
Political divisions of the divided State of Jammu & Kashmir

The State of Jammu & Kashmir has enticed attention due to the conflict situation, fuelled by rampant terrorism in the Kashmir Valley for close to three decades; conflict that has its roots in the multi-layered identity politics of the State. Kashmir-centric, singular political representation of the State, more than often disregarding the plurality of the society, in terms of it being an abode to diverse cultures, religions, ethnicity and languages, largely contributes to the political opinions of its inhabitants. The demographic pattern coupled with an overlapping and heterogenous identity has equally contributed to the varied political opinions of the people of the State. The international community too, has chosen to selectively focus on the Kashmir Valley, conveniently ignoring Jammu and Ladakh and evidently oblivious to debates on Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir, both of which continue to struggle for basic constitutional rights and civil-liberties.

Jammu & Kashmir was not isolated from the Indian Sub-continent. However, as a geographically strategic and politically distinct region it has always been home to alternative languages of belonging in the form of regional identification, religion and nationalism within the Sub-continent.

Geographical divisions

The territories of Jammu, Kashmir Valley, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir form the erstwhile Princely State of Jammu & Kashmir, founded by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846, well before the partition of (British) India in August 1947. At that time the total area of the state was 2,22,236 sq km (85,806 sq miles). Pakistan invaded the State in October 1947 and the first war was fought between India and Pakistan over the Princely State of Jammu & Kashmir from 1947 till 1st of January 1948 when the Prime Minister of India, JawaharLal Nehru called his forces and a formal cease-fire was declared as he took matters to the UN Security Council, though about one third of the area i.e. 78,114 sq km (30,159 sq miles) i.e. the whole of Gilgit, Mirpur, Kotli and a part of Poonch came into the possession of Pakistan, leaving behind 143,304 sq. km (55,330 sq miles) under Indian administration. In 1962 China occupied about 37,555 sq km (14,500 sq miles) in Ladakh, known as Aksai Chin. Pakistan illegally ceded the Shaksgam Valley in the disputed Northern Territories to China in 1963, which is about 5,180 sq km (2,000 sq miles) in area, to improve its diplomatic relations with China.

The Kashmir province is further divided into six districts; Anantnag, Baramulla, Srinagar, Budgam, Kupwara and Pulwama. Jammu province is demarcated into following districts - Jammu, Kathua, Poonch, Rajouri, Udhampur and Doda while Leh and Kargil districts are part of Ladakh. Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir consists of two regions namely 'Azad' (Urdu for 'Free') Jammu & Kashmir - 10,733 sq km (4,144 sq



miles) and Gilgit Baltistan 77, 218 sq km (29,814 sq miles), formerly known as Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA).

According to the Census of India 2011, Indian Administered Jammu & Kashmir recorded a population of 12,548,926. The State also recorded a growth of 23.7% in its population beginning from year 2001 till 2011. Based on its annual growth rate, its population is estimated to be 14,280,373 in 2017. Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir has a total population of 4,045,366 as per the 2017 Census, while as Gilgit- Baltistan is inhabited by close to 2 million people.

Gilgit Baltistan is administratively divided into three divisions; Baltistan, Gilgit and Diamer. These, in turn are divided into ten districts, consisting of the four Baltistan districts of Skardu, Shigar, Kharmang, and Ghanche, and the six Gilgit districts of Gilgit, Ghizer, Diamer, Astore, Hunza and Nagar, of which Astore and Diamer are part of Diamer Division. The principal administrative centres are the towns of Gilgit and Skardu. Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir is also divided in three administrative units; Mirpur, Muzafarabad and Poonch, further divided into ten districts.

