

Jammu province, including bombarding the agitating protestors. As intense political activities took place across the state, the members of YMMA of Jammu and the Reading Room Party of Srinagar unified towards creating a common platform with a statewide appeal, resulting in the Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference.

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah insisted on building the party on secular lines, but Jammu leaders had a very different approach vis-a-vis the party's outlook. Gradually, the party was re-christened as the Jammu Kashmir National Conference. Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah's close rapport with the Indian National Congress was another obstacle to the functioning of the Kashmir Muslim Conference. Bazaz (1954) informs the growing proximity of the congress and Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, which ultimately led to the resignation of Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas from the National Conference and the restoration of the Muslim Conference in 1942. Whatever influence the National Conference could have had in Jammu province was pre-empted by the resurrection of the Muslim Conference. The political-ideological battle lines were drawn between the two provinces, with the National Conference working in close coordination – with the Indian National Congress having its primary concentration in the valley but claiming a presence across both regions. The Muslim Conference was primarily concentrated in the Jammu province and allegiance with the All India Muslim League. The autocratic Dogra rule ended in 1948, and Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah took over the reins, first as the emergency administrator and then as Prime Minister. This marked a watershed in the history of Kashmir as the 101-year-long Dogra rule ended, and the seat of power shifted to the Valley.

## The Moment of Partition

Partition put Jammu in a precarious position as the region witnessed the worst kind of communal frenzy, where the state administration was equally complicit in the perpetration of the violence. By the time the dust settled, the region had a significant central portion of its territory.

As much as 75.07 per cent of the entire population and 51.29 per cent of the area of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir was drawn from the Jammu province. Conservative estimates record that over a million Muslims of the region were uprooted and 250000–300000 massacred in the Jammu region alone in August–October 1947. With the Muslim leadership of Jammu jailed around this time, the National Conference, too, couldn't deliver to the dismay of Jammu Muslims. Thus, the Jammu factor in Kashmir politics appeared to complicate issues in the times to come.

While Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were all affected by the violence in 1947, written and oral evidence indicate that Muslims bore the brunt of the violence. Violence against Muslims in Jammu pre-dates the princely state's accession to India. Muslims comprised 61% of the population in the Jammu province of the Dogra state. However, the Hindu majority districts of Jammu, Udhampur, Reasi, and Kathua only made up 38%, becoming increasingly vulnerable in the build-up to Partition. Ian Stephens (1955) notes that the violence in Jammu began in August 1947 and continued for about eleven weeks. Stephens claims that five lakh people were killed and two lakhs went missing, with many women being abducted. The exact death toll varies across sources.

Christopher Snedden's (2012) controversial book *Kashmir: The Unwritten History* suggests that no less than two lakh Muslim men, women and children were killed, while the number of women abducted is estimated to be 27,000. Choudhary (2015), in his book, uses documents from the International Committee of the Red Cross to narrate how 256 Muslim women were abducted from Ustad Mohalla in Jammu before eventually being sent to their male kin in Pakistan. The number of abductions is said to be much higher, but many cases went unreported because of the conservative social setup. More than a thousand women could not be traced despite many efforts to locate them. Prominent Muslim Conference leader Choudhary Ghulam Abbas's daughter was also allegedly abducted by Hindu right-wingers in 1947. The large-scale displacement of Muslims caused significant demographic changes in the Jammu region. The community went from a majority of 61% to a minority of 30%. The censuses conducted after 1947 reveal the existence of "uninhabited villages" – villages whose residents left or were killed in 1947. The Jammu

violence was also accompanied by the systematic erasure of evidence and denials that followed the violence and the state's alleged conspiracy. Perhaps the main reason for attempts to erase any proof of the Jammu violence is that it questions the narrative.

The accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India was necessitated by the invasion of Pakhtoon tribes in 1947. While it is indisputable that Pakhtoons invaded Jammu and Kashmir in October 1947, it was not how the conflict started. Jawaharlal Nehru's biographer, Sarvepalli Gopal, acknowledges that the Jammu violence was the starting point of trouble in the princely state. The Indian government has consistently claimed that all the violence started on October 22, 1947. However, several press reports, some dated as early as September of 1947, speak about the violence in Jammu. This clearly shows that the Jammu violence preceded the tribal invasion. According to a New York Times report mentioned by Snedden, Jawaharlal Nehru informed the home minister, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, about the events in Jammu and also sent a 19-point report prepared by Nehru's close aide, Dwarkanath Kachru. The essential elements of the report were that the National Conference had decided to accede to the Indian Union and how Sheikh Abdullah deemed the "killings in the state" as "un-Islamic and un-Hindu". Since there was no violence in the Valley till then, it is clear that the

National Conference leader was referring to the massacre in Jammu. The report further stated that Maharaja Hari Singh had lost control over the administrative and governmental machinery. So this means that three weeks before the Pakhtoons arrived in Kashmir, the government of India had reliable information that the Maharaja had little control over his princely domain. The Pakhtoon invasion narrative serves two purposes – legitimising Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India and demolishing the premise for any indigenous mobilisation in the state. It completely ignores the uprising of Muslims in Poonch in September 1947, as well as the violence in Jammu. These events have been glossed over in all accounts of the Kashmir dispute. The Pakhtoon invasion narrative highlights the external threat while completely denying the indigenous revolt against the authority of the Maharaja. Another reason for the erasure of the Jammu massacres from public memory is the

evidence of state complicity in the events. While the arrival of a large number of Sikhs and Hindus from West Punjab led to a communal frenzy in Jammu, the Maharaja's administration played a vital role in the massacres. Various sources refer to the Maharaja's growing proximity to the Hindu right-wing. In an interview with Khalid Bashir Ahmad, who has conducted extensive research on the 1947 Jammu violence, prominent human rights activist Balraj Puri, a witness to the violence, testifies to the close relations between Maharaja Hari Singh and the Hindu Right. MG Golwalkar is said to have been a private guest of the Maharaja. Rajguru Sant Dev, a vital functionary of the Maharaja's regime, is said to have been the main link between the Maharaja and Hindu right-wing outfits. This was also the period when Rajguru had come to occupy enormous influence in the administration, sidelining the secular elements.

Furthermore, Muslim soldiers in Jammu, Mirpur and Poonch were disarmed, something which was not done with their colleagues of other religions. Ian Stephens claims that Maharaja Hari Singh not only encouraged the violence but also opened fire on a group of Gujjar Muslims. However, this also explains the failure of Kashmiri Muslim leadership – both separatist and mainstream – to accommodate survivors of the Jammu violence. Far from accommodating them, the leadership hasn't even acknowledged the events. Sheikh Abdullah understood the state's collaboration but chose to remain silent. No proper inquiry was ordered on the role of Maharaja Hari Singh and his Prime Minister, Mehr Chand Mahajan. Abdullah maintained that the survivors wanted to go to Pakistan, and the only justice that could be done to them was providing safe passage. A leader of Sheikh Abdullah's stature set a precedent, and no civil society or future government took to the cause of survivors of the 1947 massacres. As Ahmad (2014) writes, "The victims of the Jammu carnage still wait, some in body and the rest in soul, for justice which has alluded them all these decades".