

GENOCIDE OF HINDUS OF KASHMIR



**Dr. MOHAN KRISHEN TENG
CHAMAN LAL GADOO**

**JOINT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
DELHI**

Genocide of Hindus

The ethnic cleansing of the Hindus of Kashmir in 1990 is one of the few episodes, which occurred after the Second World War, and in which a whole community of people was subjected to genocide and driven out of its natural habitat. The terrorist violence with which the Muslim *Jehad* in Kashmir commenced in 1989 was aimed to achieve a number of military objectives which the militant regimes and the *Jehadi* war groups considered to be essential for the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir from the Indian occupation. The ethnic extermination of the Hindus was one of the primary objectives, the *Jehad* aimed to achieve. The Hindus of Kashmir formed the Sanskrit component of the social culture of Kashmir and provided the Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir its secular identity. More importantly, the Hindus formed the frontline of the resistance against the separatist movements in the State, which the Muslim separatist forces carried on for decades with the support of Pakistan. The Hindus had fought for the freedom of the State from the British rule and when the freedom came, they had paid the heaviest price to defend it against the invading forces of Pakistan in 1947. Not many people in India know that more than thirty eight thousand of Hindus and Sikhs were killed by the invading armies across the territories of the state they over ran.



Pandit Tika Lal Taploo was the first Hindu to fall to the bullet of the terrorist. He was a renowned BJP leader, a lawyer and voice of Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley of Kashmir. The terrorists silenced this voice on 13th September 1989 and the rest followed.

After the Independence of India, the one community in India which suffered for its commitment to patriotism and Indian unity was the minority community of the Hindus in the Jammu and Kashmir State. The Hindus constantly faced the accusation of the Muslims that they had conspired with the Government of India to secure the accession of the State to India against the will of the Muslims. They suffered the charge that in 1947, they had, with the help of the Hindu ruler of the State, Maharaja Hari Singh and in connivance with the leaders of the National Conference, treacherously sabotaged the Muslim endeavour to achieve the integration of the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir with the Muslim homeland of Pakistan. They were also indicted for having opposed the Muslim resistance against the accession of the State to India. They bore the brunt of the Muslim precedence, the National Conference established in the State and after the National Conference broke up in 1953, they were proclaimed the enemies of the Muslim movement, the Plebiscite Front led in the State. Even after the Plebiscite Front was wound up in 1975, the condemnation to which the Hindus were subjected did not end. They continued to be charged of being the arch enemies of the Muslim nation of Kashmir, a threat to the Muslim religion and its political solidarity and the motive force behind all secular processes in the State which obstructed the Muslim struggle for Pakistan. In fact, they faced the first crucifixion for their loyalty to their country. The first shots fired by the terrorists were received by the Hindus.

The genocide, the Hindus in Kashmir, were subjected to and the exodus forced upon them by the terrorist regimes, right from the moment they began their military operations in the State, was undertaken in accordance with a well laid out plan. The plan envisaged the ethnic extermination of the Hindus in the Kashmir province and the Muslim majority regions of the Jammu province to bring about the de-Sanskritisation of the part of the State situated to the west of the river Chenab and prepare the ground for its separation from the Shivalik plains, situated to the east of the river Chenab. The division of the State in between India and Pakistan had been proposed as a basis for settlement of the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, by the United Nations mediator on Kashmir Sir Owen Dixon in 1950. When the terrorist regimes, extended their military operations to the Muslim majority districts of the Jammu province, they followed the same “scorched earth”, policy there to bring about the ethnic extermination of the Hindus.

The terrorist organisations carried out systematic operations to massacre the Hindus and flush them out of the Kashmir Valley. As the death toll of the Hindus increased, they began to evacuate from the Valley in larger numbers. The State Government reacted to the elimination of the Hindus with utter passivity and indifference. The Janata Dal Government at the Centre lacked the will to deal with terrorist violence. With the Home Department of the Government of India, placed under a Kashmiri Muslim, who too was committed to the precedence of the

Muslim majority in the State, and who carried out the behests of the powerful Muslim lobbies in the Janata Dal, the State Government, could not deal with the terrorist violence with any firmness. The ludicrous drama of the kidnapping of Rubiya Sayeed, the daughter of the Home Minister and the consequent breakdown of the Central Government, had left little moral strength with the State Government to face the terrorist challenge. The brief spell, during which Sh. Jagmohan tried to retrieve the situation, was a half-hearted endeavour, which ultimately ended in a fiasco.

