

My Years with  
**Sheikh Abdullah**

KASHMIR 1971-1987

Ghulam Ahmad



Residency Road, Srinagar 190001 Kashmir  
[www.gulshanbooks.com](http://www.gulshanbooks.com)

DS  
485  
• K27  
A23  
A36  
2008

First published 2008  
© Author

ISBN: 81-8339-082-X

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Published by Sheikh Ajaz

**Gulshan Books**

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Email: [gulshanpub@rediffmail.com](mailto:gulshanpub@rediffmail.com)  
[www.gulshanbooks.com](http://www.gulshanbooks.com)

Distributed by:

**Sheikh Mohammed Usman & Sons**  
Booksellers, Publishers & Distributors  
Residency Road, Srinagar-190001 Kashmir  
Exchange Road, Madinah Chowk,  
Srinagar-190001 Kashmir

Printed and bound in India

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## **FOREWORD**

Destiny brought Ghulam Ahmad I.A.S to work as the Principal Secretary to the Chief Ministers of the Jammu & Kashmir State. It was Syed Mir Qasim who was Chief Minister from 1971-1975, who selected him for this most important post in place of Pt. O.N.Dhar, who considering himself to be indispensable had thrown up tantrums to the new Chief Minister and asked to be relieved from his duties.

Right from the advent of the Dogra rule in 1847, almost all posts in the administrative setup of the state had remained monopolised by the Kashmiri Pandit community. Under these circumstances, it was a bold step taken by Syed Mir Qasim to select a Muslim officer to serve him as his Principal Secretary. After Syed Mir Qasim was asked to step down in 1975, the Government of India appointed Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah the erstwhile firebrand leader of the Kashmiris, as the Chief Minister. Mr. Ghulam Ahmad continued to hold the post of the Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister until the laters death on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1982. Mr. Ghulam Ahmad continued to hold this post under Dr Farooq Abdullah from September 1982 for a few months only. Subsequently

Dr.Farooq Abdullah posted him as Home Secretary. He again worked in the capacity of Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister with Ghulam Mohammad Shah from July 2, 1984 to March 6, 1986.

The present work is a faithful record of memoirs of Ghulam Ahmad of years with Sheikh Abdullah. He has expressed his impressions without fear or favour and disclosed startling facts and shocking revelations about the tragic events in the modern history of Kashmir. In doing so, he has made an in depth study of the major players, who played with the destinies of the Kashmiri people. One may agree or disagree with his views but the sincerity of the author cannot be doubted. His exposure of truths is bound to make this book controversial but at the same time widely read by those who are interested to know the inner story about the rise and fall of the Chief Ministers in the State. The author was an important witness of the events that have resulted in a prolonged agony for Kashmir since its division by the Ceasefire Line in 1949 and its subsequent occupation by both Pakistan and India.

Srinagar

March 2007

Professor Fida Mohammad Hassnain

## PREFACE

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In October 1972, the Cabinet presided over by Syed Mir Qasim, Chief Minister, was considering alternatives as to who would replace O.N.Dhar, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, who had once again thrown up tantrums and asked to be relieved so that he could have a much needed and much deserved rest. In fact, he had thrown up a challenge that he was indispensable and let Chief Minister try other substitutes. Dhar was Secretary to Chief Minister G.M.Sadiq too and often during that period, he proceeded on leave ostensibly to "relax" and rest but actually daring the Government to replace him. The substitute turned out to be unhappy choice and Sadiq had to eat a humble pie and recall Dhar. He was again at his old game. Syed Mir Qasim wanted "that man in sky blue suit," that was me, to replace Dhar and thus beat him at his own game. The members did not know who the man was and thereupon Syed Mir Qasim asked one of his aides to summon that man in sky blue suit and present him before the Cabinet. Some members of the Cabinet were pouting, grimacing, or just sitting sullen and indifferent. The only exception was Chief Minister Syed Mir Qasim, who with a cheerful countenance that challenged his *bête noire*, Dhar that here was a man whom Dhar would find hard to dislodge later when he

was mortified by his rash decision. So this is how I came to occupy the post, and that too for over a decade.

Nazima, my daughter, had come to visit us (me and my wife) to Bahrain in January 1993 to look up her parents. She had hardly got rid of the rigours of her long travel from London to Gibraltar, Spain, Amsterdam and finally to Bahrain, when she started pestering me to write my memoirs. In fact, she arranged the requisite material - pens, paper, pins and other perquisites and started brainstorming sessions with me. There are two kinds of writers, creative, one who are writers and from whom ideas just flow out like pearls from a torn necklace, and the second are those who have to ferret out ideas from the subconscious to the conscious and arrange them in a coherent manner. Well in my case, I just had only to go back to the past, dig and prod my memory events, incidents and anecdotes that had become part of oblivion would flow out jostling for a place in the memoirs. That is how I came to compile this record, which is untarnished, untrammeled, cold, and hard.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah Chief Minister was speaking on the occasion of the farewell luncheon arranged in my honour on the eve of my retirement from Government service. There was an elite gathering of top brass from all three Services and the Police. It was my turn to reciprocate the sentiments expressed by him. I began, "Mr. Chief Minister, I am beholden to you for having thrown this farewell luncheon in my honour and having showered all the encomiums on me. As you know, I have been close to all the Chief Ministers and to all the epoch-making events, which changed the course of history of the sub-continent. Some are etched on my memory, some I have committed to paper; most of the anecdotes which I have preserved in my memory are based on writings of well known Kashmir watchers which I find no reason to disbelieve. However, this is not the occasion to recount all those events. I will jot them in black and white for posterity so that records are put straight no matter if they are unpalatable to the dramatis personae that have played a role in making these records." This was in June

1987 and was in April 1995 that my brainstorming sessions fructified the long and arduous struggle from conception to culmination.

My gratitude is firstly due to my niece, Dr. Shehzada Malik, presently in Gibraltar, who typed the first copy of the manuscript and transferred it on a CD. I am thankful to Mr. Mohammad Ashraf I.A.S. former Director General, J&K Tourism, for taking pains in arranging and revising my draft papers into something readable. I am also grateful to Professor Fida Hassnain for writing a foreword to this book.

Srinagar

April 1995

Ghulam Ahmad

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## CHAPTER I

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### PROLOGUE

*Neither do I care for fame nor  
do I seek intercessors, I am only looking  
and waiting for takers of the truth.*

It is often said, "men, matters and events that occur in the life of a nation either form a watershed in its history and come to occupy pride of place in it, or constitute its most unpleasant and painful chapter living in its memory as a perennial nightmare. History is merciless and in its inexorable march, it throws up some persons who create history and some persons who become Willy nilly a part of it despite their dismal failures in life."

The miscalculations which led Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to labour under misconceptions about his goals and wrong assumptions based on false premises and relentless pursuit of his elusive objectives which left a trail of misery and bitterness for the people living across the two sides of the line of control per se place him in that category of people who imposed themselves on the pages of contemporary history.

Looking back at hindsight it may be seen that, his cantankerous role in the politics of Jammu & Kashmir had much wider ramifications, beyond the confines of territory, of far reaching socio economic and political significance in the sub continent.

Yet he will find a place in history for, as Herodotus wrote in his European History. "The things which have happened may not perish from among men by the lapse of time;" and that "deeds (good or bad) displayed ...may not lack renown."

It is indeed tragic that his consuming passion for something which eluded him throughout his public life landed people who adored him into unmitigated hardships and misery and culminated in not only division of lands but also their hearts and souls across the length and breadth of Jammu & Kashmir.

As the saying goes, "if an individual commits a mistake, he alone suffers the consequences; but if a leader of a nation commits it, the whole nation suffers, and for generations to come." The people have paid, and are still paying a heavy price for his follies and emotive decisions.

Perhaps the history of the sub continent would have been different and it would have been enjoying peace, progress and tranquility and earned itself a pride of place among the comity of nations, if the Sheikh had not channelised all his energies in the pursuit of an independent Kashmir, which eluded him till his end.

Whenever a balance sheet is drawn for the decades after the British left and successes and failures for the period are assessed, accusing fingers will point at Sheikh Abdullah as one of the those persons responsible for India's failure on the socio-economic as well as on the political front, for souring relations between India and Pakistan, and the concomitant bitter memories which continue to haunt the people of the sub continent. Indeed the trauma of partition and the scars and wounds left behind it would have been forgotten and would have perhaps healed but for the Kashmir dispute.

Sheikh Abdullah has been variously called an enigmatic as well as a magnetic personality, a crowd puller, a volatile public figure who used different languages at different places and on different occasions depending upon the mood and response of his audience; a demagogue who swayed crowds in whatever direction he wished. In one breath, he would beguile gullible crowds by his

## *Prologue*

polemics and indulge in the other breath in pontificating and shibboleths moving them into tears. Not infrequently, he indulged in brinkmanship and turned somersault on the slightest of provocation. His colleagues and associates held him in awe as also grudging esteem. His authoritarian style of functioning earned him more foes (hidden and open) than friends. Yet he was admired for his courage and boldness by the rank and file of his party (National Conference), particularly by the peasantry for whom he has done a lot. He was conscious and aware of his capacity to elicit from his followers deference, devotion and awe.

Sheikh Abdullah had a marvelous mind, set up and furnished to wield influence upon the individual or upon multitude's; to charm, to persuade, to command. His appeal was that he could touch the deepest emotional chords of his audience. He was (literally) tall in stature and equally tall (figuratively) in ego. He had also the gift of the gab. God had endowed him with a stentorian and melodious voice. Whenever he had to address a public meeting during the pre-independence era, he would begin by reciting verses from the Holy Quran followed by couplets of Dr. Iqbal. People would flock to him as if drawn by a magnet. He was conscious of his power to hold his audience spellbound. That inflated his ego beyond bounds. In course of time the authoritarian and dictatorial streak in his blood surfaced and he became arrogant, obdurate, stubborn, and intolerant of opposition. He would ruthlessly trample under his foot any voice of dissent. However, in spite of fits of wild temper and emotional outbursts he never succumbed to sniveling sentimentality until his last days when reaction of what he had done, on calm reflection, overtook him with its full intensity. Indeed, he passed away a very sad man, repentant, morose and chaffing at his helplessness. His rise was meteoric and tumultuous; his entire public life was tempestuous and his death an equally thunderous event. No doubt, he rode like a colossus on the crest of waves of popularity as also resentment and implacable hatred of his opponents for over six decades. Perhaps it was destined that in the twilight of his life he should accept a position quite below his stature and succumb to temptations of office and accompanying transitory

comforts, which brought him tumbling down from the high pedestal of a demi-god down to the abysmal depths of ignominy.

Destiny had chosen to entrust to me the difficult and unenviable task of serving this firebrand man in all my waking hours for seven long years. My tenure as Principal Secretary to successive Chief Ministers of Jammu & Kashmir beginning with Syed Mir Qasim and ending with G.M.Shah, spreading over a decade, remained uneventful, particularly because I cared more for the onerous and highly vulnerable job where I had, of necessity, to steer clear of all pitfalls. Nevertheless, I did contribute my bit in accomplishing some tasks, which, while looking back in retrospect, gives me immense satisfaction. In this context I would like to mention the following:

1. During the tenure of Syed Mir Qasim (1972-1975) I found that there was a fund known as "J & K Relief Fund" from which Chief Ministers from time to time used to make contributions to various agencies, individuals and States struck by natural calamities. The fund was initially raised by increasing duty on goods during period 1950-53 and had a tidy sum of over Rs.30.00 lakh. But by frequently drawing from it for acts of munificence, it had shrunk to a lowly sum of Rs. 10.00 lakh. During Syed Mir Qasim's time, I felt that the fund would completely disappear in a year or so considering the heavy drawals made from it for donations etc. I then hit upon the idea that if the fund was converted into a perpetual fixed deposit and the annual yield accruing on it credited to a current/saving account monthly it could not only be saved but many an indigent people could be helped by extending financial assistance to them out of the yield which would accrue to the deposit. I consulted the then Finance Secretary, late Pandit J.N.Kaul, a brilliant man well versed in financial and accounts matters, who agreed with me and assured me that he could arrange with the J&K Bank to have the fund converted into a P.F.D.R. The monthly yield accruing to the deposit could be credited to a separate current/saving account to be opened for the purpose. I broached the subject with the Chief Minister. He was at first reluctant to agree to this arrangement but after a great deal of persuasion, he came round.

It is indeed gratifying to note that in course of time liberal contributions were made to this fund by various philanthropic individuals, agencies and even the Central Government. When I retired, the principal amount had increased five fold and was intact whilst hundreds and thousands of persons in indigent conditions received help from it.

2. During G.M.Shah's time a similar fund was created for helping cancer patients. Many cancer victims who could not afford the costly treatment were assisted from this fund. The two funds continue to subsist even now and provide help.

3. During the year 1976-1977, when Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was at the helm of affairs, a devastating fire had razed to the ground the town of Shopian in District Anantnag (now District Pulwama). The Cabinet at that time had appointed a Relief and Rehabilitation Committee of which I was made de-facto chairperson. By untiring efforts put in by the District Administration under my supervision the girdawari of the town was completed in record time of one week, lost and damaged property assessed, and a new pattern of relief was evolved which came to be known as the "Shopian pattern" and subsequently came to be applied to all cases of relief to victims of the fire. Relief and rehabilitation to them was organised within two months from the date of the calamity. The proposals in this regard were placed by me before the Cabinet and approved by it. Sheikh Sahib was so impressed that he, partly in earnest and partly in jest, asked why the Shopian town should not be renamed "Ahmadabad". In fact the whole town was reconstructed under a new town plan providing for wide fire gaps, a network of roads, shopping areas and a new colony was carved out of a piece of Government land. I, as member of the low cost Rural Housing Construction Committee, managed to own one such unit (of ten houses) allotted to the poor sufferers who could not raise enough finances to re-construct their gutted houses.

4. In addition to my duties as Principal Secretary, I held the charge of inter alia Fisheries Department also. A scheme was prepared for Commercial Trout Farming under the EEC funded

programme, at Kokarnag, a beautiful tourist resort in the District of Anantnag. A youthful, energetic and technically competent officer by the name Dr. Nisar Jan was the Director of the Department. By our untiring efforts, it was possible to complete civil works, importation and installation of equipment and other jobs precedent and incidental to the project well in time. A team of EEC experts paid a visit to the project site immediately after it was completed and commissioned and were greatly impressed. Today the project is humming with activity and producing seeds for distribution to farmers interested in fish farming. The project produces the Rainbow variety of trout, which has a prolific growth. A large surplus quantity of trout is even now marketed at affordable prices.

