

## **Understanding the Drift From Political Nationalism to Militant Nationalism**

Militant ethnic nationalism emerged to challenge the state by denying it symbols of authority and legitimacy. The militant form also blocked the monopoly of coercive violence. The political ethnic nationalism operated to undermine the state through mass agitation on social, economic, and political issues. However, militant nationalism, in a way, was perceived as eroding the ruling government's claim to authority. This was done by establishing the legitimacy of numbers. Thus, the militant movement was a strategy of sustained political violence to challenge the state. Guell (1989) notes that the strategy of armed struggle may be viewed from two distinct perspectives. From one perspective, armed struggle represents the first phase in the plan of political violence. It gradually advances from armed struggle to guerilla warfare and then to people's war to general insurrection and weaken the state. From the other perspective, armed struggle represents an autonomous strategy sufficient to achieve the desired goals.

The idea of a transition from political nationalism to militant nationalism can force the state to negotiate the demands made by the militants. However, this could be facilitated only by successfully coordinating two different forms of struggle, reconciling the conflicting demands of the strategy of armed struggle and political outreach and mobilisation.

The Kashmiri nationalist movement adopted a variety of structural combinations. For example, the political wing created and directed an effective mobilisation, setting up small semi-military organisations and directing subordinate wings to disseminate propaganda and mobilise local support for nationalism. It was successfully dispersed through military, political, trade union, and cultural forums. Distinct but allied organisations did not wage the military and political struggles. Kashmiri nationalism also took to an electoral strategy, using elections to expand the famous battle and expose the shortcomings of governments in power. The elected representatives sought to establish formal access to the state to translate movement aspirations into policy and create new institutions. However, many who opposed an electoral strategy regarded

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