

The Mughal decline made way for Afghan rule over Kashmir, which is seen as one of the worst periods of poverty and persecution. During this period, the Pandits were deeply entrenched with the administration and connived at aborting any chances of rebellion against the Afghans. Similarly, during the Sikh and Dogra reigns, Pandits enjoyed power and patronage of the Lahore Durbar while naked economic, political, and religious aggression was meted out on the Muslim subjects.

During the Dogra era, a series of natural calamities took a heavy toll on lives, forcing a considerable portion of the population to move to neighboring Punjab. Against this scenario, Kashmiri Pandits did not feel any pressure to migrate. Lawrence (1895) validates that since Kashmiri Pandits were powerful, they could avail grains during natural calamities. The enormity of the Muslim migration to Punjab can be realised from the Punjab Census Report (1891), which listed around 111 775 Muslims from Kashmir settling in Punjab.

The differential access to the political and economic centre created fissures, rather veritable chasms, in Kashmiri society. Since Muslims had limited to no access to education, the community was likely to remain at the bottom of the social and political hierarchy. Hence, it could not correct and compensate for the disadvantages that had haunted them. The Kashmiri Pandits were comfortably placed and continued to work as an arm of repression.

However, Gellner's (1985) argument also suggests that within the differentiated population, there will be many who are much better and much more fit in terms of whatever performance criteria may currently be relevant and applied. The condition of this section will be painful and fraught with tension. And the sociological obstacles won't be easily removed by goodwill or legislation.

Historical Factors

The year 1931 is critical to understanding the emergence of civil society and its role vis-a-vis the growth of Kashmiri nationalism. The events of 1931 satisfy all the qualifications that a nationalist narrative demands: a

unified movement, a mature civil society, and the arrival of Muslim leadership on the scene. The scope of the uprising was not limited as it made religious collectivity and rights an inseparable discourse. Kanth (2008) narrates how 1931 made *Hakuk* (rights) and *Baidari* (awakening) part of the Muslim self-consciousness. It is in the face of the events that unfolded in 1931 that the rights discourse evolved.

The incidents of 1931 began in Jammu on April 29, when a *maulvi* was asked to stop the Eid *khutba* (sermon). Following this, protest meetings were organised, and the government was requested to punish the offenders. However, in another few days, an incident of a similar nature reoccurred where a Hindu constable allegedly desecrated the Quran. Young Men's Muslim Association of Jammu⁴, which had earlier contacted the government over the *khutba* controversy, sprang into action again and issued notices for calling protest meetings throughout the state. The blasphemy was yet again prompted by the discovery of a few torn pages of the Quran in a Srinagar drain.

By this time, in Kashmir Valley, the reading room party formed by the Muslim graduates was emerging as a locus of Muslim civil society.⁵ The

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- 4 Muslim civil society in Jammu emerged in response to the network of civil society reform among Hindus and Sikhs of the region. Given the geographical proximity, these reforms were led by mostly Punjab-based organisations and run by one or the other Hindu sects. Hence, the Muslims were excluded. Towards the end of the 19th century, Arya Samaj was firmly established in Jammu. Soon, Shri Ramakrishna Sewa Ashram also followed. The vast influence of Arya prompted the entry of Sikh organisations like Guru Singh Sabha, Khalsa Youngman Association. This social reform based on identity inevitably led to the formation of sociopolitical organisations by Muslims, too. Muslims indigenously formed Anjuman-e-Islamia Jammu for their community's social and educational upliftment. However, in the coming years, the Anjuman-e-Islamia made a political foray under the name of Jammu's Young Men's Muslim Association (YMMA). Given the curbs on political activities, YMMA worked as an underground political organisation for the Muslim Awakening. (Choudhary, 2015)
- 5 The educated young Muslims from the valley formed an informal party as freedom of association was strictly proscribed. These young men formed a reading room party where the grievances of the Muslim community were expressed and

protest program given by the Young Man's Muslim Association was enthusiastically followed in Kashmir as a protest against the trampling of Muslim rights. Big gatherings were held where the policies of the Dogra government were criticised.

A massive gathering of Muslims assembled for protest in the courtyard of Khanqah-i-Maula shrine of Srinagar on 21 June 1931. A person named Abdul Qadeer, who was in the services of a European visitor, made a speech that was considered seditious and for which he was promptly arrested. His trial date was July 13, 1931, inside the central jail premises. On July 13, restive crowds and police clashed, resulting in the death of 22 unarmed Muslims. Some accounts foreground a picture of communal rioting where Muslim men destroyed the shops and homes of Pandits after the civilian killings.

However, a remarkable difference remains in how the two communities remember the event and how local and official histories narrate the event. The state's narrative contributes to constructing a particular image of the Muslim public. The Srinagar Riot Enquiry Committee report appointed by Maharaja to enquire into the disturbances of 1931 publicised that the movement erupted as Kashmiri masses had been duped by their leadership by blurring the boundaries between their religious and economic grievances, thereby communalising the 1931 movement. The commission read the uprising in Kashmir as primarily inspired by 'outsiders'. Bazaz (1954) notes that as the external influences were cited for provoking Muslim masses that were dumb-driven cattle, it denied any agency to the locals. This assertion also dismissed agitating masses as having no rationality or historical reason for mass eruption.

