

election participation as providing legitimacy to the incumbent regime and the institutions. However, with time, differing ways to seek the goals proved to be a source of disagreement and disintegration rather than of the success of Kashmiri militant nationalism. In particular, the internal debate often resulted in organisational splits and recurrent warfare.

Rise of Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front

Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front was one of many organisations formed as an offshoot of politics of the Plebiscite Front in mid-1960. For more than two decades, JKLF had a negligible presence on the Indian side of the Line of Control as the National Conference and the Plebiscite Front powerfully captured the pro-independence space. Ideologically, it was very close to NC's version of Kashmiri Nationalism, but at the same time, it was disassociated from Shiekh Abdullah's political heritage. Bose (1997) records that in the backdrop of the alleged rigging of the elections of 1987, JKLF resurfaced after remaining dormant for twenty years. The core HAJY group that emerged immediately after the election rigging had its allegiance to JKLF. Essentially, it found spiritual inspiration in the Islamic traditions rooted in the mystical piety of Kashmiri Sufi saints. Kashmiri identity could never merge with a religious identity. Explaining the spiritual aspects of Jameel (2017), a professor at the University of Kashmir said, "Major religions modified when they came to Kashmir. The local texture was retained to uphold the nationalistic identity that existed here. Hinduism did not exist here in the way it existed elsewhere; Buddhism also underwent major changes to accommodate the local practices. So, did Islam emerge in a way that has no parallels elsewhere?" He added, "In Kashmir, there has always been spirituality beneath the realm of politics. For example, Syed Ali Hamdani gifted Kashmiris a beautiful treatise on spirituality-*Aurad-e-Fatiha* because he understood and valued the spiritual mysticism practised here."

The interview reminds me of Renan's (1882) famous essay, "What is a Nation", where he drew a parallel between the nation and the soul. Past

and present are the things that constitute this soul or the spiritual principle. The first is the legacy of memories, and the second is the desire to live together. The vision of Kashmiri nationalism shared by the JKLF rested on the glorified vision of the shared past, but how the idea of consent was emulated remains a matter of debate. Malik (1995) notes that JKLF is mainly based on geo-political and historical grounds, focusing on territorial and geographical identity. The organisation's activists put forward the idea of a supra-religious Kashmir. The term was both an ideological and strategic attempt to not alienate Buddhists of Ladakh and Hindus of Jammu from the predominantly Muslim population of the valley.

JKLF advanced as a frontline group that crossed the border for arms training in 1988. On December 7, 1988, it took the entire state machinery by surprise with a high-profile kidnapping of Rubaiya Sayed, daughter of the then Union Home Minister, Mufti Muhammed Sayed. This marked the arrival of JKLF on the political scene and explained the breakdown of the state apparatus. The kidnapping was surprising for the state machinery, traditional leadership, and the Pakistani stakeholders equally. The helplessness of the state machinery could be evaluated by then Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's insistence on the act as 'un-Islamic' and then chief secretary Moonis Raza calling out to the kidnappers as "brothers do not hold sisters hostage."²³

The case of Rubaiya's kidnapping presents a crisis of weak mediating structures and how the state was held captive by militant nationalists. Constant appeals from the representative organs of the state express a breakdown of trust and a complete takeover of the traditional pro-resistance leadership by the JKLF. The traditional pro-resistance camp essentially espoused political nationalism. The fact that Pakistani leadership also appealed to JKLF to release Rubaiya is indicative that the external actors did not induce the kidnapping, and JKLF was posing a threat to them as well. Prominent Pakistani leaders like Maulana Kausar Niazi and Dr Sher Ali Khan expressed astonishment at this act.²⁴

23 *The Kashmir Times*, December 11, 1989.

24 *The Kashmir Times*, December 12, 1989.

This act of kidnapping also took the traditional leadership by disbelief. Awami Action Committee chairman Mirwaiz Maulana Farooq, requested the JKLF to release the hostage as it was against the principles of religion.²⁵ Subsequently, there was no other way than to give in to the demands of kidnappers to resolve the crisis, as police and intelligence could not locate the kidnappers. The militants had put a condition that Rubaiya would be freed only if five of their colleagues were released by the government. The militants had also put a condition that Rubaiya's release would come only after 48 hours of the release of the five militants.²⁶

As Rubaiya was released in exchange for the arrested militants, the society expressed widespread jubilation. Women often turned out with garlands, traditional sugar candies (*shirini*), and traditional folk songs to welcome the militants. Immediately after the release of the five militants, JKLF flags were hoisted all over Srinagar, and celebratory gunshots were also fired.²⁷ In the words of a senior journalist, Bukhari (2017), "The Rubaiya kidnapping case was a psychological victory for the Kashmiri nation. It was for the first time that a common Kashmiri had brought the government to its knees."