Ethnic plurality- regional, religious and linguistic

Indian Administered Jammu & Kashmir is a heterogeneous State divided into three main divisions; Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, with its inhabitants possessing different ethnic backgrounds, professing diverse religions, culture and language. The major ethnic groups living in Jammu & Kashmir include Kashmiris, Gujjars, Bakarwals, Paharis, Dogras and Ladakhis. Jammu lies towards the southern and south-eastern side of the State and has people who are related to those of the Punjab. They are mostly Hindu, with Muslim and Sikh minorities. Jammu province constitutes 65.23% of Hindus, 30.69% of Muslims, 3.57% of Sikh, whereas Christian, Buddhist and Jain populations are negligible. Hindi, Dogri and Punjabi are the most commonly spoken languages in Jammu Province. The Valley of Kashmir lies towards the western side of the State. 97.16 % of the total population of the Kashmir Province constitutes of Muslims while Hindus constitute the largest minority community with 1.84% population and some negligible percentages of other faiths. The major languages are Urdu and Kashmiri.

Ladakh on the other hand stretches over the northern and north-eastern mountainous part of the State. It has been the highest centre of Buddhism which is practiced as a way of life. Buddhist and Shia Muslims are the dominant groups in Ladakh. Its two districts are Leh with 68% Buddhist and Kargil that has 91% Muslim population. Other religious groups are in minority, which include Hindus (6.22%) while Sikh, Christian and Jain population is negligible. The people of Ladakh are of Indo-Tibetan origin and the Muslims speak Balti while the Buddhists speak Ladakhi. In Indian Administered Jammu & Kashmir, the principal languages spoken are Kashmiri, Urdu, Punjabi, Dogri, Hindi, Pahari, Balti, Gojri and Pashto. The official language of the State being Urdu, occupying an essential space in media, education, religious and political discourses, and the legislature of Jammu & Kashmir.

The ethnic groups that dominate areas along the Line of Control (LoC) are called Paharis, Gujjars and Bakarwals. Gujjar-Bakarwal is a Sunni Muslim nomadic tribe and are found both in Jammu and the Kashmir Valley; wholly nomadic pastoral people who move along the Himalayan slopes in search of pastures for their huge flocks of goats and sheep. Jammu's Dogra culture and tradition is very similar to that of neighbouring Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, while Ladakh is famous for its unique Indo-Tibetan culture. Sanskrit and Tibetan language form an integral part of Ladakh's Buddhist lifestyle.

Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir is inhabited by Muslims and majority of them are ethnically Punjabi. Though Urdu is an official language, other languages commonly spoken are Pahari, Gojri and Punjabi. The communities living in this part of Jammu & Kashmir are Gurhar, Jat, Awan, Abasi, Sudhan and other ethnic Kashmiri populations from and around the Valleys of Neelam and Leepa respectively. The culture of Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir has many similarities to that of northern Punjabi (Potohar) culture in Punjab province and the Kashmiri language is spoken by only 5% of the population. The population of Gilgit-Baltistan consists of many diverse linguistic, ethnic, and religious sects. The ethnic groups include Shins, Yashkuns, Kashmiris, Kashgaris, Pamiris, Pathans and Kohistanis. Gilgit-Baltistan is a multilingual region where Urdu is the official language while English is the co-official language and is also used in education. Other commonly spoken languages by different ethnic groups are Shina, Balti, Burushaski, Khowar and Wakhi. Gilgit-Baltistan is the only Shia majority area in Sunni majority Pakistan.

Demographic Changes

- ***Pakistani Invasion (1947- 1948)***

In 1947 when the British left India, the Sub-continent was divided into two sovereign States, India and Pakistan. Along with other 562 Princely States, Jammu & Kashmir became independent, recognizing the paramountcy of the British crown, and was given an option of acceding to one of the two emergent States of India or Pakistan. To the dismay of both India and Pakistan, Maharaja Hari Singh, the Hindu ruler of a Muslim majority State harboured a vision of independence, by refusing to accede to either India or Pakistan. As the Maharaja vacillated the idea of accession, Pakistan invaded the State of Jammu & Kashmir using the combination of tribesmen and Pakistani troops. The Maharaja desperately turned towards India for military assistance and India agreed to send in troops. As sending in troops required a legal foundation, a legal document, namely the “*Instrument of Accession*” was signed by the Maharaja, by the virtue of which the State of Jammu & Kashmir acceded to the Republic of India.

