

PARADISE LOST



Courtesy: Bhan Kamalnayan (Artist)

SEVEN EXODUSES OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

By
Prof. K. L. Bhan

*Dedicated to
My reverend mother
And all those innocent souls who became victims of fatal
Islamic Fundamentalism in Kashmir*

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Contents

	page
Contents.....	vii
Acknowledgement	1-2
1 Introduction.....	1-3
2 The First Exodus (1389-1413).....	2-7
3 The Second Exodus (506-1585).....	3-8
4 The Third Exodus under the Moghuls (1585-1753)	4-11
5 The Fourth Exodus (1753).....	5-14
6 The Fifth Exodus.....	6-15
7 The Sixth Exodus.....	7-21
8 The Seventh Exodus (1989-)	8-23

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Prof. K.L.Bhan

1 Introduction

So much has been sung of the marvellous and magnificent beauty of the physiography of Kashmir, 'Paradise on Earth' by saints and sages, philosophers and poets, mystics and bards, divines and emperors, historians and travelers from far and near, that I wish I could describe one hundredth of what they have sung. One must possess a born poet, powerful and refined sensibility, imagination and vision together with the boldness of his pen to be able to make attempt to sing of her charms with full-throated ease. The Valley of Kashmir lures all irresistibly. Those who have tramped across the globe have no hesitation in asserting that Kashmir is a land of peerless beauty on this planet. It excels the beauty of Switzerland. Bowl shaped with lofty mountains standing guard all around, cradled in the Himalayas, Kashmir has everything to gratify all the senses with thrilling experiences and to seekers of peace it gives a satisfaction that is much more solid and enduring than a thrill.

With its salubrious climate that infuses health and heartiness into a sick-man, its bewitching, quite idyllic scenery, its arresting landscape, its snowcapped peaks from which flow perennially murmuring streams rivulets and sinuous rills and cataracts guttering, like glass, fit for angels to repose by its mists and clouds that rise sky wards like swirling smoke of incense, its remarkably exquisite dawns and day breaks and equally enjoyable dusky evenings, its ancient and mysterious all encompassing woods and evergreen forests that are home to a treasure of fauna and flora, its gorgeously colourful meadows, its warbling birds, its tranquil and placid blue lakes, bubbling springs, its sprawling orchards laden with tempting juicy sweet and delicious fruit, its pleasure gardens and grottos, its breezes that kiss gently and tenderly and a variety of other gifts of nature that beggar description, this happy and has been the chosen land of Gods and to which nature has been lavish in her bounty. A new comer here falls in love with it at first sight and cannot help being swept away by a feeling of rapture and unearthly joy. He stands and stares around in wonder. The magnetic beauty of the land draws him closer and closer and spell bound he saunters about and deeper the wonder grows and the more unwilling he becomes to part from it.

The germ of his attitude and response to the surroundings is essentially the environment of unearthly peace, tranquility, calm and security. Here peace rains imperceptibly from heaven and settles in every nook and corner. Here peace descends from mountain tops and cliffs, emanates from deep woods and forests, exudes from gardens and orchards and finds retreats in every house and habitation and inhabitation. It gives a feeling of the uplift of the spirit where by a person merges and mingles with every thing around him and every thing becomes part of his being. No one escapes this spiritual feeling which is not a simple pleasure. No wonder, then, that this spirituality forms the woof and web of more than five thousand years old culture of Kashmir. This abode of peace and, the seat of Goddess of learning.

Shahjahan exclaimed, "If there is paradise on the earth it is here, it is here." Pandit Brij Narain Chakbast sang, particles of my motherland, Kashmir are known for their hospitality. Not to speak of its lakes and cascades, even the way side pebbles quenched my thirst whenever the need arose." It is but natural that such physiography of Kashmir should get reflected in the character of its ancient inhabitants who are nice, good, gentle and harmony gave birth to myriad saints and sages who attained highest goals of life by meditation. The mother of the three worlds and consort of Lord Shiva Parvati, chose to take her birth in this hallowed land the Maharagni came flying from the deep south to make it her home Lord Shiva himself made it his abode. It is Sharda Peetha lovable, devoid of malice and crookedness. Kashmir has been a sangam, a meeting place of various communities and sects professing different faiths, beliefs and creeds and all co-existing in prefect harmony and tolerance. Practicing respect for others beliefs they had a world outlook and knew no conflicts arise out of racial and religious differences.

The aboriginal inhabitants of Kashmir, the Kashmiri Hindus, in common parlance known as Kashmiri Pandits (KPS) constitute a distinct class of their own are considered to be a purest specimen of the ancient Aryan settlements on the banks of the river Saraswati and who migrated to Kashmir Valley in wake of the changing course of the river and eventually becoming invisible, having been dried up. The offsprings of rishis and seers and sages and belonging to the highest order of Brahmins, this small community of the Samswats have been and still are by and large, sober, peace loving and docile. They are among the few

ancient surviving races whose traditions come down from the Gods. They are characterized by their being highly educated and learned. Vidyadhars, with more than 95% literacy, they have produced a galaxy of brilliant sages, saints, poets and statesmen, administrators and ambassadors, who made a lasting contribution to the development of the Indian composite heritage and culture.

When Islam came to Kashmir, it brought conflict as it brought wherever its followers went. The KPs withstood and despite centuries upon centuries of humiliation, persecution, repression and torture at the hands of foreign rulers they survived. They passed through numerous periods of shame and indignity and physical vicissitudes, yet century after century they have recovered their glory by their own power of self-preservation. They have succeeded against fierce odds in preserving their rich cultural heritage bequeathed to them by their forebears who were men and women as great saints, free thinkers, intellectuals and literary giants showing matchless maturity and tolerance. Kashmiri Pandit is the product of that vibrant, vigorous and unfettered, broad, exciting and tolerant culture and civilization that has never shown apathy and aversion to new and alien influences, thoughts and faiths whenever they came into contact with them. And to this day he is known for his dignity of soul, true valour, tolerance, piety, hospitality and forbearance. There are evidences of synthesis of KP culture with ancient Greek, Roman and pre-Islamic Persian culture. Tolerance has been and continues to be the hallmark of KP culture, despite severe pressure to make it contrary.

Buddhism, acclaimed the most tolerant religion/way of life known to the world, came to Kashmir much earlier than Islam, neither in the form of political nor religious conquest, as the later did. It only stimulated a new culture and religious resurgence without producing a clash or conflict with the Samatna Dharma. Thus KPs joyfully joined the ranks of the Buddhist Church and endowed it with new directions, opening new vistas and leading to a new enrichment.

History bears witness that no fewer than 700 KP Brahmin monks crossed the inaccessible mountains and carried the message of Buddha to Tibet, China and Central Asia. As a mature and tolerant race the KPs always upheld freedom of thought and free inquiry and in this background forcible conversion was unknown to KP ethos. The interpenetration and intermingling of Buddhism, Shaivism and Vaishnavism into a reformed form of Hinduism with its fundamentals remaining unchanged has been the sequel of the most tolerant cultural ethos obtaining in Kashmir prior to the coming of Islam. During the Hindu rule there was absolute harmony socio-political plane and the idea of conversion was something unknown and non-existent in the Kashmiri culture. Hindu places of worship and prayer have never been misused as centers of preaching and propagating intolerance and religious bigotry and hatred to other faiths and creeds nor for inciting and abetting sedition nor as repositories of arms and ammunition, nor for providing secure shelter to sinners and criminals. The scope of their use has ever been confined to purely religious, moral philosophical and literary pursuits. The KP ethos echoes the basic Hindu ethos of equality and co-existence of all religions (Sarve Dharma Sambhavah), of the entire mankind being of but one family, (Vasudaiva Kutumbakam), of praying for the well being of entire mankind (Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu), not only for a particular group or community of co-religionists. It has always been a vehicle for transmitting the message of peace, brotherhood and co-existence of all faiths, never contaminated religion by an immoral union with politics. Such an unholy alliance had no place in the scheme of things as conceptualized by the KPs right from the beginning of their history in the hoary past. And this heritage and outlook they possess even today. With their high profile thinking beyond banal mundane themes they turned Kashmir into a seat of invigorating, illuminating and emancipating intellectual occupation that attracted all in quest of higher values and spiritual exaltation.

The entire socio-political and religious structure of KP society in Kashmir suffered a subversion in the beginning of thirteenth century with the appearance on the scene of several Muslim ambitious adventurers and upstarts from far off alien lands. Harassed and faced with physical liquidation at the hands of their arch rivals and enemies in their respective countries they fled from there and found a haven of refuge and safety and security in spiritually stable though politically unstable Kashmir. Rinchen a fugitive refugee from Ladakh, Shah Mir forced to flee from Swat for his life and Bulbul Shah from Turkistan were given shelter in Kashmir, abiding by the glorious heritage of extending consideration,

compassion and kindness and hospitality to those seeking refuge, irrespective of their beliefs and faith. And in true Kashmiri Pandit tradition they were permitted to practice their faith with full freedom without anybody raising any objection. They found the natives peace loving and unorthodox to fault and a country a propitious ground for their ulterior motives; therefore, they stayed on and enjoyed the generosity and hospitality of the Hindus rulers as well as the common people.

Before long they started preparation for grinding their axe, and began to behave like the proverbial Arabian camel who cunningly occupied the tent by steadily nudging its owner out.

These refugees, feeding fat at the hospitality of the people and building up pockets of influence became ambitious of seizing power and grabbing the throne with a particular design up their sleeves, transforming the entire religious and demographic profile of Kashmir. History bears witness to the glaring fact that they were responsible for creating and shaping condition in Kashmir, which caused intolerable affliction, miseries, torture, persecution, cruelty and pain to the KPs in the name of Allah. The reader experiences convulsions at the cruelties and indignities heaped on the helpless KPs for the holy cause of spread of Islam. This is how they repaid the munificence and benevolence of the Hindu rulers.

Zul Qadir Khan, a Turkish Tartar, leading his savage hordes in tens of thousands looted and plundered and massacred the Hindus and razed the standing crops to ashes, thus spreading death, dissolution and ruination throughout the land for full eight months. The approach of winter, forced him to return. He took with him 50,000 Kashmiri men and women and children as slaves to be sold in Turkistan. As fate would have it, the barbaric heartless Khan was caught in a blizzard while traversing the mountainous path 'Devsar Pass' and the entire mass of people perished in cold snow. This place is called as 'BATA SAGAN' (Brahmans death oven).

Jonraj a Kashmiri historian of the time paints a harrowing picture of the havoc and horror struck by Zul Qadir Khan in his spree of massacres that decimated the Kashmir Hindus. The land having been marauded, mangled, thousands died of poverty and starvation as if doom "pralaya" had overwhelmed the country. The carnage turned rivers and brook scarlet and gory with human blood.

Rinchen thought to be Buddhist by faith, received shelter and sustenance and safety under the wings of Ram Chander a KP Commander-in-Chief, whom he betrayed and got killed with a view to pounce upon the throne of Kashmir. Since he was an alien he sought to identify himself with a set of people with a vested interest. Bul Bul Shah, one of them trickily converted Rinchen to Islam under the name of Sader-ud Din. And as the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir and with his converts missionary zeal Rinchen started his campaign for the mass conversion of KPs to Islam with all the brutal vigor and force at his disposal. It was Bul Bul Shah who incited, aided and abetted Rinchen to persecute and tyrannize the resistant Hindus and used all sorts of unfairways and means like compulsion, taxation, unjust law, use of the sword and forcible inter-marriages. Guided by him Rinchen pioneered the path for the later Muslim rulers to depopulate, dominate, degrade and drive KPs out of their ancestral land.

2 *The First Exodus (1389-1413)*

The scheming wily and guilty Shah Mir became the founder of the Muslim rule in Kashmir. By encouraging inter-marriages he poisoned and weakened the family life of the Kashmiri Hindus to the advantage of the Muslim minority as this tactics built a reliable and strong base/plinth for the propagation of Islam in Kashmir. By fraudulently getting Kota Rani, Bhatta Bhikshana and Bratta Autar murdered he removed forces of resistance from his way and became instrumental in letting Islam set its root deep in Kashmiri soil. The counselors of Kota Rani did not let her have tit for tat, following their ethos of non-violence, reverence for moral and ethical values.

Terrorised by Tamur the Lame - Syiid Mir Ali Hamdani along with 700 Sayyids, his followers, landed in Kashmir and drove a wide and deep wedge between the majority Hindus and minority Muslims. He dictated the Sultan Qutubud-Din to make the persecution and torture of the KPs a state policy. The code he prescribed for the sultan was a model of hatred, distrust, intolerance, bigotry and malignity against the KPs. He compelled the Sultan to officialise the presecution and massacre of KPs unless they embraced Islam. He is the architect of desecration and demolition of the Kalishree temple near Fatah Kadal in Srinagar and raising on its plinth a mosque known as Khanqah-i-Mulla. With his repressive and precautionary measures backed by state terrorism he achieved the conversion of 37,000 KPs to Islam during the latter two of his three visits. The Sayyids headed by Mir Ali Hamdani openly preached extermination of Hindu religion and Hindu politics from the soil of the Kashmir in order that Islam might flourish and get unshakably entrenched in their place. Following in his father's footsteps Mir Mohamad Hamdani urged Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413) notoriously known as the iconoclast (Sikandar but-shikan) to wipe out infidelity (Hindus) root and branch, from Kashmir and let not even a weed of it survive. The two reinforced by the rabid neo-convert Malik Saifudin unleashed a massive war against KPs with the target of genocide of this highly cultured people. Sikandar having pawned his soul to the Sayyids threw all norms of civilized life and tolerance to winds and issued an atrocious and barbaric Government decree ordering the KPs to opt for conversion or exile, flight or death. They let loose the floodgates of a reign of terror on the KPs to pressurize them to embrace Islam. Sikander enjoyed and exulted in breaking down images of Hindu deities. No temple anywhere in the city town or village escaped paying the heavy toll. Numerous Hindus fled, numerous were converted and numerous were brutally killed. Many poisoned themselves. This marks the first ominous exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits from their native fair homes. It is this mass migration that occasioned the plight of KPs to the neighbouring regions of Kishtwar and Bhadarwah via SMITHAN pass and to various provinces of India via Batote (Bhatta wath, path of the Bhattas or Kashmiri Pandits).

In the wake of this damned decree of Sikandar, seven mounds of the sacred thread of the murdered Brahmans were burnt by Sikandar and all of their sacred books were thrown into the Dal Lake. The KPs numbering over one lakh were drowned in the Lake and were burned at a spot in the vicinity of Rainawari in Srinagar City known as Bhatta Mazar (The grave yard of the Bhattas, the KPs) beyond present day Jogilanker. According to the living memory of the KPs only eleven KP families stayed back in Kashmir, the rest, rather than abandoning the religion of their father's, chose to migrate leaving behind their beloved homes hearths, lands and everything, only to protect their religion and faith.

Jonraj, the contemporary historian draws a graphic picture of the traumatic experiences of the first exodus. Crowds of Hindus ran away in different directions through passes and bypasses. Their social life was totally disrupted, their life became miserable with hunger and fatigue. Many died in the scorching heat. Some disguised as Muslims roamed about the country searching for their distressed families. Hindus lolled out their tongues like dogs, looking for dog's morsel at every door. (Jonraj: Kings of Kashmir). Then the Sultan exclaimed proudly that he had succeeded in exterminating all traces of Hinduism from the valley by massacring the Hindus, by ravaging, looting and ransacking their properties and more than most by kidnapping and raping their women folk. Jonraj laments the trampling of the Hindu ethos by the Yavanas (Muslims) whom he compares to locusts descending on and destroying a paddy field.

3 The Second Exodus (506-1585)

The Kashmiri Pandits suffered vicissitudes and misfortune when under the zeal of Islamic fundamentalism the Sultans made it a state under policy to effect forcible conversion and implements it by issuing decrees to sever and chop off limbs of the Pandits, kidnap them, loot their possessions and imprison respectable people on various concocted pretexts so as to pressurize them to change their faith and become the followers of Islam, the religion of the rulers.

There is a general agreement on the point that the Chaks came to Kashmir from the land of Dares of Dardistan of Gilgit-Hunza Region. Ferocious, rugged and wild by nature they possessed great physical powers. When Shah Mir founded the Sultanate in Kashmir he found them the most suitable to be recruited to his armed forces. This brought them into great prominence.