The terrorist violence struck the Hindus in its full fury in January 1990. The death and destruction it brought to the Hindus was widespread. Not much of what happened those days in Kashmir is known in the rest of the country as a concerted campaign of disinformation was carried on to camouflage the ravages the community of the Hindus was subjected to. By the end of the year, the death toll of the Hindus had risen to about eight hundred. The white paper on Kashmir, the Joint Human Rights Committee, Delhi, issued in 1996 noted: "A computation of the data of the massacred Hindus on the basis of reports in the local press, news papers published in Srinagar, and the other townships in Kashmir, reveals that the number of the Hindus killed ran into several thousands." The White Paper notes further "Among the killed were several hundred Hindus who were reported missing. Among the missing were many Hindus whose bodies were never identified and were disposed off by the State Government agencies at their will. Many of the people killed and still to be identified were Hindus." The chaotic manner in which information about the killings were reported is shown by the following wireless message, transmitting information of the death of two Hindu men, in Srinagar to their kin in Jammu, "To SSP Jammu L.B. No: 13 from Police Control Room Srinagar, 25/6/1990. Please contact Shri Makhan Lal Sumbli H.No: 28 Bhagwati Nagar and inform him about the death of Som Nath S/o Shri Lassa Koul and Chaman Lal S/o Shyam Lal R/o Pattipora Bala, Chattabal, Srinagar, the above dead bodies were lying unidentified at Ali Jan Road. Signature of officer, 1920 ToR, S.P. Police Control Room"

'White Paper on Kashmir' further explains in detail the background which led to Genocide and ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits states; 'among the accusations piled upon the Hindus in Kashmir, the following were the prominent: that they misled the leadership of the Muslim Conference in 1939, and ensured the Muslim Conference leaders to accept secularism as the basis of the Muslim struggle against the Dogra rule, that they supported the accession of the State to India and actively worked to consolidate the Indian hold over the Muslims in the State; that they sabotaged the secessionist movement aimed to disengage the State from India;

that they supported the merger of the State in the constitutional organisation of India;

that they were severely opposed to the Muslim precedence; and

that they did not accept the primacy of Islam and obstructed the Muslimisation of the society and Government of the State.

The accusations were not unfounded. The Hindus in Kashmir fought for Indian unity and freedom from foreign rule, shoulder to shoulder with the people in the Indian States. The first ever held Conference of the Indian States People, convened in 1927, was presided over by a firebrand Kashmiri Pandit, Shankar Lal Kaul, who had left Kashmir after having been removed from the State services on the advice of the British Resident. Kaul demanded the right of the States People to repudiate the princely order and called for a united struggle of the people in the Indian States and the British Provinces against the British rule. A decade after, the All India States Peoples Conference, in its session at Ludhiana, reiterated the demand Kaul had made for the repudiation of the Paramountacy and the end of the princely rule in the Indian States.

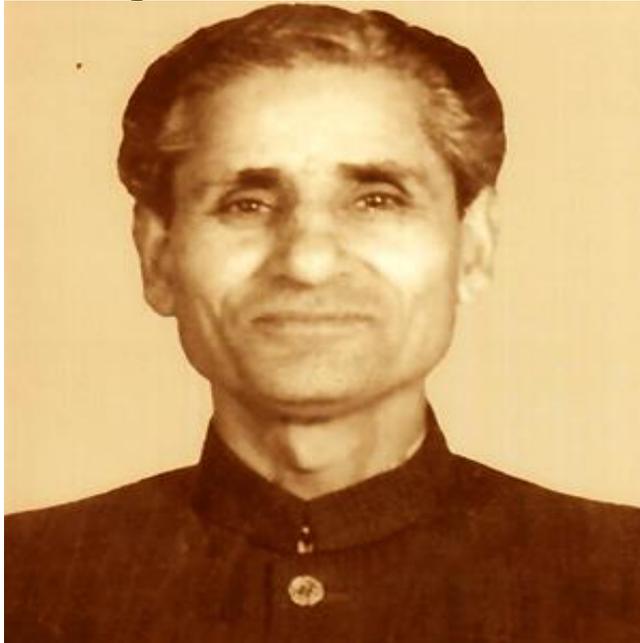
Pandit Dwatika Nath Kachroo, a veteran Kashmiri Pandit freedom fighter, served the States Peoples movement, as the Secretary General of the States Peoples Conference, during the most formative years of its development. He was arrested in Kashmir in the 'Quit Kashmir' movement. Later, Kachroo represented the All-India States Peoples Conference in the historic meeting of the Working Committee of the National Conference held in October 1947, in which the Conference decided unanimously to support the accession of the State to India.