The commission also attempted to define the agitation as a communal event between the Pandits and Muslims. Conversely, it is more important to understand 1931 as an outcome of years of oppression. Because the demands of Kashmiri Muslims were couched in religious terms, it did not mean that the demands were essentially communal. Zutshi (2003) corroborates that despite the communitarian rhetoric in

articulated. Subsequently, the room party went on to play an extremely instrumental role in the growth of nationalism in Kashmir.

the aftermath of 1930, the tensions were far from motivated by religion. The tussle between the Muslims and the Pandits in and after 1931 was more about political and economic representation than religious antagonism.

Significantly, the events of 1931 marked the advent of Muslims into the political scene, which coincided with the emergence of Muslim provincial leadership in British India. It also gave a common platform to the Muslims of the Jammu and Kashmir divisions to articulate their rights. Given the geographical and political proximity of Jammu with Punjab, it also meant an intervention from Punjabi Muslim organisations in Kashmir. The All-India Kashmir Committee, Anujuman-i Himayat-i-Islami, and Anjuman-i-Kashmiri Musalman were prominent. The prevailing situation in Kashmir equally appealed to the Ahrar and Ahmediya leadership in Punjab, and both parties plunged into Kashmir to boost their political image.⁶ Jalal (2008) writes that Majlis-i-Ahrar decided to send its volunteers to liberate thirty-two lakh Muslims of Kashmir valley. This position of Ahrar was challenged by the creation of the All-India Kashmir Committee by Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, a prominent Ahmediya.⁷ Looking at the situation, the Government of India feared that the uprising in Kashmir would spill to the neighbouring province of Punjab. It advised the Durbar to enquire into the disturbances as a measure of political expediency. Eventually, the Maharaja's government announced the appointment of B.G. Glancy to hold an independent commission to investigate the grievances.

6 In Punjab, the British patronised landed rural intermediaries who could be counted for becoming allies of the Government. Gradually, oppositional voices in the form of the Ahrar party rose, which was critical of the British and the landowner alliance. The Ahrar party was reformatory and primarily composed of urban lower and middle classes. For more, see (Jalal 2002:342).

7 Ahmediya is an Islamic revival movement founded in Punjab. The originated with the life and teachings of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who claimed he embodied the metamorphic second coming of Jesus of Nazareth and the divine guide, which was foretold by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad. The orthodox Muslims consider the message of Ahmad heretical, as they believe Muhammad was the final prophet of Islam.

Secondly, the events of 1931 transformed the political vocabulary. Muslims employed moral discourses to demand their rights, while Pandits resorted to the past by continuously reiterating their position. For example, in one of the representations by Sanatan Dharma Youngmen's Association Srinagar, the group blames the durbar for step-motherly treatment despite the historical importance of the Kashmiri Pandits, which entitled them to special protection.

These grievances established the biased nature of the state in creating a public sphere, which gave differential patronage to individuals based on their membership in particular religious communities. As the communities became pitted against each other, it led to the newer forms of 'Self' and the 'Other'. The new subjectivity challenged the rationality that Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims had held when they raised the slogan of Kashmir for Kashmiris. The events brought into play the fear of numbers, whereby the Pandits feared losing ground in the state to the Muslim majority. This gave impetus to the idea of a threatened Hindu minority. The events also catapulted several new actors on the political stage of Kashmir, which was different from the older elite leadership.

The new leadership was determined to gain total mileage out of 1931 by drawing attention to the origins of the disturbance. The economic and political disabilities suffered by the people could only be corrected through a widespread reformation of the structures of the state, which implied representation through legislation. Bazaz (1978) writes that the memorials presented a detailed description of the proposed constitution for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which would guarantee the fundamental rights of religion, press, platform, assembly, and equality of treatment of all state subjects and the formation of executive and legislative bodies to carry out the will of the people. Significantly, the memorial demanded proportionate religious representation for the elected representatives.

As the events of 1931 catapulted the growth of civil society in Kashmir, one of its significant contributions has also been the formation of the Muslim Conference, which later converted into the National Conference. The inaugural session was held in October 1932, during which the constitution was drafted and a party flag was adopted. The unique feature of

this association was that it extended beyond the territorial divisions, and representatives from all parts of the undivided Jammu and Kashmir became a part of it. However, to make the Muslim Conference inclusive, the party was converted into a National Conference in 1939. Abdullah (1986) writes that the policy of admitting non-Muslims was neither tactical nor diplomatic. Therefore, a sincere voice opened the doors for all minorities to join the fight against autocracy. This political strategy of transforming the politics of grievances into a successful nationalistic movement draws an analogy in Gellner (1983), who considers that assimilative functions could be performed either through triumphant nationalism or through education. Prem Nath Bazaz, who was Shiekh's companion in this effort, wrote a letter to Mahatma Gandhi, explaining the direction of Kashmir politics to him. Bazaz (1944) wrote that only nationalism could save his country and community because neither the Hindus nor the Muslims could wipe out one or the other from the government. Since Kashmiri Pandits and Kashmiri Muslims did not live in segregated localities, communalism would endanger their lives. It is only nationalism that would save such families. Consequently, members who aligned with the Punjab-based Muslim politics did not become a part of the rechristened National Conference and relaunched Muslim Conference. This splitting of ranks had many ramifications for the state's politics in the years to come, as their vision was more closely aligned with the idea of Pakistan and pro-Pakistan politics in the coming years.

Educational Factors

In the context of Kashmir, education was intermeshed with the structures and functions of the established hierarchies. The early Dogra state did not intervene in the indigenous educational system, as it was hectic consolidating its dominions. The notion essentially was education was the prerogative of the ruling class, and hence, Kashmiri Muslims would be kept away from education. The Census of India (1911) notes that in 1910, there were only 15 educated Muslim males compared to 453 Hindu