“Intelligence reports from the frontier areas of Poonch and Mirpur as well as the Sialkot sector started coming in which spoke of large scale massacre, loot and rape of our villagers by aggressive hordes from across the borders. I recall the grim atmosphere that began to engulf us as it gradually became clear that we were losing control of the outer areas”. –
Excerpt from Dr. Karan Singh’s (Son of Maharaja Hari Singh and ‘Yuvraaj’ - heir apparent - of Jammu & Kashmir) Autobiography - “Karan Singh Autobiography”.

By the end of the war, Pakistan occupied region of Jammu & Kashmir consisted of the then districts of Bhimber (Mirpur, Kotli and Bhimber tehsils), Muzaffarabad (Muzaffarabad tehsil), parts of Poonch (Bagh and Sadhnuti tehsils), Gilgit and the Frontier Ilaqas, and Skardu and Baltistan - part of Ladakh. However, some parts of Bhimber and Poonch areas are in Indian Administered Jammu & Kashmir as well as Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir. Part of Jammu & Kashmir State occupied by Pakistan is wrongly advertised by the Pakistani State as ‘Azad Kashmir’, to the dismay of the local population, while internationally it is referred to as Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir, which includes the vast area of Gilgit Baltistan.

The pre-partition demographics of the State are as follows; Jammu & Kashmir had a total of about 4 million people, of whom 76.4% were Muslim, 20.1% were Hindu, and 3.50% Other, mostly Sikh and Buddhist. The two main cities were Srinagar, with 208,000 people (78.4% Muslim, 20.7% Hindu, 0.9% Other), and Jammu, with 50,000 people (60.6% Hindu, 31.6% Muslim, 7.8% Other, mostly Sikh).

The figures corroborate the fact that Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir should have a substantial number of Hindus and Sikhs, though these minorities went missing during and after Pakistan's invasion of the State in 1947. As per the census of 1941, Muzaffarabad, Bhimber and Poonch areas were inhabited by sizeable numbers of Hindu and Sikh minorities constituting of Brahmins, Hindu Rajputs and Jat communities. In the wake of Partition, despite the flood of thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees towards the border towns (now in Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir), the Pakistani invasion devastated these minorities to the extent that there are hardly any Hindus and Sikhs left in Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir.

After the partition of Punjab around 100,000 Hindu and Sikh refugees from Sialkot migrated to Jammu, carrying with them the *'harrowing stories of Muslim atrocities'* which ignited communal tensions in Jammu. There were districts within Jammu province with a clear Muslim majority; Mirpur (80.41%), Poonch (90%) and Riasi (68.06%). Other districts had a considerable Muslim minority; Jammu (39.60%), Kathua (25.33%) and Udhampur (43.62%). There were reports of killings of Muslims in the areas where they were in minority. Thousands of Muslims were killed and women dishonoured. Hence, as an aftermath of the Partition followed by the invasion of the State of Jammu & Kashmir by Pakistan, people from all ethnic communities were killed, thereby significantly effecting the demographics of the State. In backdrop of Partition, the Pakistani invasion and communal rioting, Muslims and Hindus started killing each other under the pretext of religion, revenge or political dominance.

"Conversely Muslims killed many Hindus and Sikhs in other parts of Jammu Province and in the Muzaffarabad district of Kashmir Province.....equally frenzied, they took revenge, or inspired others to take revenge on Jammu Muslims, particularly those more vulnerable because they lived in Hindu majority areas in eastern Jammu Province". - Christopher Snedden, Australian political scientist, academic researcher and author.

