

omised by India, and ethnic nationalism embodied in what Kashmiris called Kashmiriyat (being a Kashmiri).

## **Kashmiri Nationalism: An Overview**

The growth of Kashmiri nationalism can be broken down into a few critical themes: the construction of 'self' versus the 'other', the centrality of religious identity, the desire for political autonomy, and its contested nature. As Kashmiri identity cannot be seen as a homogenised monolith, its transformation into contestation does not happen without the intervention of exogenous factors.

Like in other identities, the constitution of Kashmir's identity is about differences. Identity formation happens through the self-realisation of an individual of how others perceive the individual. Mead (1934:225) argues that "an individual becomes self by taking attitudes of individuals towards himself/herself within a social environment." The collective formation of identity and the sense of self-reflexive action formulate the distinctions between the self and the other. The Kashmiri identity gets negotiated between the 'self' and the 'other' through how it imagines itself and how the identity of the other constructs an identity for the self. This book examines the self and the other through how the self/other binary is reproduced and arranged. The underlying argument remains that the relations of difference are distorted into othering only when certain factors play in. And in essence, those transformative processes form the constitutive basis of the self/other interaction. Often, the interaction between the self and the other could only be for securing one's identity. However, the difference is characterised by other factors like the nature of identity, social distance, etc. This work draws on the understanding that contestations between the self and the other are produced where identities are invoked overtly and made the basis for conflict. The social and political reproduction of conflict transforms the incompatibility of interests into an active battle between the self and the other.

Kashmiri identity in response to the 'other' needs to be understood in the context of the centuries of foreign rule Kashmir has witnessed – Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs, and Dogras. The identity has to be located in the series of dynamic interactions that have taken place over the years. Khan (2012) observes that the anxiety for preserving the Kashmiri identity can be traced to two crucial junctures, 1586 and 1846, when Kashmir came under the control of the Mughals and the Dogras, respectively. The sense of national and religious belonging also changed owing to the different ruling regimes. The establishment of the British Residency and the centralisation of the Dogra state under the British at the turn of the 20th century provided a context for an emphasis on 'community', which later became a reference point for identity.

A vital element of the 19th and 20th centuries political discourse in Kashmir is the repeated regional assertion against anything from the 'outside' (*Nebar*). While the narrative on Kashmiri regional and religious identities was undoubtedly transformed in indirect colonialism's social and political context, the historical discourse, literary forms, religious idioms, and symbols from the pre-colonial period were easily identifiable in the 19th and 20th-century Kashmiri public discourse. For instance, the growth of radical Islam in the valley caused discomfort among the Sufi practitioners of Islam. Similarly, the Kashmiri Pandit community became quite apprehensive of the designs of co-religionists who had migrated to Awadh and had begun attacking the regionally specific religious customs. The contending contentions of 'insider' and 'outsider' are witnessed numerous times.

In this context, the protests of 1931 are an important landmark as it was the first time that Kashmiri Muslims erupted against the Dogra rule. It was in the 1930s that the sense of belonging to a religious collectivity informed the discourse on rights and freedom. In other words, the new Muslim leadership that emerged in the wake of the events of 1931 linked religious affiliation with political demands by claiming rights for Kashmiri Muslims based on the concept of a just Islamic society. Furthermore, since this leadership ultimately sought to replace the autocratic rule of Dogras with Kashmiri self-rule, articulating national ideology was imperative to its project. The energies unleashed by this mo-