5. In Jammu province I held, as Secretary, Auqaf and Hajj affairs, an additional charge with me. Thousands of acres of landed property were identified as wakaf lands, which were duly registered and notified as such under the law that also I helped in drafting. A number of income-generating assets were created in Jammu. In this connection may be mentioned the beautiful building at Residency Road where previously wooden ramshackle structures existed. It now houses the offices of the State Financial Corporation yielding a handsome income. A huge complex was also raised at Gandhi Nagar, a commercially most important area. It has not only provided a source of income for the Aquaf but also added to the beauty of the environment.

6. As a result of free education and general scramble by young men and women for professional training, the competition for admission to professional colleges had become very acute. The intake capacity of the colleges being limited, all sorts of corrupt practices for admissions became rampant. This frustrated resource less candidates with limited means. It was in this hopeless situation that the two government polytechnics invited applications for admission to its diploma courses and draftsman training. The intake capacity of the polytechnics was 50 in each course. Several hundred applications were received in response to the advertisement. The principals were in a quandary as what to do. The unsuccessful candidates would surely have raised a hulla

gulla. I happened to come across a report of the committee of Chief Engineers who had made a perspective study of employment potential in the engineering departments for the two disciplines over a period of 5 years. They had estimated that 500 jobs were expected to become available to diploma holders and draftsmen. On the basis of this report, I formulated a proposal for increasing the capacity of the two polytechnics to 100 in each discipline. That would make available 200 seats in the diploma course and 200 in the draftsmen course. To cope with the increased intake I suggested that the two polytechnics should work in two shifts. The resource personnel were to be offered double the salary for the additional hours of work to be put in by them. Devi Das Thakur who was then Finance Minister agreed to the proposal on condition that candidates sponsored by him should also be accommodated irrespective of their merit or suitability. Anyhow, the Cabinet approved the proposal. Sheikh Abdullah asked me to prepare three lists of candidates recommended by:

- (a) Ministers
- (b) Officers
- (c) Legislators

Accordingly I prepared four instead of three lists. I prepared the fourth after proper scrutiny of the candidates and this list was of candidates who did not figure in any of the three lists. When the Sheikh asked me what the fourth list prepared was, I told him that they were really the deserving candidates in point of merit and suitability and none of the above three categories of persons had recommended them. I called them "Yateem Lawaris" (i.e. orphans). The Sheikh smiled and approved all the four lists. Thus, as many as 400 candidates were selected after a viva test was held. I argued, before the proposals were approved, and the Sheikh agreed that it was better to have trained workforce of technocrats rather than untrained half-baked staff who would only be a liability rather than an asset. It is gratifying to note here that within a year after completion of training, 75% of the successful candidates were absorbed against available vacancies and the rest of them found

jobs after a wait of about 2 years. They have since been redesignated as Junior Engineers and are happily and gainfully employed.

By mentioning my contribution to these schemes, the intention is not to blow my own trumpet but to bring out that even while grappling with the day's drudgery and attending to mundane affairs associated with the job with thorns strewn in its path one can draw moral elation from things done for the general good. "The reward for good deed is to have done it" (Elbert Hubbard.)

In the succeeding chapters, I have attempted to bring out the many faceted personality of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, his weaknesses and strong points, his failings as a leader and as a man, the bright as well as seamy side of his life candidly and without any exaggeration. On the contrary, in most cases I have been guilty of understatement of certain episodes, events and incidents. Unfortunately, I have had no access to most of the documents to buttress my narrative with facts and figures. I have relied on my memory and, for aught I know, it may have eluded me somewhere or somehow for which I can only express regret.

Human memory is proverbially short, especially so in regard to figures. Dates and data elude memory of even the best brains. It sometimes plays tricks, which only confound rather than enlighten. Sometimes old memories come crowding into your mind gushing out in great exuberance. However, more often than not, they refuse to budge from the subconscious to the conscious even if one cudgels one's brains to the limit. Considering this human failing, I am sure the readers will forgive me if they find that I have ignored attention to precise dates and chronological order and that I have been unwittingly guilty of parachronism.

I wish to make it clear here that the memoirs do not attempt to narrate a chapter of contemporary history of Kashmir, but only portray the Sheikh as an ordinary mortal, his ambitions and *raison d'être* of his political forays. If in the process, some historical events relevant to this study have crept in, it was inevitable. After all, he (the Sheikh) made history of sorts, which a student of history can ill afford to ignore.

What I want to emphasize is that what I have recorded is based on truth and facts which I heard from elders or learned from writings of many eminent personalities who claimed to be contemporaries of the Sheikh Era or events. May be my memory could have erred or played tricks but only in the details and not on the substance of the incidents and episodes forming part of these memoirs.

*"I Speak the Truth Not So Much As I Would, But As Much As I Dare; And I Dare A Little More, As I Grow Older."*

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## CHAPTER II

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### KASHMIR AND ITS PEOPLE

*"Oh Saqi this soil is  
Very fertile if made a little moist"*

Kashmir has glorious past, a rich cultural heritage, golden traditions handed down from generation to generation and a proud and chequered history. It is not only a landscape of lofty snow-capped mountains, meandering brooks, beautiful dales, life-giving springs, sweet water lakes, serene and salubrious climate that promotes calm reflection but also people, pulsating with life and with throbbing hearts who are rightly proud of their inheritance. Kashmir has produced geniuses who made mark in various fields of human endeavor. It has through the ages attracted scholars who came here to quench their thirst for knowledge, saints and savants and Rishis and Munis who chose it as the abode for meditation and spiritual upliftment, and left indelible impression on its people; lovers of sport who found a wide range of game, big and small; lovers of nature for whom there was enough to feast their eyes on.

The many and varied scents and smells, and smiles, sensitivities, and abundance of multihued flora and fauna inspired Thomas Moore to give birth to an epic poem "Lala Rookh", Moore had only read about it and had never been to the beautiful valley.

Kashmir has produced artists and artisans who with their deft and nimble fingers and keen sense of beauty perfected over centuries which have won worldwide fame and acclaim and appreciation of connoisseurs and lovers of art alike.

It was during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen that Kashmir attained heights of glory in the field of arts and crafts, music, literature, scholarly pursuits, and religious tolerance. Indeed, it constitutes a watershed in the proud history of Kashmir. No wonder this period is known and recalled with pride as a golden era. It was during his time that world famous arts and crafts were introduced and flourished, silkworm rearing and silk reeling touched new heights of perfection and captured fancy of all and sundry for its univoltine and superior quality, and carpet weaving became a brisk business. His court attracted scholars and saints, men of letters and masters of classical music and received his abundant munificence. He is fondly remembered by the people as Bud Shah (Great King).

M.L.Kapur in his book Kingdom of Kashmir writes about the reign of Bud Shah: "after a storm comes calm, and so came the rule of Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen after that of Sikandar and Ali Shah. In the words of SriVara, Zain-ul-Abidin reign "after that of Ali Shah, who was ignorant of the art of ruling, was like the cooling sandal paste after the heat of summer in a desert had departed." Possessed of a broad and tolerant outlook he ruled with equity, justice, brought peace and prosperity, promoted art and learning. His policy was "like the sugar cane, and it removed the people's thirst for the good Kings of old."

The interaction of all the influences of environmental beauties, bounties of nature, an invaluable asset gifted by God to the land, spiritual knowledge bequeathed to the successive generations, had an everlasting impact on the way of life of the people. They imbibed the virtues of peace loving, religious tolerance, generosity, liberal outlook, and serenity in adversity. Alas, all this glory has been lost in the mists of the hoary past, albeit it has left a lasting imprint on the life of the people. The subsequent period saw a reign of terror let loose on the people and unparalleled repression to which they were subjected by successive regimes of Sikhs, Pathans and Mughals,

and later by Dogra rulers when the East India Company gifted the land to the Dogras (Maharaja Gulab Singh) in recognition of his services to it for a token sum of Nanak Shahi rupees 75 lakhs by virtue of the infamous Treaty of Amritsar. The effect of the repression from regime to regime and generation to generation led to impoverishment, unmitigated hardships and misery and the whole nation was enmeshed in a quagmire of socio-economic degradation. The people had no option but to accept the fate and continue to groan under the loathesome burden of abject poverty but recognising at the same time the virtue of simple living and plain thinking. The abiding influence of saints, Rishis and Munis mellowed down their bubbling spirit to a deep natural sobriety that enabled them to survive every crisis with calm aplomb and fortitude, which unfortunately has been mistaken for cowardice.

Arthur Neve, in the preface to his book Picturesque Kashmir, writes about this period, "All are familiar with some Kashmir history, with the fact that it has been an enslaved country for centuries, passing from the grip of Buddhists to Hindus, thence to Muslims, thence again to Sikhs and yet once more to Hindus before the present era of general toleration. How the Pathan followed the Mughal, the Sikhs ejected the Pathan, and the Dogra purchased the Sikh Provinces of the Himalayas from the Indian Government need not be here described. Under any of these successive rulers, the Kashmir peasantry was enslaved."

It is a fact of history that when suppression transcends the limits and bounds of tolerance, it sharpens the instinct of survival of the victims who contrive many and diverse means to tide over the buffets of misfortunes. That is what has happened in Kashmir. It is this trait in their distinctive identity, which they call "Kashmiriat", and fight the oppressor with guile rather than by guns. "Kashmir is an apostrophe of greenery in the lap of three ranges within the lesser Himalayas. Its sparkling streams, placid lakes and snow-capped mountains beguile with their pristine charm.... Even when autumn's searing colours fade into winter, the landscape appears, not bleak and colourless, but as fascinating as a daguerreotype, with every tint of white in the sky and in the snow deep brown in the cloaked figures that people the scene." Thus, Marie D'Souza waxes eloquent over the breathtaking natural beauty of Kashmir.

People through the ages have gone poetic over its celestial charms and admired the bounties of nature God Almighty has bestowed on the valley, which has captivated visitors all over the world from time immemorial. Indeed the greatest service done to this heaven on earth by the successive rulers from the dawn of history was that they did nothing to tamper with its pristine glory.

This was precisely the view of an authority on landscape Architecture of International renown who was commissioned by the State Government way back in the late sixties to prepare monographs on tourist resorts of the valley. He went into raptures over the beauty and generous bounties of Nature and in sheer ecstasy praised the powers that were who left the creations of nature untouched and undamaged.

"Kashmir", writes Walter Lawrence, Settlement Commissioner of Jammu & Kashmir at the turn of the century (1889 to be precise) "as possessing a distinct nationality, character, language, dress and body of customs affords much that is interesting, while its unique history and curious administration are worth careful study." It is a multi-lingual region where accent and dialect changes from area to area. In fact, the whole region has distinct linguistic islands offering a mosaic of kaleidoscopic colours yet presenting one whole. Walter Lawrence has drawn a graphic picture of the indignities heaped on the people by the minions of Dogra Rulers. He writes, "Much has been written of the abuses, which have prevailed in the administration of Kashmir. They were numerous and deplorable and when I first came to Kashmir in 1889, I found the people sullen, desperate and suspicious. They had been taught for many years that they were serfs without any rights but with many disabilities. They were forced by soldiers to plough and sow, and the same soldiers attended at harvest time. They were dragged away from their houses to carry loads to Gilgit, and every official had a right to their labour and to their property. Their simple proposition "he who ploughs shall reap" was ignored and their position was infinitely worse than that of the Tiers Etat before the French Revolution. The peasants were over-worked, half starved, treated

with hot words and hard blows, subjected to unceasing exactions and every species of petty tyranny."

About the people, he writes thus, "The Kashmiris possess an individuality and national character which will cling to them wherever they go. I have seen men return to Kashmir whose ancestors left the country two or three generations ago. Their dress was changed, and yet they retained unmistakable signs of a Kashmir origin and their ways of thought and of speech showed their descent. The Kashmiris are fond of their own country, its food, its water and its dress and though oppression had driven them out of the valley, many have come back and all are loathe to leave". "It could be argued", writes Brigid Keenan in her book *Travels in Kashmir*, "that neither India nor Pakistan has any convincing claim to Kashmir, and if it were a bleak and unattractive little country may be neither of them would bother with it, but, as Shakespeare pointed out long ago, "beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold; being an earthly paradise brings its own problems." Kashmir, a small green footprint in this vast, hostile and colourless landscape, naturally became known as more than just a pretty place. It has always been thought of as a land of milk and honey, an oasis, a coveted prize and over the centuries greedy eyes have been turned on the valley by most of her less fortunate neighbours."

About people, Ms Keenan writes, "Kashmiris are not an aggressive people; their character seems to have been shaped by nature's generosity to them. Their land was fertile and productive and they do not need to seek new pastures or expand their frontiers. With one exception or two Kashmir bred no men of war. On the contrary, it were they who were repeatedly invaded by envious neighbours. Over the centuries, the Kashmiris have had to learn the hard way how to survive conquest, oppression and extortion. They have had to teach themselves to be submissive, to bend with the wind, to evade all confrontation and to make the best of often appalling circumstances." They acquired unmatched and enormous capacity, over a period of time, to withstand extraneous influences and successfully resist repeated assaults on their culture, traditions, customs and individuality.

"Kashmir," writes Marie D'Souza, author of Kashmir the Himalayan Paradise, "can be compared to a diamond, whose glitter and sparkle has attracted a multitude of adventurers, scoundrels, pious men, fortune seekers and romantics. And like a diamond, that has brought fame and fortune to some owners, and disaster to others, Kashmir's history is one where sudden vicissitudes of prosperity and calamity have overtaken one another. In all this, it would perhaps not be un-expected if Kashmir's essential vitality and culture began to blur or will it remain forever as it is now? Swimming with the tide, yet never relinquishing its vital ingredients. "Indeed the contemporary history bears testimony to this sterling trait in the character of the people of Kashmir."