The Chaks belonged to the Shia sect of the Muslims, like all other earlier Muslim rulers they also adopted their policy of conversion by coercion, loot, plunder arson and butchering of Kashmiri Pandits, who as a result of continual religious persecution became considerably reduced in number. There was no let up in religious crusade against them either to force them to get converted or face liquidation.

Kashmir universally known as abode of sufis and saints (Rishiwari) presented scenario of religious harmony, peace and absolute tolerance as long as there was preponderance of Hindu population, be it Saivites, Vaishnavites or Buddhists. All co-existed amidst amity and maintained very cordial relations and religious intolerance was unknown. This serene and sublime atmosphere was vitiated and poisoned by the emergence of alien Muslim rulers, no matter what class of dynasty they belonged to. The holy land of Kashmir, the cradle of Trika philosophy, the abode of rishis and munis was transformed into an arena of strifes and intrigues which very soon saw not only the reversal but also the annihilation of centuries old and precious socio-cultural attainments.

Making a historical evaluation of political and social role of Islam in Kashmir and among various medieval societies, historians have adjudged Muslim ideology as parochial and stereotyped. It is in this ideological framework that, to one's amazement and shock, loot, arson rape, murder and killing have a religious recognition and sanction.

Firstly all this appears legalized under the umbrella of 'maliganeem'. Secondly any social strife leading to disorder and anarchy is permissible getting covered under Jihad (holy war). Thirdly any Muslim intoxicated with religious frenzy and going on a spree of killing without rhyme or reason is saluted as 'Majahid' or 'Ghazi' (conqueror or victor).

The Kashmiri Hindu having reached a high level of cultural attainment was found to be a soft target and was thus subjected to the most horrendous tortures and atrocities in the name of service to Islam. A right thinking person wonders whether the message of Islam was bloodshed, plunder, arson and liquidation of followers of other faiths or for spiritual betterment and exaltation of mankind at large.

Dr. M.L. Kapoor observes that it took Islam almost six centuries to secure a strong foothold in Kashmir. Subsequently with a jet speed it galloped through and within next one hundred years over shadowed Hinduism and claimed a majority. Quoting Jonaraja Dr. Kapoor writes "As the wine destroys the trees and locusts the paddy crops, so did the Yavanas destroy the usage of Kashmiris and the Kingdom of Kashmir was polluted by evil practices of malechhas."

While the power of the later Sultan ebbed, the Chaks correspondingly gained supremacy at the court and ultimately succeeded in usurping the throne and establishing their suzerainty over Kashmir. They consolidated their political power through intrigues, conspiracies and murders of political rivals and opponents. They spared no ferocious and barbaric means to seize political power. Though belonging to the Shia sect the Chaks were no less ruthless than the earlier Sunni rulers and showed no sympathetic consideration for the Kashmiri Pandits whose number continued dwindling steadily following the unrelenting onslaughts of the fanatical zealots.

When Fatah Khan (1506-16) proclaimed himself the ruler and ascended the throne under the title of Sultan Fatah Shah, the situation in the valley was depressing and deplorable. He tried his best to restore normalcy and rule of law and order by curbing the power of nobles but met with no success. Contrarily he ended up in becoming a mere tool in the hands of those who counted in the echelons of power. Foremost among those were the intriguing Shams Chak, and his three trusted friends. Nasrat Raina, Sarhang Raina and Moosa Raina. Moosa Raina succeeded Shamas Chak as the Prime Minister of Sultan Fatah Shah. He was a confidant of Shams-ud-Din Iraqi propagator of Islamic faith and converter of non-believers and Sunnis to Shia sect of Islam. Hailing from Talish on the Caspian Sea he played a capital and instrumental role in converting Chaks to Shia sect of Islam. Receiving green signal from Moosa Raina Shams Iraqi opened floodgates of repression, terror and cruelty against the Kashmiri Hindus. Hindu places of worship were demolished only to see the erection of mosques on their foundations. All traces of infidelity and idol worship were replaced by Islamic symbols and the infidels and holy thread bearers of Kashmir were converted to Islam so much so that Shams Iraqi with the help of Moosa Raina was able to convert 24000 Brahmin families to Islam. (Kapoor from 'Baharistani Shahi'). The two savages terrorized and forced their faith. A model of bigotry and tyranny, Moosa's mission of humiliating, looting and then murdering those Kashmiri Pandits who still clung to their ancient faith besides wiping out residual Hindu temples and schools.

When persecution and religious repression became intolerable and showed indications of being tantamount to ethnic cleansing, some Hindus rallied round the leadership of one Pandit Nirmal Kanth, a respected scholar. They sent a delegation to Prime Minister Moosa Raina to appeal for mercy. Moosa Raina came down with a heavy hand on the members of the delegation. It was breaking their head against the stone wall of cruel Fatah Shah, wolfish Shamas Iraqi and pitiless Moosa Raina. The suppliants were thrown into jail, where unfed they famished and groaned and died of starvation. This forms one of the darkest periods of the black history of Kashmir. Shamas Iraqi's fanaticism and zealot was unquenchable. His vindictiveness did not get satiated with the massive conversion of Kashmiri Pandits whom he found with suspicion and distrust. He did not spare them even after they had forcibly accepted Islam. He charged the neophytes of clinging to their original faith. He gave free vent to his wrath when he observed them chanting mantra by placing their haunches on the hand written copies of Muslim religious texts and bowing before Hindu idols. Moosa Raina set up camps for forcible circumcision of the neophytes in order to brutalise and deculturise them. Moosa Raina and his gang men would forcibly draw and haul them out of the homes and stuff their mouths with beef so as to stagger and shock them psychologically. This was intended to give them such a shaking that they would not dare retain any Hindu tradition and lest they should be exterminated, snapped their habitual links with the Hindus, their erstwhile brethren.

After Moosa Raina had gone the way of all flesh in 1513 Mohammed Shah (1517) appointed Kazi Chak, again a Shia, as his Prime Minister. Kazi Chak too gave no quarter and no time for recovery to the distressed Kashmiri Pandits. One hound after another thirsty of the blood of the unfortunate Pandits followed in succession. Kazi Chak left no stone unturned inflicting pain and heaping disasters and miseries on the Pandits. He initiated a systematic and planned campaign for the desecration and dismantling of Hindu temples and sacred places. The movable and immovable property of Pandits were looted and ravaged and ruined. It is attributed to him that he used to get 900 KPs beheaded every day for not having accepted Islam as their only mode of faith. Such kind of cruelty was unheard of before.

The Hindus hold cows sacred and revere them. The Chaks ordered that one thousand cows be slaughtered every day to wreck vengeance on the Kashmiri Hindus so as to shock them into accepting Islam. They re-imposed the dreaded punitive tax Jazia on KPs and snapped all means of sustenance from them. The contemporary historian Shukla testifies. "The Hindus were overpowered by the religious intolerance the same way as the sun is overpowered by the gray sable clouds". A KP wearing the sacred thread had to pay annual tax to the Chak rulers. For the Chaks killing, butchering, mangling and marauding was a common place routine after not worth being taken as a sensation.

During the Chak period the KPs were persecuted, snubbed, humiliated, held low and trampled mercilessly. They had to pay tax even for performing their religious rites and obligations, rituals and

customs. To preserve the distinctive traits of their sect and creed the Kashmiri Pandits were bound to pay 40 precious stones to the ruler. The Chak era goes down as black saga in the history of the Kashmiri Pandits. The Chak rulers were cruel and heartless and peerless in devising ever-new methods of inflicting pain and misery to the KPs without the slightest tremor of scruple. Those KPs who somehow escaped getting converted to Islam fled their native places to seek refuge and sustenance at safer places in the neighbourhood of Kashmir Valley. It was a massive exodus in that innumerable KPs left their homes and hearths and marched out of Kashmir. While they were fleeing for their lives, a barrage of spiteful abuse and insolent contumely was let loose on them with the aim of preventing their return to the land of their genesis. Thus the genocide of Kashmir Pandits was designed, engineered and pursued to transmute the basic character of the heritage of Kashmir, change its social religious and cultural identity beyond recognition and reduce this ancient land of Hindu sages and saints to the Muslims ghetto as was conceived by the Sayyid theologians.

When Akbar, the Mughal King, began to make inroad into Kashmir and Yusuf Shah Chalk abjectly surrendered and joined the invading Moghul forces, the rebel Yakub Chak seized the reigns of power in Kashmir. He too initiated his rule with forced conversion of the Pandits, rank communalist as he was. He made the Jama Masjid in Srinagar as the headquarters of his Jihad against the Sunnis and the Pandits. Under his instructions his fanatic Shia zealots committed numerous atrocities on the Pandits, especially on their women folk, including their massacre. He added a new feather to his cap in his Jihad for Islam by hauling up Pandits in their houses and roasting them alive. It was a new cono button to the spread of Islam in Kashmir.

4 *The Third Exodus under the Moghuls (1585-1753)*

Akbar captivated by the idyllic and scenic beauty of the valley of Kashmir visited the place three times. His court poet Maulana Faizee composed a poem to eulogize the beauty of Kashmir. It purposed to say that the dust of Kashmir is like an eye lotion and the grass and herbs are vital medicines for beauty. Faizee depicts the great Mughal's fascination for the allurements of Kashmir. Akbar initiated many plans and welfare schemes for the people of Kashmir. He attempted to expend his liberal policies to Kashmir. He entrusted the administration of the valley to a subedar.

Akbar launched a comprehensive scheme for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Pandits honourably in their native place. He also became aware of the importance of the role they could play in managing and running the administration of Kashmir. They in fact rose to high places of status and prestige. After about a span of thirty years the KPs again started feeling comfortable and assured of their safety and security. They found the atmosphere favourable enough to practise their faith without any coercion and persecution.

Akbar was admittedly highly tolerant and refrained from falling into the net of fanatic religious zeal. He never resorted to following the policy of persecution and discrimination against the Hindus who had earlier encountered periods of misfortune at the hands of Muslim rulers who made them targets of their religious bigotry and persecution.

On his visit to Kashmir in 1589 Akbar gleaned accounts of stirring and blood boiling plight of the KPs where groaning, being crushed to pulp under the heavy weight of the vexatious extortion's like the much deplored Jazia (Poll tax), Akbar repealed the black tax along with other taxes and fines imposed by the vicious Chak rulers. Akbar's decree abolishing them brought a relief and much sought after respite to the KPs. Many KPs who fled to other safer places their lives and honour found conditions in their home land quite conducive to their honourable return though shocked to find their homes and hearths looted and plundered by the Muslim zealots during the period of their absence.

Jehangir, Akbar's son made a departure from the path of religious tolerance and non-interference in other religious affairs. His sectarian predilection and prejudices were clearly pronounced. He shuffled his stances in his dealing with KPs and his inconsistencies were to a large extent responsible for the communal frenzy and rioting to resurface in its full fury. It was during his rule the Kashmiri Pandits were forced to marry their daughters to Moghul officers and Subedars and yet it is an irony that Jehangir is known for his "adal" and love and concern for justice. Seemingly just and equitable in his treatment of the Kashmiri Pandits, he upheld and followed in letter and spirit Islamic practices. This blots and besmears his image of being a tolerant ruler. He disapproved of and opposed matrimonial relations between Hindus and Muslims but declared that while a Hindu was forbidden by law to marry a Muslim woman, Muslim had all the license to marry a Hindu woman.

Jehangir did not lag behind in following the footprints of earlier Muslim fanatics. It was at his behalf that the flight of steps linking the temple of Shankaracharya to the river Jhelum near the temple of Trepur Sunday was dismantled and the smooth chiseled stones thus got were used by Noorjehan to erect the massive mosque at Pather Masjid in down town Srinagar on the west bank of over Jhelum. The Mughal Sardar Itquad Khan, cruel and inhuman as he was, further tarnished and blackened Jehangir's image that had already been soiled by anti-Hindu pursuits in Kashmir. Itquad Khan forced the Hindus at gun point to get converted to Islam and tortured them by levying taxes on them. As the Shia Chaks had persecuted Sunni Muslims, he persecuted the Shias.

Shah Jehan was a chip of the old block of his father and proved true to him. No less ardent lover and admirer of the natural beauty of Kashmir he did conceal the ugliness in his mind. He did justice to his faith as a Muslim in devoting himself to torturing and persecuting the Kashmir Hindu. He laughed with pleasure when a Muslim mob led and instigated by Kwaja Mam pounced on a prominent Kashmir Hindu Pandit Mahdeo's house and looted it and set it ablaze.

Shah Jehan did not fail to keep up the iconoclastic heritage of his father and did his bit by desecrating and demolishing a number of temples in Kashmir. Bernier is reliable in his conclusive finding that "the doors and pillars were found in some of the idol temples demolished by Shah Jehan and it is impossible to estimate their value." Shah Jehan showed his love for gardens by laying out Shalimar, Nishat, Achabal. He also got constructed many mosques, but hardly cared to reconstruct temples, monasteries and libraries of Hindus demolished and destroyed by Islamic zealots preceding him.

Aurengzeb the 'Puritan King' whose life is a sharp contrast to that of his predecessors/ancestors lost no time after ascending the throne in Delhi in 1658 to convert whole of India to Islam. To fulfil this desire of his he had no hesitation in using and wielding sword. The fundamentalist emperor threw to winds the seemingly secular policy of his forefathers replacing it by one of religious harassment and persecution. He re-imposed Jazia (poll tax). While the entire Indian people shuddered at his manner of building an Islamic state, he implemented a well calculated plan according to which he started with liquidating Hindu scholars in India in general and the Kashmiri Pandits in particular. Not surprising he did not spare his own father. According to him elimination of Hindu scholars was a pre-requisite for the spread of Islam India.

Since Kashmir has from times immemorial remained a prominent center for learning, Aurangzeb appointed 14 atrocious subedars as administrators and governors of Kashmir for its Islamization. Notable among them was Iftexhar Khan who during his regime (1617-75) unleashed his pack of hounds of cruelties of all sorts to leave the Kashmiri Hindus no alternative but to embrace Islam on pain of death. During his rule of five years of hair raising cruelty and tyranny Iftexhar Khan drove it home to Pandits that their future in their land of birth was assured only if they kissed Islam, failing which they must quit their homeland forthwith; there was no third option.

In consequence of this dire threat thousands of Kashmiri Pandits succumbed to his policy of duress and treacherous religious bigotry of the vicious subeder and thus got converted to Islam. Thousands who could manage to withstand the tremendous pressure bade good bye to their homes and hearths and sought refuge in neighbouring regions to keep alive themselves and their faith that was so dear to them.

It is during the rule of Emperor Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb that Kashmiri Pandits driven out of Kashmir reached Delhi and settled down in Bazar Sitaram. Two prominent castes namely Zutshis and Shangloos reached there after a great struggle, difficulties and hardships. These castes over a period of generations had changed into Pehlvis (poets) and Topawallas, said one of the descendants of KPs living in Bazar Sitaram Shri Gulzar Pahlvi. There is a temple of ancient KPs now internally displaced communities in India believe in. It is said that Pandit Nehru's marriage procession had come all along from Allahabad to Bazar Sitaram where his marriage was solemnized. Their present priest is Iqbal Krishen Revoo.

It is during the Aurangzeb-Iftexhar Khan combine that reduced the Kashmiri Pandits as low as dust, nay they made them lick the dust. They trampled the Pandit psyche by subverting all the achievements of this advanced and learned community in social, economic and religious fields during the pseudo-secular stance of the earlier Mughals. Aurangzeb followed Islamic law with fervor showing no regard for normal laws of Hindus.

When the religious persecution and cruelties perpetrated by Iftexhar Khan and approved by Aurangzeb made life unbearable for Pandits in Kashmir, the latter decided to approach the immortal national hero Shri Guru Teg Bahadur at Anand Sahib for rescuing the Kashmiri Hindus from Islamic onslaught by his personal intervention. A delegation of 500 KPs led by Pandit Kripa Ram learned person, called on the Guru and narrated their harrowing and woeful experiences of the diabolical misrule of Iftikhar Khan patronized by Aurangzeb whose wickedness had no parallel. These fundamentalists thrust Islam by hook or by crook. They converted by atrocities, by polluting the KPs by banning the wearing of sacred thread and tilak, by sexual harassment and forcible abductions of the daughters of Hindus and other satanic misdeeds. The delegations appealed to Guru Teg Bahadur to deliver them from their religion of the land.