bilisation phase resulted in the formation of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. The period forms the fulcrum of how the emerging sense of political and religious belonging gradually hinged towards two directions – a civic territorial idea of Kashmiri nationalism and an ethnic idea of Kashmiri nationalism. The rechristening of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference indicates how emerging consciousness ranged from exclusivist to inclusive liberal democratic. The sense of belonging was split over the organic historical experience linked through linguistic, religious, and folk traditions versus a unified voluntary nature of the state. Therefore, the focus of the two is different: the idea of how people imagined and envisioned a community and the idea of belonging to the same. By the time of the partition, Kashmiri nationalism was emerging civilly. The emergence of a civil society within a demarcated geographic territory, legal equality to the members, a government that respects the law rather than exists above the law, and respect for liberal democracy were the demands nationalists were espousing. As the partition approached, the question of Kashmiri nationhood came to be tied with the fate of princely states in the eventuality of a British withdrawal. As a Muslim-majority kingdom with a Hindu ruler, Jammu and Kashmir's status was unique in its complexity. The Kashmir War of 1947 led to the Maharaja of Kashmir acceding to India on 26 October 1947. Lord Mountbatten accepted the accession with a clause that a referendum would be conducted in the region as soon as possible. The people would be allowed to either validate or negate the accession.

This provision for referendum or plebiscite became one of the main rallying points and demands by the Kashmiri nationalist movement. The much-promised referendum never happened, and the Pakistanis and nationalist sections in the valley claimed that it was an act of sabotage.

To account for the complexity of Jammu and Kashmir and accommodate nationalist claims in the state, it was given a special status under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Sheikh Abdullah, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference leader, became the state's first Prime Minister. As Prime Minister, Sheikh Abdullah combined secular, civic nationalism with socialist policies to create a constituency for his rule, which shaped the ideology of the National Conference. Besides ending

the hereditary monarchy, one of his significant achievements was the Abolition of Big Landed Estates Act, which ushered in land reforms and abolished the feudal system in Kashmir.

In the post-independence era and particularly under Sheikh Abdullah, a central concern in the Kashmiri nationalist sphere was the desire to maintain the state's autonomy vis-a-vis the Centre. Despite the assurance of Article 370, the central government continued pressuring the state government to accept more provisions of the Indian Constitution. After hard bargaining by both sides, India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah entered into what became known as the Delhi Agreement in July 1952. However, there were contesting narratives to this as well. While the Muslim Conference continued to advocate accession to Pakistan, Jammu's Dogra Hindus formed the Praja Parishad in the early 1950s, demanding the final and irrevocable accession to India. The removal and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953 proved to be a significant point of rupture between Kashmir and the Indian state. Abdullah created a support base for the National Conference through land reform and debtor relief measures. By winning over their loyalty, he managed to secure their tacit support for their accession to India. His arrest harmed the credibility of the state government. It also decisively turned the balance of power in favour of the Centre. A symbolic manifestation of this was degrading the vocabulary of the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir to the Chief Minister under the state's new constitution adopted in 1957.

The structural breakdown enforced by the state led to the creation of alternate spheres of political mobilisation. Non-state alternatives emerged when the state-dominated participation and representation. The state promoted nationalism, which was fundamentally majoritarian and restricted autonomous political agency. The political process was based on centralisation and hegemonic control, curtailing legitimate representation. Thus, the strategy of hegemony and delegitimation emerged at the doctrinal and political levels. The state's interests were taking priority over all the other commitments made at the time of accession. The state-nationalism espoused a parochial character and made itself a carrier of limited loyalties, ignoring or deliberately wiping

out local or cultural characteristics. This situation led to the crisis of legitimacy and longevity of regional nationalism. The internal crisis of the state and the search for community and identity made way for a confrontation between the forces of Kashmiri nationalism and state nationalism.

Abdullah's arrest in 1953 strengthened the autonomous nationalist forces. The heightened political turmoil led to the formation of the J&K Plebiscite Front in 1955. Its doctrine was "ensuring self-determination through a plebiscite under UN auspices, withdrawal of the armed forces of both nations from Kashmir and restoration of civil liberties and free elections." These demands continue to be a central part of the nationalist outfits' program in Kashmir.

The state's majoritarian character promoted nationalism, restricting collective rights at a doctrinal and political level. The interests of the central state were prioritised over all other promises made at the time of accession. State-led nationalism espoused an exclusionary character and became a carrier of limited loyalties. This situation led to a crisis of legitimacy and provided longevity to local nationalism. It also led to youth-led organisations creating alternate avenues of mobilisation, channelling alternate narratives towards sustained collective action.