It was the choking atmosphere where Sheikh Abdullah found himself when he returned from Muslim University Aligarh after securing a Master's Degree in Chemistry. The soul searing poverty of the multitudes, the dehumanised administration whose sole objective was to perpetuate autocratic Dogra Rule, the listless people wallowing under heavy debts of usurers and the clutches of the money lenders, starving masses who even after hard toil could hardly keep their body and soul together, was enough to give a rude shock to young Abdullah's whole being.

## CHAPTER III

### **SHEIKH ABDULLAH- A PROFILE**

*Kan thav, bu wannai Sher-i-Kashmir  
Listen! I will unfurl the story Sher-i-Kashmir*

Sheikh Abdullah's public life can be divided into the following phases:-

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| (1) 1931-1938     | (2) 1938-1946-47 |
| (3) 1947-1953     | (4) 1953-1975    |
| (5) 1975- 1976-77 | (6) 1977-1982    |

During the first phase spread over seven years his role was positive in that he brought awakening to the people and championed the cause of the downtrodden. He fought a relentless battle against the autocratic Dogra rule in conjunction with Mirwaiz Maulvi Yusuf Shah, the moving spirit behind the Muslim Conference, Chowdry Ghulam Abbas of Jammu, another stalwart of the Muslim Conference, late Khwaja Ghulam Ahmed Ashai an eminent educationist who was later appointed first Registrar of University of Kashmir. and others.

It was mainly through the efforts of these leaders that Glancy commission was appointed to look into the grievances of Muslims

and to recommend remedial measures. For the first time educated Muslims could find a berth in Government and Praja Sabha was brought into being.

During the second phase, i.e. 1938-1947 Sheikh Abdullah had fallen in the net of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on whose advice he converted the Muslim Conference into the National Conference, paving the way for all sorts of elements of dubious bonafides to infiltrate into its ranks. Late Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, a socialist by conviction, has in his book, Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, traced its origin (conversion of Muslim Conference to National Conference,) to the machinations of N. Gopalaswami Ayyengar. It may be of interest in this context to quote what he says, "In 1936 the Maharaja had appointed a crafty Brahmin Dewan Bahadur (afterwards Sir) N. Gopalaswami Ayyengar, an efficient and capable civil servant of Madras as his Prime Minister. Ayyengar was a communalist and a nationalist at the same time. He was a sundried bureaucrat and a perfect disciplinarian who believed in strong government in Kashmir. Before he had administered the State for many months, Ayyengar became thoroughly popular with the upper class Hindus. In equal measure, if not more, he earned the hatred of the Muslims and the progressives in the country. He was determined to eradicate their Freedom Movement before he left the state and for the achievement of this objective, he had been applying all the energies of his active mind and soul. Ayyengar was a Gandhian at heart and reposed complete confidence in the ideals of the Congress. He closely watched the events and developments, which took place in Kashmir politics during the days of Nehru's tour. He could rightly guess the spiritual and moral crisis through which Abdullah was passing. In a flash of genius, he thought of playing the role that ordinarily should have been played by the State Hindu leaders. He became sympathetic towards the topmost man of the National Conference and encouraged him to plunge headlong into the Congress ideology. As we shall presently see, the lead given by Ayyengar was speedily followed by the conservative and reactionary Hindus of the State who began to join the ranks of the National Conference in increasing numbers.

This episode of Nehru's visit to the Valley killed Abdullah the revolutionary and the fighter for freedom. We shall no more hear of him in that capacity. Of course, Abdullah continued to cry and harangue in the name of the Holy cause but in reality, all that he did after this was actuated and prompted by his lust for power and fame. No doubt he has been all along rationalising his anti-democratic and anti-national activities by adducing as many plausible and clever arguments as his advisors could think of, but as we shall see in the course of this survey, gradually but surely he has been led astray and has gone away from the goal of the Freedom Movement in the opposite direction. Ultimately, he became a tool to crush the people of Kashmir in the hands of those very exploiting forces whom he had originally planned to exterminate.

Kashmir Muslims made a grievance out of Nehru's visit by saying that the National Conference had entirely identified itself with the "Hindu Body", the Congress. This complaint became widespread within a few months of the departure of Nehru that when the second session of the National Conference met at Baramulla on 28th September 1940, all the delegates were nominated as only a small number of primary members had been enrolled during the course of the year. No Muslim delegates attended from Jammu province except the Mirpur district. It was significant that a large contingent of Hindu and Sikh delegates had come from all over the State and even from Jammu.

The total indifference of the Muslims towards the National Conference disheartened many Muslim Nationalist leaders, notably Afzal Beg and Maulvi Sayeed, the two communally inclined leaders of the high command, if not Abdullah and Bakshi as well. But what was the remedy? By now, all the leaders had come round to the view that the alliance with the Congress was essential to secure funds and publicity for the National Conference. Nevertheless, it was equally necessary that the State Muslims should be brought back into the Congress fold.

It was not a mere quirk of fate or accident that transformed Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah from a humble schoolteacher to that

of a volatile and fire-brand leader of the masses. There were strong motivating factors and highly provocative situations that brought about the metamorphosis in him. He has referred to these factors and situations in his autobiography dictated in outlines to Mohammad Yusuf Taing, Secretary of the Cultural Academy and his blue-eyed boy, entitled *Aatish-I-Chinar*. One day when he was in a reminiscent mood, he narrated the incidents with a wistful look in his eyes. These are reproduced below in his own words:

(1) "People were poor and accepted their fate with resignation born of deep influence of saints, savants, rishis and munis. They believed in simple living and plain thinking. Mutton, chicken, eggs and other rich foods were luxuries unknown to them and much beyond their reach. But those fortunate people living on the banks of rivers or around the lakes would once in a while secretly catch fish during the night from the river or lake and supplement their simple meal with boiled fish without any condiments, which too were beyond their means. Indeed, they considered it "*Manna*." Unfortunately, Kashmiri Brahmins got wind of it and they were greatly chagrined at this indulgence by "*Maleech*" and vowed to teach them a lesson. It so happened that someone in the family of the then Dogra Ruler had passed away. They conceived a diabolical plan to punish these poor, helpless and hapless people. Earlier these Brahmins had convinced the Maharaja that the soul of the departed member had assumed the garb of a drone. Now they assured him that the soul had transferred itself and chosen a fish as its abode. The Maharaja immediately issued a proclamation banning fishing and prescribing severe punishment for offenders. A poor Kashmiri not knowing anything about the proclamation was caught red-handed while netting fish by the self appointed vigilantes who were none other than these Brahmins. The poor fellow was stripped naked and made to stand on one leg in the scorching sun and fish caught by him were made into a sort of necklace and thrown around his neck. Whenever the hapless man wished to relax his aching limbs, he was whipped. This in-human punishment was inflicted on him from "dawn to dusk."

His skin was parched and the poor fellow could not stand the torture and breathed his last as soon as night fell. According to the Sheikh, this sordid incident was related to him by an elder of his family who was witness to this unheard of brutality.

(2) Another incident to which young Abdullah was himself a witness demonstrates to what lengths the minions of Dogra Rulers would go to demean and demoralise people to perpetuate their subjugation. One day a local Naib-Tehsildar paid a visit to Soura village, the birthplace of Sheikh Abdullah. He immediately summoned all residents to a nearby public park. The Naib-Tehsildar then asked them as to who was the most respected member amongst them. The unfortunate man happened to be a very near relation of Abdullah. As soon as the unfortunate elder stepped forward before the Naib, he slapped him so hard that the sound of impact reverberated all around and sent him reeling to the ground, his turban falling on one side and the shawl (usually carried on shoulders by respectable persons), on the other. The Naib warned the gathering that this should be an object lesson to them that no one high or low should have the temerity to raise his voice against Maharaja Bahadur.

(3) There is a forest check post on the outskirts of Soura village. Once it so happened that a poor Kashmiri wood cutter had collected some firewood from the nearby forest and was carrying it on his back, the sale of which in market could have provided him and his family necessary sustenance for the day. When he passed the check post, the Forest Guard on duty there started to abuse the woodcutter without any rhyme or reason. Then he snatched the small bundle of firewood and when the poor man protested the guard beat him mercilessly inflicting grievous injuries all over his body. To cap it all, the guard after tying his hands and legs made the poor man to hop and wobble across the road all the time thrashing him with a whip. The Sheikh was a witness to this sorry spectacle. He was so infuriated that he caught hold of the guard and beat him black and blue.

These and other scores of similar incidents had a forceful impact on young Abdullah and provoked him to rise up to and challenge the oppressors.

Young Abdullah, impetuous and rebellious as he was, could not tolerate the de-humanised environment where even the simplest and the smallest wish was a taboo and would get stifled. When there were not many educated Muslims around and jobs were hard to come by, Abdullah resigned from the post of schoolteacher, which he had taken up on return from Muslim University Aligarh, and jumped in the fray. His appearance on the political firmament of Jammu & Kashmir and the role he played in bringing awakening to the downtrodden masses has found place in many a book and brooks no repetition here. Nor is it very germane to my study of the man.

In passing I may mention here that Robert Thorpe in his Misrule in Kashmir has painted a dismal picture of the plight of Kashmiri people. Perhaps Dante's description of Hell in his Divine comedy, "Lasciate speranza Ogni Voi Che'nRat" "All ye who enter here must abandon hope." Admirably fits the description of the particular period of history of the land and the people.

When Sheikh Abdullah and his other colleagues and associates started protest demonstrations demanding a say in the governance of the State in late thirties and early forties, people were made to crawl on their bellies and cross bridges on their haunches by Dogra police and Military. (It is indeed an irony of fate that the brutalities during the Dogra rule are being repeated now at the hands of minions of Delhi with un-imaginable ferocity, brutality and bestiality). The immediate fallout of Sheikh Abdullah's appearance on the political scene was that he came to be a man who needed to be watched as he was otherwise sure to prove a stumbling block to his vision of *Maha Bharat* for which northern Areas including Kashmir were a *sine qua non*. He did watch him with a hawk's eye and closely monitored his activities. Then a well thought out process of wooing him to the Congress fold was started and every trick in the *Chankya Neti* and *Shastras* was employed in the pursuit of Nehru's vision. All sorts of

allurements and attractions were dangled before his eyes. Pandit Nehru being a good judge of human character tapped all weaknesses of Abdullah and so contrived the modus operandi in this regard that he did not fight shy of even pandering to his basest proclivities.

All through his public life, he acted like a banyan tree and never allowed any alternative leadership to grow under him. He never tolerated any challenge to his authority; and ruthlessly put down dissenting voices. No doubt, he started as a revolutionary motivated by an ardent desire for socio-economic and political emancipation of the people from tyrannical ruler. But when he found his feet firmly planted on political firmament, he eased out one by one persons whom he thought could pose a challenge to his leadership. Soon his priorities shifted; people became in his calculations only as an instrument for achievement of his goals - to rule as an unquestioned and uncrowned monarch, became his burning passion. Because of his fiery speeches against the authorities, which reflected urges and aspirations of the people, he became the darling of the masses. He could sway crowds in whichever direction he wished. This completely changed his psyche also. Because of his religious fervour, people began to take him as a God's chosen man. Rumours were set afloat that were fanned by interested groups for their own purposes. Poets and bards composed songs on him, and panegyrics tuned to traditional *Rouf* (chorus) which women would sing on all festive occasions. In short, he became a legend in his own lifetime. All this gave a strong impetus to his lurking ambition to become Sultan of Kashmir (he always referred to Kashmir as my country). Even though he suffered long periods of imprisonment and went through many and diverse trials and tribulations, the dormant but intense desire to rule never left his sights.

A glimpse into his inner feelings was given by him when he gave an interview to R.K. Karanjia, Editor *Blitz*, immediately after his release from Kud Jail, in 1958, when he elaborated the idea of Independent Kashmir as the only solution to the problem which had baffled resolution and was fraught with dangerous portents

for the peaceful existence of the whole region. His character was a bundle of contradictions. By reciting Quranic Verses, he would move people to tears and quote Dr. Iqbal's couplets appropriate to the occasion. He would offer (Namaz) prayers five times a day and observe fast during the month of Ramadhan. Large crowds of gullible and credulous women would wait at his residence for hours on end to receive his benedictions. He would invariably dole out pieces and crumbs of bread and bottles of water, which they believed, had healing powers. As a demagogue, he knew every trick of the trade. He acted as both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde according as the particular situation demanded. He would recite verses from the Holy Quran wherever it suited the occasion and act as a firebrand speaker when he wished to warm the hearts of the people.

Pandit Nehru's largesse's which were bestowed on him in the shape of first as Vice-President and then as President of the State Peoples Conference bloated his head which made him imperious in his dealings with his political opponents, ruthless, dictatorial and unforgiving . Pandit Nehru handled him with kid gloves and bowed before his whims and caprices without caring for his pride or prejudices following typical *Chankya Neti* and dictates. The long periods of incarceration had no sobering effect on either his temper or his dictatorial instincts and his arrogance. It was at the behest of Mahatma Gandhi who made a dash to the state when Delhi sensed the mood of the people to release Sheikh Abdullah from jail in the late forties for the purpose of a prime national importance; and again it was as alleged by the Sheikh's contemporaries as also by knowledgeable sources, Mahatma Gandhi who prevailed upon Maharaja Hari Singh to pave way for accession to India. When subsequent to partition of the sub-continent and accession of the state to India, he was installed first as Head of Emergency Administration and then as Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, the power went to his head. He would move smug in the newly acquired splendour in a Cadillac convertible car flying two flags-one of India and the other of the state and go to Nehru Park which was built under his personal supervision in the Dal Lake and named after Pandit Nehru. Here he would offer evening prayers

and acknowledge disdainfully like a Mughal emperor salutations from the awe-struck subjects.

Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that it was Sheikh Abdullah who awakened the people from the sloth and deep slumber induced by continuous repression at the hands of successive tyrannical rulers. He aroused in them an abiding sense of pride in their distinctive identity, glorious past, rich cultural heritage and golden traditions worthy of a proud people with a long and chequered history. He called it "Kashmiriat" and Kashmir as "Moj Kashir"-Mother Kashmir. Preservation of this distinctive personality was the Sheikh's "Summum bonum." At every turn of his tempestuous and tumultuous political life he would stick to this dogma no matter what the buffets of misfortunes and howsoever adverse the situation. He was often eloquent on the subject whenever he had a moment to himself in the midst of his busy public life. Like Nelson Mandela, he could be said to be yet another public figure to have suffered long periods of detention and imprisonment. He was in and out of prison for over 11 years and so frequently that it became a routine and a part of his life.