The great Saint whose face radiated Cecilia light was painfully moved on hearing the woeful tales narrated by the Kashmiri Pandit suppliants. This great man from Punjab went to Delhi for the redressal of the grievances of the KPs and got killed by the cunning Aurangzeb. The Guru was asked to embrace

Islam but he preferred death to change his Dharma which was most dear to him. Furious Muslim zealot Aurangzeb ordered the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur. His head was slit by one Jalal-ud-din Jalad (Executioner). In this way the Guru attained martyrdom for the sacred cause of saving Hindu Dharma. Shat Shat Pranam. Guru Maharaja's sacrifice sent a shiver down the spine of Aurangzeb and it marked the beginning of the fall of Mughal empire in India.

Despite the supreme sacrifice for the preservation of Hindu religion and Kashmiri ethos, the state terrorism remained unabated for sometime more. The desecration of temples and the killings of KPs continued and the process of exodus also continued.

A gripping and inspiring and graphic account of this national issue and the unforgettable sacrifice and martyrdom of Guru along with his three disciples has been given by Giani Gian Singh in his book 'Shri Guru Granth Prakash' and another book 'Shri Guru Pratap Suraj' which are strongly recommended to the readers.

5 The Fourth Exodus (1753)

Following close on the heels of Faqierullah's tyrannical and fanatic misrule came his diabolical son Fazal Kanth the Chief Minister whose subedar beheaded Kailash Dhar in broad day light in the open court of the Shia-Muslim Governor Amir Khan Jawansher and gave a contemptuous watery burial in the river Jhelum. Then he went amuck killing and plundering the KPs. This episode so alarmed and panicked the KPs that they felt helpless and desperate. The whole environment became so hostile to them that they fled to Poonch and Kabul for safety and shelter.

Physical torture in the most ruthless fashion, mental agony, emotional, spiritual anguish fleeing punitive taxes, indignity heaped on the male members of the hapless community. Unchecked harassment and shameless molestation of women folk and more than most the commendable remarkable and unbeaten will to preserve the faith that had been good enough for their forefathers could perhaps have been the reasons that compelled this exquisitely cultured and literate, non-violent and highly tolerant community with rich and radiant heritage to flee the land of their genesis, of their Saints and Sages, of their mature ancestors four times by the time the sixty seven year black and cursed rule of the Afghan butchers in Kashmir expired. The capture of Kashmir by Sikhs marked the deliverance of the KPs from the barbarous Afghan governors.

6 The Fifth Exodus

Despite having been made victims of repeated humiliations relentless atrocities, a series of reigns of terror, religious fanaticism of the worst type known to the world, conversion by sword and fire, social and economic repression, population decimation and what have you at the hands of savage Muslim rulers for over 500 years, the vibrant and resilient spirit of the KPs despite diminishing numbers, never got dampened or sagged. In spite of deathblows to their culture, ethos and faith they managed to keep alive their centuries old heritage and tradition while they had to pass through fire and water. This microscopic minority recognized and acclaimed and feared as an extra-ordinarily intelligent stock even by the barbaric rulers, both local and alien always maintained a unique cultural attainments and inherent goodness and shunned crookedness even when they served in key positions in the courts of the despotic, bigoted brutal Muslim rulers barren in all human attributes. This nationalistic group preferred to break but did not bend. It did not easily rush into making compromises with the iconoclasts even at the cost of their lives. It was the great Pandit Birbal Dhar whose political maturity and maneuvering paved the path for Maharaja Ranjit Singh to re-establish a Hindu Government in J&K state. After Kashmir slipped from the hands of the Afgans back into those of the Hindus in 1820 the sound of bells restarted emanating from temples that had earlier stood for over four centuries wearing the mantle of mourning, whose ruins spoke volumes in a loud and clear voice of the stones of religions and ethnic fanaticism and intolerance suffered by their builders at the hands of those who hold their faith superior to all other faiths but which deems as sacred and halal, dispossession, loot arson, molestation, rape and slaughter of infidels particularly the Hindus. The Sikh rule ushered in an epoch of peace for all. In some instances the Sikh rulers may be guilty of harshness but they were not cunning, cruel and fanatic religious zealots as their predecessors were. With the passage of time the Sikh rule displaced symptoms of aging and the Dogras seized the golden opportunity to step in and take charge of administration of the combined provinces of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh. It was a glorious period of all round development and reform. It signaled the initiation of the modern history of the state. All the Dogra rulers, though Hindus, believed in and adhered to religious tolerance and harmony. Maharaja Hari Singh, a refined and cultured person, had good will of all his subjects to his credit. Lover of freedom and self-rule he was progressive in his thoughts and deeds.

That the British rulers of India followed the policy of divide and rule is well known to all. To safeguard their entrenched supremacy they went the whole hog in communalising politics and drive such a wide wedge between the Hindus and the Muslims that there could be no meeting point for them. How could they approve of the communal peace and amity the Sikhs and the Dogra rulers had established? Maharaja Hari Singh had to encounter political agitation triggered by the cunning, British from the very inception of his rule. Young Kashmiri Muslims, fresh from the universities of Northern India, particularly AMU, Aligarh where they had met and come under the influence of burgeoning Muslim leaders in India and who were hectically propagating and campaigning for Pan-Islamism, formed an organization for holding frequent meetings. It came to be known as Muslim Reading Room. This crop of new spring literate young Muslims became jealous of well-educated KPs holding comfortable position in the state administration. They became frustrated and desperate at their failure to enter Government service and hold responsible and influential and remunerative posts by direct appointments. So they commenced a campaign against what they dubbed the Hindu State. They had the covert backing and blessing of the British India Government chair and the Maharaja had no knowledge of it. His address at the Round Table Conference in London in 1931 as chairman of the chamber of princes convinced the British rule that he was a hard nut to crack by virtue of his being haughty and independent in his ways and, therefore, he could not toe their line nor have any truck with them. The British carved a situation in which stage was set for the desperate educated young Muslims to enact scenes of violent political agitation. And the Muslim press did not lag behind in keeping pace with the agitators. It let loose a fierce and venomous propaganda against the Hindu Maharaja; later on Anglo-Indian press joined hands with its and echoed its refrain.

Sheikh Mohd Abdullah was the most prominent, voluble, eloquent, firebrand activist of the Muslim Reading Room Group. He was all fire in his outbursts against the procedure guidelines of the civil service

Recruitment Board for selection and appointment of candidates to higher posts strictly on the basis of merit where the KPs stole a march over their rival aspirants among the Muslims. The Sheikh and his comrades in arms would not take it lying down. After over a hundred years, the KPs unfortunately became an eyesore for the simple fault of their out-shining others with their higher education and technical qualification. The Sheikh minced no words in voicing his resentment against the established system and convened mammoth meeting of Muslims in mosques and made fiery provocative speeches instigating the audience to rise in revolt. Communal tension reached the point of ignition needing just spark to engulf the state in uncontrollable conflagration.

The 13th of July 1931 will go down as a black day in the history of KPs in modern times. On that ominous day the Kashmiri Muslims repeated their history vis-a-vis the KPs. On that Day City of Srinagar and its suburbs witnessed a depressing and demoralizing spectacle of loot, arson and murder of Kashmiri Hindu property and lives. The Bombas and the Khakas had, it seemed, revisited the Valley. On the incitement and directive of the Muslim Reading Room party the Muslim hoodlums made the unfortunate KPs direct target of their wrath, frenzy and madness. The Goondas and the anti-KP Muslims had a hayday. They went berserk everywhere particularly in downtown Srinagar looting KP shops and houses and setting them on fire. The booty they lard their hands on in Zaina Kadal and Maharaj Gunj was distributed. It was in fact, the looters day and the real martyrs were the KPs. Numerous KPs were killed and many wounded. Legend has it that there was a communal orgy at Kanikoot, Tehsil Nagam, Distt, Badgam, a few KMs away from the city of Srinagar. About a dozen houses of the KPs were ransacked, looted and then torched and several KPs were murdered for absolutely no fault on their part. Sheikh Abdhullah in his ever first address to the KPs at Sheetalnath in Srinagar, is on record having blamed it on the goons for the communal disharmony resulting in loot and murder of the KPs.

A mob of furious Muslims gate crashed into the central Jail in Srinagar to extricate one Qadir, a bearer of a European, who was being tried there for sedition. The state police posted there fired on the rowdy mob killing ten agitators. The Muslims crowded and directed their vengeance and vindictiveness against the soft and easy targets, the KPs, who were taken unawares and who had a long history of meeting violence with non-violence as sufferance has been their badge since they came into contact with the Muslims in Kashmir. Those responsible for flouting law and order and creating mayhem and glory on a spree of loot and murder were eulogized and glorified as Freedom fighters and exalted as martyrs for the cause of rights of Muslims. They went scotfree and the Maharaja's administration proved too weak and ineffective to afford protection to the terrorized KPs.

The KPs received no privileges and prerogatives from Dogra rulers. They were not specially favoured community. The Dogra rulers were as strangers to them as to the Kashmiri Muslims. There was no partisan of partial tilt towards the KPs who, like the Ajax rose from their own ashes, regenerated and renewed themselves by hard incessant labour and struggle. Speaking with regard to all fairness and objectively, the sufferings of the Muslims taken apart during the one hundred and twenty six years of the rule the Sikhs and the Dogras in Kashmir pale into significance and dwindle to nothing when contrasted with the sufferings of the KPs during the five hundred years of the Muslim rule. No Sikh or Dogra ruler employed state power for proselytising Muslims into Sikh or Hindu, for demolishing mosques to raise temples on their plinths and ruins, for torturing and persecuting Muslims for following their faiths, for extorting exorbitant sums of money by way of religious taxes, jazia, baj, zaridood or tax on burying their dead and maintaining their identification marks. No Muslims were tied back to back and put into sacks and consigned to the Dal Lake. No Muslim women were made victims of their carnal lust, debauchery lechery and voluptuousness. No Muslim family had to marry off its young budding daughters in teens or chop off their noses to disfigure their faces and make them repulsive lest they fell prey to the lusty eyes of the rulers and their ministers. And yet the Hindu rulers are denounced as tyrants despots, fanatics and anti-Muslims. It is the pot calling the kettle black.

KPs were equal partners in the quit Kashmir movement launched against the Dogra rule. As India awoke into freedom in August 1947 from the yoke of British imperialism, Dogra rule too reached the end of its tether soon after. While freedom bells were chiming for the majority community, the unfortunate KPs

were in for a grave surprise and shock turning the reveling and jubilation of freedom into a melodrama for them. Pakistan, the new born Islamic theocratic state, clandestinely engineered and launched an aggression on Kashmir by sending armed tribesmen backed up by Pakistan army across the state border on the northern and northwestern side. The religious zealots of Kashmir acted as guides to these hordes of savages from NWFP who behaved even worse than their Afgan ancestors. Besides indulging in wholesale loot and arson they killed numerous KPs at Batapora, Gushi and Tikkar in the present Kupwara district and at various places in the district of Baramulla, Badgam and outskirts of Srinagar.

Tens of thousand of KPs in the Northern, Northwestern and Northeastern Kashmir had to flee their homes and hearths and seek refuge in Srinagar. A good number of them left the state for good, thus setting the stage for the fifth exodus. The local Muslim zealots joined hand with the wild tribals in forcibly converting many KPs to Islam on pain of torture and instant death. And numberless were the Hindu places of worship and Dharamshalas that were reduced to ashes.

The emancipated, the far sighted and those with the sense of the past history of Kashmir since the coming of Muslims and those who were sagacious enough to sense which way the wind was blowing and what trends the future had in its womb lost no time in seeing through the intriguing game plan of what was in essence pan-Islamic fundamentalism raising its ugly head. Mir Waiz Yousf Shah, a grand uncle of Umar Farooq, the present Mirwaiz of Kashmir became cat's paw for Muslim clergy. At the behest of M.A. Jinnah he corned on in Pakistan a campaign of canard of concocted and alleged tales of persecution of Kashmiri Muslims under Dogra Hindu rule and pioneered the process of infecting the psyche of the Kashmiri Muslims with the ideal of separate quam (nation). Barring in Srinagar and the southern Kashmiri they acted as guides and accomplices of Pakistan army supported Pakistan tribals, in their crusade against the infidels for the glory of Islam by means of murder, rape, loot, arson and conversion by coercion. According to a Reuter's dispatch in 1947 the mass rape at Baramulle eclipsed the massacre at Rajouri in Jammu province. With a view to grab Kashmir by force Pakistan flauntingly violated Maharaja Hari Singh standstill agreement with India and Pakistan and in a way pushed him to execute the instrument of accession to India. But for the landing of the Indian troops at Srinagar who stalled the advance of the tribals almost at the gates of Srinagar, the gori things would have happened, had they entered the city.

When the popular Government came into existence in free Jammu and Kashmir it started imperceptibly implementing the resolutions of the Reading Room Party. We cannot help making allowance for the occurrence of some pleasant and unpleasant things in the course of transfer of power from one form of Government to another. These are bound to happen. But when the mind of the people at the helm of affairs is warped and deformed by narrow, sectarian, communal, and religious considerations and prejudices one cannot hope for fairness and justice. The newly sprung Muslim Ministers coupled with the bureaucracy and executive of the same creed made the KP officers and official's targets of their vendetta for being good and loyal employees of the erstwhile rulers. Resorting to compulsion and coercion. they brushed aside all moral restraints in subjecting the KP employees in subordinate positions to injustice and gross unfairness and vexations and whimsical orders. Their rights by way of their seniority, qualification and experience were treated as trifles. They were relegated to second class status and treatment. Was this their dream of Naya Kashmir they had aspired to build in a democratic egalitarian secular framework in unison with the Muslim freedom fighters? Having gauged and scanned the trend of the Government and having been disillusioned and embittered with the gap between its theory and practice, some self respecting KP intellectuals abandoned Srinagar. Notable among these are Dr. R.K. Bhan, Prof. Soom Nath Dhar, Prof. T.N. Raina, Prof. S.N. Koul, Prof. P.N. Dhar Secy to Late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Veer Vesheswer and others. There are innumerable prominent KP personalities who felt compelled by hostile political and economic circumstances to bid unwilling good bye to their dear native places. They found the climate of the paradise charged with sinister and inauspicious and revengeful mist which would in due course of time drop as brutal hail on the poor KPs leaving them cold, shivering and stunned. People like Sh. R.N. Koul Advocate, (Ex-Registrar Supreme Court of India), Sh. P.N. Koul Karihaloo (Ex-Governor, Reserve Bank of ndia), Sh. Zinda Lal Koul (Charge do affairs), Sh S.N. Bhat

(Indian Railways), Sh. J. N. Ganjoo (Secretary, Indian Embassy in USA) who died recently and among others Munshis, Kaws, Saproos. Tengs. Gassis, Thusoos, Wangnoos and so on migrated to better and safer pastures.

The post independence period in J&K state witnessed an unmistakably slow and steady exodus of the KP community owing mainly to the following prime and significant factors:

- (a) Break down of law and order.
- (b) Ever dwindling and waning chances for securing government appointments in spite of their requisite merit and qualifications.
- (c) Abolition of Zamindari system, which though welcome step in principle, resulted in turning thousands of KP landowners into paupers as no compensation in lieu of loss of their land was granted to them. Nor was any other means of rehabilitating them sought with the inevitable result that they became victims of rural indebtedness.
- (d) Discrimination of admission of KP youth to higher educational and technical and professional institutions.

The year 1948 dawned quite ominous for the KPs. The tribals of NWFP again supported by regular Pakistan army re-raided north Kashmir, this time from Titwal Karnah-Keran in Kupwara sector. Meeting no resistance of any name the raiders wiped out all KPs staying behind in the region following the earlier raid of the Pakistan army and tribals in 1947 on the heels of the partition. Unfortunately Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation, met his dramatic end in the national capital in the course of his prayers for national reconciliation and emotional integration. Here in Kashmir a campaign was let loose to harass and humiliate KPs for alleged allegiance to RSS and those who were thought to be stooges of Maharaja Hari Singh, the then ruler of the state. Distinguished and eminently respectable KPs were summoned time and again to Halqa (Block) National Conference offices for interrogation by members of the Halqa peace Brigade officers. They were subjected to unbearable disgrace, humiliation and even tortured for personal animosity and political vendetta. Not tolerating this insult many people belonging to various social and political groups were disgusted and ran away to escape facing dire consequences. Thus a good number of KPs of repute holding dignity, honour dear to them said good bye to the Valley never to re-enter it. There was obviously no state authority to look to the affairs of law and order. Only the peace brigade constituted at the time of Pakistani aggression ruled the roost and held the supreme sway. They enjoyed the full liberty to settle their personal scores.