The Hindus of Kashmir extended their support to the Indian national movement right from its revolutionary days and demonstrated their fraternal solidarity with the people of India in the Civil Disobedience, which followed the Rowlatt legislation in 1919, the Khilafat Movement in 1921, and the Salt Satyagraha in 1931. Many of them, including Pandit Kashyap Bandhu, joined the revolutionary underground in India which actually shook the roots of the British Empire.

The Muslims of Kashmir inspired by Pan-Islamism, which pervaded the Muslim outlook in India till the British left, adopted an attitude of active opposition to the Indian struggle. The Muslims in the State never lost sight of the identity of their interests with the British and spared no efforts to help them to undo the Dogras and provide them support in their endeavour to smother the liberation movement in India. They strongly opposed the State-Subject movement led by the Kashmiri Hindus, which was mainly aimed to forestall any attempt the British made to acquire land in the State. Infact, the Muslims in their Memorial, submitted to Maharaja Hari Singh in the aftermath of the Muslim agitation of 1931, blamed the State Government of having connived with the Hindus in

organising demonstrations in the State in support of the Congress movement, which, they alleged, went against their loyalty to the British Empire.

In truth, it was the Hindu community in Kashmir which by its exhibition of tolerance and forbearance and a long campaign of education in secular values, laid the foundations of a secular, non-partisan and non-communal movement in the State. The declaration of the National Demand, which was issued by Hindus and Muslim leaders of Kashmir in 1938, and which in the later days, formed the basic groundwork of the movement for self-government in the State, was drafted by the Kashmiri, Hindu leaders. The Declaration of National Demand became the basis of the emergence of the National Conference in 1939.



Pandit Sarwanand Koul 'Premi' and his son Virendra Koul. Pandit 'Premi' was a poet, scholar, teacher and journalist. He stuck to his hamlet despite the rise in terrorism. Unfortunately, both of them were assassinated on 30.4.1990.

The Muslim Conference, which spearheaded the Muslim agitation against the Dogra rule in the State, was converted into a secular organization the National Conference in 1939, with active collaboration and support of the Hindus in Kashmir. The Hindus joined the ranks of the National Conference on the terms which the Muslim leaders laid down. The Muslim leaders who did not join the National Conference broke away to continue their struggle for the Muslims and aligned themselves with the Muslim League movement for Pakistan. They accused the Hindus of Kashmir, particularly the Kashmiri Pandits, of having divided the Muslims of the State on the instigation of Hindu leaders of India. This accusation was never washed away. The ideologues of the Muslim terrorism repeated the indictment.

The Hindus allowed the escheat of their landed estates, the confiscation of their property, and their exclusion from the administration of the State and accepted political change which sought its legitimacy in the primacy of Islam, to provide the Government of India support in the United Nations, where the Indian representatives were seeking hard to prove more Muslim than the Muslim nation of Pakistan to justify the accession of the State to India. The Kashmiri Pandits went as far as to applaud the long harangues delivered by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in the Security Council, which in substance embodied the Muslim claims to the nationhood of Kashmir on the basis of the Muslim religious injunction.

The Hindus bore the first impact of the upheaval which followed the dismissal of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1953, and in fact, they took to the streets in support of the second Interim Government, demonstrating their solidarity with the Government of India. For twenty-two years, they fought with dogged resolution, the movement for plebiscite, which Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and the Plebiscite Front led. After the Accord in 1975, they found themselves arraigned against the Pan-Islamic fundamentalism which assumed the leadership of the secessionist movement in the State after the Plebiscite Front was dissolved.

The secessionist forces charged them of obstructing the liberation of the Muslims in the State and the State Government charged them of acting on the behest of the Indian Government, to spread Hindu communalism in the State. The National Conference leaders charged the Kashmiri Hindus of acting as the agents of India. The Muslim wrath fell upon them, when widespread anti-Hindu riots broke out all over the south of Kashmir in 1986.

In the province of Jammu, the Muslim leaders of the National Conference cracked under the pressure of the dominant Hindu majority and frightened by the Hindu backlash offered to separate the Hindu majority districts of the province from the rest of the State. The Hindus of Jammu rejected the dismemberment of the State on communal lines and re-emphasised their demand for the integration of the State in the secular political organisation of India. In Kashmir, however, they reduced the Hindus, particularly the Kashmiri Pandits, to a subject population, outcaste and branded those enemies of the cause of the Muslims and their religious identity. Impoverished by their exclusion from the economic organisation of the State and their elimination from all the political processes, the Hindus lost their initiative and became the hostages to what was later called "the Muslim identity of Jammu and Kashmir". They were subject to religious persecution, their temples were desecrated; many of their temples disappeared completely, among them the famous temple of Vishnu located in the flank of Jama Masjid in Srinagar. As the secessionist forces gained the upper hand, pressure was mounted upon them and thousands of them abandoned their homes. No wonder that during the last four decades about two lakh of Kashmiri Hindus quietly migrated to the other pans of

the country. The blitzkrieg assault, the terrorists delivered upon the Hindus in the Valley in January 1990, was the last blow, dealt out to them to uproot them completely and put an end to the last measure of resistance they still offered to Muslim communalism.