- ***Gilgit Baltistan***

The Gilgit Baltistan region currently under Administration of Pakistan, is inhabited by Muslims, the majority of them being from the Shai sect. In 1948, Shias constituted about 85% of the population in Gilgit Baltistan. In 1974, the Government of Pakistan, under the leadership of President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto abrogated the State Subject Rule in Gilgit-Baltistan, which protected the status of the indigenous people since the rule allowed only the natives (also referred to as State Subjects) to acquire permanent residence in the State. The abrogation of the State Subject Rule allowed non-State Subjects from mainland Pakistan to settle here, thereby changing the demography of the region and the State of Jammu & Kashmir. The growing intolerance for minority groups in Pakistan, had already begun in the 1970s, received full State support under General Zia-ul-Haq, who pushed Wahhabi-oriented Islamization in the country. The minority communities like the Shias, Ismailis, Sufis and Ahmadis were and are still targeted by Sunni sectarian groups. The tensions between Shia and Sunni communities increased especially after the construction of the Karakoram Highway, which connects this previously isolated region with China and mainland Pakistan, and during which the Shia's of Gilgit-Baltistan were subjected to massive oppression and human rights violations. It is estimated that over 30,000 Gilgit residents have fled since the year 2000 due to increased sectarian violence orchestrated by the Pakistani State and discrimination by the people from mainland Pakistan, who have settled in the region in the absence of the previous State Subject Rule.

- ***Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir***

In 1960's, Mangla Dam was constructed in Mirpur area of Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir by the Pakistani government to produce high-quality electricity for industrial purposes in mainland

Pakistan. Several thousand aboriginals were forced to vacate their land. This development coincided with the man-power requirement in textile factories in the United Kingdom. A sizeable population from Mirpur left for Britain, but till today, no compensation has been provided to the displaced by the Pakistani government, stating the non-Constitutional status of Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir as a reason for non-payment. The displacement of this community of Mirpur not only led to loss of finances, fertile lands and graves of their forefathers but also resulted in cultural dislocation. The mass migration that took place post the construction of Mangla Dam, contributed to demographic changes in Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir. Estimations put 70% of the British Pakistanis, from Mirpur.

- *Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits*

The Kashmir Valley was engulfed by an armed insurgency, sponsored by Pakistan in 1989, with the aim of annexing the Kashmir Valley by communally cleansing Kashmir of its minority community of Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus) which significantly altered the demographics of the State. The objective of the armed struggle was to evict the minority community in order to strengthen Pakistan's claim over Jammu & Kashmir and resulted in selective ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits (Kashmiri Hindus) and assassination of secular Kashmiri Muslims like writers, academicians, artists and bureaucrats. Kashmiri Pandits form a 3% minority in the Valley and by 1990 the entire community of about 350,000 people were forced to flee their ancestral homeland. After nearly achieving their aim of changing the structure of human population in the Valley, Pakistan sponsored terrorist organizations were successful in extending their subversive activities to Doda, Poonch and Rajouri districts of Jammu & Kashmir, where a series of Hindu massacres also led to migration of the minority community.

Socio-Economic Changes

The continued conflict in the Kashmir Valley had adverse impact on the economy and the social structure of an otherwise liberal and secular Kashmiri society. Weeks (sometimes months) long Hartals (strikes) and curfews forced many people to shift their primary trading centres from the Valley to other parts of the country and others were forced to leave their ancestral homes looking for alternate means of livelihood to combat the economic catastrophe. Education turned out to be another casualty of the ongoing turmoil and the lack of educational facilities and job opportunities led to substantial number of youth moving out of the State, eventually leading to brain drain. Lately there has been an influx of large-scale illegal migrants from Myanmar (bordering with Bangladesh) referred to as '*Rohingyas*'. As per Government reports about 13,400 migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh are living in camps in Jammu.

Political Divisions

The inhabitants of the State of Jammu & Kashmir are '*politically disparate*' having essentially diverse and often varying political leanings and loyalties. The erstwhile Princely State consisting of different geographical units, Kashmir Valley, Jammu, Ladakh, Gilgit Baltistan and (now) Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir, which all can be categorized based on culture, religion, language and ethnicity; such diversity has its impact on the political outlook of its inhabitants that leads to political divisions. Though the concept of distinct Kashmiri political identity evolved in the 1930s with the rise of a movement against the Dogra rule in 1931, but took a violent turn in 1989. Supporters of the insurgency claimed it to be a rather passive '*struggle*' for greater political rights but it soon became apparent that the struggle was based on communal lines and in essence, was terrorism, supported by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The violence led to loss of countless innocent lives, disruptive schooling, destruction of support system, erosion of ethnic cohesion, alteration of the social and

economic order of the society and the exodus of the minority community of Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus).

