

to impart military training to recruits. To manage the shortage of funds, Bhat robbed a bank. The employees resisted, and in a shootout that followed,¹⁹ the bank manager was killed. It soon led to Bhat's arrest, and he was subsequently sentenced to death.

From the time of Bhat's arrest in 1976, the National Liberation Front changed its strategy towards advocacy and lobbying as practical techniques for bringing Kashmir to the forefront. This way, JKLF was formed in London, and a journal called *Voice of Kashmir International* was started. The lobbying mechanisms included booking the visitors' gallery of the United Nations General Assembly and raising slogans against the stalemate.

Plebiscite and for endorsing the independent claim to Kashmir. On behalf of JKLF, Amanullah Khan started holding press conferences to discuss the historicity of Kashmir and complete independence as an option. The lobbying continued from 1979 to 1984, and there was a lot of press and media publicity around this time. While the total number of people working for JKLF was not more than a few dozen, the organisation would quickly become the largest and most influential group working for Kashmiri independence. Soon branches were set up in New York, Holland, West Germany, Denmark, France, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Understanding the Impact of Youth Groups on Kashmiri Nationalism

The Plebiscite Front movement and the proliferation of youth groups became part and parcel of everyday life in Kashmir. These everyday experiences and events shaped the Kashmiri nationalist narrative. Faheem (2018) notes that the Azadi movement of the 1990s provided a context through the broken promises connected with other narratives, producing a collective narrative and thereby giving birth to sustained collective action.

19 *Main Kaun Hun*, Muhammad Maqbool Bhat.

The activities of the Plebiscite Front and the corresponding network of indigenous organisations led to what Anderson (2006:8) calls a “spontaneous distillation of complex tossing of historical forces”. Once these historical forces surfaced, Janus could acquire newer meanings. As these historical forces were transported through various social terrains, they acquired varying self-consciousness. Thus merging with a correspondingly wider network of more comprehensive political and ideological constellations.

Before 1947, the National Conference headed by Shiekh Muhammad Abdullah was the major political force behind the political mobilisation. His leadership charisma and appeal made it the primary catalyst for political mobilisation. This time, folk songs and stories are full of narratives of Shiekh’s popularity. However, by 1953, he was arrested, and a new Prime Minister was installed. This event marks the curtailment and erosion of the autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir. As the National Conference was banned and Shiekh Abdullah was imprisoned, many members, supporters, and sympathisers of the National Conference galvanised themselves into a new party called Plebiscite Front. The massive publicity done through the Plebiscite Front became the primary carrier for Kashmiri political nationalism in these years. This corresponded to a remarkable increase in the number of underground youth-led organisations.

The personality cult of Shiekh Muhammad Abdullah had grown regardless of the institutionally defined position and superseded the established institutional authority. After the Indira-Abdullah accord of 1975, the personality cult diminished, but by then, the historical forces had taken a self-directed trajectory. This corresponded to the e-reading public through educational reforms. Shiekh Muhammad Abdullah made several radical reforms, including access to free, standardised education. Education ensured that people would think about themselves and relate in newer ways. The land-to-tiller reforms successfully created a middle class that prioritised education over everything else. Razdan (1999) informs that in 1941, only 1.6 per cent of the Kashmiri Muslims could read and write. However, two decades later, the literacy rate for the state rose to 11.03 per cent and then 36.29 per cent. From the early 1950s,

Jamaat-e-Islami of Jammu and Kashmir also increased its involvement in education. Sikand (2006) records how Jamaat's growing network of schools made tremendous contributions to the field of education. Jamaat schools were planned as safeguards against the onslaught in the cultural sphere. The self-consciousness brought through education had taken different forms- Islamic, secular, socialistic, etc. and led towards political baptism across the class and sectarian lines. The partition of the sub-continent had already created a political atmosphere charged with newer doctrines, which were further transmitted through the surge in education.

Another major factor that sustained political nationalism was the rapid development of print. To borrow a line from (Anderson 1991:90), "The readership had expanded beyond the tiny literate reefs on the top of the vast illiterate ocean". The readers were connected through print, forming a visible invisibility symbol emblematic of the nationally imagined community. Ganguly (1996) cites that in 1965, 46 newspapers were published in Kashmir, while the figure in 1991 was 254. The advent of education, print, power-packed politics of the Plebiscite Front and the subsequent birth of Indigenous organisations on the one hand and the religious revivalist organisations like Ahle Hadith and Jamaat-e-Islami converged for setting the stage for Kashmiri political nationalism.

Before the Indira –Abdullah accord, the demand for plebiscite had been the primary demand of the Plebiscite Front for twenty-two years. These years were essential in forming political nationalism, and this memory laid the foundation for militant nationalism. In public memory, the mobilisation followed a continuity, which started in 1931. In this context, the youth organisations, particularly the JKLF, extensively used influences from past events, forging bonds between past and present events. The underground organisations were, in a way, weaving a parallel narrative from 1953 to 1987, where perceived political betrayals were openly discussed. Underground literature in books, pamphlets, and newsletters was being shared in a realm that was not controlled by the state. Faheem (2018) regards that instead of being a phase of relative calm, this phase was collective effervescence whereby shared narratives, jokes, rumour, and gossip embedded in the larger political reality of the

time were emerging as the powerful vehicles for political mobilisation in Kashmir. The slogans acted as memory snapshots, waiting to be discovered from generation to generation.

The cadre of the newly formed organisations revived and accelerated the political mobilisation through collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction of political events and how these events mediate between political opportunities and action. The youth-led organisations and their intervention created a collective perception of the Indira-Abdullah Accord and developed a new language of political nationalism. Equally, political nationalism, be it Arab or Afghan nationalism, provides motivations and helps the imagination locate oneself in a global matrix.

Run-Up to the Elections of 1987

The closure of legitimate avenues of democratic political participation had made way for many youth protest groups. The 1975 Indira -Abdullah accord eroded the legitimacy of the National Conference as a representative of Kashmiri Nationalism.

Punjabi (1989) characterises the 1980s as the result of the non-fulfilment of urges and aspirations of the people, the result of undemocratic functioning of different institutions of the state, the result of mal-administration in running the affairs of the state and violent expression and militant assertion of a sub-national identity. As the process of participation of people in decision making, power sharing and restructuring of the institutions did not take the ordinary course in the state in general and Kashmir valley in particular, the policy of appeasement was used to win over the estranged majority of the population. Appeasement included generous central government aid, gearing up a highly subsidised economy, and arbitrary and discretionary sanctions of permits licenses and permits. The bureaucracy assumed the role of according legitimacy to the successive undemocratic government. Thus, the cumulative effect of all these processes was the emergence of the new middle class in Kash-