Victims of Genocide

A lot of crap is being peddled out about Kashmiri Pandits having a dominant position in Kashmir whereas facts speak a different story. The basic fact is that the Muslims are ruling elite in Kashmir. They dominate the entire economic organization and enjoy communal precedence in social forums. Islam is virtually the official religion of the state. They have three-fourth share in legislative bodies, administrative organizations and all the local government institutions. In the Kashmir province, Hindus have no elected representation in local bodies. They constitute less than 5 percent of the administrative services of the state and have less than 1 percent share in higher cadres of the state administration. Muslim monopolize 94 percent of the state services in Kashmir. More than 90 percent of the admissions to professional, technical and other educational institutions are reserved for Muslims in one form or the other. In financial sphere, the Muslims own 96 percent of agricultural lands, orchards and other urban landed estates. They enjoy monopoly over the entire industrial organizations, trade and commerce, financial resources and exports from the province of Kashmir. Kashmiri Muslims understand quite well the massive economic benefits that accrue from India. A Kashmiri gets eight times more money from the centre than citizens from other states.

Kashmiri Pandits are historically and traditionally a community of scholars, intellectuals, efficient professionals, administrative workforce and have passion for education, a community which is almost cent percent educated in varied disciplines. It was thus an unbearable oppression for them when the state authorities worked assiduously and strictly towards restricting their admissions to higher educational courses and institutions. Simultaneously, their opportunities to enter state government employment were slashed and their landed properties were taken over under cover of laws which were unconstitutional, unfair and unequal. State government changed the names of 684 villages, which had Hindu names by a government order No. REV/S/340 of 1981 dated 13-10-1981.

The Muslimisation of the various political and economic processes had begun earlier and the minorities in Kashmir were at the receiving end. Within the broad scheme of the militarised secessionist movement in the State, carried on by the Muslims, the elimination of Hindus from Kashmir had obvious tactical advantages. These were:

The elimination of the Hindus would destroy the groundwork of all secular institutionalisation in the State, which would render all ideological commitments to the secular unity of India utterly redundant.

The liquidation of the Hindus and their exodus would destroy the credibility of the Government of India among the Muslims of Kashmir.

The elimination of the Hindus would break the psychological contact, a large section of the Muslims, still continued to have with the Indian support structures in the State.

After having flushed the Hindus from the Valley, the Muslim psyche could be easily exposed to more persuasive fundamentalist indoctrination.

The elimination of Hindus would ensure the rupture of important communication and feedback channels of the Government of India, which the Hindus always endeavored to keep open.

The helplessness of the uprooted Hindu masses would break the resolve of the Hindus in India, as well as the Government of India to hold any further in Kashmir.

The exile of the Hindus would mark the first step towards the conversion of Jammu and Kashmir into a Muslim State and its eventual separation from India.

By and large, the terrorists succeeded in their broad designs in eliminating the Hindus in Kashmir. They destroyed the traditional population balances which formed the bases of the coordinate plurality of the State, replacing it by a communal identity of the Muslims, which found its legitimacy in Islamic fundamentalism. The psychological contact which had always been vital to the community relations in Kashmir as well as the Muslim support structures of India, were wiped out and the Muslims, who did not support the secession of the State,

gave way after they saw the apathy with which the Government of India watched the death and destruction of the Hindus. The Hindus uprooted from their land, are now shouldering in exile, unburdened of their illusion about Indian secularism and Indian commitment to resist separatism and violence.