A noted historian and political associate and co-worker of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, P.N. Bazaz records that "those who dared to oppose National Conference were treated as 'Pariah' dogs. They were arrested in thousands, their hands tied with ropes behind their backs and dragged like animals through the main bazars of Srinagar and other towns". The former Prime Minister Shri R.C. Kak was taken from a subjail to the High Court on foot with his hands tied with rope made of dry paddy hay and enroute Muslim, National Conference workers pelted stones, cast dirt and rubbish on him and even spat at him. And in the courtroom the N.C. activists manhandled him doing him physical violence while the judge looked on helplessly and dumbly.

Now the soil was propitious for Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah to transform into reality his cherished dream that had been lurking in his mind since the Reading Room Forum days. ZAMIN KISSAN KI. In 1950 an act called "The J&K Landed Estates Abolition Act of 2007 (1950) vide Act No: XVII of 2007" was passed. It purported the abolition of big landed estates and their transfer to the actual tillers. This act came into force with immediate effect without any consideration for payment of compensation to the landowners dispossessed of their land. The landowners could retain 182 canals of land with no tenancy rights. According to the provision of the Act, the landowner would get 1/4 th of the yield of 182 canals but no share of the hay. Sheikh Sahib's dream came true when he rapturously witnessed the KP irreparably hit by his land reform program. With one hit below the belt he gloated quietly at the thought that KPs had been sent sprawling with no chance to recover and fight back. Reduced to the state of paupers the aggrieved KPs knocked at the doors of justice but in vain.

The land reform blitz that turned the tables out of justifiable proportion on the former land lords and changed social relationships and traditions so suddenly generated enough heat in the dispossessed land lord community to which KP community was no exception.

To the tenants, predominantly Muslims, the Act came as a boon and blessing and they received it with jubilation and revelry. On the landlords, mostly Hindus, it fell like a guillotine. They protested and cried hoarse against the unfair and partisan and jaundiced deal given to them. The game plan of the Sheikh was clearly seen through. The cardinal objective of the Act was to deprive the landlords of their rights as proprietors and help the tenants at the cost of the former. The judicious approach ought to have been made to find a path to secure fair play and justice to both the classes. The Act, it became clear, was remotely motivated by such consideration and indicated antagonistic and hostile approaches only to see that KPs were reduced to penury. The Act was sheerly based against the Hindu community in particular and heavily tilting in favour of the tillers, thus making one class poor and the other suddenly rich. The Act was categorically against the spirit and the interest of natural justice according to the bereft and distressed landowners. The writer has personally been witness to the spectacle of so many KP Chakdars starving and living below poverty line. Deprived of all means of sustenance for their families and livestock they distributed their starving cows among their well off neighbours and bewailed their destiny.

Chances for appointment and promotions were blocked, by taking into employment undesirable and incompetent persons from the majority community ignoring the deserving and qualified and technically trained hands. It became a state policy to ignore KPs in matters of appointment and give first preference and priority to take a Muslim applicant or to wait till one became eligible or available.

A KP teacher with a good deal of service to his credit was made subordinate to his Muslim taught who was upgraded and promoted to be his Head Master. Here is an instance on how the administration of education was deliberately and crudely maligned. Once all aspirants to the post of headmaster were called for an interview and the venue was the open lawns of the palace on the bank of the Jhelum. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs their number ran into hundreds. Sheikh Sahib, the then Prime Minister and incharge of education, was in a fix what he should do. He hit upon a plan. He asked them to fall in two rows - one of those tall in size and the other comparatively short or medium. This having been done he had a look around and looked still indecisive and confused since both the rows consisted of both Hindus and Muslims. Ultimately utilizing his sweet whim of absolute power, he resorted to absolute corrupt practice of pick and choose by pointing his finger, like Hitler, on tall Muslim aspirants, like Mr Abdul Ahad, Mr. Kak and others singling out about 100 teachers from the lot ignoring veteran teachers like Sh. Gangadhar Dhar, Sh. Sham Lal Madan, Sh Raghunath Kaul, Sh Keshov Nath Veshin and so many others. This naturally entailed a breaking of hearts and genuine grievance of unjustified unwarranted and brazenly unrestrained open discrimination against the KPs. The realization that Kashmir is not a place for the future of their children nor for their posterity began to gain ground and later events confirmed it so that it turned into a conviction deeply rooted in the treatment meted to KPs in every sphere of life in Kashmir and they started turning their gaze beyond the borders of the state to find sustenance to their survival. They were snubbed and subjected to various indignities and deprived of avenues and opportunities to display what mettle they are made of. Thus started an imperceptible exodus of KPs for pastures elsewhere.

The state Government, controlled, regulated and steered by the National Conference passed new laws designed to protect the interest of the majority community. One of these was the Agrarian reform law brought into abolish tenancy farming. All land that was cultivated by tenants was taken away from the landlords and transferred to the tenants. It was a welcome step in socialistic sense. But the axe fell on the KPs in the Valley as the new law made them suddenly paupers and deprived them of source of their income and livelihood. Many of them who were solely dependent on land turned into paupers. Since the bulk of the landlords affected by the Agrarian reform were the KPs, the reform as a tremendous success. It was along cherished desire of the ruling National Conference to snatch away the land. The money that was to be paid to them for their land barely added to a fraction of a year's income from it and in any case, it was to be paid at some future date not specified. Decades have passed since the KPs lost their ancestral

fields. They have still not received the money. The compensation case is still pending resolution. No attempt was even made to rehabilitate the ex-owners of the land.

As it all this were not sufficient Caesar appeared in the form of a ghost. Mr Ghulam Mohd. Sadiq, said to be a liberal, emancipated, progressive and secular person passed, as state Education Minister in Bakhshi Ghulam Mohd. Ministry an impugned order/circular that only 30 percent seats at the maximum be allowed to the KP boys seeking admission to academic colleges for higher education, not to talk of admission to professional institutes. What tale hangs thereby is obvious. And it was allowed to take effect when the state followed the declared policy/program of free education to all up to postgraduate level. In order to curtail and curb and demoralize the brilliant KP youth from obtaining admission in academic and professional colleges in the state various impediments and hurdles were put up in the form of admission committees, selection boards and boards for categorizing and classifying the admission seekers. The tacit purpose was to dissuade and deprive them of all possible opportunities for progress and advancement. How ironical it is that the son of Muslim Chief Secretary was deemed and acknowledged as backward while his Jamadar-Ramjoo's son was declared forward and not entitled to the award of the backward certificate! The resultant mood among the KPs was naturally underlined by preference for life and death some where else to economic strangulation and deprivation in the so called Naya Kashmir where communal prejudice and discrimination had become order of the day under the patronage of rulers known for secular credentials. There were writ petitions of scores of KP teachers and admission seekers in the Apex Court of the country and the state High Court for redressal of their genuine grievances and injustice meted out to them on the basis of belonging to the KP community. The powers that be minced no words in telling them that India is a vast country and KPs could go upto Raskumari (Cape Comorin). Where will the poor Muslims go? This was the import of the discourse of no less a person than late Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah with a deputation of the KPs that called on him to give vent to their protest. We believed him to a majestic edifice sheltering us all. The signal was loud and clear - the KPs had better pack up and get scattered over the rest of India, it would be of no avail to them to stay back. Sheikh Sahib's words made it abundantly clear what his motives were.

The agitation by the Muslims following the disappearance of the holy relic at Dargah Hazratbal in 1964 and the KP agitation following the conversion of an underage KP girl Parmeshwari to Islam was a severe setback to the existing KP social fabric. It aggravated the process of exodus of KPs that was going on quietly un-cared for by the so-called nationalists.

While concluding the era from 1931 to the end of 1985 I find it quite pertinent to quote here a few significant excerpts from the book "History of Kashmiri Pandits" by justice Jia Lal Kilam, also known as Sher-e-Babbar Kilam. He terminates his history at the point of time of the conversion of Muslim Conference to National Conference. Why he did so is intriguing and worth probing. He writes "But here we stop. What followed is matter of recent history in which the present writer has also played his humble part. It would indeed be embarrassing for the present writer to discuss facts that form a quite recent history".

A person of Kilam Sahib's status and caliber and with his rich and varied store of information and personal experience on the subject should not have chosen to cut it short and apply the break abruptly to bring the history of the sufferings of the tormented community and the events having bearing on life after the conversion of the Muslim Conference into National Conference to a grinding halt. It should be apparent that there could not be any justification to abandon the narrative kept alive by his compelling historical impulse to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity. He ought not to have left the community in the lurch by leaving the story untold. Obviously there must have been more compelling and urgent considerations - political, social and last but not the least personal, that must have constrained the roaring lion of the KP community to become tame and quiet. Is not discretion the better part of valour?

"Khamoshi guftagoo hai, bezubani hai zuban meri"

7 *The Sixth Exodus*

The mastermind behind the planning and architect of Shah Masjid within the premises of an ancient temple inside the New Civil Secretariat area at Jammu was Mr. Gul Shah 'Padsha' and his brigade of hoodlums and hooligans (sirwallas), after he had snatched political power from his estranged brother-in-law Dr. Farooq Abdullah. Gul Shah held the reigns of power as Chief Minister for a spell of twenty months. His regime was the worst ever in the post independence history of the state. Every Kashmiri, even every child who had attained age of consciousness then, will testify that Kashmir saw maximum number of curfew days during Shah Sahib's mis-rule. He earned the appellation 'Gul Curfew' not unjustifiably and undeservedly. Chaos and confusion held its sway all over. Law and order suffered a complete break down. Anarchy spread its tentacles in political, social and economic area. Corruption was rampant.

The valiant people of Jammu did not take Shah Sahib's heroic deed lying down. They poured out into the streets. There were demonstrations and protest marches throughout Jammu against this avowedly Islamic act of the CM in a secular state. Shah was not only haughty but also unpredictable and deeply vindictive. Accompanied by some of his trusted Muslim officers and bureaucrats like Sheikh Gulam Rasool, the former chief secretary, who could boast of brave exploits of having evicted some KPs from EP Quarters, Gulshah entered Srinagar on 20th February, 1986 and provoked the Muslims to communalise the situation in Kashmir in view of what had happened in Jammu and deliberately raised the boggy of 'Islam Khatre Mein Hai' (Islam is in danger) and excited and raked his Lushkar (Brigade) known as Lushkari Gulshah Padshah among the local people into a violent and bloody stance and then directed them towards Kashmiri Pandits for no fault of theirs. At his behest they went on a unleashed spree of desecrating their temples and places of worship and shrines, torching their cowsheds and molesting their womenfolk. This time it was in south Kashmir that had in the post-independence time remained untouched by the loot arson, murder, molestation and rapes by the tribal invaders with the active support of Pakistan in league with its stooges in Kashmir. They had not suffered the ordeal and trauma that the KPs in Baramulla district had passed through in the wake of partition in 1947. The then Congress (I) President, Mufti Mond. Syed, the former Union Home Minister, patronized a member of his clan Qazi Nissar, a crude and confirmed fundamentalist and theologian to spearhead the movement against the KPs in Southern Kashmir where the latter commanded a vast influence and audience. This provided the hawk like Farooq Abdullah a golden opportunity to go for fishing in the troubled waters. The anti-KP tirade of repression spread like wild fire. The main targets were their temples to what was a lightning operation temples at Vanpoh, Lukbhawan, Anantnag, Salar, Fatehpur, Akoora and so many places in South Kashmir and those in and around Sopore in north Kashmir the birth place of Jamaite Islami leader, Ali Shah Gillani were rampaged, demolished and leveled to ground and destroyed in fire. It was like Sultan Sikandar the iconoclast (butshikan) having been recalled to life. Putting the pieces together it is very easy to discover that it was a planned design of the pseudo secularists and the Muslim fundamentalists with Qazi Nissar in the vanguard hatched not only to destroy the property of the KPs but also it bred a fear psychosis in their mind so as to facilitate and precipitate their early flight from the Valley. It was the shadow of the coming events. It did cause a tremor in the KP psyche and many a sagacious person was wakeful enough to read the writing on the wall and take time by the forelock. Not a tear was shed by the then Government of the State or the Central Government. The light that Mahatma Gandhi had sighted in Kashmir was beginning to fade. The KPs were frightened and armed by the psychological onslaught by the forces inimical to India on the patriotic community of the KPs. The episode of 1986, in fact, made two things crystal clear:

1. Kashmir is for Kashmiri Musalman only. Islam can exist and flourish there and there is no place or scope for any other religion or its followers to co-exist in Kashmir.
2. The slogan of secularism with reference to Kashmir in particular is a farce and a facade rendered hollow and a hoax by the passage of time and the behaviour of the State and Central Governments viz. Kashmir secularism as a concept and way of life had become cold and dead and lay buried deep in the same Kashmir where, during the bloody days proceeding and following

the partition of India, the Father of the Nation, Bapu had seen a ray of hope of survival of communal amity and harmony; It turned out to be a myopic sight. The myth had got exploded with a bang, whether they heard it in India or not. They heard it in deed, but they paid no heed or were indifferent or did not care about it, since it touched neither their skin nor their heart. It touched them no where at all.

The Indian intelligentsia and leadership of all hues and labels remained mute spectators. The mass media looked the other way. The Indian Army and security forces stationed in the Valley could not come to the rescue and succour of the unhinged and terrorized KPs. The State administration gloated and laughed up its sleeve at their plight and anguish. It was at this juncture that the KP lost his faith and trust in both the State and the Central administration. Both betrayed his faith and turned out to be pusillanimous in the extreme. The very soul of India was gasping for breath; the very corner stone of India's composite cultural tradition was dislodged; the backbone of Indian polity was broken; the spirit of the constitution of India was hacked. It appeared that the State Administration and the anti-KP and anti-national elements were in league with each other for the former did nothing to assuage the emotional pain caused by the communal violence. The KP looked at the situation in a historical perspective and its analysis left him in no doubt that it formed a link in the chain of persecution of KPs at the hands of the Muslims. Those who were not complacent and doubted the effectiveness of the Indian polity took the cue and planned their quiet exit from the Valley where the latter-day Chengezes and Tartars in the form of Gulla Shahs, Farooqs, Syed Mir Qassims, Qazi Nissars etc. with their inherited convert's blood and zeal were there to carry on their tradition in a modern drafty manner. Thousand of KPs saw no redeeming feature in the way things were shaping and found no option but to make preparation or rather be in a state of preparedness for deserting their motherland physically and mentally. The truth is that numerous families disposed of their immovable property and left the valley for good.

8 The Seventh Exodus (1989-)

The wounds inflicted on the Kashmiri Hindus in the 1986 disturbances were not allowed to heal. Looking back now the episode looks like a mild arm twisting of the State administration and that of the so-called mighty India to gauge their real might and will-power to deal with recurrence of such disturbing situations. The unexpected speed with which anti-India and anti-Kashmiri Hindu designs, the seeds of which had been sown over the years, began to unfold themselves was the most terrifying thing about it. The madrasas financed and run by the Jamaite-Islami had poisoned the mind of the younger generation with Islamic fundamentalism under dictation from the theocratic Pakistan. The Jamaite-Islami activists had crept into the services at a large scale. They had found their way even into the top rung of the State machinery and also influenced and won the members of the bureaucracy that crossed over to their side. So for all practical purposes the State bureaucracy was hand in glove with pro-Pak elements and forces that had most sinister plans up their sleeves.

Though Dr. Farooq Abdullah saddled himself in power by allegedly rigged elections in 1987, the power had, as a matter of fact, slipped from his hands. The Muslim United Front, a new fangled Muslim outfit owing political allegiance to Pakistan did not take its defeat at the busting lying down and vowed to get its own back. A monster with virulent fangs was harnessing itself for the charge. The Government headed by the nincompoop chief minister was too inefficient to crush the monster raising its horrible head. Law and order machinery that had developed cracks became steadily defunct. Farooq Abdullah openly admitted having sent numerous Kashmiri Muslim youth to Pak for training in arms. He released about seventy of them soon after they had been arrested. It is clear that armed insurgency and subversive activities were receiving state patronage and protection. Soon the forces inimical to secularism and democracy, having got sufficiently pretty good time and long rope found the time ripe for sounding alarm calls of terrorism which before long became the rage through out the length and breadth of Kashmir Valley.