For some time, JKLF articulated a vision of an independent state and strongly expressed the autonomous political agenda. Earlier, there had been attempts at channelling political consciousness outside of state-defined institutions; however, those attempts could not grab attention like JKLF did. The JKLF politics found a parallel in insurgent peasant consciousness that Guha (1983) explains, occupying autonomous space derived from the historical and social aspect of identity.

There was also a gradual increase in organised violence; an editorial of *Kashmir Times* titled *Insidious Tactics*²⁸ discussed how the call for *bandhs* surprisingly evoked total response despite the large-scale pre-

25 *The Kashmir Times*, December 10, 1989.

26 Meraj, Zaffar (1989), "Government vacillation delayed Rubaiya's case by 3 days" *The Kashmir Times*, Jammu and Kashmir, December 15, 1989.

27 *The Kashmir Times*, December 13, 1989.

28 *The Kashmir Times*, January 27, 1989.

emptive arrests having been made to prevent any coercion and intimidation. The futility of all these preventive measures was highlighted. It showed how the ruling parties had lost their influence, and the support drifted towards JKLF. The massive demonstration in the form of protest marches and strikes was churning out a new narrative, which was threatening Pakistan and India. The complete support for strike calls and political marches reflected the solidarity for Kashmiri nationalism.

On 18th June 1990, when the guerrilla movement was at its peak, Amanullah formed the interim independent government, creating a whirlwind in the national and international media. The independent government attempted to cross over the ceasefire line at *Chakoti* in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir on February 11, 1992. Marchers were stopped short at the ceasefire line, and 12 of them were killed and many arrested. This exposed Pakistan's reprehensible position on Kashmir completely.²⁹

The act of kidnapping Rubaiya Sayeed and the act of forming the interim independent government constituted an experience where the 'self' and the 'other' encountered and confronted one another. There was considerable strain between the ISI and the JKLF during the latter half of 1989. The ISI even forced the JKLF to change its central plank from sovereignty to self-determination. Jamal (2002) writes the ISI also demanded that its representative be allowed to sit in JKLF central committee meetings as an observer. Amanullah Khan rejected both ideas, saying that he would enable ISI to participate in the central committee meetings if he was allowed to sit for meetings of the Pakistan army. By early 1990, the ISI had cut all funds to the JKLF. Amanullah tried seeking help from Benazir Bhutto, but the communications channels were completely blocked.

JKLF was repeatedly attacked for its secular character by the ISI. As it was the first militant organisation to cross over the border for militant training, its cadres were attacked for fighting for a cause distant from Islam. But beneath the smokescreen of secularism, it was JKLF's vision for independent statehood that was a challenge for the Pakistani state

29 <https://kashmirilife.net/the-gilgit-rebel-issue-07-vol-08-104096/> [Online: web] Accessed 3 January 2019.

and the ISI. The Pakistan-supported groups adopted an area domination programme where the geographical territories were marked either as green or red. Green represented areas where pro-Pakistan groups dominated, and red represented areas where JKLF was in control. The JKLF cadre was attacked repeatedly for taking secular positions and pressurised for defection. Those who disagreed were killed mercilessly.

Constitution and Strategy of JKLF

In the proposed constitution, JKLF envisioned a federal, parliamentary political system. This system comprised five federal units: Kashmir Valley, Jammu Province, Ladakh, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit and Baltistan. These units would be autonomous with elected provincial governments and subdivided into districts with their administrative structure. At the centre, it put forward bicameral houses of the legislature with proportional representation. The lower house of the parliament would have proportionate representation vis a vis the population. The upper house would have an equal representation from all units.³⁰

The envisioned constitution provided social, economic, and political equality to religious and ethnic minorities and neutrality towards Pakistan and India. The proposed neutrality was such that the proposed republic of Jammu and Kashmir would develop economic cooperation and trade links with India and Pakistan. Regarding the socio-economic program, JKLF, strongly recommended by the Naya Kashmir manifesto adopted by the National Conference in the early 1940s, praised egalitarianism and social justice.³¹

The JKLF constitution promotes the non-homogenization of identity in many ways of autonomous federating units, which can provide greater recognition and establish legitimacy in many ways. Based on the interviews with activists from JKLF and reviewing newspaper articles, the strategies aim at actively disseminating nationalism. JKLF

30 JKLF Constitution (2003).

31 Ibid.