The rumblings of the storm which engulfed Hindus were heard long before it swept the valley. Right from the beginning of 1989, the Hindus, other than the Pandits in Kashmir, professionally a trading community, were served threats to quit Kashmir because they were Indian Hindus and had acquired interests which impinged upon the rights of Muslims in the valley. The ultimate and devastating blow came on January 19, 1990, late in the night, when hundreds thousands of Muslims came out in streets and the loudspeakers fitted on the mosques started blaring and yelling ‘Kashmiri Pandits, leave Kashmir, without your womenfolk, or else face death!’ Then hell was let loose. Hundreds of innocent Kashmiri Pandits – men, women and children—were killed .Among those picked for killing were the people from all sections of Hindu society ---teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, political activists, media persons, intellectuals and men of small means. The worst victims were women. Torture deaths were resorted. Inhuman practices like strangulation by using steel wires, public hanging, impaling, branding with hot iron rods, torching alive, lynching, gorging of eyes before assassination, slicing, dismemberment of limbs, drowning, dragging to death, draining of blood and slaughter in the open were adopted. During 1989-90 terrorist killings were accompanied by rape, torture and atrocities unheard of in the annals of human history. 24,000 residential houses and 14,430 business houses were destroyed. About 12,500 orchards of Hindus were grabbed by Muslims. The widespread killings, assault on women, the fear of conversions and the shocking experience of being forced to join the militancy campaign against India were main reasons that drove out Hindus from Kashmir. . The traumatic experiences of Kashmiri Pandits were so acute that they found themselves left along to their fate, face to face with death and dishonour. The total breakdown of the law and order machinery spread a sense of insecurity, which was so severe that the most of the Pandits, more than 400,000, fled the valley and migrated to Jammu and Delhi in the dark hours of the night without any belongings. There by the ethnic cleansing of the Pandits was completed.

Kashmiri Pandits despite of having suffered untold miseries, in the past, have maintained distinct community features. Kashmiri Pandit is a class-less society of Brahmans without any further caste and creed. A farmer, a trader, a teacher, a doctor, an advocate, an employee, everyone is of same class of Kashmiri Pandit. Perhaps this is the greatest strength of its survival!

KASHMIRI PANDITS BECAME REFUGEES IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY!

Mass Massacres

The terrorist violence in Kashmir has involved in genocide of Hindus, destruction of their property, destruction of their temples, and their exodus from Kashmir. The terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir, on a well designed pattern, has led to several consequences which are inextricably interlinked with the violation of human rights. The pattern in which terrorism has manifested itself in Jammu and Kashmir has several aspects, some of which are characteristically original to the political violence unleashed by the various terrorist organizations and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir. These aspects are; (a) mass massacre; (b) genocide of Hindus and (c) atrocities committed by terrorists.

In Jammu and Kashmir terrorism has involved the liquidation of thousands of people, including the Hindus, the Muslims, the security personnel and the strategic staff of the State government and other administrative bodies.

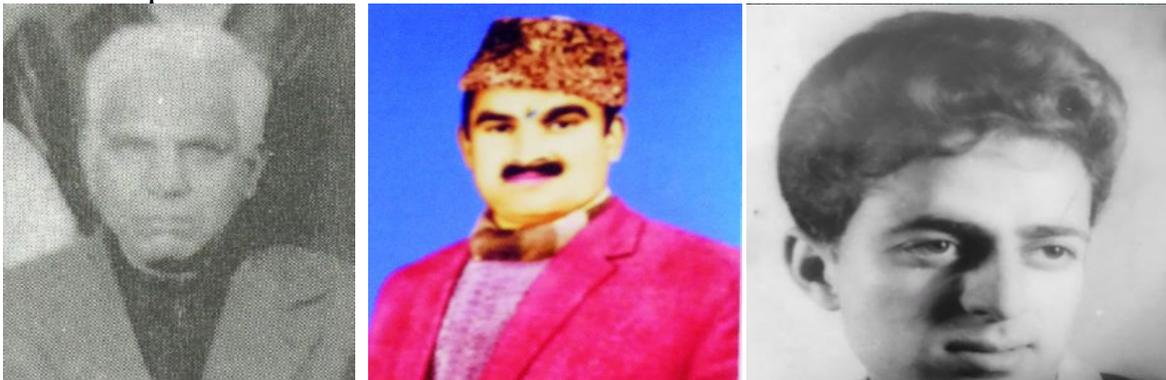
The main targets of terrorist violence in Kashmir have been;

1. the Hindus; The Hindus of Kashmir have been killed in large numbers irrespective of their age, profession and political commitments.
2. the Muslims opposed to secession,
3. Hindu employees of the State government, the government of India posted in the State, Hindu technical staff of Government of India installations of communications, police, radio and television.

Terrorism has taken a very heavy toll of the personnel of the security organizations of the State. A fairly large numbers of the personnel of the para-military forces and the Indian army have been killed in the hit and run guerrilla attacks mounted on them by terrorists. The attacks have involved sudden assaults on para-military pickets in civil areas, ambush of army and para-military convoys, mine blasts, rocket and bomb blasts on police stations and other security installations.