Then entered Gen. Zia-UI-Haq into the Kashmir arena. Addressing a top secret meeting in April, 1988 at Islamabad he said, "Gentlemen, let there be no mistake, however, that our aim remains quite clear and firm the liberation of the Kashmir Valley. Our Muslim Kashmiri brothers can't be allowed to stay with India for any length of time now. The Kashmiris have a few qualities, which we can exploit. First, his shrewdness and intelligence; second his power to persevere under pressure, and the third, if I may say so, he is a master of political intrigue. If we provide him with means through which he can utilize these qualities he will deliver the goods". Spelling out his methods of combat in terms of moral and physical means 'he singled the Kashmiri Muslims to get hold of the power apparatus of the State by political subversion and intrigue and seek collaboration of favoured politicians' for subverting all organs of the State. He went on to say to elaborate his Kashmir Plan "OP TOPAC" we plant our chosen men in all the key positions to subvert the police force, financial institutions, the communication net work, whip up anti-Indian feelings amongst the students and peasants preferably on some religious issues. Detailed plans for the liberation of Kashmir Valley and establishment of an independent Islamic State in the third phase will follow".

The speech of Gen. Zia-UI-Haq speaks volumes for the on going insurgency and terrorism in Kashmir Valley and Doda and which is now escalating to other parts of the State. The message to the Kashmiri Muslim was loud and clear and urgent declaration of Jihad, holy war, against the infidels ruling from New Delhi. But the beginning was to be made with hitting the Kashmiri Pandit, a very soft and easy and non-retaliating target. Give the dog a bad name and kill it, they say. That is what they did with the Kashmiri Pandit. Posters were pasted outside Mosques and at selected busy places labeling KPs as agents of India and branding them as traitors; accusing that the KPs had always and invariably acted as traitors and stabbed in the back of Kashmiri Muslims and their sectarian movements. It was quite easy to incite the motivated, indoctrinated Muslim youth in particular and other Muslims in general, and make them rally one and all under a religious theme to fight the enemy, the KP in the first instance. Thus fundamentalists axe felt on the KP and drew the first blood. The fundamentalists exhibiting their terrorist

credentials included government employees more than most police officials. The Muslim policeman posted for the security of the Mahant at Vicharnag killed with his rifle butt the Mahant Pandit Keshav Nath, for refusing to embrace Islam. The savage killer Mohd. Yusuf, represented only the tip of the iceberg of the all pervading deeply embedded fanaticism, religious prejudice and intolerance. The truth about the motive and intentions of the frenzied Kashmiri Muslims obsessed with Islamic fundamentalism and was no longer concealed. Their battle against Hindu Indian would be half won by decimating the KPs, by the ethnic cleansing.

This immediate goal with far reaching consequences had, been dinned into the ears of the rank and file of Kashmiri Muslims by all from within and without the State in unmistakable terms. The Allah-Wallahs rode rough shod on idol worshipping Hindus and openly exhorted and urged their mammoth congregations to concentrate all their attention and efforts for the establishment of Nizame Mustafa. The KPs scanned the public mood, the collaborative nuances of the government and the trends of the future. They became wary but did not lose faith in the saner leadership among the worked up Muslims and the capability of the Central Government to act to shield its cherished values of secularism, religious freedom, pluralism, national integrity and solidarity. It proved a highly mistaken conviction that got shattered more easily than most brittle glass at one jolt.

Days went by and each day saw the floating of a new terrorist and militant outfit. Their number went on swelling steadily but surely. JKLF had been there in the vanguard. Among others that crept up were AI-Jehad, Dukhtarane Milat, Muslim Janbaz force, Ikhwan-ul-Muslameen, Allah Tigers, Hizbul-Mujahideen and many more by scores. Hindu temples, shrines and their properties came to be attacked, looted and damaged or torched not to speak of Hindu houses. This after all, did not augur well for the KPs. All was not well for them. The rot had set at work, the canker had eaten into the entrails of communal harmony. The Islamic bigots and frenzied zealots gone crazy were prowling about drawing up their lines for whole sale onslaught. The air, the mist, the sunshine, the good earth, the whole environment tingled and vibrated with threats of danger in security, instability and gory days ahead. There was no lull, a storm was brewing.

Frightened Pigeons that was what the KPs felt like. This feeling was not anything new to the KPs. History bears eloquent testimony to the fact that since the coming of Muslim rule till today Kashmiri Pandits have been the worst victims of terrorist violence. The recent trouble in the Valley started in 1989 when some miscreants masquerading as followers of Islam began to frighten the Kashmiri Hindu Community and others by resorting to violence. "Within a span of a few years not less than 300,000 members of the Hindu minority had to leave their hearths and home, they are now leading a miserable life in the camps at Jammu, Delhi, Chandigarh, Amritsar and other places, " writes Himanshu Shanker Jha (HT, August 15, 1995). The writer further adds " It may be recalled that the first mass exodus of Pandits started 500 years ago when an irreligious despot, Sultan Sikander made a proclamation that if a Hindu did not become a Muslim he must either leave the country or be killed; the persecution of Pandits continued during Aurangzeb's regime too. Teg Bahadurji the 9th Sikh Guru boldly faced death at Chandni Chowk in Delhi in 1675 to protect the lives and honour of Kashmiri Pandits".

Subsequent to the passing away of the great son and iron man of India, Saradar Vallabhai Patel, no Central Government had noticeable hold on the State bureaucracy and the local leadership. The Indian army stationed in the State was sitting on the fence and non-interfering and, therefore, a mute witness to all that was happening in Greater Kashmir. Perhaps they had no role for anything other than disposing off surplus diesel and petrol all along the National Highway from Nandni (Jammu to Barsoo, Anantnag).

In free democratic socialistic and secular India too, the KPs were direct and easy targets for humiliation, and vandalism at the hands of the Kashmiri Muslims. The Jews desecrated the Aqsa Mosque in distant Israel but the poor KP had to pay for it through his nose. For what fault? He was a Hindu and belonged to the minority community. Passing through the Hindu localities of the city of Srinagar the angry demonstrators protesting against the Jewish high handedness shouted 'Yeh tamasha nahi hai, yeh matam dari hai' if a Hindu dared look from a window above or if one passing by the roadside stopped to look on. An anecdote of those days comes to my mind and is worth mentioning here. Two ladies, one European and

the other a national leader, Mrs. Krishna Hathi Singh on a tour of the valley, were staying at Nedous Hotel. They came out on the verandah to have a look at the passing protestors. The fanatics, crazy with religious frenzy and fervor rushed through the lawns and caught hold of the two ladies. Without being severe to them they only thrashed their pelvic regions and loins with fresh nettle that produced red spots all over the skin affected by the nettle-sting. The ladies moaned and groaned with pain and mental agony. The European lady had to get hospitalized for a couple of days and on recovery she said she had traveled widely and she had widely read but never encountered such brutality as she was made victim of. The first target incidentally of the vandalism was the Mission School at Fateh Kadal followed by two Churches in Srinagar City.

Who are these fanatics and the fundamentalists? They are not the descendents of the alien rulers like the Chaks, the Afghans and the Mughals etc. They are none other than our foster brothers, born and brought up in the Muslim culture and tradition. Gen. Zia-ul-Haq would call them Brahman Zadas. But I fail to understand their psychological standard, which is still poor, deficient, crude and coarse. Professing to be more loyal than the King, they typify the proverbial convert's zeal. When Z.A. Bhutto, former Prime Minister of Pakistan gave up his ghost at the gallows following the Machiavellian machinations of his patronized Gen. Ziaul-Haq they burnt effigies of Zia and his stooges in the Jamat-e-Islami were roasted alive. They blocked roads with uprooted trees and smashed electric and telegraph posts. The KPs, the ever frightened pigeons, remained imprisoned within their houses for many a day without water, vegetables and essential commodities because the entire Muslim community was in mourning since their liberator had been mercilessly killed by his own creation.

Now see the other side of the picture. When on 17th August 1988 Pak President Zia-ul-Haq was killed and torn into shreds in a plane crash, the Brahman Zadas repeated the mourning cry "Yeh matam hai koi tamasha nahin" as they moved in procession through lanes and by lanes and Hindu localities in particular. They coerced the KPs to switch off the lights and virtually imposed civil curfew on the bewildered and dazed KPs, the Muslim women pounded their chests and beat their breasts with closed fists and the Muslims on the whole behaved as if some dearest members of their families had died.

In his "Op Topac" aiming at the liberation of the Kashmir Valley, Zia-ul-Haq had clearly hinted at adopting a coordinated use of moral and physical means, other than military operations as methods of combat. It was just a political operation, it had tacit religious, cultural, communal aspects. The means evidently signaled an uncivilized, undemocratic, unlawful and irreligious line of action. It was a clarion call for Jihad, a holy war enjoined upon Muslims as a religious duty in the service of Islam. Which could be the best form of that service? The cut and dry method was elimination of the microscopic KPs who had ever and all along been branded as symbolic presence of India in Kashmir. There being only a handful of them, their liquidation was a simple and easy goal to be achieved and thus bring to fruition insignificant item on the Jihad agenda, that of complete, ethnic cleansing.

The path to 'azadi' began to be paved with the blood of the KPs. All Kashmiri Muslims of all shades and hues, Of all denominations and nomenclatures, converged and united, rising above their divergent conflicting beliefs and convictions, in the unholy mission of raising the edifice of 'azadi' with the bricks and mortar of the bodies and blood of KPs. The names of KPs, young and old wanted to be sacrificed in the service of Islam came to be pasted, as public posters, at the entrances of mosques in the localities where. the innocents doomed to death had been living for generations in peace and amity. The lists appeared at regular intervals and were there for any one to see. The names of the condemned stood in a sort of rank and merit or order of priority. They were dubbed as 'mukhbirs', spies working for interests of India, and hence meriting no mercy. The war against the arch enemy India was inaugurated with blowing the bugle against KPs for whom India had done no favour out of the way.

There was a mushroom growth of militant and terrorist outfits. Trained in the use of deadly sophisticated weapons and armed to teeth by Pakistan, they multiplied in scores, all moving ahead concertedly with the plan of striking terror, all pervasive terror, before embarking on a spree of preplanned murders.

All news papers published from Srinagar carried no news worth the name other than declarations like 'Mein Mukhbir nahin Noon' (I am not a spy) 'Ailane la taaliqui' (confession of parting links with political parties and serving of such affiliations) and open unmistakable threats to the KPs of dire consequences for their past and present anti-movement (anti azadi) and traitorous behaviour. Thus the message of the terrorists that Muslims of Kashmir should gear themselves up and be in readiness to pounce and swoop upon the soft target, the defenseless KPs, reached every home. The developments in Romania and Chekoslovakia became models for the insurgents who believed that following these models for their goal of azadi was almost a foregone conclusion and a matter of days. The religious frenzy and Islamic euphoria was on a spiral surge.

The terrorists were emboldened beyond their expectation when almost half a dozen hardcore terrorist were released in exchange for kidnapped Rubia, daughter of the Union Home Minister Mufti Mohd. Syed. By abjectly surrendering to the demand of the terrorists the Central and State Governments licked the dust and acquiesced in the wide spread belief that the terrorists were a power to reckon with. The follies galore of the two Governments boosted up the morale of the militants and terrorists tremendously.

They marched on making one inroad after another. Suddenly mosques boomed and zoomed day in and day out with pro-jehad and anti-India and anti-Kaffir (anti-Hindu) slogans, speeches, sermons and discourses. No relevant superlative can convey the degree of venomous and provocative propaganda blared at maximum pitch from the mosques. At night they beat empty tin canes and tin roofs to inject terror into the mind of KPs. Several shocks had already been given to them including a sizeable warning and threats in black and white through some dailies that the KPs must quit the Valley within 48 hours or overstay on pain of death. The *Alsafa* edited by Mohd. Shaban Vakil was in the vanguard publishing these gory threats. This paper virtually became the mouth piece of the terrorists and played a capital role in fanning its flames and carrying them to remote corners of the Valley. Ironically Mohd. Shaban Vakil was gunned down in his office in April 1991 for having criticized a militant group. But by then he had been instrumental more than anybody else in inflicting maximum damage to the KPs in his vocal advocacy of the terrorist cause. 'Aftab' and 'Azaan' joined in the choice songs in praise of the mujahids. And incidentally now 'Ahadnama Kashmir' written by Sonallah Bhat tracing the history of the state from the Buddhist period to recent times, stands banned by AL-Fateh force and the AI-Faran.

The night of January 19, 1990 will remain the most unforgettable one in the memory of every Kashmiri Pandit child who had attained age of consciousness of surroundings, and grownup men and women. That night stands singled out as the harbinger of the terrible catastrophe which beforelong engulfed the panic-stricken unfortunate community. That night flood gates broke open and the world resounded with war cries inciting the Muslims that it was time they came out into the streets breaking the chains of slumber, to welcome the ringing of the dawn of a new and Islamic order. That night seemed to be fated to ring out the life of every Kashmiri Pandit child, man and woman. That night signaled that all was over with them. That night tolled the knell of what Kashmir and oft-quoted Kashmiriat symbolized. No male Muslim man or child stayed back in doors but streamed out to swell the crowds whose shouts of 'death to India', death to Kafirs rent the skies from Qazigund to Karnah. That night in the pall of darkness the land of rishis would get saturated with the warm blood of Kafirs. That night demons masquerading as neighbours, friends, co-workers came out in true colours, for a sea change had swept over the so-called peace loving Kashmiri Muslims. Gone with the wind was their facade of secular, tolerant, cultured educated outlook replaced by intolerant Islamic fundamentalist stance. The urbane and the rustic, the high and the low, all rubbed shoulders in wild frenzy in their common war against the KPs huddled up together indoors while their fate hung in balance. They read the clear writing on the wall, their days in their native land were numbered and they must catch time by the forelock to escape the impending doom. The seventh exodus was surely in the offing. The pusillanimous Central and State Governments had neither the will nor where with all to crush the monster of Islamic fundamentalism that had entrenched itself in the Islamic Republic of Kashmir. The terrorist living and acting in absolute fidelity to bear creed of intolerance emanating from Muslim fundamentalism set in motion the Juggernaut of physical liquidation of KPs on selective basis. The terrorist outfit Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front stole the march over other groups. The terrorists

who were never tried of styling themselves as followers of Islam, as their camp followers still do, adopted the evil policy 'kill one and frighten one thousand'. It was in pursuance of this policy that 1000 KPs were butchered in 1990. The terrorist outfits vied with one another in out Heroding, Herod and devised so barbarous and horrendous methods of torture and murder that would make Sikandar the iconoclast, the Hamadani rulers, the Chaks and the Afghans turn in their graves and salute their present progeny for improving upon and breaking all their records in savagery and inhumanity. Have you ever before heard of or read of such cruel acts of violence as stitching the lips of the victim before killing him and nailing the chest and feet of the poor man till he bled to death? Those who crucified Christ were kinder.

The implementation of the policy began with extinguishing the beacon lights among the KPs comprising intelligentsia, the political workers, professors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, well placed officers in the State and Central Governments and others. The stale and hackneyed accusation or charge in every act of murder was that they had indulged in anti-azadi activities. There was not to reason why? There was not to ask why? The terrorists had their own interrogation centers and courts awarding penalties and death sentences. Very few KPs were afforded opportunity to explain their position or prove their innocence. There was the Jamate-Islamiinjunction and commandment "Bahas Mubahasa se perhez Karen" (shun argumentation). So the allegedly unwanted and undesirable persons were killed summarily and point blank in lanes and by lanes, streets, thoroughfares, in offices, at homes, any where the choice was that of the killer who more often than not made a show of his chivalry in the Islamic tradition by gunning down a poor KP in full public view so as to earn the appellation and applause for being a mujahid. Kill an unarmed, defenseless person caught unawares and become a mujahid. JKLF drew first blood with the pre-planned murder of Shri Tika Lal Taploo, an advocate and prominent and vocal member of the provincial wing of BJP. He fell to terrorists bullets quite near his house. He had always helped and served the Muslims of his locality without any compensation and was very popular with them. The Muslims of his locality mourned his death and joined the mammoth funeral procession. His death sent a powerful tremor down the spine of the KP community and caused real tangible concern. The ground had been broken for the vicious process to gather momentum. As days passed the heads of prominent KPs rolled down. No day passed without registering the murder of an innocent KP here and there. Shri N.K. Ganjoo, a retired Judge was gunned down at an arm length in broad day light in Hari Singh High Street, Srinagar. The dead body lay in a pool of blood with no police anywhere and no Hindu daring to touch it, lift it or cover even with a sheet of paper. The Muslim passers by and shopkeepers watched the scene with jubilant faces and hilarious hearts. Much later Muslim policemen removed a dead body dragging it in the manner of dead dog. The scene was televised a number of times.