When he resumed responsibilities as Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, the state was undergoing a financial crisis; the treasury was empty; the total budget of the state was rupees two crore or so and the expenditure far outstripped the income. There were not many sources of revenue. Economy measures were enforced, grants for various Departments were slashed and superfluous staff was retrenched. He would always exhort people "Prefer to eat potatoes and make self-reliance as the motto of your life rather than hanker after luxuries that would change your life style and traditional ethos giving way to only spurious values in a corrupt society thus making you easy prey to machinations of usurpers and tyrants." Two instances were often quoted by his associates about the intensity of his patriotism and unwavering dedication to the cause he had taken upon himself to espouse:

- (1) In his early public life he would come from his residence at Soura to Mujahid Manzil, the headquarter of National Conference

on bicycle, a distance of about 6 km. One day as usual he came to the office, tired and famished, it being an unusually hot day and asked one of his workers to fetch some food from a neighbour who happened to be his fan. The worker ran to do his bidding but the woman told him that no food was left and that there was nothing but some "phoheri" (the crest that forms at the bottom of the rice cooking utensil). The worker returned to him with a long face and reported what he had been told by the woman. Sheikh was annoyed and retorted "fetch the phoheri, it will do." Thereupon the worker brought the phoheri, which is normally thrown away, and placed before him in a large copper cup. The Sheikh asked the worker if he had any money. The worker took out one anna and told him, that it was the only money he had. The worker was asked to fetch yoghurt, some radishes and red chillies. The required things were brought to him and Sheikh Sahib mixed all the ingredients with the phoheri and ate the concoction with relish. No fads, no luxurious foods and no grumblings, except when he would be invited to feasts by his admirers now and then where he would surpass even the hardest gormandizers and gluttons. During the year 1952, crops failed in several districts. This earned the nickname "*Draga Dev*" (the famine demon) for M.A. Beg who was Revenue Minister. To supplement the rice ration people were issued groundnut flour. One day while he was working in his office, his meal was brought to him in a tiffin box. He asked his Private Secretary (Pandit R.C.Raina) to join him in the meal who politely declined. When the Sheikh opened the tiffin box, he laid the contents on a plate. Lo and behold there was nothing but cooked groundnut flour and yoghurt and radish chutney, the same food which was the diet of the common people.

He was too proud to allow import of food from outside the State as that would have made people dependent on imports which was quite anathema to his scheme of things. These were the sterling qualities in him. During the brief period of less than four years, he introduced several pieces of social legislation, which provided immense relief to the common masses. To name a few, Distressed Debtors Relief Act, Restitution of Mortgages Act, etc. which freed poor people from the clutches of usurers and moneylenders.

Sweeping land reforms were introduced under which big land lords retained only 182 Kanals of land (subsequently all estates were transferred in ownership rights to the tillers). This completely revolutionised the whole Agrarian set-up and had tremendous impact on the rural masses. These ameliorative measures endeared him to the simple folk who loved him with all his faults and questionable traits in his character. Meanwhile the central leadership started to squeeze and bridle his hitherto unrestrained freedom of action; gradually his wings were clipped and the centre began to tighten its grip on the state. The natural outcome of all these curbs led to complete disenchantment and disillusionment of Abdullah and shattered his dream of an independent Kashmir.

Far too late wisdom dawned on him that all promises made were glittering mirages. The centre wanted the land and not the people to secure its frontiers of Mahabharata as envisioned by Pandit Nehru. In fact, once he burst before a central leader that India was treating people of the state as part of landscape forgetting that they were pulsating with life with throbbing hearts and had urges and aspirations for a better quality of life free from bondage. They would never tolerate to live under the shadow of a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads all the time. In utter frustration, he bemoaned the change of heart of the central leaders and wrote a letter to Maulana Azad on July 16th, 1953 in which he gave expression to his hurt feelings. Inter alia he wrote, "As is well known to you, the present relationship of the State is based on the document of Instrument of Accession. We the people of Kashmir regard the promises and assurances of the representatives of Govt of India, such as Lord Mountbatten and Sardar Patel, as surety for the assistance by us in securing the signatures of Maharaja of Kashmir on the Instrument of Accession, which made it clear that the internal autonomy and sovereignty of the acceding States shall be maintained except in regard to three subjects which will be under the Central Government. This sums up the relationship between Kashmir and India. It should not be forgotten that this is a temporary or provisional relationship, which we had hoped would strengthen our position, gradually it underwent a change with restrictions

imposed upon the majority community in the state. The finalisation of this relationship between India and Kashmir caused concern among the people here and has given rise to doubts and fears in their minds."

As time elapsed, it began to become clear that this special position conceded with certain reservations and there arose objections against this "special treatment". It is important to note here that responsible representatives of the Govt of India themselves gave rise to many doubts by terming this position as provisional, and the ensuing events confirmed us in our belief that the relationship between India and Kashmir arising out of document of Instrument of Accession was not final. It is true that older generations had a soft corner for the Sheikh due to which he could get away with the farce of an election to the Constituent Assembly in 1950 where he collected 75 nodding heads. But people in general baring the hirelings, hardcore cadre of National Conference composed of riff raff that had stakes, were disenchanted but they dared not give vent to their pent up emotions. The younger generation in particular was the target of all sorts of repression. The intelligentsia too could not escape the wrath of the regime. In fact, the majority of thinking people were smarting under the authoritarian rule and oppressive measures adopted by the so-called popular Government. Listening to Radio Pakistan or Azad Kashmir Radio was taboo, and an offence, and people found guilty of it were sent to prison after receiving a dose of torture at the hands of a brute of a police officer. The lion was, however, caged and cornered when the internal autonomy was gradually eroded which brought to his mind the stark realities with a sledgehammer force. He was allowed to roam around freely in the belief that it would breed in the people contempt for him. Even so, the ambition of creating an independent Kashmir with him as the sole arbiter of the destiny of the people continued to be his consuming passion. He started hobnobbing with world leaders none too friendly to India to enlist their support for his brainchild. This proved the last straw and Delhi pulled the rug from under his feet. He was dismissed and imprisoned and a case of treason known as "Kashmir Conspiracy

Case" instituted against him so that he could be chastened and taught a lesson.

In his various utterances at public meetings and communications to the Central leaders, he made no secret of his ambition to secure an independent status for his "country". Even in his opening address to the Constituted Assembly on Nov 6, 1951 Sheikh Sahib reserved the right to exercise the third option, namely independent Kashmir. He declared; the third course is open to us and is still to be discussed. We have to consider the alternative of making ourselves Switzerland of the east, of keeping aloof from both States but having friendly relations with them. This might seem attractive in that it would appear to have the way out of the present deadlock. To us as a tourist country it could also have certain advantages. But in considering independence, we must not ignore practical considerations. Firstly, it is not easy to protect sovereignty and independence of a small country, which has not sufficient strength to defend itself on our long and difficult frontiers bordering so many countries. Secondly, we must have the good will of all our neighbours. Can we find powerful guarantors among them to pull together always in assuring us freedom from aggression?

Again, I quote from S.R. Bakshi's book here. Although Sheikh Abdullah had, on many occasions, ruled out the idea of independence for Kashmir, he had already given an indication of what was on his mind. In early 1953, it was arranged between India and Pakistan that the Prime Ministers of the two countries would meet to resolve the Kashmir problem bilaterally. Accordingly, the Government of India asked the State government to form a high power committee and to send to New Delhi the suggestions of the State Government. The ruling party constituted a committee consisting of Sheikh Abdullah, Maulana Mohammad Mausodi, Mirza Afzal Beg, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, S.L.Saraf, G.M.Sadiq, G.L.Dogra, and Sardar Budh Singh as its members. The Committee recommended that a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir be held to decide its future status; the Jammu and Kashmir State to remain free; foreign affairs and defence be given to India and Pakistan; or

the Jammu and Kashmir State be divided into three parts- the Hindu majority area of Jammu to be integrated with India, the north western parts including Gilgit and Hunza to be integrated with Pakistan, and Kashmir valley to be kept independent. When the document reached New Delhi signed, ironically enough by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the Centre must have started doubting Sheikh Abdullah's intentions.

In fact, Sheikh Abdullah also gave clear indications of the shape of things to come. He had expressed his fears frankly without being afraid of anybody. Rather impulsive by nature, he lacked the true statesman's quality of keeping his own counsel. Being a man of truth, he spoke out his fears without the least thought that these utterances could be distorted. Or, believing that he really wanted to undo the accession and make Kashmir independent, the logical conclusion is that he was living in a world of illusion. After 1952 and 1953, when a change in Sheikh Abdullah's thinking became perceptible, Nehru visited the Valley in the last week of May and met the members of the National Conference Working Committee impressing on them the dangers of making the valley independent. But even then, Sheikh Abdullah did not change his stand. In the Centre's efforts for a rapprochement Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad played important roles. Nehru sent his trusted lieutenant's one after the other to Kashmir to discuss the problem with Sheikh Abdullah who treated them with disdain and they returned to New Delhi empty handed. He told them: "As is well known to you, the present relationship of the State is based on the document of Instrument of Accession. We the people of Kashmir, regard the promises and assurances of the representatives of Government of India, such as Lord Mountbatten and Sardar Patel, as surely for the assistance rendered by us in securing the signatures of Maharaja of Kashmir on the Instrument of Accession, which made it clear that the internal autonomy and sovereignty of the Acceding States shall be maintained except in regard to three subject which will be under the Central Government."

Sheikh Abdullah rose as an unknown commodity and a nonentity, then became a champion of the cause of the poor masses

who gave him ungrudging love and affection despite his faults, but in the evening of his life succumbed to the worldly pleasures, entertained grandiose ideas, and harboured and nursed the ambition to become one of the greats in the contemporary history and brought himself down tottering under the weight of his own follies. "How blest is he who can close his eyes and let vain pageant of life pass by; untouched by the magic of earth can keep his soul awake while the senses sleep." To compound his misery and frustration, he and Afzal Beg were detained and their passports impounded in the late spring of 1965. This added fuel to the simmering discontent triggered by Hazratbal agitation and hardened the already hostile attitude of the people towards Delhi. The Sheikh was so disgusted that he expressed a wish that on his death, his dead body should be consigned to the Indian Ocean for he was loath to be buried in the land of his birth, which was still in bondage. He was toying with the idea of an Independent Kashmir with cordial relations both with India and Pakistan is amply clear from the following letter he wrote to one of his admirers in Pakistan. Though he has not said so in so many words, the inference is implied in it:

*"My Dear,*

*I regret to have to say that because of my pre-occupations, I could not write to you earlier. In fact, while en-route from Algiers to Jeddah, we stopped over night at Cairo where I tried to contact you on telephone, but unfortunately could not, I just wanted to say how do you do. However, I hope you are quite well.*

*You might have come to know from the press reports that Government of India has cancelled all endorsements on my and my party's passports, except for Saudi Arabia, and has reduced its validity to 30th April from 12th July 1965.*

*I am, herewith, enclosing a copy of the letter of Indian Embassy in Jeddah, on the subject for your information. Enclosed, you will also find a copy of my letter addressed to the First Secretary of the Embassy. This will give you a complete idea of*

*the whole situation. I have not yet decided what course to adopt, in regard to this action of Government of India.*

*You are aware that during the current tour, I took the opportunity to inform the outside world about the Kashmiri people's point of view in regard to accession dispute of the state. This, I have done without malice for anybody or apportioning blame between India and Pakistan. My sole aim has been, as you know, to bring about an amicable settlement between India and Pakistan, for therein lies peace and prosperity of the whole sub-continent, and that of the South East Asia. Failure to resolve this dispute during the last seventeen years had not only implicated agony and distress to the people of Kashmir but has contributed to the creation of bitterest relations between India and Pakistan. This state of affairs, apart from continued denial of the basic right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir is resulting in colossal drain on the meagre resources of the two countries, as also putting peace in the region in constant jeopardy. The only remedy lies in the restoration of friendly relations between India and Pakistan and amicable settlement of the Kashmir dispute. I have made strenuous efforts in this direction, and have, I think, mobilised to a certain extent on our side public opinion in my support, with the assistance of friends like you."*

Sheikh Abdullah had somehow succeeded in bringing round Pandit Nehru to his line of thinking and of the dire necessity of maintaining friendly relations with Pakistan in the larger interests of peace and prosperity in the region. Pt. Nehru deputed him to Pakistan as his emissary to discuss proposals in this regard with Field Marshall Ayub Khan. The Sheikh was given a red carpet reception in Pakistan and was received with open arms wherever he went. Probably he had some preliminary rounds of discussion with the Field Marshall but before the proposals could come to any fruition, Pandit Nehru passed away at Dehradoon dashing any hope of resolving the tangled web, which has brought the two countries almost to the brink of ruination. Three wars have been fought over the issue since the birth of the two countries. The mad

race for armaments and diversion of scarce resources towards stock piling of arsenal of lethal weaponries and weapons of destruction which otherwise could have been utilized for economic enlistment of the people and national reconstruction and thus brought them nearer to the goal of much vaunted social justice, has ruined the economy of the sub-continent and made it a prey to international indebtedness.

Anyway, when he was finally released from jail (probably in 1968) the young generation had become assertive and occasionally stoked smouldering embers into fierce flames. Frequent protests were made for one reason or the other which often turned violent resulting in loss of many precious lives. The Sheikh saw it fit to stay away from active political life and keep a low profile and busied himself with collecting donations for reciting and rebuilding of Hazratbal mosque on the model of Masjid-i-Nabvi at Madina. When the old mosque was demolished, nature unleashed hurricane winds and ferocious downpours and people subsequently questioned the wisdom of bringing down the centuries old historical building which even nature abhorred.