As the Jehadi war groups and the terrorist regimes settled down to carry on a prolonged war of attrition in Jammu and Kashmir, they changed their tactics. They reduced the frequency of sporadic surprise strikes on specifically identified targets to pre-planned major military strikes on Hindu localities to carry out mass-massacres. The mass massacres were brutal and had a staggering effect on the entire community of the Hindus in the State. The massacres were carried out at different places in the Kashmir province : at Sangrahampora where eight people were killed; at Wandahama in North Kashmir, in January 1998, where twenty three Hindus were killed; at Anantnag in South Kashmir, where twelve Bihari labourers were killed in July 1999; at Chattisinghpora where thirty-six Sikhs were killed in March 2000, at Pahalgam, where thirty-two Hindus, including twenty-nine pilgrims to Amarnath Shrine, were killed in August 2000; and at Nadimarg, where twenty-four Hindus were killed in March 2003.

In the Jammu province, the mass massacres were widespread and the death-toll heavier. Seventeen Hindus were killed in Kishtwar during 13-14 August 1993; sixteen Hindus were killed in Kishtwar in January 1996; Seventeen Hindus were killed in Simber, Doda in May 1996; twenty-nine Hindus were killed in Dakhikot Prankot, Doda in January 1998; Eleven Hindus (defence committee members) were killed in Dessa, Doda in May 1998, twenty nine Hindus were killed in Chapnari Doda, in June 1998; twenty Hindus were killed in separate terrorist attacks in Chinathakuri, and Shrawan, Doda in July 1998; seventeen Hindus were killed in Surankot Poonch in June 1999; fifteen Hindus were killed in Thatri, Doda, in July 1999; seventeen Hindus were killed in Manjakot Rajouri in March 2001; fifteen Hindus were killed in Cherjimorah, Doda in July 2001', Sixteen Hindus were killed in Sarothdhar, Doda in August 2001', Thirty four Hindus were killed in Kaluchak, Jammu in May 2002; twenty-nine Hindus were killed in Rajiv Nagar, Jammu in July 2002; seventeen Hindus were killed in Udampur in March 2003; twelve Hindus were killed in Surankote, Poonch in June 2004; ten Hindus were killed in Budhal, Rajouri in October 2005; three of a Hindu family were killed in Chaal, Udampur in April 2006 and thirty Hindus were killed in Thana Kulhand, Doda in April 2006.



Justice Neelkanth Ganjoo , Advocate Prem Nath Bhat, Pandit Lassa Kaul

Justice Neelkanth Ganjoo was a high court judge in Kashmir. As a Sessions court judge, he had presided over the trial of JKLF founder Maqbool Bhat in the murder of police inspector Amar Chand. He sentenced Bhat and one other to death. On November 4, 1989, a group of three people surrounded Ganjoo as he was in the Hari Singh Street market near the High Court in Srinagar. He was shot in broad daylight and was not allowed to move to hospital, till he died on spot.

Pandit Prem Nath Bhat, a leading advocate of Anantnag in Kashmir, a selfless social activist, a journalist par excellence, writer of repute and patriot of the core, was assassinated on December 27, 1989 at Anantnag by a Jahadi.

Pandit Lassa Kaul, at about 7:15 PM on 13th February 1990, 45-year old Lassa Kaul, director with Doordarshan Kashmir, was visiting his ailing parents. As he stepped out of his vehicle, he was gunned down by terrorists.

The exodus of the Hindus picked up pace as the summer set in. By the end of the year 1990, the larger part of the Hindu community of Kashmir had left. The rest followed as the terrorist violence intensified. The White Paper noted : “In the rural areas of the Valley, cadres of the secessionist organisations and their supporters, almost of every shade and commitment, the supporters of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front in the vanguard, did not hide their hostility towards the Hindus. At many places, even in Srinagar and the other townships, Kashmiri, Hindus were openly charged of espionage for India. The indictment spelt death”. While the Hindus began to leave Kashmir the Jehadi flanks unfolded their plans to destroy the Sanskrit heritage of the Kashmir. The homes the Hindus left-behind, were ransacked and after their properties were looted, burnt down. Within four years of the onset of the terrorist violence in Kashmir, 18,000, Hindu houses were burnt down, bombed and demolished.



Smt.Roopawati (Pulwama, Kashmir), Smt. Ganju(Banamohalla,Srinagar)

. In due course of time as the terrorism continued to ravage Kashmir, the Muslim separatists forces and the Jehadi flanks gained an upper hand, the Hindus were dispossessed of whatever they owned, their land, dilapidated structures of their homes, business establishments and other assets by what came to be called the distress sales.