The genesis of this terrorism and ongoing unrest for nearly three decades which has consumed generations is often attributed to the alleged rigged elections of 1987 in the State. In reality it was a proxy-war initiated by Pakistan to annex the Kashmir Valley and at the same time, inflict a thousand cuts on its adversary, India. Pakistan successfully injected communal ideology in Kashmiri Muslims, thereby altering the means and goals of this “*political revolt*” making it evident that it was based on religious foundations. The violence in the Kashmir Valley is religious in character rather than political, being dominated by group of militant leaders acting increasingly under a Pan-Islamic ideology. Islamist intellectuals and activists have been seeking to distort the difference between Islam as a religion and nationalism, reinforcing the Islamic political consciousness by politicizing already existing religious traditions and practices and by resisting change and modernization.

Kashmiri Muslims, who form the majority in the Kashmir Valley are split between supporting India, Pakistan, Independence of the Valley or the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. It is noteworthy to mention that none of the separatist or insurgent groups have ever spoken about the reunification, or Independence of the entire State of Jammu & Kashmir, which include the regions under Pakistani Administration (Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir). It is often assumed that “*Kashmir*” refers to the entire State of Jammu & Kashmir, when it is only a part of the entire State and holds no jurisdiction to represent the political opinions of the entire State, which is home to several ethnic communities. The Kashmiri Pandits, majority of whom live outside the Valley since their exodus in 1989/1990 and have had an insipid taste of Islam-centric terrorism, support India. The minority community of Sikhs, having no representation in the democratic set up of the State also support India. This cry for ‘Azaadi’ (Freedom) from India, Pakistan or both is unevenly distributed across the region. The people of Jammu and Ladakh, from the outset, have disdained the “self-proclaimed” movement and maintained and distanced themselves from it, while supporting further integration within India.

Ladakhi Buddhists claim of having an inadequate representation in the legislature of Jammu & Kashmir and their dissatisfaction over the fact that commerce is dominated by the traders from the Kashmir Valley has fuelled tensions in the remote areas of Ladakh province between majority community of Buddhists and Muslim minority, resulting in the demand by Ladakhis of being granted Union Territory (UT) status, meaning in essence separation from Jammu & Kashmir State, to be ruled directly from New Delhi. In June 2000, an agitation launched by the Ladakhi Buddhists, led by the Ladakhi Buddhist Association (LBA), put forth their demand for the Union Territory status, emanating from innate alienation and a widely shared perception among the Ladakhi Buddhists of having been treated as a ‘*colony*’ by the Kashmiris. After demands by Ladakhis of separation from Jammu & Kashmir State, people of Jammu intensified their demands of liberation from the State and further integration with India.

“We unequivocally demand liberation from this Islamic dispensation”- Hari Om, Chairman, Jammu for India (JFI)

On the other side, Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir is being governed by the ‘Interim Constitution Act of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Act 1974’, which was passed by the Legislative Assembly of ‘Azad’ Jammu & Kashmir and approved by the Government of Pakistan. Gilgit Baltistan is governed by the Gilgit Baltistan (Empowerment and Self Governance) order 2009, which was issued by the President of Pakistan after informal consultations with local leaders. It is suggested that both