The youth-led organisations mainly emerged to launch an indigenous struggle to highlight the Kashmir issue internationally by giving it an indigenous shade without the involvement of Pakistan. These political formations became essential to everyday life in Kashmir and shaped Kashmiri nationalism. Sheikh Abdullah's growth as a figure of Kashmiri resistance was cut short with the Indira-Abdullah Accord of 1975. The years from 1950–1970 were a time of intensive political mobilisation that constantly invoked the shared memories of denial and dispossession. The narratives produced during this period came to configure the political events within a context and created conditions for shaping the collective conscience.

Shiekh passed away in 1982 and was succeeded by his son, Farooq Abdullah. However, the Centre dismissed Farooq Abdullah's government and imposed President's Rule in the state, in a repeat of what had happened in several other states in India under Indira Gandhi. The periodic

dismissal of elected governments and interference by the Centre prevented even pro-accession leaders like Sheikh Abdullah and Farooq Abdullah from building a stable political base. This created a vacuum that was later exploited by separatist outfits. President's rule administered by Governor Jagmohan Malhotra following the sacking of Farooq's government was accompanied by a crackdown on protests and arrest of political leaders.

The events of the 1980s created perfect conditions for the growth of militant nationalism. Non-fulfilment of the political aspirations of the people, undemocratic functioning of different institutions of the state, and maladministration in running the affairs of the state made ground for violent expression and militant assertion of Kashmiri identity. The breaking point was the electoral rigging of 1987, where Congress and Farooq Abdullah's National Conference contested in alliance. It was opposed by a coalition of nonmainstream, anti-establishment groups known as the Muslim United Front (MUF). MUF represented a new face of Kashmir politics. By most accounts, the elections are said to have been rigged, and reports reveal that candidates of the MUF were beaten up. Pakistan, on its part, tried to capitalise on the resentment in the valley and provided patronage to the MUF member's militant groups, reinforcing its irredentist claims over Kashmir through the militant groups. While the JKLF stood for complete independence and reinforced civic nationalism, the Hizbul Mujahideen, which was the militant wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, stood for the merger with Pakistan.

Kashmiri nationalism adopted a variety of structural combinations to pursue its goals. Political nationalism directed an effective mobilisation for nationalism and tried utilising electoral strategy to expand the base of popular struggle. It sought to establish formal access to the state to translate movement aspirations into policy and ultimately created new state institutions. Meanwhile, militant nationalism undermined the state's legitimacy through mass agitation on social, economic, and political issues. It sought to erode the ruling government's claim to authority in the eyes of constituents and also tried to convince the international community of the state's legitimacy. In a way, the militant transition was directed towards securing the political rather than the

military overthrow of the state. Thus, one can say that the military and political struggles were not waged distinctly but in alliance. The outbreak of militant nationalism was not sudden but rather a gradual culmination of demands expressed in political form earlier. The absence of democracy, deep political mobilisation, and the growth of modern education and the press further channelled the grievances into a vocabulary of nationalism.

One can broadly assume that over the years, these central themes pointed out earlier constantly reinforce Kashmiri nationalism — fear of the other, religious identity, and loss of autonomy. The study uses 1989 as an entry point to delineate the nature and emerging aspects of Kashmiri nationalism.

## Conceptual Definitions

### Nationalism and its Typology

Nationalism is a political belief that people representing a natural community should live under one political system. The underlying question is what classifies a natural community: was the natural community invented, or was there a preexistence of nations? Additionally, today, what is the relation of nations and nationalism to modernity? The position taken by the perennialists and primordialists reflects whether it is natural or not; nations have been there for a long. The features of a nation, whether symbolic or mythical, pre-date the living memory of its members. The second position by modernists is that nations have emerged within a modern context and are created cosmetically. Schleiermacher (2004) and Fichte (1808) are the primary theorists who based their arguments on the primordial/perennial grounds where nations are an ancient and natural phenomenon. As the nation is immemorial, national forms may change, age and particular nations may dissolve, but the identity of a nation remains the same. Fichte (1808) advocated for the earthly fatherland and based his claim on ethnic-genealogical and cultural-linguistic elements.