The White Paper on Kashmir noted: “The actual number of temples demolished and damaged in Kashmir was much larger and vandalism to which the Hindu shrines were exposed was widespread”. In the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the militants and the Muslim mobs joined to attack the Hindu temples and places of worship. On 7 December, 1992, one day after this demolition of the Babri Masjid, two temples, one in Anantnag and one in Srinagar, were burnt down. During the night of 7-8 December, thirteen temples : one each in

Kulgam and Sopore; two in Tangamarg; three in Srinagar and one each in the Anantnag, Utrasu, Shadipur in Sumbal, Pahalgam and Verinag, were damaged and burnt down. On 9 December, two temples were damaged and burnt down at Trehgam and Pattan. The demolition of the Hindu temples continued after 9 December, for many more days taking the number of the temples, desecrated damaged, demolished and burnt down to thirty-nine.

The depredations the terrorist regimes wrought did not end with the destruction of Hindu localities, homes and properties. They attacked the temples and Hindu places of worship with iconoclast zeal. The Minister of State for the Home Department of the Government of India told the Indian Parliament on 12 March 1993, that thirteen temples were desecrated and demolished in 1989, nine temples were damaged and demolished in 1990, and sixteen temples were damaged and demolished in 1991.



Innocent victims of Terrorism

The campaign of terror spread in Jammu and Kashmir follows the same pattern which the 'Direct Action' followed in 1946; genocide of Hindus, their ethnic cleansing by forced exodus from the Muslim majority provinces of India and the destruction of their religious identity. Genocide of Kashmiri Pandits is violation of not only Human Rights but also its Constitutional Rights. In a report on Kashmir by Amnesty International released in December 1993, it said, "Armed opposition groups in Jammu and Kashmir have been responsible for numerous and grave Human Rights abuses, including hostage taking, assassination of politicians and their families, deliberate killing of civilians including journalists, torture and rape....It urged all such groups to release all hostages and respect Human Rights and humanitarian standards." The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in ruling on the 11th June, 1999 stated that, "The commission is constrained to observe that acts akin to genocide have occurred with respect to Kashmiri Pandits." UN Secretary General at the 60th session of the commission on Human Rights in Geneva on 7th April, 2004 observed, "When civilians are deliberately

targeted because they belong to a particular community, we are in the presence of potential, if not actual genocide.” It is a pity, that in spite of repeated requests no enquiry commission has been constituted by state or central government so far to bring culprits to book who are responsible for genocide and ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits, nor the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India has acted so far.



Disinformation Campaign

The Indian political class launched a widespread dis-information campaign to camouflage the portent of the terrorist violence and conceal the real purpose of the *Jihad* in Jammu and Kashmir. The disinformation campaign succeeded only partially to provide a smokescreen to what the Jihad wrought in Kashmir and the Muslim-majority districts of Jammu province. Yet a part of the truth was revealed by the leaders of the mainstream political parties of the State, the National Conference and the Peoples Democratic Party, when they admitted that the basic cause of Muslim unrest was the political issue which underlined the Kashmir dispute. The rest of the story of the Jihad which has continued in the State unabated for the last two decades is still to be told. A large part of the truth of what the war of attrition wrought in the State is still not told.

A part of the truth of what happened in Kashmir was actually revealed by the *Jihadi* regimes themselves and their over-ground separatist outfits like Hurriyat Conference. The Indian political class had ascribed the militant violence to alienation of Muslim youth wrought by Indian misrule which had led to economic deprivation and political oppression of Muslims. The *Jihadi* regimes told the Indian people and the world that the Muslim Jihad aimed to liberate the

State from the occupation army of India, stationed in the State illegally. The *Jihadi* regimes and Muslim separatist organisations denied that the militant operations and Muslim upsurge accompanying them were in any way related to political distrust, economic deprivation or alienation of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir. They made it clear in unmistakable terms that the Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir had commenced the *Jihad* in Kashmir to liberate the J&K State from the “illegal occupation of the Indian army” and unite it with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. A part of the truth was told by the leaders of mainstream National Conference and Peoples Democratic Party who had ruled the State before the onset of the militant violence as well as after it. Without mincing words, they accepted that Muslim unrest in the State and Muslim struggle were an expression of the peoples’ desire to seek a settlement of the central issue underlying the Kashmir dispute. They gave ample expression to their opinions stating that so long as the Muslim quest for a separate freedom which was not subject to the secular imperatives of the Constitution of India, and so long as a settlement of the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan and the Muslims of the State was not found, the distrust would not end.