It became a common place to hear Kashmiri Muslims greeting one another with the gleeful news of the fall of a KP. The day angered well if the day dawned with fresh warm blood of a KP. A medieval tribal trait still alive in Kashmiri Muslim mind despite the gloss of advancement in its modern sense.

Those who know Shri P.N. Bhat, a front rank advocate practicing at Anantnag, will vouch safe how much popular he was with Muslims in his town. His skull was shattered with a volley of bullets. No Muslim uttered a word of condolence for him; why should they? It had brought glory to Muslim zealots.

Shri Lassa Koul, Director, Doordarshan Kendra, Srinagar, was gunned down just outside his house at Bemina. He was returning home at night after doing his duty. Even a layman could suspect the foul play of DD employees in his dastardly murder.

Shri R.N. Handoo, P.A. to Governor, was killed outside the gate of his house at Narsingharh just as he was entering the official vehicle to take him to his office.

The next day, in its early hours, witnessed the merciless and brutal killing of Shri B.K. Ganju, a young budding and extraordinarily intelligent and efficient Telecom Engineer, within his home at Chotta Bazar, Srinagar. He hid in a charcoal drum and the assailants failing to find him were about to leave when his neighbours whom he trusted too much redirected the blood thirsty savages to conduct a research. A dozen bullets were pumped into the drum killing the helpless trapped weak man. When his young widow

appealed to the jubilant killers to shoot her down along with her two baby daughters, they marched out chuckling "who would mourn over his dead body?"

The following day heralded the murder of Shri A.K. Raina, Deputy Director, Food & Supplies, Srinagar by terrorists in his office. It was literally dying in harness. His subordinates stood aloof and watched the proceeding joyfully.

Prof. Nila Kanth Lala, MA (Political Science, History and Education), extensively read and informed person, with a gift of gab, in fact an institution in himself, was done to death by his own Muslim taught of his own area. After his retirement from Government service he had been serving in Islamic Higher Secondary School; What a reward?

Prof. K.L. Ganjoo an agricultural scientist at Sheri Kashmir University of Agriculture Science & Technology at Wodhura Sopore (his home town) was kidnapped and tortured by his own Muslim students and friends before he was shot dead while wading the Jehlum under dictation from the terrorists. His wife Prana Ganjoo was kidnapped and gangraped and then dismembered. Her body was not returned to her relatives.

The followers of Nizam-e-Mustafa revived the medieval barbaric age when Shri Brij Nath Kaul, a driver in SKUAST, Shalimar campus, Srinagar was tied by his feet to a jeep driven by the terrorists. Muslims praying five times day, witnessed the ghastly manner of dealing out death and enjoyed his defacement. This belittles the brutalities of the Afghan rulers of Kashmir.

Shri D.N. Mujoo had done a lot for educating the Muslim youth of his area, Fateh Kadal, Srinagar before he moved Rawalpora. Besides being a Theosophist, an unassuming Scholar, an educationist who took pains to experiment 'with J. Krishnamurti's dynamic thoughts on education, Shri Mujoo was all his life a real teacher. An old man of over 70 years, tall and healthy he passed his time in philosophical contemplation. He did not dabble in any politics and was least dangerous. Yet the terrorists intruded into his house seized him and stabbed ruthlessly at the dead of night. His wife was also assaulted and injured but left as 'dead'. The poor old man bled pale and cold.

Shri Sarvanand Koul 'Premi' truly brimmed with love for all. A distinguished poet in Kashmiri he contributed much to enrich the Kashmiri Literature. He translated the Bhagvat Geeta into Kashmiri verse. He had a copy of the Holy Quran besides the Hindu scriptures in his library. Destroying his library was not enough. The terrorist hounds led Premi and his son Virender some distance away from his house. His forehead was nailed at the tilakmark, his eyes were carved out; his limbs and bones were broken; his body was aeced and then butchered in the same manner. What impressive examples of Islamic tolerance!

Smt. Sarla Bhat, a nurse in SKIMS Srinagar was suspected of being an informer since the institute was a den of other terrorists who included members of the faculty as well. At the behest of Dr. A. A. Guru she was gang raped by a number of Muslim bad characters of degraded order before she was stripped naked, mauled and murdered in a shameless manner that no human being born of woman can conceive. She was thrown on the road for all to see what respect they had for womenfolk.

Smt. Girja a school teacher in Bandipora had gone to school to collect her salary and called on a friendly Muslim colleague. The architects of Nizama-e-Mustafa kidnapped her from there with the Muslim lady restraining herself from interceding and thwarting the evil designs of the Islamic zealots. The possession of her body was halal; according to religious injection. They gang raped her, ripped open her abdomen, placed her on band saw and sawed her into two halves.

Kumari Babli and her mother Smt. Roopwati of Pulwama met a horrible end at the hands of terrorist brutes.

Shri Balkrishen Tutoo, an officer in agriculture department became the victim of callous bloodthirsty militants who barged into his house to abduct and kill his brother. Tutoo pleaded for mercy and resisted, he was fired and critically wounded. He was rushed to the hospital where the doctors on duty allegedly completed rest of the work.

Mustaq Latram for whose release the AI-Faran outfit wants release of the four foreign hostages was allegedly involved in the gruesome murder of four members of a family at Mallapora, Habbakadal, Srinagar. The victims at the instance of some neighbours gunned down Jawahar Lal Ganjoo, Mrs. Ganjoo, Badri Nath Koul and his wife Lalla, living under one roof, leaving behind two unmarried daughters and two innocent teenaged boys and an old 85 years paralytic mother.

Asha Koul was abducted from Achabal-Anantnag. She was taken to a KP migrants abandoned house in Srinagar and gang raped for many days and tortured. Her body was found in a decomposed state in the very house on 8th August in 1991.

Babli Raina, R/o Sopore a teacher was gang raped in her house in presence of her family members on 13th August 1990, before she was killed an act we have never heard or read in the recent history of any civilized country. There are many more reported and unreported cases of brutal and hair-raising treatment meted out to women as memorable examples of Islamic gallantry.

No religion enjoins upon its followers such inhuman, cruel and unnatural acts. And the Muslims more educated in number than the uneducated ones hailing from well to do homes indoctrinated and motivated by Pakistan Government backed ISI prowled about like man eaters looking for KP victims. Killings were carried on and unabated in ever new devised forms that beat all past records of cruelty and ferocity during the 500 years of Muslim rule in Kashmir. The KPs went or receiving threatening letters, death warrants and highly disturbing telephone calls not in-joke but in real meaningfulness. For paucity of space I cannot allude to comprehensive details brutal and ruthless murders of hundreds of Sarlas, Rainas, Ganjoos, Tikoos, Kouls, Mujus, Tutoos and so on. Hundreds of KP martyrs who fell at the altar of Indian secularism and the splendid heritage of India have remained unsung.

The KPs remained at the receiving end, the terrorists were ruling the roost as the gun had given them unfettered liberty and power to kill, where and when they chose. Even teenagers and boys under ten could be seen openly carrying lethal weapons slinging down their shoulders under their pherens. The unrestrained hunting of the cream of the KPs became as much a pastime as it was a well planned and calculated design to achieve ethnic cleansing with the ulterior aim to establish Islamic way of life and governance and merge the Valley with Pakistan, the so called defendant and guardian of Islam in the world. Each case of murder sent waves of shock after shock and tremor after tremor in order to shed and break the spine of the Pandits. There was no law and order worth the name as it was under the control of the terrorists who counted the shots. The collusion or nexus between the law enforcing agencies and the gun trotting terrorists was conspicuous. In fact the Kashmir Police was there as it is still now infested with anti-national elements and moles that provided protection and patronage to vandals and criminals. It was a total Muslim revolts nay, armed insurgency against the KPs as a matter of first preference.

No saner voice rose from among the enlightened literate Muslims of Kashmir. They sealed their lips, curbed their conscience and smothered their soul in astonishingly mysterious silence. Muslim ladies proved more ferocious and furious than men. Humanity and humanism in Kashmir vis-avis KPs were dead and cold and buried. Gods and Rishis seemed to have fled the valley leaving the dumb founded and bewildered KPs. It was at the total mercilessness of Islamic zealot's fanatics and fundamentalists whose writ prevailed. There was in fact, one exception: late Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq who did not toe the line of the terrorists. He had the temerity to declare that all that was un-Islamic. His voice was a cry in the wilderness and the Mujahids professing to be impassioned followers of Islam too silenced it for its non-conformity. Did the Prophet preach intolerance towards adherents of other faiths? Is this the path to the type of peace in his write up 'Tolerance is key to peace' the eminent Islamic scholar and authority on Islamic scripture Maulana Wahid-ud-Din Khan writes: 'Tolerance is not an act of compulsion. It is a positive principle of life expressing a noble side of a man's character. The existence of tolerant human beings in a society is just like blooming of flowers in a garden.'

So far as Islam is concerned it is an entirely tolerant religion. Islam desires peace to prevail in the world. The Quran calls the way of Islam the path of peace the state of peace can never prevail in a society if a tolerant attitude is "lacking in the people...." (Excelsior 2.9.95) What a sublime ideal, theoretically! But

what an agonizing gulf between the ideal and the ground reality, between theory and practice of Islam as is expounded by the Maulana.

Now, when the entire Kashmiri Muslim populace was up in arms yelling out in bass and treble disaster and death to the Kafirs, meaning there by clearly and explicitly the KPs whom they, without any valid justification, alleged to be a major stumbling block and obstacle in their illusory dream of azadi and integration with Pakistan; when the Muslim leaders like Ali Shah Geelani, Qazi Nissar, Abdul Gani Lone, Prof. Saifu-Din Soz, and their ilk by their well guarded muteness concurred with the acts of loot plunder, vandalism, arson, murder and desecration of temples and shrines; when acquaintances, neighbours, friends, colleagues and co-workers bore daggers in their eyes and spat fire in their speech; when none in the majority community deemed the KP minority as God's trust with them and therefore imperative to be protected; when the KPs encountered hostility and strangulating atmosphere of insecurity within and without their homes and places of work; when their women folk were ridiculed, humiliated, physically and sexually harassed and terrorized; when their political and religious freedom were snatched from them; when their basic rights of life, property and freedom were trampled; when discussion, dissent and disagreement become a crime and irrationality and obscurantism, fanaticism and fascism became the order of the day; when the KPs were given a bad name and all sorts of notorious accusations leveled against them adding up to their being black sheep and traitors and above all when the barrels of Klashnikovs and AK-47s were vomiting bullets freely at them and respect for age and dignity of womanhood was no consideration; when in nutshell the Kashmiri Muslims, on the whole, became brutalized and impervious to the fundamentals of Kashmiri culture and heritage the KPs pondered to retrieve themselves from the traumatic and bleak situation.

What could they do? How could they pull themselves out of morass of depression and mounting tension eating into their entrails and sapping their vitality? How could they manage to pull on when life became intolerable and they became prisoners feeling choked in foul contaminated air? How could this essentially peace loving, non-violent, non-aggressive, liberal, secular community of 4% completely unarmed choose to go on warpath against the majority of 96% armed to the teeth and financed by a hostile neighbouring power? How could they bear with the indignity and insult, which their womenfolk were subjected to? Could they forget their racial memories of their faith and honour during the repressive rule of the Sultans, the Chaks and the Afghans? History was repeating itself and they had to rise to the occasion which was clearly on the cards of the terrorists who had sold their souls to satan. The seventh exodus was forced on the KPs and the most regrettable thing about is that it happened in secular India that claims J&K to be an integral and inalienable part of the Republican, the most precious jewel in the crown of India, whose President and the Prime Minister are both Hindus.

The insurrection of the Kashmiri Muslims could, for the sake of argument, be defended were it directed against injustices and lapses, omissions and commissions of the Central and the State Governments from time to time or that it was the outcome of economic and educational neglect of the Kashmiri Muslim alone. They are more affluent than the other segment of population in the whole J&K state and many other states in India. They are more than enough pampered lot. their advancement in every aspect of life during the last about fifty years has been phenomenal; they have come a long way while as their counter parts in the other two provinces of Jammu and Ladakh are leagues behind. This is not an over statement as facts and figures speak for themselves.

The insurgency in Kashmir by the Kashmiri Muslims erupted at the behest and incitement of Pakistan essentially in the name of their religion, Islam. Several other strides like Pan-Islamism, world Muslim brotherhood, conquest of the World by Islam in the Hitlerian fashion, flow of petrodollars, regional ambitions etc. were twisted to it to form a formidable force visualizing/envisioning the Islamisation of the whole of India. We who are the sons of the soil and have lived among them, have our fingers on their pulse and know their chemistry better than those sitting in the ivory towers in New Delhi and gazing on the storm raging in Kashmir. The reigns of political power have all along been in the hands of their elected representatives and bureaucracy predominantly Kashmiri Muslim. Policies and plans were formulated and shaped not in Jammu or in Leh but in Srinagar which has B1 status while as Jammu and

Leh have no status at all. Political masters they were; they wanted religious, i.e. Islamic supremacy. Hence Jihad and Nizame-Mustafa. The explicit character of slogans raised and popularized drives home the irrefutable point, "Zalimo, O Kafirot Kashmir harmara chod do", Kashmir main rehna hai, Allah-ho-Akbar kahna hoga' "Musalmano jago, Kafirot bhago", "Islam hamara maqsad ha Kuran hamara dastur hai, jihad hamara rasta hai", "Kashmir banega Pakistan" and a host of other highly provocative communal, pro-Islamic, sectarian and anti-secular slogan and martial songs. As an immediate reaction there could be no other alternative for the KP than have recourse to flight from his homeland. The seventh and may be the last exodus was forced upon the KPs to get them scattered and battered in unfriendly circumstances like fish out of water and easily achieve an ethnic cleansing. The Islamic jihad had its eye on the genocide of the KPs. There is no mistake about it notwithstanding the observation of pseudo secular, shallow and hypocritical guardians of human rights. The Muslim fundamentalists at least did succeed in their avowed and cherished goal of ethnic cleansing and islamisation. if not in getting rid of Indian presence in Kashmir.

While the Islamic zealots and mujahids fired cannon shots at secularism and coexistence and Indian nationalism and buried them alive hundred fathoms deep, the Indian State watched and, waited effeminately. No amount of pressure could arouse it to action. The very corner stones of the Constitution of India were being not only questioned and challenged but also knocked out so that the entire structure of the Nation was crumbling. All cries and appeals for constitutional guarantees and safeguards and protective remedies were falling on deaf ears of the rulers smug in their vice regal mansions. Even in these circumstances the KPs sought, advice and protection from their Muslim brethren who cared least to have any communication with them. The intentions and the motives of the adversary were clear in their slogan "Asi gache Pakistan, Batav ros Batnev san (we want Pakistan, inclusive of Kashmiri women and exclusive of Kashmiri Pandits). It needs no elaboration.

In this context what could the KPs do? To whom could they look up to for a healing balm to their bruised hearts? Their leadership, if any, was in disarray. They did not need any guide or leader to give them a green signal to pack up and quit, highly literate sagacious and impregnated with sense of history as they are now. Everyone unto himself. It is travesty of truth to put the former governor Jagmohan in the dock for having induced the KPs to flee because he had some specific drastic, line of action up his sleeve to deal with the Kashmiri Muslims up in arms and teach them a lesson leaving the KPs untouched and unscathed. It is a myth, a farce, and a figment of prejudiced Muslim imagination.