Thus for 22 long years from August, 1953 to February, 1975 he, in the words of his life long colleague, Mirza M.A. Beg whom later he unceremoniously threw out at the fag end of his life when he deserved a better deal for all his labours, "they roamed the deserts, forlorn, forgotten neglected, unwept and unsung despite the turn about of his party National Conference and formation of Plebiscite Front." In the meanwhile, Mohammad Shafi Qureshi a political adventurer, an opportunist and once President of Muslim Students Federation, established a branch of Congress in Srinagar conspiring with other political adventurers and with the blessings of the National Party. The main objective was to erode the power base of the National Conference and create a formidable opposition to the National Conference (converted into Plebiscite Front). Despite social boycott against the party members who were dubbed as "Gogas" the Congress gained strength by enrolling all sorts of upstarts and persons out for grabs for fishes and loaves of office, undue favours and looking for areas for advancing their material and political

interests. Qureshi enlisted the services of a ruffian known as Noora Taburdar (woodcutter - his father was a woodcutter) and his friends and comrades in hooliganism to entice and enroll all sorts of riff raff in the Congress fold to swell its ranks with the blessings of the central party. Eventually, the local Congress committee became a part of the National Party, was named as Pradesh Congress Committee, and came into power through unabashedly rigged elections.

## CHAPTER IV

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### **INDIRA-ABDULLAH ACCORD**

*"I have already explained to you that the clock cannot be put back and we have to take note of the realities of the situation"*

*Mrs Indira Gandhi*

On the death of G.M.Sadiq in 1971 at P.G.I. Chandigarh somewhat allegedly in mysterious circumstances, Syed Mir Qasim, a stalwart of Pradesh Congress Committee, was made caretaker Chief Minister until the elections when he was elected as the leader of the Legislature party and formally inducted as Chief Minister. Even otherwise, he was next in the line of succession in the scheme of things already on the shelf. Syed Mir Qasim was a gentleman par excellence, mild-mannered, polite, a scholar and an orator of high calibre. Soon after assumption of office, he set about to persuade, cajole and coax Sheikh Abdullah to once again join the mainstream of Indian body-politic whether at the behest of his mentor, Mrs. Indira Gandhi or on his own volition, he alone can tell. Then Mrs. Indira Gandhi considered Sheikh Abdullah as a thorn in her flesh and presumably wished the Sheikh to be enticed and beguiled into accepting the reigns of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir and thus rid herself of this source of constant irritation; and thereby relegating the vexing Kashmir question to the limbo, into the bargain. Syed Mir Qasim spent many sleepless nights with the Sheikh in marathon sessions to win over the almost tired Sheikh to his way of thinking. Meanwhile Sheikh Abdullah came under tremendous

pressure from the family to accept the office once again. Far too long, they argued, he had remained in wilderness, sans creature comforts, sans power and sans authority. The allurements of office were too attractive to resist. While the negotiations were going on at Delhi between G.Parthasarthy the emissary of Mrs Gandhi and Mirza M.A. Beg the emissary of the Sheikh, the family members and Sheikh's close relations were itching for the authority that they would wield on acceptance of the *Gaddi* (throne) by the Sheikh. Most of them set up their camp in Delhi and were eagerly looking forward to the day when the Sheikh would assume office and open way for them to secure their hold on the Government as also on the people. Eventually the accord was reached but the Sheikh had not bargained for the rude shock that he received when he found that the honorific appellations of the Head of the State and Head of the Administration, the main casualty.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that Syed Mir Qasim, the Chief Mediator who succeeded in taming the lion, acted like an uneasy soul in great torment and, therefore, like an odd man out throughout the process of negotiations. The fact that he had ultimately to make room for the Sheikh heavily weighed on his conscience. His colleagues, notably G.R. Kar. and Mufti Sayeed, members of his Cabinet, opposed the accord tooth and nail *ab initio*. In fact, they rose in open revolt against him. Earlier A.G.Lone (Later Chairman, Peoples Conference) had resigned the office as Minister adding to his difficulties. They even went to the extent of inciting Ladakhis who launched a virulent agitation against him and held violent protests when he visited Ladakh area. But Syed Mir Qasim stuck to his guns and ignored the protests from the party and interested groups opposed to the accord. As a Chief Minister, Syed Mir Qasim gave impression of a benign ruler out to mitigate the hardships of people. Whenever there were protest demonstrations leading to violence and in some cases loss of life, he would indeed become very sad.

He toured every nook and corner of the State; would meet daily hundreds of people at his official residence and meticulously look into their complaints/grievances and would do his utmost to

redress them. Had it not been weighing on his conscience that he was temporary substitute and had eventually to make way for Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, he would have proved a highly successful Head of Government. The administration was lax and took things lightly. Consequently, the ruffians and goons, who enjoyed patronage of a minister and some Divisional officers, had a field day and whenever some enterprising and conscientious officers would haul them up the higher ups would shield them. The Cabinet Minister and Divisional officers whose protégées they were would use them for pressurising of their critics. It was so both in Jammu as also in Srinagar. In Jammu, they were known, as *Toka baz* (dagger wielding goons). In Srinagar, a group of young men headed by an Engineering college student nick named Papa had become quite a nuisance. His companions belonged to well to do and influential families. They would often highjack college buses and hold law-abiding students to ransom. There was another group known as "gang of four" headed by a burly and hefty man dubbed as Tarzan. In Jammu, the mixed group belonging to different communities was headed by a Sikh young man known as Kuki Singh, real name Sukhnandan Singh. Another group of Muslim young men of Jammu had Abdul Majeed as their spokesman. There were even inter-gang wars in which lethal weapons were freely used. As they enjoyed protection of minister concerned and Divisional officers, they had become quite unruly and a pain in the neck for the Government. Anyway, these young men in both Srinagar and Jammu were tactfully brought round and absorbed some in Government service and some in gainful self-employment enterprises. It is indeed gratifying to note here that all the young men became responsible and well-behaved citizens and helped administration in dealing with and tackling many a tricky and dangerous situations. They were always available at the beck and call of Syed Mir Qasim.

The intention of mentioning this aspect of the rule of Syed Mir Qasim is simply to bring out his disinterest in administration not because he could not run it but because he was biding for time and creating grounds for the return of the Sheikh. After long drawn out and marathon discussions between Qasim and Abdullah on the

one hand and G.Parthasarthy and Mirza Afzal Beg the two emissaries of Indira Gandhi and Abdullah respectively, Delhi Accord was hammered out in February'75 which promised much but actually gave nothing tangible. The tenuous vestiges of Internal Autonomy already eroded over a period of time and honorific Appellations (Prime Minister and Sadar-I-Riyasat) supplanted by banal designations of Chief Minister and Governor as in other states were promised to be restored during long drawn out negotiations but never conceded.

One of the English dailies of Delhi appropriately mirrored the abject subjugation of Abdullah by a cartoon in which Abdullah was shown as a lion, his denture torn out of his mouth and kept in a glass jar and Indira Gandhi standing before him with a whip in her hand. The cartoon carried the caption "he will roar but cannot bite." This telling jibe was shamelessly swallowed by Sheikh's family and friends in their eagerness to grab power, which would change their lifestyle from one of privation and misery to that of luxury and comfort, and bring the proverbial plenty in place of scarcity. Until the details of the Accord could be spelt out and quantified, Sheikh Abdullah was permitted to attend the Majlis Mushawarat at Bombay where he was accorded a rousing reception. On return from Bombay, he was provided all facilities and accorded protocol as de-facto Chief Minister to tour the length and breadth of the State. The idea was to give him a foretaste of power and authority that would come to him and at the same time blunt his resistance to some of the terms of agreement on which he was very adamant such as fresh elections, retention of the nomenclature of Prime Minister and *Sadar-i-Riyasat*, withdrawal of Central Laws applied to the State in his absence etc. The idea was also to prepare the people of the State for his return as Chief Minister.

Though he was accorded tumultuous receptions by the people wherever he went and in particular in the Valley where mammoth crowds awaited his arrival for hours together; and en route to Srinagar tens of thousands of people accompanied his procession. This was just to watch a novel spectacle, which the people of the Valley love to witness per se. But the people realised that this was a

climb down which they never forgot and forgave and added a most inglorious chapter in the annals of his political life. Sheikh Abdullah, on assumption of office, behaved in his new role in the same imperious manner as in the yore, impervious to the criticism of his opponents in the policy statement, which was broadcast from the Radio he held out a stern warning to all stressing that the day of reckoning for the corrupt officers and politicians had arrived. He set about tightening his grip on the administration with an iron rod. The newfound power and the adulation he received from the people of all walks of life went to his head. He would literally strut about like a lion among the sheep.

In the beginning, he chose a three member Cabinet namely Mirza Afzal Beg, his life long colleague, Devi Dass Thakur a Judge of the J&K High Court, and Sonam Nurbu, then Ambassador in outer Mongolia, an engineer by profession. The Cabinet held continuous sessions. Meetings were held even in the car; all the three members travelled in one car. Sheikh Abdullah frequently bemoaned the mess left by the predecessor regimes and according to him, he had to address himself to the unpleasant task of clearing the "Aegean's stables." The first casualty became the scores of officers who were dismissed from the service "in the interests of the security of the State" without giving them an opportunity to explain their position on the alleged grounds of being corrupt and of doubtful integrity. The axe fell by and large on Muslim officers. Some brilliant officers known for efficiency and expertise in various fields were guillotined. Peerzada Ghulam Nabi, one of the authorities on irrigation system and flood control was one amongst them. He was later appointed by Central Water & Power Commission on a very senior position. Curiously enough, some of the non-Muslim officers known for their corrupt practices and who had amassed lucrative assets disproportionate to their known sources of income were let scot-free. What, however, rattled the whole officer community was avalanche of complaints, some anonymous, some pseudonymous, which poured in the office of Chief Minister making wild and sweeping allegations against senior Muslim officers. This was the handiwork of disgruntled elements in the services mostly belonging

to one particular community and made out of pure spite, which saw an opportunity in the Sheikh's return to power to settle old scores and denigrate senior Muslim officers who held positions of trust and authority. To add to their gloom and discomfiture it was rumoured that the Cabinet was compiling another list of officers of doubtful integrity and honesty who too would be thrown out. The whole officer community was highly demoralised. Something had to be done to cry a halt to this witch-hunting and heedless persecution.

At the outset, the Sheikh did not trust officers and looked upon them with suspicion, especially senior Muslim officers, because of an orchestrated campaign of vilification carried out by Delhi English press dominated in so far as press corps based in the state was concerned by members from one particular community. Series of articles appeared in the Delhi English press against these officers and the piece de resistance was a highly provocative article in the Calcutta magazine, SUNDAY, supposed to be well above the common run of magazines, which appeared on the death of Abdullah containing, inter alia, unmistakable insinuations and innuendoes direct against the senior Muslim officers dubbed as "Syndicate." I had yet to establish my credentials with the Sheikh. In the beginning he directed me not to open mail and that the whole Dak "mail" should be brought to him and he would open it himself. When I brought two sacks full of mail carried by two orderlies one morning he looked at me askance. I responded by saying "today's dak (mail)". He opened about a hundred envelopes and was tired. He threw the paper knife towards me and ordered me to open the rest of the mail. I instructed the orderlies to carry the sacks back to my office where I asked my two private secretaries to open and arrange the mail in the usual manner.

Anyway, I had hell of a time to cope with Sheikh's peremptory manner of working. He would keep odd hours. Sometimes he would summon me late in the night and work until the wee hours of the morning. Like a child, he would argue every point made by various officers in the chain of command in the Secretariat. The Secretariat had a pyramidal structure and files would move through various

officers until they reached Secretary's level. I painstakingly put him through the maze of rules and procedures relating to disposal of Government business. I explained to him patiently that no complaints whether anonymous or pseudonymous warranted any action unless of course concrete instances were quoted supported by substantive evidence. I told him that under the prevalent procedure all such complaints had to be divided into the following three broad categories:

- (a) Anonymous / pseudonymous making general and sweeping allegations;
- (b) Complaints even if presumed to be pseudonymous but giving concrete instances;
- (c) complaints carrying authentic signatures and full Particulars of the complainants.

The first category had simply to be shelved and those falling in category (b) referred to the concerned authorities for enquiry and report, whilst complaints falling in category (c) had to be given serious consideration and brought to the logical conclusion. The Sheikh grudgingly agreed especially because he had no stomach to wade through the mass of paper and get lost in the welter of confusing and confounding communications. Thus, the tide was turned and the flood of vilification campaign unleashed against officers stemmed. Sheikh's mindset was unchangeable. He believed that it was ordained that he would preside over the destiny of the people of the State; and this belief was reinforced by the accolades he got from various quarters, the press, political leaders, social workers from various corners of India, not for the love of the Sheikh but in the belief that the architect of accession would cement it further and make it inviolable. To keep the Sheikh in good humour, Mrs. Gandhi pampered him beyond his wildest dreams. Egotist as the Sheikh was, she tried by every conceivable means to engender in him a highly exaggerated sense of his importance in the Indian socio-political life. The itinerary of world dignitaries who paid official

visit to India during this time was so designed that a visit to the valley was made a must for them.

This was intended to achieve the twin objectives of (a) inflating the ego of Sheikh and (b) to make known to the world at large that J&K was very much a part of India and Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah was one amongst many Chief Ministers of India. In this context may be mentioned the visits of Adam Malik of Indonesia, Rockefeller of USA etc. Lavish feasts and banquets were arranged in their honour where formal speeches were made by both sides. While the visiting dignitaries showered encomiums on the Sheikh lauding his role in the freedom struggle of the State in particular and India in general and the special place he had come to enjoy in the body-politic of India; Sheikh in his turn would eulogise Mrs. Gandhi and harp on the oft-repeated and ad nauseam Jammu & Kashmir being an integral part of India etc. He was even given the sobriquet of "Lion of Bharat (India)" by no less a person than the President of India, Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, in the civic reception held in his honour at Shalimar Garden in Kashmir when he paid a visit to the State. In fact, Kashmir was proudly showed as an icon of Indian secularism.

At that period of time, spartanism became a thing of the past and gave way to ease loving and luxurious life. Despite his advancing years (he was according to his real date of birth researched by Yusuf Taing, Secretary Cultural Academy, 76 or there about in February, 1975) he felt young in spirits. He would go to dinners, lunches, and parties thrown by various quarters both social and political, resplendent in brand new designer suits, oozing confidence and rearing to make conquests. It was public talk that he would often go on pleasure jaunts accompanied by Om Prakash Gupta, his private secretary, to relax and recuperate his energy and recharge his batteries.

