

caves, vegetarianism, maintaining celibacy, etc. While accommodating local Hindu-Buddhist practices to the Islamic framework, the Rishis gradually assimilated the people into the Islamic identity. What is, however, unique about this identity is not merely the assimilation of the Kashmiris in Islam over six centuries but also, importantly, their urge to live with their Pandit compatriots in symbolic rather than synergetic relationships. The vitality of the movement that separates and unites a deep metaphysical identity can be reflected in the verses of Shiekh Noorud din Wali, the pioneer of the Rishi tradition.

Among the brothers of the same parents  
 Why did you create a barrier  
 Muslims and Hindus are one.  
 When will God be kind to His servants?  
 (Kulliyat, II, 1981:33-34)

Khan (2011) and Shah (2011) explain that Kashmiryat has been defined to serve the ideological interests of the Indian state. Neither can Kashmiryat be explained as Kashmiri nationalism. The conception of nationalism is foreign to metaphysically oriented civilisations. Any culture's mystical, metaphysical grounding implies that modern political appropriations are prone to suspicion.

The identity crisis is a modern phenomenon, and attempting to graft it onto traditional cultures is not admissible. Kashmir's self or spirit of individuality cannot be located without an in-depth analysis of its religions, mythologies and, most importantly, metaphysics. A comprehensive conception of Kashmiryat requires understanding the metaphysical tradition underlaid by diverse religious and philosophical expressions.

## Conclusion

Like elsewhere, they imagined the nation arose when education offered privileged access to understanding centuries of oppression. The development of social communication and the growth of print linked the ideas

of community, power, and time. This also, for the first time, made it possible for people to think about themselves in newer ways.

A deep-rooted sense of regional identity has existed in Kashmiri for long, which only hardened with the subsequent years of oppression. The Mughal and the subsequent ruling realms could not address this regional identity but widened the existing chasms by patronising a particular community. The religious migration impelled mass conversions to Islam, but the migrants got placed above the new converts, giving them access to sacred words and scripts. The new religion made the community imaginable but remained centripetal and hierarchal rather than dispersing horizontally. The majority was doubly discriminated against, and various border guards and symbols functioned to preserve the binary of 'us' and 'them'. There was a visible similarity-dissimilarity pattern, where members shared similarities and dissimilarities with the members. With one section of the population, i.e., the Kashmiri Pandits, the Muslims shared the language and culture, but somehow, the power dynamics were not balanced. With the non-members of the Kashmiri society, the Muslim majority shared the religion but not the culture and language.

The educational reform movements in British India filtered down some welfare payments to Kashmir, and some of the Kashmiri Muslims were able to make educational journeys into British India. These journeys also facilitated the rapid and easy transmission of political ideas rife in British India. Political ideas were transported to various geographies, emerging with multiple political and ideological terrains.

The arrival of education distinctively baptised this differentiated class into a collective where they began to assert their demands through the rights discourse. Since a majority shared this anxiety, it garnered a populist character very soon. These developments led to a re-interpretation of the historical realities, leading to rival histories and, subsequently, dual association and dual recognition with a single territory. By the 1930s, a new Kashmiri leader educated in British India replaced the religious leadership, and the discourse on economic, political, and social rights became an essential part of Kashmir's political

culture. This narrative shaped the articulation of coherent nationalism that accommodated the diverse local, religious and sectarian interests.

After 1947, Kashmir has always been imagined through a Hindu subjectivity that has obstructed any attempt to grant full citizenship rights to Kashmiris while, at the same time, it does not accept its distinct existence. The right to a distinct nationalism was obfuscated under the united nationalism. The new system did not redeem its pledge to conduct a referendum to concede to the demands of the wishes of the Kashmiri people. New Delhi supported unrepresentative governments to safeguard its position and pumped monetary emoluments to strengthen its limited patronage network. In a way, it replicated the structure inherited from the Dogra government. The demand for rights was met with political and economic coercion, which further solidified the assertion of rights in a religious language.