The position and State of KPs in the post independent Kashmir was like that of the sacrificial lamb bedecked with garlands of flowers, vermilion, bandanvar and other tokens of having gone through the ritualistic operation and ready to be led to the altar for the offering and in innocence licking the knife of the butcher. In the latest instance the state had failed him, defrauded him, deserted him and he stood forsaken and Forlorn. He murmured plaintively:

**"Bul Bulu, Mat Ro Yeh Ansu Bahana Hai Mana,
is Kafas Kai Kaidiyo Ko Gul Machana Hai Mana.
Chod Kar Tufaan Mai Yeh Keh Kar Malah Chal Diya,
Dub Ja Manjdhara Mein Sahil Pae Aana Hai Mana.
Mai Hun Voh Fariyadi jiska Sunane Walla Chal Basa,
Mai Hu Voh Ansu jise Daman Pe Aana Hai Mana".**

The Muslim and Sikh taxi drivers and truck drivers came handy and with broken bruised heart and tears streaming from his eyes a KP bade adieu to his home and hearth. Upto the moment he took leave of his Muslim neighbours and actually departed from his door, he waited and waited for Samaritans to come and assuage his agony. But the security collapse was so total that no neighbour could come forward with any degree of assurance of safety. In explicit terms they conveyed their utter helplessness even against the gun wielding fundamentalists of their mohallas, not to speak of any power and strength to prevail over the Muslim bigots from other mohallas to spare the helpless KPs from becoming their fair game. When all avenues and prospects of safety and security of life over and above all things were tapped and found to be unreliable and treacherous and no guarantee of life the KPs could not be naive to take chances and meet

their doom wittingly. Embracing the lot of a refugee was the last and the only resort and recourse for him to I' take. When the air was resonant with shouts of Muslim big- I' ots crying extermination of the kafirs. The take over of Kashmir by the Muslim terrorists in the name of Jihad woke the KPs upto the fact that they had very little time while the terrorist's mounting capacity to destroy was keeping abreast.

Would that we had a Khushwant Singh to document the aftermath of migration, nay fleeing of the KPs from their paradise to the plains at the time of the year when it is virtual hell on this side of Patnitopl! It was falling from frying pan into fire. Caravans of buses, trucks and taxies with puzzled and anguished men, women and children huddled in them looked like sheep being taken to the slaughter house. Searching questions seemed writ large all over the faces. What had they done to deserve such severe inhuman punishment? Why this banishment? Where was the protective umbrella of the State Authority? The Kashmiri Muslim intelligentsia, the Muslim press dancing to the tune of the ISI commands, terrorists belonging to numerous outfits and the Kashmiri Muslim political leaders taking oaths of loyalty to the Indian Constitution but in the depth of the heart owing allegiance to anti-India subversive force spread the canard that the Kashmiri Pandits left Kashmir on their own in search for greener pastures and that nobody compelled and coerced them to quit their homes and hearths. Living in the most advanced epoch of the 20th century and thriving on the spoils of Indian secularism and tolerance these philistines retain characteristic traits of tribal culture of the middle age. How much truth and fact their propaganda contains is for anybody to see and verify by himself. You can scarcely imagine a more shameless, blunt and deliberately concocted white lie than this. No doubt, the highly qualified and educated youth among the KPs deprived of opportunities and jobs in the State did reluctantly migrate to destinations outside the State in the search of pastures. But why would the entire minority community migrate? Were they like lemmings that periodically rush to the sea and drown themselves? The heard instinct along the KPs is not so pronounced and dominant as it is among the Kashmiri Muslims. Who will be so idiotic as to call Migrant camps at Nagrota, Muthi, Purkoo, Mishriwalla and other localities at Udhampur, Kathua, Delhi and elsewhere green pastures? Would that they too were driven to greener than these green pastures!

We have no count how many KPs young and old men and women, gave up their ghosts in the fefugee camps because of sun strokes, snake bites, cardiac breakdown and other unnatural causes of death unknown in the Valley. What a plight the KPs braved through, my countrymen, in unfriendly, hostile climate! It left one dazed, stupefied and infuriated to see the "Kings" of yesterday turned into "Paupers" of today looking up for succour, accepting charity that they dispensed so freely in their own homes. Thousands of KPs are even today in the ninth year of the exodus languishing and decaying in the pigeon holes , stables and cells that the built up quarters are, as they are counting their days in the torn tattered tents that fall with stormy winds and are swept away by heavy rains and rise again with fair weather.

In the thirties of this century when Jawahar Lal Nehru visited the slums and hovels of industrial workers in Bombay and Calcutta, he was infuriated to see the sub human condi tions and environs of squalor in which the workers lived. Would that he had lived to see the people of the land of his forefathers, the land that he loved most, that he integrated with the body of India and called it its head and crown, living a life worse than that of the creatures of the forests and fields. Three four generations of hundred percent literate enlightened decent KPs cramped and crumpled into one room or tent! The pangs of the loss of home and homeland by the KPs is aptly mirrored by W.H. Auden's poem. Say this city has ten million souls on the theme of the misery and lament of the German Jews rendered refugees by the persecution and torments of Hitler in the name of ethnic cleansing. Nehru's ancestors too had been victims of Islamic fascism in their own day. The KP refugees live worse than sub human life, by modern standards.

Consider the fall out of the forced migration of the KPs from their paradise. Families have become disjointed and fallen apart. Father has parted from his sons, brother from brother. For a pretty good time people did not know where their kith and kin had taken refuge, in what city or town or village. They lost all track and there is a shocking communication gap particularly on occasions of sadness and sorrow in a family. Wedded partners have got dispersed with distances of a thousand kilometers separating the two. They have a reunion once in a blue moon. This has adversely affected their children.

The growth rate of widows and widowers has amazingly increased. Those in the evening of life rendered lonely feel terribly deprived and alienated not having their children around them to depend on in their distress.

The petty agriculturist lost his land, the orchardist his orchard and the shopkeeper his source of sustenance. The economy of these classes of KPs lies shattered to pieces and their laments during these six years of exile have fallen on deaf ears, the dole of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 1500 can in no case mitigate their stress and strain. How they keep their body and soul together is a miracle. But for the continuation of payment of salary to the refugee KP State employees, their economic problems would have compounded their miseries to an unimaginable extent and what the condition would have been like staggers the imagination.

The one notable segment of KP refugees is that of the school and college going youth, the latter particularly. Their normal process and plans of education have been totally unhinged and ruptured. Suddenly they found that neither the present nor the future held any hope or promise for them. Their admission to local centers of learning was and is still vehemently opposed. Against their will they are knotted to the Kashmir University which bothers two hoots about their educational career and future prospects. Examinations are time and again postponed or delayed and there is absolutely no schedule of any sort to follow. What though it takes six years for a student to qualify as a graduate? Most of the graduates have overage and thus been deprived of employment opportunities in Central Services, they belong neither to Kashmir nor to Jammu. They have no cake either to eat or to have it. Bypassing the appointed rules and regulations for recruitment the Central Government holds no examination for the Kashmiri Muslims in their vain efforts to appease them. Central teams visit the Valley and order appointments on the spot. No such extraordinary concession is extended to candidates from the Jammu region or the refugee KP aspirants to various posts. There is no HRD Program for the educated unemployed KP youth whose potential gets dissipated in unproductive activities. There will be no denial of the fact that 23000 Kashmiri Muslim young men have been appointed by the Central Government in various Departments, particularly the Railways, B.S.F and C.R.P.F., Banks without any test or criteria simply to appease them. There was a duel between the Railway Minister Jaffer Sherief and the BJP M.Ps on the floor of the house during question hours in the Indian parliament in Monsoon Session 1995.

The civic amenities at the refugee camps are conspicuously non-existent. The inhabitants of these camps and their spokesmen and leaders frequently complain through the press of the lack of hygienic conditions. It is a cry in the wilderness. Nobody is interested in heeding to them. It does not pay to do so, for the helpless KPs have no mischief value. They are a spent force left to their lot to rot in sun and shower.

Yes, they are in for humiliation after humiliation. For any thing under the sun, be it petty or of some consequence, he is required to furnish affidavits duly endorsed by authorities appointed by law or State. Proofs of this kind or that to authenticate his claims. The Photostat business is in boom. Probably no ration card of any citizen in any State of India is bound to have a joint photograph of the cardholder, and his spouse pasted on the front page or anywhere inside. As if declared offenders and criminals, with their records and files duly maintained at zonal offices and then at the Relief Commissioners office. No new ration cards have been issued to them since 1991 as is usually done in the case of people in Kashmir and Jammu divisions on yearly basis. At every level and at every step they are made victims of exploitation, corruption, discrimination, neglect and injustice. The migrant employees are not paid HRA and CCA while as Muslim employees in Kashmir Division get these at double rate for contributing nothing by way of service. Is not anti-social and anti-national activity at a premium?

The inmates at refugee camps have virtually become collection of living curios, as if in museums. From time to time delegations, national and international, land there to have a look at the species of the lost tribe of KPs. No visit to Kashmir is complete unless you have visited the human zoos. Activists of human rights outfits, known and unknown ambassadors and envoys, double faced politicians Central Ministers flock to the sanctuaries where the KPs enjoy the status of being protected species like the Hangul (the Kashmiri stag). The camp dwellers assemble time and again with the hope and faith that their fate is going to be decided. They narrate the horrendous and hair raising circumstances and episodes related to

the rise of ISI backed Islamic fanaticism and religious persecution at the hands of the terrorists in the valley and their present sufferings as refugees in their own great country, Bharat. Tragic experiences are recalled and relived. Appeals to the international community and the world conscience are rehearsed. The guest visitors listen visibly moved; they give assurances of every possible moral support and raise their voice in various fora to highlight the sufferings of the refugees. So dignitaries come and go: but nothing moves, nothing follows so as to alleviate their suffering and terrible plight. Visits to the camps have degenerated into a farcical ritual. End to their exile continues to be an illusion and still they hope against hope to return to their hearths and homes.

Meanwhile, the Islamic fundamentalists have consolidated the gain accruing from pushing and hunting out the KPs. They have seen to it that no chance and scope is left for the return of the native KPs. They have left no stone unturned for making a frontal and all out assault to destroy all symbols, tokens and traces of their culture, their practices, traditions and heritage. Uprooting the KPs is not enough, their existence in the valley in the past and in the present must be wiped out root and branch so as to make it appear that KPs never belonged to the valley. They would rewrite the history of Kashmir in the Islamic way.

With an eye on this the fundamentalists went on a free for all spree of loot, plunder, spoil and arson. Village after village comprising of KP settlements have been razed to ashes; KP localities in towns and cities have been torched and gutted either completely or partially in such a manner that the vagaries of weather in a couple of winters will complete the unfinished agenda of the Muslim bigots who aim at ground and leaving no evidence of their having lived there. The looted booty ornamented their houses and halls and what was unwanted was disposed off in Sunday markets. Following the Islamic traditions private libraries of the KPs containing priceless manuscripts and rare books on philosophy, world religions, Hindu scriptures, literature, art, law, humanities etc. were plundered, torn to bits, burnt or sold to street hawkers what they were worth as radii or junk, good for a retailer to sell groceries in. Islam enjoins upon its followers to venture going to far away China in pursuit of knowledge and here in Kashmir you get a fine specimen of reverence for knowledge. The ineradicable, the incurable, intolerance towards followers of the other faiths. Knowledge too is Muslim and non-Muslim. What a perversion and decadence of mind and spirit. It does not matter in the least that pages of the religious books and Holy scripture of the KPs litter the lanes and bylanes. float in the gutter and are trampled upon because they sing hymns of God who is not Muslim. What hullabaloo would have followed if a page from any other religious book had been shown scanty respect in this manner? The progeny of those who burnt the legendary library at Alexandria a rich and peerless repository of knowledge and learning in its day, find a mean and petty pleasure to destroy Kafirs treasures of learning.

The KPs of the post Muslim period in Kashmir had read of Khokas and Bombas, savage and ferocious Muslim tribes, used by the callous and ruthless Muslim rulers to plunder and kill the KPs. Loot, plunder, arson, rape and ruthless murder have been an essential ingredient of the Muslim psyche and ethos and they can't see life and world but through these ignoble and diabolical devices. Suffering these at frequent intervals has been the badge of the KPs. And since 1989 we have been eye witness to the re-emergence of this racial traits of savagery, crudeness, tiger like ferocity of the Kashmiri Muslim re-enacted towards the KPs contributing in the main to the unavoidable exodus of not fewer than 3,00,000 members of the Hindu minority.

The customary loose long robe worn by the Kashmiris to protect themselves from severe cold is known as pheran. It has found universal usage these days and embroidered pheran is a craze with big people. The pathan ruler of Kashmir ordered KPs to have "laad" a wide fold near the lower border of the pheran on its outside so that they could become easily distinguishable from the Muslims. Normally this garment has only one pocket on the right side below the length of a hand. The pathan rulers ordered the KPs to wear pherans with two pockets on either side so that the bastard boor could use the two pockets as spurs and ride a KP holding him by long bushy bodhi or tuft of hair at the rear top of his head. Is there a worse form of humiliation and indignity than this? The fear of the Pathan that it engendered in the psyche of the KPS persisted till the present exodus. While going round the Hari Parbat as part of his religious duty the KP

devotee would at every short interval revolve around himself. In verity it was a vestige of the repressive pathan rule; the KP simply turned around to watch that no pathan was to be seen within his sight that the savage would command him to stop so that he should make the KP play the horse for him. With such a proud track record of barbarity the Kashmiri Muslim feels anguished with the rule of Hindu India that scrubbed away layers of alien growth on his head and made him affluent and taught him to live with comfort.

But racial traits die hard or seldom.

Commenting upon the Kashmir situation, Dr. Karan Singh former Sadri-Riyasat observes in January 1995 issue of VOM, "Many in the capital tend to look upon J&K merely as an interesting problem; Tens of thousands are forced to leave their home to live in refugee camps. Crores of rupees worth residential and other property are destroyed. Thousands of widows and orphans are left to face a bleak future". It is now common place and anybody's impression that New Delhi is least bothered about the safety, self-respect and property of the Pandits. In its estimation, a handful of outlaws have turned the valley into a veritable inferno. Fear has gripped every heart and home and there is sense of insecurity prevailing all around. Unless the State of India exerts its power and authority and addresses the situation arising out of terrorism with an iron hand, as Late Beant Singh, Chief Minister of Punjab did in his state, no solution is foreseeable.

The Central Government continues befooling the Indian public. Committees followed by Central Ministers air-dash to the valley to take the stock of the position on spot and report to the Prime Minister about the ground realities. Heaven knows whether any reports are submitted or it is just an excuse to seek relief from the blistering heat of New Delhi's sun and enjoy eating cherries under the Chinar tree. But where is Kashmir policy? Every opposition party has been repeatedly urging ruling congress party to spell out its Kashmir policy. BJP wants New Delhi to come out with a white paper on how it means to tackle the problems of terror, and subversion there. There is no policy. Nothing can move the hard-boiled rulers to utter a word. Do what you will it will stick to its policy of no policy. Why should it have any? When it comes to distributing and sharing loaves and fishes and enjoying unearthly prerogatives and luxuries in state mansions, the Kashmir imbroglio is ticklish and too frivolous to deserve attention on emergency basis or war footing. When the engineers of the destiny of the nation are in race for position of power and pelf who has the time and inclination to pay heed to Kashmir? Minister after Minister changes portfolios of Kashmir affairs as if it were a laboratory for conducting experiments in which much was lost and little gained. It was hoped that with the Prime Minister having assumed the charge of Kashmir affairs things would crystallize and concrete and tangible steps would be taken in the direction of speedy restoration of normalcy in the troubled valley. Those hopes have proved dupes. Leniency on the part of Central and State administration has encouraged the anti-nationals to commit more crimes and create more mayhem, otherwise a government building which is the residential accommodation of S.M. Hussain (K.A.S.) presently Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag district would have not turned into a laboratory for preparing improvised explosive devices (IDS). Unfortunate and sacrilegious crimes like the burning down of the holy shrine of Nund Rishi at Charar would not have occurred if exemplary and deterrent punishment had been awarded to the terrorists responsible for the Hazratbal seige. Too long a rope has been given to the subversionists. The consequence of the policy of appeasement has cost the ruling party little but the KPs and the nation have paid dearly for it.

As time goes by the Central Government plays its cool waiting and watching for nature to have its own course. The Muslim fundamentalists in the valley are upto their hilt in Islamising the basic secular culture of Kashmir and changing the centuries old face of Kashmir. The spirit of Kashmiriat distorted and marred by dying it in the exclusive Islamic caul drop and thus put a seal on the process that began with the Muslim rule in Kashmir. What else is the purport and motive behind destroying KP shrines temples, all centers associated with their faith immovable structural properties and grabbing their land and orchards by tampering with revenue and land records? The state administration has till date taken no step to protect their land, houses and other property despite persistent demand for it by the KP community in exile. Its policy of expediency has overriding effect on the principle of justice and fair play. That explains settling

the claims for damage to Muslim properties in the valley on priority basis by deputing special teams to settle the claims on spot while the claims of the KP fire sufferers, theft and loot are consigned to cold storage and neglected. Discrimination against the exiled KPs has not diminished, rather it has been augmented and its compass extended to encompass every area of their miserable life, notably education, recruitment into state services, grant of loans, payment of various allowances etc.

