muslim League controlled more general subcontinental politics that exacerbated Kashmir's situation. While Nehru and Gandhi's backing enhanced the status of the National Conference, Jinnah's efforts to unite Kashmiri Muslims under the Muslim Conference lacked appeal. The accession of Kashmir was set up by the Maharaja's rejection of his pro-autonomy Prime Minister and the mounting political instability. Kashmir's political battle exposed the complexity of regional nationalism, sectarian identities, and outside influences as India neared independence and partition, thereby guiding choices that would define its destiny on the newly split subcontinent.

REFERENCES

1. Mohammad Amin Malik. *The Role of National Conference in Politics of Jammu and Kashmir.* Tahzeeb Publishers, 2010, p. 68.
2. Prem Nath Bazaz. *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir.* Gulshan Books, 2009, p. 148.
3. Muhammad Yusuf Saraf. *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom.* Vol. 1, Ferozsons, 2005, p. 333.
4. Prithivi Nath Kaul Bamzai. *A History of Kashmir: Political, Social, Cultural, From the Earliest Times to the Present Day.* Metropolitan Book, 1973, pp. 715-16.
5. Mridu Rai. *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects.* Permanent Black, 2007, p. 270.

© 2023 The Authors, Published by (PHJSSH). This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

6. *Report of the Kashmir Constitutional Reforms Conference Presided Over by B.J. Galancy.* Ranbir Government Press, 1932, p. 1.
7. Narinder Singh. *Political Awakening in Kashmir.* H.K. Publications, 1992, p. 39.
8. Khushwant Singh. *Flames of the Chinar: An Autobiography of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.* Penguin Books, 1993, p. 35.
9. Mohammad Saleem Khan. *The History of Modern Kashmir.* Gulshan Books, 2006, p. 81.
10. Prem Nath Bazaz. *Inside Kashmir.* Gulshan Books, 2011, p. 184.
11. Mohammad Amin. *The Blazing Chinar: An Autobiography of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.* Gulshan Books, 2013, p. 123.
12. *The Tribune* (Lahore), 28 Apr. 1938, p. 1.
13. G.H. Khan. *Freedom Movement in Kashmir 1931-1940.* Light & Life Publishers, p. 376.
14. F.M. Hassnain. *Freedom Struggle in Kashmir.* Rima Publishing, 1998, p. 96.
15. Rashid Taseer. *Tarikh-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir.* Vol. 2, Muhafiz Publication, pp. 68-70.

© 2023 The Authors, Published by (PHJSSH). This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)