The Sheikh toured every State of India with full complement of his family members during this period. Again, the annual feature of these pleasure-seeking tours was that he was accompanied by cultural troupe consisting of young beautiful girls meticulously

selected by Yusuf Taing of the Cultural Academy with an eye on the likes and dislikes of his boss. The troupe gave performances in different cities of India and made quite an impression. Everywhere he was accorded royal welcome; State airplanes were placed at his disposal; Guest Houses were thrown open and he was accorded a protocol reserved only for regal personalities. During the Janta rule when Morarji Desai was Prime Minister of India, himself a man of Spartan habits, he sarcastically remarked on seeing members of the troupe in Delhi: "*Why do you carry these harlots everywhere?*"

After the 1977 elections when the Sheikh again donned the mantle of Chief Ministership, he decided to pay an official visit to Delhi. The entourage comprising Cabinet Ministers, the entire Sheikh family and some of their friends, travelled in a caravan of limousines from Jammu to Delhi. En route, the caravan was given red carpet reception everywhere reminiscent of the British Raj. A lavish traditional *wazwan* (feast prepared by Kashmiri professional cooks (chefs) for which they were specially brought from Srinagar, was arranged in which the whole Union Cabinet, some important Secretaries to Government and other high ranking civil and army/air force officers were treated to a gala evening beginning with performance by cultural troupe and followed by a lavish dinner which was a gourmets' delight. It was on this occasion that Morarji Desai made the above remark about the cultural troupe. It was also on this occasion when the Prime Minister's office revealed to us the food habits of Morarji Desai. They sent us an *aide memoir* regarding the diet of Prime Minister. It consisted of:

- (a) A few pieces of cashew nuts and / or almond kernels
- (b) A piece of cheese made out of pure cow milk
- (c) A few pieces of raisins
- (d) A tea spoonful of pure honey
- (e) A glass of pure cow's milk.

The dinner was to be served punctually at 8 p.m. The same was the menu for lunch, which was to be served at 10 a.m. sharp. (Incidentally G.M.Shah when he was made Chief Minister organised

a grand dinner at Delhi at a much larger scale in honour of Rajeev Gandhi who had taken over as Prime Minister of India after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. The dinner was attended by the entire central Cabinet, high ranking civil and Army/Air Force Officers, Lt. Governor of Delhi etc. G.M. Shah went a step further when he presented a large and beautiful Kashmiri carpet valuing above Rs. 1, 50,000 to Rajeev Gandhi). Although the Sheikh had not fully recovered from his illness, he made it a point to receive each and every guest at the gate of Kashmir House at 5-Prithviraj Road, New Delhi. While receiving Babu Jagjeevan Ram, a central Cabinet Minister, who had come from sickbed, the Sheikh rushed to support him and assist him in mounting the stairs. Jagjeevan Ram exclaimed "Sheikh Sahib, you have been ill, please don't tire yourself." The Sheikh retorted "Babu Ji I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself and others too." This was an oblique reference to the uncharitable remark made by Jagjeevan Ram in a speech that the Sheikh was a spent force.

The fun-seeking forays took precedence over all other considerations. The prime concern was comfort and pleasure denied to him for 22 long years of wanderlust through unknown and uncharted sands of time with no particular destination in sight. An interesting episode which would show how the newly assumed power had gone to his head is mentioned below:

On his return to Jammu in February/March, 1975 where the Government was headquartered then, from a triumphal tour of the valley where he received a hero's welcome the like of which had not been seen till then and which he undertook soon after assumption of office as Chief Minister, he flared up when he found that none of the senior officers was present to receive him at his official residence. His youngest son Tariq egged him on and provoked him. He was able to convince him that the officers had deliberately shown disrespect to him and were guilty of ignoring protocol. The Sheikh's mind was already prejudiced against the officers. This was something, which he would never tolerate. He had always demanded and commanded respect. Next morning when I, as usual, went to my office at eight in the morning, I was surprised to find

Tariq (youngest son of Sheikh Abdullah who has passed away at a young age) sitting in my chair, red in the face and looking very angry. He handed over a piece of paper to me arrogantly and insolently demanded that I should immediately sign it and serve it to the Chief Secretary and other officers.

This was a notice coached in an obnoxious language calling upon the officers to show cause why they should not be punished for showing disrespect to the Prime Minister. I politely told him that I could not issue such a notice to an officer far senior to me in rank and status. Tariq in a fit of rage threatened me with dire consequences and left the office in a huff muttering abuses all the while. Within minutes Tariq was back and told me that the Prime Minister (Sheikh family euphemistically continued to address and call him as such) immediately wanted me to present myself before him. I with my heart in my mouth and with great trepidation presented myself before the Prime Minister.

The Sheikh was seething with anger and directed me to issue the notice at once. I meekly and with great trepidation sought his indulgence and told him my difficulty. Upon this, the Sheikh flared up in a towering rage and told me that I had not to serve the notice in my personal capacity but I was obeying the orders of the Prime Minister. To escape his wrath and taking courage in my hands, I suggested an alternative draft which would convey the same orders but in a recognised official language. On hearing this, Sheikh relented and ordered me to prepare a revised draft accordingly. The new draft was addressed only to Divisional and District officers and not to the Chief Secretary. The Sheikh approved the draft but sternly advised me that the Chief Secretary should be put at No. 1 in the list of defaulters. Late Mr. S. Banerji who was Chief Secretary then was a highly educated and brilliant officer who taught the Sheikh all tricks of the trade in the initial stages, groomed, and guided him through the intricacies of functioning of the Government. I, immediately on my return to my office rang up Banerji and informed him of my predicament and profusely apologising for the unintended affront I was going to commit by serving notice on him. Banerji was amused and told me that Tariq (Sheikh's youngest son)

must have provoked him. He advised me to send the notice by special messenger and in a sealed cover. How Mr. Banerji managed to extricate himself from a tricky and embarrassing situation is a tribute to his efficiency and brilliance. Incidentally, Mirza Afzal Beg often said, "Banerji is dangerously intelligent."

Mr. Banerji passed away at a young age in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences Delhi due to cardiac arrest, while drafting a scheme of revision of structures of Indian Armed Force (he was Defence Secretary at the time of his death). Alas, the scheme became a swan song for him and his parting gift to the Indian Armed Forces.

I was all along labouring under the misconception that because of my hard work and dedicated service I was rendering to the Sheikh I had created a niché in his heart. Far from it I received a rude shock one day when I was trying to intercede on behalf of a fellow officer who had annoyed him; the Sheikh stopped me short and admonished me for speaking for an officer who in his eyes had become useless for his purposes. With a smile he added "*So long as you get milk from a "milch cow" and its udder are full, provide maximum comforts to her, but as soon as she becomes useless for you and dries up, throw her out.*" Warning bells started ringing in my ears and I felt that when and if he thinks that I had become useless for him, he would cast me off like an old shirt. Even in day-to-day matters, I was treated like a beast of burden though he always wanted to have me around. For all pleasure trips, tours and visits outside the State, Om Prakash Gupta, his private secretary and conscience keeper was a permanent companion. He was the "*Jees*" of the Sheikh and shared all his secrets.

Besides Principal Secretary to the Sheikh, I also headed the Information Department and was always at pains to establish his rapport with the press and kept him continuously in the news. I was always on the look out for an opportunity to project his image in newer lights. Sometimes it was a brash with M.G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu state who had raked up a hornet's nest about official language and imposition of Hindi against the

wishes of the people advising him to adopt a three-language formula, which was in consonance with the line of thinking of Mrs. Gandhi also. This letter when released to the press locally was avidly taken up by the Delhi English and vernacular press who joined the issue with the Sheikh. Once English daily, which was highly critical of the Sheikh, accused him of brinkmanship and raked up Sheikh's controversial meeting with Stevenson of USA. The paper had to be silenced as otherwise it would have irreparably damaged his reputation and image. A cleverly drafted rebuttal did the trick, and the rebuttal was sent to Gundevia, once Defence Secretary of India and a friend of the Sheikh who actually had drawn his attention to this controversy. In short, concept of the Sheikh as far relations between the Head of Administration and the officers and functionaries was concerned was that of "a Master and Servant."

Another instance which provides an example of Sheikh's stiff-necked, bossy and officious attitude towards his officers and aides was that one day while the Sheikh was going to office and was already in the car, he summoned me and started giving me instructions about the day's work to be done. Unfortunately for me it was raining heavily, the torrential rains were drenching me to the marrow of my bones but the Sheikh stoically and callously went on haranguing me unmindful of my discomfiture and kept me standing in the pouring rain. Sheikh Inayat, his Security Officer, was trying to find someone who could rush an umbrella to me but none was in sight, nor would have anyone dared to give the Sheikh an affront. This attitude was displayed towards the party rank and file also by him. He was a strict disciplinarian. In fact, without any compunction he eased out his closest companion of over four decades who stood by him through thick and thin, namely Mirza Afzal Beg, when he felt his continued presence was inimical to the interests of his progeny. Even Sheikh's family members thought that the people ought to remain in eternal gratitude to them for having championed their cause. Sheikh would often in his public speeches say that his earnest endeavour has always been to assure a place of honour and dignity for his people. The reaction of one and all to this refrain was

that this goal he had set only for his own kith and kin. This impression was fastened by Shameem Ahmed Shameem through his various articles which appeared in his weekly Urdu paper *Aina* (the Mirror).

## CHAPTER V

### IMPOSITION OF GOVERNOR'S RULE

*"Power is a means to an end and not an end in itself"*  
Sheikh Abdullah

Even though Sheikh Abdullah knew that he was strutting about in borrowed plumes and propped up by the Pradesh Congress Committee, who could trip him off any time, he did not lose any opportunity to castigate them and make frontal attacks against Congress members calling them scum of the gutter. Apparently, they pocketed these insults for fear of inviting the wrath of Mrs. Gandhi if they acted otherwise. They were smarting under this onslaught and bore the humiliation quietly. They were biding for time when they could hit back and throw him again into oblivion. The Congress was in majority in the state legislature; nevertheless Sheikh Abdullah was induced and installed as Chief Minister over ruling his insistence on fresh elections with this idea that once he tasted power, he would fall like ninepins when it would come to the crunch, and that he would gladly agree to fight elections under the banner of the Congress, abolish Plebiscite Front and merge it with the state Congress party. But the Sheikh had different ideas. Meanwhile Afzal Beg as a prelude to formal merger dissolved the Plebiscite Front in the belief that the Sheikh would fall for it once he tasted power and wielded authority after 22 long years.

The issue was still being debated and before the Sheikh was brought round to agree to the merger with the Pradesh Congress Committee, Shameem Ahmed Shameem, an extraordinarily intelligent journalist, a brilliant lawyer, a fiery orator wielding a facile and powerful pen brought his Judah's touch to bear on the decision of the Sheikh. From day one when Delhi Accord became a blueprint for relations between the State and the Centre, Shameem Ahmed Shameem had latched himself with the Sheikh and become his unsolicited friend, philosopher and guide. Shemeem nursed high ambitions and wanted to become a "King Maker" in the company of the Sheikh. In fact, it was Shameem Ahmed who drafted Sheikh's harshly worded policy statement, which was to be broadcast from Radio soon after assumption of office as Chief Minister. After marathon sessions with the Sheikh sometimes stretching until small hours of the morning, Shameem managed to influence the Sheikh to revive and resurrect National Conference, which suited his own (Sheikh's) scheme of things visualised by him long before the subject was even broached.

Later Shameem parted ways with the Sheikh owing to intrigues hatched against him by the Kitchen Cabinet notably by Begum Abdullah and became Sheikh's nemesis. Shameem had a tragic end. He died of cancer in the prime of his youth. But so long as he was alive, he became a nightmare for the Sheikh and his family. He wrote such derogatory articles against them in his Urdu weekly *Aina* (Mirror) in his usual satirical and humorous style under the pen name *Charagh Baigh* that became the talk of the town. People eagerly waited for the weekly to come out and avidly read these writings. Its readership increased by leaps and bounds and the circulation of the weekly pitched so high that it surpassed the combined circulation of the entire Urdu press of the State. The decision to revive the National Conference was conveyed to Mrs. Gandhi much to her chagrin. But she could only chaff in an impotent fury. She could not retrieve the situation by any drastic counter move when the ink on the Delhi Accord had yet to dry. The Congress party had in the meantime come to the end of its tether and could no longer bear the overbearing attitude of the Sheikh towards them.

With the blessings of the centre, they came into the open and started to challenge Sheikh's authority. This somewhat unnerved the Sheikh who thought that if something was not done to placate the rebellious Congress party, his throne was in danger and he would again be thrown into wilderness. He offered to expand his Cabinet and induct some Congress members into it. Names of Congress members proposed to be inducted into the Cabinet were communicated to the Governor and date and the time also fixed for the swearing in ceremony. But things had gone too far and the Congress had a different game plan. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, leader of the Congress Legislature party and President of the Pradesh Congress Committee, impelled by personal ambition led the revolt. He had himself an eye on the chair of Chief Minister. Mrs. Gandhi at last acquiesced to the toppling of the mighty Sheikh.