Mr. Cohen, a US Senator affirms that the gist of Pakistan's foreign policy towards India is summed up in one word-Kashmir. Kashmir has become a haunting obsession with Ms. Benazir Bhutto. It is a patently evident fact that Pakistan has unleashed an undeclared, a low cost proxy war in Kashmir. The Pakistan sponsored armed militancy and terrorism has taken a heavy toll of Indian security and armed forces, perhaps more than suffered by I.P.K.F. in Sri Lanka, India has been cautiously defensive and has taken care not to mount any offensive operation. New Delhi is blowing hot a cold in the same breath. It holds out an ever extended hand with an olive branch and simultaneously is not weary of threatening Pakistan of dire consequences if it did not forthwith stop inciting, aiding, abetting and sustaining terrorism in Kashmir. We have been hearing them for the last nine years ceaselessly. These are now taken not even at the face value, for Pakistan has still to exhibit howsoever slight change in its aggressive stance.

Confirming the ethnic cleansing of KPs by the Muslim fundamentalists in Kashmir Mr. Wimmer, a member of the German Parliament and Vice President OSCE asserted that they are against ethnic and religious cleansing and the way the KPs were forced to migrate from Kashmir, the land of their ancestors. New Delhi is yet to adopt tough attitude towards the terrorists and put down its foot to crush militancy with determination and courage. Even when it has a lot of irrefutable and unquestionable evidence and proofs of Pakistani's complicity and direct and open involvement in the present disturbances in the valley, New Delhi has done nothing appreciable to counter Pakistani propaganda and expose Pakistan and its patronized militant outfits before the world community. How long will she wait? Is there no limit to the patience? Must the KPs then submit to their genocide first at the hands of Muslim fundamentalists and now the pro-Muslim ruling class?

What is worst, lamentable and deplorable is the neglect of the ruling party of India to take direct measures, which will help the KPs to return to their homeland. Still more condemnable, unfair grossly undemocratic and authoritarian is the Center's posture not to include them in any deliberations to solve the Kashmir imbroglio. This has bred deep anguish, resentment and frustration in the community that is being relegated to the background though they are the worst sufferers and victims of militancy and terrorism in Kashmir.

Only recently in the second week of September, 1995, IndoAmerican Kashmir Forum under its National President Mr. Kannya Lai Koul sought a meeting with United Nations Secretary General Mr. Boutros Ghaili to urge him to declare the displaced KPs from the valley as internally displaced persons entitled to international support for the political and civil rights and humanitarian relief as described in the relevant resolution of the UN Human Rights Commission. The circumstances that compelled the KPs to flee their homes in the valley in 1989-90 fully satisfy the conditions and terms of given in the report of the representatives of the UN Secretary General on IDPs submitted by him to HRC at its 51st session in Geneva in February-March, 1995.

Of late the ruling party has been trumpeting that it is going to hold elections in the troubled state to form a popular government in a bid to restore normalcy in the state. It has in fact been in the air for over two years; Central Ministers one after the other had jaunts to the valley off and on to assess the ground situation. The Chief Election Commissioner himself too had to see for himself if the atmosphere was conducive to holding elections. The major opposition parties have disfavoured the initiation of political process until militancy and terrorism has been completely crushed out thoroughly so that the fear of the gun stands removed from the minds of the electorate for a free and fearless franchise.

That the fear of the gun is entrenched in every mind and that there is resultant sense of insecurity pervading all around is vindicated by the civil curfew and total bandh with which the Election Commissioner of India Dr. M.S. Gill was greeted in the valley on his three day visit to the state to assess

the situation for taking the decision on holding elections in the state. The outlaws however, small their number be have to rued the Valley and Doda district into a veritable hell. In spite of tall, but in reality hollow claims of the State Administration to the contrary they count the shots and their writ prevails.

The Union Home Secretary Sh. K. Padmanabaiah has described the prevailing situation in the state congenial for holding the polls since many people in the militancy infested Valley are anxious for restoration of peace and democratic order. The Prime Minister, Sh. RV. Narsimha Rao and the Minister of Home affairs Sh. S.B. Chavan enthused by Governor Gen. K.V. Krishna Rao's pleas of conducting elections of the state in mid November 1995 have showered their blessing on him. Yet the Election Commissioner, after his interaction with the senior Government functionaries, law and order authorities and leaders of various political parties acted in no haste and did not jump to the conclusions. In a mature judicious and sagacious manner he stated that the decision would be taken after taking into consideration all the prerequisites and various aspects of the existing situation. It hardly appears to be an optimistic statement. In any exercise having bearing on the political solution of the Kashmir tangle and lakhs of uprooted and displaced Kashmiri Pandits stand not only marginalized but also absolutely excluded. No sincere efforts have been made by the governments at the Centre and the state to design any scheme or create conditions for their safe return with honour to their homes. The demand for creating constituencies in exile for them is a moot point. Thousands of eligible young voters are yet to be included in the voter lists. How the displaced Kashmiri Pandits will exercise their franchise and for whom is stilt shrouded in mysterious uncertainty or puzzles all those who take interest in watching the Kashmir affairs.

Kashmir continues to figure on deliberations on all sorts of agenda in international forum. Wrong signals continue to pour into the militant and secessionist outfits in the valley motivating them covertly and overly to subvert the peaceful election process in the state. Even as there has been surrender of arms and ammunitions by growing number of militants in the valley, infiltration of fresh batches of trained Kashmiri Muslim militants and foreign mercenaries has not stopped or dwindled to a trickle. The arms and ammunitions recovered so far forms only the tip of iceberg. The entire Kashmir and upper reaches of Doda are so flooded with sophisticated arms and explosives that it will be many years before these are unearthed and recovered by the security forces, with the government adopting a soft attitude of conciliation and appeasement and repeated advice and appeal to militants to contest the elections-Kidnappings and the abductions are still a current menace. The houses of the displaced Kashmiri Hindus continue to be torched and razed to ashes. Whatever the Central and or state governments may do with a view to end the feeling of alienation of the Kashmiri Muslims to win their hearts and confidence in Indian democracy and secularism and to coax them to fall in line with the national main stream by offers of well meaning packages, the glaring and irrefutable fact remains that acts of terrorism in the state particularly in Kashmir and Doda are not a thing of the past. The serpent of terrorism may have been scotched but it has not been killed; it raises its venomous head every now and then. Attack on security forces and bloody encounters and cross firing between the forces and the provocative militants are reported day in and day out from every corner of the valley. Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley is once again frontpage news.

Four KP families forty in all counted were forced to flee from their houses at Wanpoh after abduction and murder of one of their family members, Piyare Lal Raina on the night of September, 1995. The deceased was an ex-service man. His son Vinod Kumar Raina claimed that the killing had been carried out to coerce the remaining Kashmiri Pandits to flee the valley. But the government claims that the situation is fast returning to normalcy in the valley. The prominent militant outfits are unanimous on the stand that the war will continue, that they are least bothered as to who gets killed in this war; that by carrying out the attacks they aim to highlight their agenda of national freedom and nobody will be allowed to reach an agreement on this issue. "So the gun will continue to play its role not to allow the government to hold the elections and keep the cauldron of Kashmir as a disputed territory ever boiling and adding new ingredients of subversion".

The net result is confusion, more confusion, infinite confusion, confusion compounded and compounded, confusion created and sustained purposely by both the warring sides, the militants-cum-terrorists and the

government at the center and the state levels. The Kashmiri Muslims by and large make the best out of the situation. The militants pump bullets into Indian polity and the Indian Government pumps hundreds of millions of rupees to the Kashmiri Muslims supporting the militants who envisage one highway to Azadi, by squeezing Indian economy as a leech does with impure blood. Muddled thinking behind New Delhi's Kashmir Policy will never help it. It is a Sheer Don Quixotic misadventure. Who else knows the ethos of the Kashmiri Muslims better than then Kashmiri Pandits? They say, 'beggars can't be choosers'. The Kashmir Muslims have been both. Indian brand of secularism has an in built mechanism to lend itself be used for anti-national fundamentalist campaigns.

The non-communal stance of the Election Commissioner, Dr. M.S. Gill if it is any indication, obviously implies that he has not failed to sense the mood of the Kashmiri Muslims under the thumb of the militants and terrorists that there are no takers for the so called elections on the anvil. The Central Government can't hoodwink them and the situation in mit il ancy torn Kashmir remains as grim and gloomy as it has been for the last six years and no solution is foreseeable.

Now where do the displaced Kashmir Pandits stand? It is equally obvious that the Central Government is creating an impression that the KPs are a non-entity and have no locus stand and has as such sidelined them in its efforts to cut the Gordian knot and restore normalcy or at least semblance of it in the state. As long as the KPs, an essential and inalienable component of Kashmiri Society, are in exile they have little point of interest in the elections and holding the elections without their participation is meaningless and futile. That they all are unavoidable party to any future settlement of the Kashmir problem on the political level has been validly recognized at international forums, albeit Indian government has done precious little to project their plight as the worst hit victims of Pak sponsored militancy and terrorism in the state. It is the lobbying of the KPs themselves that has lend strength to India's stand on the issue. It is desirable that the Indian government woke up and became amenable to reason and saw the realities in their true perspective and not be complacent in neglecting the significant state of the KPs in any political settlement. In democratic scheme of things minorities have as much and as important a voice in amicable settlement of issues of national importance as the majority. No arrangement showing disregard for the aspirations and ethnic consideration of the KPs will be acceptable to them. The powers that be must not commit the folly of taking them for granted and take them for a ride.

While the Islamization program in the Kashmir Valley is being carried on unabated the KPs have a history of over 500 years of Muslim rule in Kashmir to draw lessons from; History has repeated itself too many times for them. To obliterate the deep scars it has left on their life, work and vision. The dreaded Khokhas and Bombas of the yore have reemerged with doubly redoubled demoniac vengeance and wrath to exterminate the minority community of the KPs. They seem to be kinder and less cruel as contrasted with their present day descendents with all the sobering and civilizing and humanizing influences of education and material prosperity and numerous advantages of science. That many civilizations in the history of Europe were destroyed by onslaughts of barbaric hordes of tribals has been proved true in Kashmir in our own day. Slogans like "**La Sharqiya' lagharbia, Islamia Islamis**" still ring in our ears and serve as index of the ethos of the Kashmiri Muslims in the living present and the future to be. It is as plain as it is day that this exclusive cry is unques tionably inimical to making any compromise with the Eastern or the Western cultures that today rest on tolerance, compassion, humanism, liberalism respect for basic human rights as recognized in the charter of human rights, secularism and democratic temper. It entertains no scope for modification and adjustment and believes in superimposing a particular outdated fanatical view of religion and life on others whether they subscribe to it or not. There is not to reason why.

Guided by his fundamentalist and fanatical approach to life as the majority community in Kashmir is, the minority community of the KPs must move in unison very cautiously and be guided by lessons learnt from its history down the centuries since the emergence of Muslim rule. The existence of Saprus, Katjus, Haksars, Kitchloo, Zutshis, Kauls etc., in Allahabad, Lucknow, Delhi and other places remind us of the circumstances that led to their exodus from time to time from the valley in the hoary past. Kashmir is cold, dead and buried; so is Gandhi Ji's tiny ray of communal harmony. According to hadith Prophet

Mohammed once said, "A true believer is one with whom others feel secure, one who returns love for hatred". Another hadith says "by God, he is not a believer, by God, he is not a believer with whom his neighbours are not secure". The KPs have tasted the lies of this spirit of neighborliness of the Muslims in Kashmir and they will remember it forever. They must also not forget that as Kipling found west and east irreconcilable, the Muslim culture in Kashmir is in essence diametrically poles apart from the KP ethos and the two shall never meet now that Kashmir's secular character and traditions have ceased to be.

Way back in 1989 wall posters in fairly large letters proclaiming Kashmir as "Islamic Republic of Kashmir" were a common sight in Srinagar. Since then a lot of pioneering work has been done by every Kashmiri Muslim, irrespective of his rank and standing, to make Kashmir the land of 'Militant Islam'. The so called struggle for freedom began rallying round the pivot of total Islamization of Kashmir and despite India's efforts to re-impose secular outlook. Kashmiri Muslims have been non-cooperative, Islam continues to be cultural unifying and cementing force in their life and for them religion and politics are inseparable and undistinguishable. The Jaun dived local bureaucracy no less than the administrative echelon overtly and covertly support and direct the militants. There are instances galore to establish the involvement of senior as well as junior government functionaries in the avowed goal of Islamization of Kashmir. They have taken a vow not to let the grip of Islam get relaxed and sabotage every move of the state government to curb militancy and restore normalcy and democracy.

It is for this reason that Kashmiri Muslims, including the so called leaders of any political denomination have kept absolutely mum and dared not utter a word against the Islamization campaign in Kashmir. No intellectuals among them have raised even any weak voice of protest to religious intolerance. In fact the Kashmiri Muslims are loath to the return of the entire displaced refugee Kashmiri Pandits who looked upon as the enemies of their movement. They are no longer needed there and are clearly told to forget that they ever belonged to the Valley. The foundation stone of the Muslim State of Kashmir was laid right at the time of India's partition and now the free Islamic republic of Kashmir is on the anvil.

It is in the 6th year of our exile that one secessionist leader and man behind the operation Balakote militant outfit Azam Inqulabi, speaking at a seminar organized by the South Asian Forum for People's Initiative, on the theme "Kashmir at present and future prospects" held in New Delhi on 15-11-1995 said that he had been pained by the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley. Now realizing the mistake committed and the value of KPs he said both Muslims and minority community needed to sit together to resolve the issue and arrive at a mutual understanding. He was however, critical of the community for not coming forward with the people of Kashmir (Muslims) in their struggle. "If even ten people had come forward I would shed my blood for them", he said (K.T. dated 16-12-95). "**Fitna garas bahana bisyar**" a Kashmiri saying. Ripvan winkle has woken up from a deep slumber when most of the Kashmiri Pandits blood has been spelt. Inqulabi probably does not remember that the so-called Kashmiris leading human rights activist late H.N. Wanchoo was a Kashmiri Pandit, a well-known Trade Unionist. He had filed quite a number of petitions in J&K High court against the Government and is reported to have acted as an intermediary between the Government and certain militant groups for the release of militants. He too was silenced forever on 5th Dec. 1992 by the militants of Jamiatul-Mujahideen. I ask Inqulabi, was not late Wanchoo a KP who shared and abetted terrorism? Was not Lt. Satish Tikoo S/o. Sh. RN. Tikoo of Karfali Mohalla associated with relief committee's set up by Muslims? Why was he gunned down on 2nd February 1990 by a notorious Bitta Karate? This, I write simply to keep Inqulabi's record straight. Their movement was purely a Muslim fundamentalistic Jihad against secular India. The question of KPs participation did not arise under the circumstances, even though some took part in it they were silenced because no outfit wanted the association of any Hindu with the movement (Salman Khursheed).

Kashmir Pandits now in exile have to pay heed to ground realities and watch with keen interest the changing political scenario together with its fall out and frame their policy and response in a cool collective and sagacious manner, and act firmly to achieve their goal which has already been spelled out.

History is a great teacher and reminder of time tested messages. It is time that the KPs display their characteristic intelligence and shrewdness and sagacity by heeding to the call of their history. They have committed many lapses in the past for which history has penalized them in the shape of their having

become docile sufferers of persecution cruelty and intolerance and repeated exoduses in every period of Muslim rule in their homeland and let them not make a move in huff that could prove an act of Harakiri for which their awakened and liberated young generation and posterity shall never pardon them. One foot on sea and the other on shore is not going to be helpful policy at any stage of time henceforth.

Let them show in the words of Tennyson:

**"One equal temper of heroic hearts
Made weak by time and fate but strong in will
to strive to seek, to find and not to yield."**

Let them bear in mind the wise old Persian saying "Azmodra Azmood Khatas". This may be transliterated into an English proverb "Once bitten twice shy", an unpleasant experience induces caution.