Yet a part of the truth is still concealed. The story of the genocide of the Hindus, their ethnic extermination and how they were used as scapegoats for the failings of the Indian political class in dealing with the *Jihad* is yet to be told. This part of the untold truth is closely linked with the return of the Hindus to their homes and hearths. The Indian political class is hiding the truth of what the *Jihad* has wrought in Kashmir during the last two decades. Indian Governments have never mustered the courage to stand up to the *Jihad*. The Indian political class is still following its own plans to use the Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir as a buffer in between them and the war of subversion the *Jihadi* regimes are waging in the State. The double-speak of the Indian political class on the return of Hindus to Kashmir is bound to do them more harm.

The truth is that the security environment in Kashmir province is severely strained and the social culture of the Muslim community has been drastically changed by the *Jihad*. The Hindus of Kashmir were driven out on the point of the gun because of their resistance to the Muslim separatist movements in the State. Their opposition to the Muslim *Jihad* assumed nation-wide proportions during the last two decades of their exile. They will hardly find it easy to come to terms with the conditions that prevail in Kashmir, while the religious war continues unabated. It may not be out of place to mention here that the over-ground political outfits of the *Jihadi* war groups and militant flanks, including various factions of Hurriyat Conference, have offered to accept the return of Hindus and at the same time expressed hope that after their return they will join their Muslim brethren in their struggle for liberation from India!

Reversal of Genocide

Genocide of the Hindus in Kashmir and their exile for decades has changed the geographical alignments of their community in the province of Kashmir and destroyed their social and economic base. The terrorist violence has obliterated the Hindu religious heritage of Kashmir and almost effaced the Hindu cultural identity. The return of Hindus to Kashmir can assume meaning and effect only in case the genocide is reversed. The perpetrators of genocide punished.

The Indian Government and the State Government never made their stand clear on the genocide of the Hindus and the exodus forced upon them. They did not make their stand clear on the reversal of the genocide, which formed the precedent condition for the return of the Hindus to their homes. In fact, the Indian Government never made any formal commitment in respect of the return of Hindus to their homes and made no concrete proposals for their rehabilitation.

The Indian political class assumed complete silence over the death and devastation the *Jihad* wrought in Kashmir. In fact, it spared no efforts to camouflage the genocide of the Hindus and their ethnic cleansing in Kashmir and Muslim-majority districts of the Jammu province. Stray references by Indian leaders on the return of Hindus to their homes and hearths “with honour and dignity” were part of the propaganda to minimise the impact of the displacement of Hindus in the State and contain its effects. Behind the scenes, the Indian political class tried practically to negotiate peace with the Muslim separatist fronts inside the State and their *Jihadi* mentors outside the State. Negotiations for peace with *Jihadi* war groups, who were later joined by Pakistan, left hardly any space for the return of the Hindus to Kashmir, who had been driven out by the *Jihad* for having harmed the cause of the freedom of the Muslims of the State.

The return of the Hindus to Kashmir is a historical necessity, not only for the Unity of Jammu and Kashmir, but for the unity of India. The issues which form the core of their return are : (a) the reconstruction of their economic and social base; restoration to them of their homes, land, properties, business establishment and institutions and assets; (b) recognition of their right to freedom of which the content is determined by the imperatives of secularism rather than the Muslim majority identity of the State; and (c) acceptance of their territorial claims in Kashmir in case of any settlement with the Muslims of Kashmir to reorganise the the state into a separate Muslim sphere of power on the territories of India, inside India or outside India.

No one can expect the Hindus to return to Kashmir without their sources of livelihood being restored to them and a level of economic security ensured for them. They have lived as refugees in Jammu and the other part of India for three decades. They cannot be sent to live in Kashmir as refugees in improvised camps at the charity of the world.

The Indian political class should realise that the Hindus have lived, almost all over the seven decades of the Indian freedom, within the space provided for them by the precarious balance between the commitment of the Indian people to secularism and the Muslim majority identity of the State. The Indian leadership should realise that the *Jehad* has severely impaired this balance and obliterated the space for the Hindus to live in Kashmir. It must be noted that any attempt to force the Hindus to accept to live in the space earmarked for them by the Muslim identity of the State will prove disastrous for them. For those who rule India, the return of the Hindus may be a mere change of face, the Muslim identity of the state is given. But for the Hindus of Kashmir, it is a momentous, decision which will determine the future of their generations.

After the Hindus were driven out of Kashmir in 1990, their return to their homes was never under the consideration of the people who have ruled India. Indian leaders never had the courage to deny Pakistan and the Muslim separatist forces the claim they lay to Jammu and Kashmir, on the basis of the Muslim majority composition of its population. Nor did they possess the resolution to fight against the religious war that Pakistan and the *Jihadi* war-groups operating inside as well as outside the State waged to unite it with Pakistan.

Now situation has changed after abrogation of Art.370 and Government has shown will to tackle terrorism. Let us hope for early return to our homeland!