these regions are autonomous, but practically, the real power for 'Azad' Jammu & Kashmir is vested in the Kashmir Council based in Islamabad, of which the Prime Minister of Pakistan is the head. Likewise, Gilgit-Baltistan is controlled by a council based in Islamabad with the Prime Minister of Pakistan as its Chairman. The people of Gilgit Baltistan are aware of their distinct ethnic identity and strive hard to retain it while they continue to struggle for their civil or political rights, but are discouraged to speak in their mother tongue as Urdu is imposed by Islamabad, leading to silent death of Balti and Shina, local languages spoken in the region. The numerical majority of people has been continuously diluted by the influx of people from mainland Pakistan as a consequence of the abrogation of State Subject Rule. The people of Gilgit Baltistan can neither participate in the electoral processes nor do they have any representation in the National Assembly. Majority of them want the Pakistani rule to end; function independently. Another group demands equal provincial rights within the Pakistani Constitution. However, there is also a group that comprehends how the State Subjects of Indian Administered Jammu & Kashmir have special status and benefits of Indian judicial, political and economic institutions, urge to side with India, expecting India to intervene.

In Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir, the divide between pro-independence groups and the lobby demanding merger with Pakistan persists, with former being the majority. The voices of Nationalists who support independence are suppressed; local politicians manipulated through camaraderie, intimidation and blackmailing. Several books and newspapers (written mostly by pro-freedom and nationalist writers) have been interdicted; journalists and writers demanding freedom from Pakistan are daunted and muzzled. The ban is based on governing articles of the 'Azad Jammu & Kashmir Interim Constitution Act of 1974', which states that; *"No person or political party in Azad Jammu & Kashmir is permitted to propagate against, or take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to, the ideology of the State's accession to Pakistan"*. It also states that; *"No person can assume office unless he/she takes the oath of Jammu & Kashmir's accession to Pakistan and nobody can be appointed to any government job unless he/she expresses loyalty to the concept of Jammu & Kashmir's accession to Pakistan"*.

On the 23rd of February 1998, the Azad Kashmir High Court ruled that the area under Pakistani control is nothing more than a province of Pakistan and that its much acclaimed '*autonomous status*' is only a myth and that its Interim Constitution as well as the position taken by the UN on Azad Kashmir's status does not make it an Independent State.

Justice Manzoor Geelani ruled: ***"The Articles 31-33 and 58 of the Azad Jammu & Kashmir Constitution Act 1974, surrendered Foreign, Communications, Defense and Trade powers to the federal Government of Pakistan and that Azad Kashmir Government was no more 'powerful' than any other Pakistani provincial government"*** - His ruling came in response to a legal petition filed by Mirpur based Amin Shipping Corporation which questioned the legitimacy of Foreign Imports Tax Duty charged to them by Pakistan Customs Offices.

Conclusion

The independent but militarily incapable Princely State of Jammu & Kashmir, unable to desist invaders from Pakistan (1947), acceded to the Union of India by the virtue of signing a legal document, the Instrument of Accession. After the end of the first military combat between India and Pakistan (1948), led to the State's accession to India: Jammu, Kashmir Valley and Ladakh began to be legally administered by India while the expanses under Pakistani occupation are referred to as Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir.

Jammu & Kashmir is an amalgamation of diverse cultures, ethnic groups, languages and religions establishing the cornerstone of the ethnic identity of its inhabitants. The region is inhabited by Kashmiris, Dogras, Punjabis, Gujjars, Bakarwals, Ladakhi, Balti on the Indian side and Shins, Yashkuns, Kashmiris, Kashgaris, Pamiris, Pathans, and Kohistanis on the Pakistani side; speaking different vernaculars; Kashmiri, Dogri, Pahari, Shina, Balti, Burushaski, Khowar and Wakhi respectively while Urdu and English are used for official purposes. Besides the regional, cultural, tribal and linguistic diversities there exists religious diversity. The majority population in the Kashmir Valley follows Islam while Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus) form the largest minority followed by a miniscule number of Sikhs, Christians and Buddhists. Jammu constitutes of a majority population of Hindus and Buddhist and Shia Muslims are the dominant groups in Ladakh. The mass migration of Hindus and Sikhs to Jammu post partition of British India in 1947 followed by Hindu-Muslim riots in Jammu, Kathua and Riasi regions altered the demographic contours of Jammu & Kashmir.