One fine morning the Congress swept the Sheikh off his feet by withdrawing their support to him. The Government fell and the Sheikh was left wallowing in a helpless situation and shuttling between Delhi and Jammu (where the Government was headquartered then) but of no avail. The Congress circle was jubilant and they were eagerly looking forward to forming the Government, as they were confident that by virtue of their majority in the Legislative Assembly, the Governor would invite them to form new Government. The list of Cabinet members was finalised and the prospective members included Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the lone Jamat-i-Islami member who was also assured of a berth in the proposed Cabinet. The would-be members had ordered new dresses befitting the new role as members of the Cabinet. But the wily Sheikh upset their apple cart and shattered their pipe dream. He recommended to the Governor dissolution of the Legislative Assembly. Under the State Constitution, advice of Chief Minister in this regard is mandatory. L.K.Jha, the Governor of the State, who had a soft corner for the Sheikh and was his ardent admirer, had no option but to accept the advice of Chief Minister. Incidentally, I may mention here an incident, which would illustrate what a special niche L.K. Jha had for the Sheikh in his heart. Jha used to invite senior officers to dinner every month for a chat and exchange of

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views on matters of general interest to the State. On one such occasion when he saw me with a glass of water in my hand, led for the sake of brevity "J&K State. Jha humorously suggested I offered me a drink, which I politely declined. He laughed and said "you don't call it LKJ" (the initials stand for his name Lakshmi "Ahmed, I am sorry I forgot you are a Muslim, but what to do? Jha would also stand for Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir). Then he recited Ghalib's couplet; *Verily I do not wish to derive any pleasure from indulging in drinking bouts, I only seek deep slumber (and solace) day and night.*

Continuing he whispered, "You know Ahmad; the office I am holding is no bed of roses or a *sinecure* as generally people believe. It has its own gubernatorial problems and tensions. It's indeed a bed of thorns." Suddenly he asked me if Sheikh Sahib (he would always refer to him as such) had decided not to attend National Development Council composed of the whole Central Cabinet and all the Chief Ministers of States, members of Planning Commission etc. meeting and depute instead Devi Dass Thakur, the Finance Minister in the Sheikh's Cabinet. Please advise Sheikh Sahib not to give floor to Devi Dass Thakur. He would only advance his own political interests rather than that of the State. Saying this he handed over to me a few sheets of paper and added, "Here are some points which I have jotted down for consideration of Sheikh Sahib. He can make use of these points in his address. Please see that Sheikh Sahib reads his important speeches in a National forum like National Development Council from a prepared text; as otherwise he has a tendency to ramble on and go off the tangent ignoring real issues." I showed the points to the Sheikh and told him what Jha felt. He agreed. A draft address was accordingly prepared jointly by Bannerji, Chief Secretary and me and was printed. Sheikh Sahib attended the meeting and read out the prepared address, which made quite an impression. L.K.Jha, besides being an economist of international renown, a scholar, and with a keen sense of appreciation of Urdu poetry, and practitioner of Homeopathic system of medicine, was a very witty man. When Ladakh Agitation was assuming serious proportions, a high-level meeting was called to consider the demands of the Ladakhis under the chairmanship of Mr. L.K.Jha. Amongst other things, the Ladakhis had a grievance that there was no mention of Ladakh in the nomenclature of the

views on matters of general interest to the State. On one such occasion when he saw me with a glass of water in my hand, led for the sake of brevity "J&K State. Jha humorously suggested I offered me a drink, which I politely declined. He laughed and said "you don't call it LKJ" (the initials stand for his name Lakshmi "Ahmed, I am sorry I forgot you are a Muslim, but what to do? Jha would also stand for Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir). Then he recited Ghalib's couplet; *Verily I do not wish to derive any pleasure from indulging in drinking bouts, I only seek deep slumber (and solace) day and night.*

There was mixed reaction to the downfall of Abdullah. Some malicious delight and gloated over his humiliation; and some were sorry and sad at his plight. But the youth were jubilant and welcomed it. The Sheikh left Jammu, where the whole drama was staged, unsung and unwept. But Peer Ghulam Hassan, Director General Police, arranged a Guard of honour by a contingent of Kashmir Armed Police before his departure to mitigate to some extent the misery of the Sheikh. The Sheikh and his wife were taken in a Government car from Jammu accompanied by an escort car. At Islamabad, a large body of students had collected who were raising slogans against him. Stones and brickbats were belted on his car and he had a narrow escape.

From the date he relinquished the office until the date murmurs about his serious illness started making rounds of the city of Srinagar, the Sheikh remained confined to his private residence seldom venturing out. He remained isolated and almost uncared for. Suddenly it became public that the Sheikh had a heart attack and his life was hanging in balance. This sent waves of anguish amongst his followers. Hundreds of goats were sacrificed in supplication for his recovery. Some of his detractors alleged that the Sheikh feigned illness to gain sympathy of the people, which he had almost lost as a result of his climb down. After sometime, he came out of his sick bed. He really looked weak, a ghost of his former self, and could move only with the help of a walking stick. In due course, he was taken in a truck to the Polo Ground where a public meeting was arranged. He addressed the meeting from the truck. Tens and thousands of people who had gathered to hear his speech enthusiastically cheered him. Among other things, he referred to Morarji's visit to Srinagar, who had taken over as a

Prime Minister on the success of Janta Dal in the elections and complained that while he made it a point to pay a call on Maulvi Farooq, Morarji had not the courtesy to visit him and enquire about his health even though he knew that he (Sheikh) has returned from the jaws of death. Later the Sheikh also wrote a letter to the Prime Minister which brought out poignantly and in a highly emotional phraseology this, what the Sheikh called, "an unkind cut on his part," towards him (Sheikh).

An interesting incident was witnessed at the residence of Maulvi Farooq in the interior of the city where Morarji had gone to pay a courtesy call on him. He was given an enthusiastic welcome by the Maulvi's followers and women sang songs in praise of the Prime Minister. The song had a refrain "the brave man of Pakistan has come in our midst." Mrs. Gandhi, who imposed emergency on the country in the wake of court judgment against her, caused a furore in the whole country. In the rush of blood and acting on the assessment of Intelligence Agencies, she declared fresh elections would be held fondly hoping that she and her party Congress (I) would again sweep the polls. But she lost the elections and Janta Party came to power. The new Government was at pains to curry favour of the Sheikh. Repeated visits were paid by Central Ministers to the State to ensure that the Sheikh was not bowled over by the Congress (I) and remained on the right side of the new Government. They were eager to please him and it was on one of his visits to the State that Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Minister for External Affairs then agreed with great alacrity to the setting up of a Regional Passport Office at Srinagar when the Sheikh demanded it. Till then people had to go to Chandigarh to get a passport made, which was not only expensive and cumbersome but also entailed quite a dilatory process.

For once, the Sheikh acted wisely. During the emergency, he played his cards extremely well. He never uttered a word for or against emergency nor muzzled the press as done elsewhere in India. All the time he was sizing up the situation as to which way the wind would blow. Elections in the Jammu and Kashmir were

held in July 1977, for the first time without any interference from the Centre thanks to Morarji Desai the Prime Minister which was heartening exception to the general rule. The elections had always been either rigged or stage-managed ever since dawn of Independence. The electorate was seized by such euphoria fanned by subtle appeals and innuendoes by National Conference stalwarts that completely tilted the balance in favour of National Conference. The Congress was routed. The public meetings held as a part of electioneering were swayed especially by Mirza Afzal Beg who carried a piece of rock salt from Khewra salt mines of Pakistan wrapped in a green handkerchief in one hand and the holy Quran in other exhorting the people to vote for them.

He even forcibly demanded the opening of the Rawalpindi Road so that the people of the valley could be saved from hardships caused by frequent closure of the Banihal Road. He even humorously dubbed "Accession" or *Ilhaq* in Urdu- "*Alla Haq*" meaning a dish consisting of a variety of spinach and pumpkins. The dish with the combination of pumpkin and spinach *Alla Haq* is never prepared by Kashmiris and never goes well. These emotive appeals on very sensitive subjects which always exercised the minds of the people completely changed the pattern of voting at the hustings and influenced even the dyed in the wool pro-Pak elements and recalcitrant voters from National Conference to vote overwhelmingly for National Conference out of spite for Delhi. In short, the National Conference won elections with thumping majority and the Sheikh once again formed the Government.

## CHAPTER VI

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### **THE SHEIKH AND THE SHEIKHDOM**

When in July 1977 Sheikh Abdullah was sworn in as Chief Minister again, a metamorphosis had overtaken him. The sickness had left him very weak not only physically but also mentally. Incidentally, I may mention here that on imposition of Governor's rule, I was posted as Health Secretary on the recommendation of late S.Banerji who had assumed responsibilities as Advisor to Governor. This posting did a world of good to me in that I, instead of always walking on tight rope and treading on double-edged sword, had complete freedom of action. I liked the job. I put my heart and soul in my assignment and took it as a challenge. It is gratifying to note here that I created a visible impact on the whole Department and galvanised it into new enthusiasm and attitude to work. The new motto given to the Department was "Mission of Mercy - service above self - Don't ask for rewards - the work done is by itself a great reward."

The wife of the Governor, Mrs. Mekhala Jha took keen interest in social work and welfare measures for women. She often used to call me to her office and discuss various matters of special interest to women. The day I was transferred back to Chief Minister's office;

she invited me to a cup of tea. During a chat, she pointed out certain areas in the working of the Health Department, which needed special attention, especially training of nurses and midwives for rural areas. She told me she was not happy on my transfer as it amounted to changing horses in midstream, and not conducive to the interests of the Department which had lately shown signs of improvement and was coming alive. She humorously drew my attention to the discomfiture I had caused to a central Minister by refusing to transfer his nephew. It is an interesting incident and enhanced my stock as a well meaning and well-intentioned officer who would never bow on matters of principle before anyone high or low. I was on an inspection tour of Anantnag District and during the course of the tour of Tehsil Phalgam I happened to pay a visit to a Unani Dispensary of which the nephew of a central minister nick named "Wazul Bhagwan" "Red deity", because of his complexion and very close to Mrs. Indira Gandhi was doctor in charge. The dispensary was locked. Meanwhile a few curious onlookers collected there on hearing that the Inspecting Officer was none other than the Health Secretary. They told me that the doctor seldom attended the dispensary and if and when he did instead of administering Unani medicines, he dispensed allopathic drugs and that too on payment of exorbitant sums. The Deputy Director of the Department who accompanied me was directed to break open the office. To our great surprise, we found stacks of tablets and pills kept in a most unhygienic manner and no trace of Unani medicines. To cap it all, a dozen penicillin injection vials were also found there.

The villagers informed me that the doctor (supposed to be identified as Hakim in the Unani system of medicine) administered injections irrespective of the nature of the disease and would charge huge sums for it. The whole stuff was seized and sealed. I left orders for the Doctor / Hakim to report to me on the next working day. Instead of reporting to me, he rushed to Delhi to his uncle so that he could save his (Hakim's) skin. The Minister rang me up from Delhi and in a rather insolent tone advised me to hush up the whole thing failing which I would have to face the music. I did not commit

anything on phone; but next day transferred the Hakim about 300 miles away from his home, a hilly area inhabited by Pahari people known for their ferocity. It was only after my transfer from the Health Department that *Wuzul Bhagwan* was able to get back his nephew to his original place of posting but a much chastened man.

Incidentally, in my second stint as Health Secretary after Sheikh Abdullah's Government fell as a result of withdrawal of Congress support to him in the Legislative Assembly, Mrs. Nehru, wife of Governor B.K. Nehru, a Hungarian by birth but deeply religious in her beliefs as a converted Hindu, was also a very keen social worker and especially interested in the welfare of women. She had intense hatred for fecundity and went whole hog for family planning. She too had often exchanged ideas with me, especially on women's liberation. When I was transferred and posted as Home Secretary by Farooq Abdullah, Mrs. Nehru gave a farewell cup of tea to me. When I finally rose to say goodbye to her, she exclaimed "Oh Ahmed Sahib, so long as you were Health Secretary the Department ran like an airplane but what will happen now. Perhaps it would fall in the old grooves and run at snail's pace - it would definitely go to the bullock cart age".

But every good thing is bound to come to an end. I was destined to be a witness to the end of Sheikh's Era and advent of a new epoch full of fluctuating fortunes for the dramatis personae who entered the stage of Jammu & Kashmir political scene after the death of Abdullah. One morning when I was preparing to go to my office Sheikh Nazir, nephew of Abdullah, rang me to say that before going to office the Sheikh would like me to see him at his private residence at No: 10 Hotel Road. I dutifully presented myself at his residence. I had to wait for sometime as Dr. Allaqaaband, Principal Medical College Srinagar and Dr. Jalalu Din, a heart specialist working in the Institute of Medical Sciences Soura, were examining him. Needless to mention, he was still convalescing from the illness. When I entered his bedroom, he warmly received me. Dr. Jalalu Din was still there taking his ECG. After he left, the Sheikh made me to

sit by his bedside. He was apologetic for having disturbed me and then asked me to join him again as his Principal Secretary.

When he saw me hesitating, he hastened to add that he tried Tariq, his youngest son, a carbon copy of his father in so far as temperament and volatile nature is concerned but otherwise a good draftsman in English. Being impatient and not used to sustained hard work, one morning he dumped bags of mail in his (Sheikh Sahib's) bedroom and told him that he was not cut out for this type of work and that some alternative arrangements ought to be made. He told me that he had full faith in me; and since he did not want to make experiments with his principal aides and that to maintain continuity in office, I should once again join him. It was rather audacious on my part to have shown even disinclination not to speak of showing any resistance. Thus, I was roped in by the Sheikh on the bed of thorns. Anyway, this was just a parenthesis.

The backlog of mail left by Tariq ran into thousands of communications from all over the world - messages, statements, personal letters, Central Government communications and above all, hundreds of files from various Departments awaiting the Chief Minister's orders. The clearance of this huge mass of paper and file work indeed proved back breaking for me.

Incidentally, Tariq, a bad tempered young bachelor given to violent fits and temper, a bully, foul tongued, fond of liquor managed his appointment as Managing Director of the Tourism Development Corporation where he earned quite notoriety for his brutal behaviour and unorthodox methods of work. The Sheikh turned a Nelson's eye to his maniacal and devilish antics out of sheer filial considerations.

During this particular painful phase of his life, the Sheikh seemed suffering from acute paranoia. The reaction of his past negative role in the politics of Jammu & Kashmir and the resultant turbulence in the life of the people swamped his whole being. He was torn by inner conflicts which left him benumbed, bewildered and bemused at that stage of his life when he was unable to mend matters. He was incapable of taking firm decisions and he was

what was worst, steadily but surely losing grip on the administration as well as on the party, National Conference. He chose a team against his better judgment and counsels, of men of dubious distinction who took full advantage of the Sheikh's jaundiced judgments and weakened state of mental faculties. Corruption became rampant and touched new heights of ingenuity as well as crudity and it became almost the order of the day. The lion had become a lamb. To further aggravate matters war of succession began between the son (Dr. Farooq) and the son-in-law (G.M.Shah).