The political chimera projected by the Muslim majority of the Valley and supported by Pakistan in 1989 led to the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits. Pakistan aroused communal passion among the Muslim majority and domestic politics while it militarily, financially and morally supported the self-proclaimed freedom fighters for their struggle for '*Azaadi*' (Freedom) of the Kashmir Valley which interestingly is a portion of the State of Jammu & Kashmir spread over an area of mere 6000 sq miles. The forced migration of the Pandits, tantamount to communal partition, not only altered the demographics of the Valley but gave rise to an ugly political culture where power of abuse and lawlessness became a norm. With the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, the Kashmir Valley transformed into a unitary religious society, depriving posterity of the experience of being raised in a diverse society, where majority of the times religion continued to be the only source of ethics and moral education. The poor education system and lack of job opportunities due to rising violence and terrorism also led to the outflux of Kashmiri youth, professionals and businessmen from the Valley to other parts of the globe, in search of greener pastures.

The abrogation of the State Subject Rule (1974) in Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir and the construction of the Karakoram Highway in the 1980s irreversibly changed the demographic profile of the region, leading to the influx of outsiders from mainland Pakistan, who not only purchased long tracks of land but managed to spread fanaticism, threatening the unique ethno-cultural identity of the region. The State has taken no steps to protect their culture and languages, therefore agitated natives feel that they are at a "*forever cultural loss*", in the absence of institutional support. The people of Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir gained little in return from Mangla Dam which proved to be a backbone for Punjab's agriculture. The construction of the dam led to massive (forced) displacement of people, who were neither resettled nor paid loyalties, stating the non-constitutional status as an excuse.

The operating diversities in the State of Jammu & Kashmir have led to identity politics and there has never been a homogenized representation of the political stand of the State. The political and separatist leaders in the Kashmir Valley, who tend to make claims for the entire State can primarily be categorized into two groups with former aspiring independence from India without clearly stating their stance towards Pakistan and latter perceiving Pakistan as a friend and empathizer of their fellow oppressed populace in 'Hindu India' and therefore propagating accession to Pakistan. The people of Jammu and Ladakh claim their status of marginalization, neglect and discrimination, emanating from the Kashmir-centric politics in the State. The people of Jammu urge to remain with India with more regional autonomy and Ladakh demands Union Territory status within the Indian constitutional framework. On the other side, Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Jammu &

Kashmir, uncertain about their political status continue to fight for their basic constitutional rights, with majority groups struggling for independence and an end of Pakistani rule.

The political discrepancy existent within the State owing to overlapping ideologies and diverse identities, has created enormous space for dialogue which none of the regimes in the State have initiated so far. This dialogue ideally should go beyond the exclusive positions of any sections, groups or subgroups; representing the aspirations of the people, way towards workable, secular pluralism in the State. All the State Subjects irrespective of their ethnicity deserve their share of “*political limelight*” and a legitimate share in the economic, political and social processes of the State. The politics endorsed by separatist leaders in the Kashmir Valley, who hold the future of the children of common Kashmiris hostage, demands transformation.

All stakeholders would require talking amongst themselves. Peace in the region should be the ultimate aim and superior to anyone’s ideology or stated positions. The conflict has been going on for seven decades and cannot be solved without co-operation and mutual understanding of all concerned parties. An institutionalized Intra-Jammu & Kashmir dialogue should be facilitated in all the 5 regions of Jammu & Kashmir, in order to enable the people of the State to create genuine consensus and at the same time disqualify the political discrimination and supremacy by the Kashmir Valley.

India needs to hold inter-State dialogues and Pakistan should reciprocate by initiating a dialogue with the people of Gilgit Baltistan and Pakistan Administered Jammu & Kashmir. The people of Jammu & Kashmir, especially the inhabitants of the Valley of Kashmir, India, Pakistan and the wider International community need to accept and comprehend that every inhabitant of the State of Jammu & Kashmir is not a Kashmiri and that the State of Jammu & Kashmir is not just the Valley of Kashmir; any discussion without the participation of all the stakeholders of the entire State will prove to be futile and incomplete.



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