Begum Abdullah supported her son and Khalida, his eldest daughter, her husband G.M.Shah. This sordid, insidious and conspiratorial atmosphere worked havoc on the already weakened state of health of the Sheikh. Meanwhile the race for supremacy between the mother and daughter assumed unpleasant, unsavoury, unethical and immoral dimensions. Khalida had quite a hold on the Sheikh and claimed his uninhibited affections. She on her part spent all waking hours ministering to his needs and taking meticulous care about his health and happiness. In fact, she alone could influence and change his mind on even most delicate matters of state. On the other hand, Begum Abdullah was subtly manipulating various areas of her influence with a view to propping up her wayward son as the successor to his father.

The covert manoeuvring soon surfaced because of the intensity and no-holds barred type of conspiracies, mutual recriminations and acrimonious language used by the two contenders to the throne, eventually became public knowledge and led to the division of the National Conference into two camps - pro-Farooq and pro-Shah. Both camps coined choicest expletives and invectives to denigrate each other. Farooq was dubbed as *Disco* (because of his weakness for disco dancing in which he indulged unabashedly quite often, whether or not any particular occasion suited it). G.M.Shah was nicknamed as *Kashur* - (cob without corn presumably because they thought he had no claims or pretensions to the high political office).

I am reminded of an amusing incident about the seamy side of Farooq's life. One afternoon when I came to the Sheikh's private

residence on some official business, Girdari Lal, one of the chauffeurs of the staff cars, came rushing to me and whispered in my ear "Sir you know what is happening in the house of *Bub* ("father")? While *Bub* is offering *Namaz* in his room, his rascal of a son is having a drinking bout with his younger brother and some of his disreputable friends." Indeed, Ghani, Sheikh's personal valet, confirmed it later. These developments in the family feud wrought havoc on the health of the Sheikh. He felt while Farooq because of his non-serious nature was not capable of pulling chestnuts from fire whenever exigencies of any particular dangerous situation demanded. Shah because of his vile temper would demolish the whole edifice so painstakingly built by him over decades and bring down the final curtain on Sheikh Era. One day when he was in a sad and reflective mood, with a sigh he told me "Shah & Farooq are both dear to me; they are my eyes. Alas, both are unsuited to carry forward the name and traditions of the family. They will only bring disgrace to us. What to do? I think I would call a meeting of the Working Committee and advise them to elect a leader whom they consider best suited for the onerous responsibilities." He did call a meeting of the Working Committee but instead of advising them so, he extracted an oath of loyalty from them to his person and party.

The circumstances, which brought the downfall of Mirza Afzal Beg, are both tragic and pathetic and have all the ingredients of a Greek tragedy.

## CHAPTER VII

### CORONATION OF FAROOQ

The war of succession between the son and the son-in-law at last came into the open. The bitter and straitened relations between the two camps came to breaking point snapping the filial obligations to smithereens. In fact, the mother and the daughter fell apart drawing a seemingly insurmountable wedge between the two. In one of the public meetings, Begum Abdullah offered *Fatwa* for her daughter who, she wailed, was dead for her for all practical purposes. It goes to the credit of Khalida that she did not go public about her sentiments in this regard. This melodrama went on for quite some time and eventually matters came to an impasse. It was in this seemingly impossible situation that Syed Mir Qasim played a crucial role in breaking the deadlock. Needless to mention, the Sheikh was unwilling to accept Farooq as his successor for three reasons:

(a) His son's non-serious nature which made him unfit to handle serious and sensitive affairs of the State and the party National Conference when the two were at the crossroads of history in the prevailing bellicose and hostile atmosphere obtaining between the State and the Centre and two opposite camps of the party.

(b) Though his flamboyance and gimmicks and antics would for a time amuse the people, they would reject him once it came to brass tacks.

(c) He had allowed himself to be surrounded by some persons of dubious reputation both in the administration as also in the party and horde of psychopaths claiming to be his friends who would undoubtedly lead him to his downfall.

Though Farooq enjoyed some sort of popularity albeit ephemeral, Shah in contrast could have proved a better choice for his qualities as administrator and as strict disciplinarian but for his fiery temper and mercurial and impetuous nature. I felt that the situation had to be tackled one-way or the other and the stalemate brought to an end. Neither of the camps was prepared for a compromise or a via media. This dangerous drift in the affairs of the state and the party was not conducive to the interests of the people or the state. The alternative would have been Governors Rule with disastrous consequences. At this critical juncture, Syed Mir Qasim came forward to mend the situation, which was otherwise sure to end in chaos and confusion. After considering the pros and cons of the two choices before us — Farooq or Shah, Syed Mir Qasim was of the view that Farooq who was basking in the reflected glory of his father might find acceptance with the people for the time being until the crises would blow over. If Farooq justified his selection in course of time, well and good. If, however, he failed to live up to our faith, things would take care of themselves. I agreed with this view. Without informing any one even Begum Sahiba and Khalida, I fixed an appointment of Syed Mir Qasim with the Sheikh.

They accordingly met for over two hours and when Syed Mir Qasim came out of the Sheikh's room, he was all smiles and whispered to me "*the Jigsaw puzzle has been solved*". The Sheikh had agreed to Farooq's selection as his successor. After sometime arrangements were made for formally announcing Farooq as President National Conference. Farooq was taken out in a huge procession to Iqbal Park with great fanfare where he was declared in a highly emotional speech by Sheikh Abdullah as President

National Conference. The occasion reminded us of coronation of Kings and Queens and verily it was so. The Shah's camp reconciled to the situation. He was advised to bide for time, as Farooq was sure to fall by the weight of his own follies.

## CHAPTER VIII

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### LAST DAYS

As the days passed, Sheikh continued to sink. His once tall and hefty build, which placed him head and shoulders above the common run of people, became hunched and shriveled. He had difficulty in walking. He was completely disillusioned and day in and day out would recount his sad experiences and encounters with the forces arranged against him at the instance of central leadership ab initio. According to him, they (the central leadership) had no intention of keeping up their promises. He was all the time pensive and heavily overwhelmed by the weight of blunders he had committed. He knew that damage was done and things were beyond redemption. One day when he was in a very despondent mood, he summoned Yusuf Taing and me. Suddenly he blurted out "Look here, they have gulped us but don't allow them to swallow and digest you. Let us get stuck in their throat". Then he quoted from memory statements and pronouncements made from time to time by extremist Hindu Leaders who openly threatened Muslims to assimilate the Hindu culture of the country or pack off and go to Pakistan. In particular, he gave reference to some documents, which showed that attempts had always been made even before independence to convert Muslim majority in the State into minority.

He admitted that he had trusted Pandit Nehru to abide by his commitments and the assumptions he had made based on these assurances, had proved wrong. He also confessed that he was taken in by the wiles and guiles of the Congress leadership who came out in their true colours when they were reminded to translate the commitments and assurances into concrete action.

Mohammed Yusuf Taing, Secretary Academy of Arts, Culture & Languages who was also present when the Sheikh opened out his heart, was advised to bring out a brochure based on the statements, and pronouncements of the extremist Hindu leaders so that the people know what they have to contend with and prepare themselves to face the daunting challenges of the future. Mohammad Yusuf Taing, after a painstaking research, for which he has a marked flair, brought out a brochure, which carried a verse of Iqbal, as its title. This was signed by A.R.Rather, MLA from Charar Sharif then and 20,000 copies of it got printed for wide circulation. It appears as Appendix I-A, but hardly a couple of 100 copies were circulated when the publication mysteriously disappeared as if it dissolved in thin air. It was suspected that the I.B. (Intelligence Bureau) seized all copies and destroyed these. The Central Government in their unrelenting hostile attitude fired salvos upon salvos on the Sheikh. An insidious campaign of calumny was launched against the Sheikh.

Allegations of corruption were made against him and he was accused of having amassed huge and varied assets dishonestly and by abusing and misusing his position. A publication with a red cover was brought out by the Pradesh Congress Committee giving in great detail properties acquired and assets created by the Sheikh family. This publication became known as 'The Red book'. The officers on the J&K cadre from central deputation quota actively assisted the Pradesh Congress Committee in compiling the data gleaned from revenue records. This was a devastating broadside fired by the centre, which brought the name of the Sheikh family into the mud. Morarji Desai as Prime Minister in the Janta Rule forwarded a copy of the Red Book to the Sheikh for comments. A detailed reply was sent to the 'charge sheet' refuting the allegations

and indicating the sources from which properties and assets had been acquired. Whether or not Morarji Desai was satisfied by this defence is nowhere on record. But the mud thrown on the Sheikh in the hope that some of it may stick somewhere was fulfilled. The Red Book became the talk of the town and tarnished the image of the Sheikh's family.

This set the tone for harsh attitude of Delhi towards the Sheikh and the powers that be started tightening the screws around him. He felt like a cornered lion but without a bite, unable to stem the tirade against him and helpless to change the course of events. At Kathua in Jammu province, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, in one of her public meetings berated Sheikh Abdullah and warned him that if she wished she could remove him in a jiffy. Strangely enough, the erstwhile lion became mortally afraid of Mrs. Gandhi. He would often relate a dream (nightmare) about her, when he saw her as a hydra-headed serpent waiting for a chance to pounce upon him. According to him when he saw her in this deadly form, he started perspiring from every pore of his body. The apparition disappeared only when he recited verses from the Holy Quran. The euphoria and the *deja vu* promoted by power grabbed by Sheikh in the wake of the Delhi Accord, gradually wore off, particularly when the centre began restricting and restraining his freedom of movement. Agitations stage-managed in the three regions of the State, Kashmiri Pandit agitation in the Valley, Kishtwar agitation and Rajouri agitation in Jammu province, clamour of Bhartiya Janta Party to accord status of District to Reasi, the fallout of recommendations of the Boundary Commission, and frequent calls given by the Bhartiya Janta Party in Jammu for abrogation of Art. 370 of the Indian Constitution, and the Ladakh agitation were constant irritants, which frustrated the Sheikh to an extent where he could only indulge in impotent rage. Had he lived longer, he would have most probably risen in revolt against Delhi and would doubtless have been in prison again. The final *coup de grace* was dealt when a plane load of income tax officers descended upon the Valley and made raids in businesses known to be his financiers and supporters. He was enmeshed in a web where he could only fume and fret but was

incapable of doing anything. This in fact was responsible for hastening the deterioration of his health from which he was not able to recover.

The most blatant aspect of the drama was that only Muslim businesses were targeted, the only exception being R.K.Sawhney of Krishna Flour & Oil Mills; then he too was very closely associated with the Sheikh's circle of friends and admirers. These soft targets were selected so that the Sheikh could not react without attracting public odium and to deprive him of the long time sources of finances for the Party. Another area, which was gnawing the psyche of the people of the valley and had become a festering sore, was almost nil representation of Muslims in the Central Government establishments located in the State. Even very strong communications to the Central Government bringing out the harsh realities of the situation failed to improve the matters. The Sheikh in frustration wrote in one of his communications to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that people of the Valley considered themselves as strangers in their own land; and how did in such a disgusting atmosphere in the Valley the Central Government expect emotional integration of the people with India.

The cumulative effect of these unexpected burdens of fear for reprisals from Indira Gandhi, discord in and pessimistic about the future of the people and the State, left him a physical wreck. Angina attacks became more frequent. Heart specialists from Delhi were specially flown to Srinagar. They and his personal physicians Dr.Ali Jan, Dr.Allaqaband, Dr.J.S.Bajaj and other junior doctors attending on him did their best to stem deterioration in his health but all in vain. He himself had given up hope of recovery. One day he humorously remarked when Dr. Allaqaaband and Dr.Jalal-u-din were checking his progress "physician heal thyself". Then he was serious and said, "My friends, you have done your best but I am convinced that my time has come." During the early part of September 1982, he had a massive heart attack. Every one thought that they were seeing the last of him. Despair was writ large even on the faces of doctors also and the unworthy son of worthy father was enjoying a game of golf, carefree, unconcerned, and indifferent to

what was happening to his father and his family. Messengers were rushed to the golf ground to fetch him. When after about an hour he came with his Golf Kit, I was outside in the lawn waiting for him to give him the good tidings about Sheikh's recovery. Before I could waken him up, he asked me with sweet insouciance and a glint in his eyes "Is he dying?"

The year 1982 was the worst year for Abdullah. He became gradually a physical wreck. He was smitten by mortification and remorse and often gave vent to his pent up emotions which he till then held close to his heart, about his ambitions, the manner in which he received a raw deal at the hands of the Congress leadership from time to time, his betrayal by his close associates and colleagues, doubts about the future of the people and the state, infighting in the Party riven by rivalries and jealousies and the war of succession between his son and son-in-law. All through this period, Farooq played truant and remained busy in his own games of wining, dining, and chasing film actresses and damsels of ill-repute. The combined effect of all these emotive pulls and earthy troubles sapped his will power and took a heavy toll of his energies. The doctors and specialists especially those flown from Delhi tried their best to stem the rot but all in vain. During the month of September 1982, he ultimately bowed before the will of God and gave up his ghost. Somehow, the news of his serious illness leaked out. Thousands of people came to his house, grief-stricken and wailing.

A posse of police had to be deployed to restrain furious but grief-stricken people from breaking open the gate of his house. The security men had a very difficult time to restrain the mob. Later majority of them dispersed after they were given false assurances that the Sheikh was still alive but hundreds remained and kept a vigil nevertheless outside the house throughout the night. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah breathed his last on the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> September 1982. During his lifetime, he had chosen his last abode near Hazratbal. One of his admirers got two marble tablets prepared from Delhi with his last message carved out on them, taken from his statement of Defence in Kashmir Conspiracy Case, and published under the title "Kashmir On Trial." In the small hours of the morning

of 9<sup>th</sup> September, his dead body was taken to the Polo Ground to lie in State for the day. The news of his death spread like wild fire and people in lakhs came to Polo Ground to pay tearful homage to the man who ruled over them for about six decades, all the while, wailing, beating their chests and pulling out their hair. Even in his grimace of death, he inspired awe. Almost all leaders of different faiths, ideologies and schools of thought descended on Srinagar in their hundreds to pay homage to the Man they admired and feared. Indira Gandhi came by a special plane and stood by the side for the departed leader for over an hour. On Friday, 10th of September, his funeral started with full state honours. His dead body was kept on a gun carriage, draped in tri-colour and pulled by high-ranking Army officers. The procession started at about 8.30 am in the morning at a snails pace, about a million people had come from towns, cities and villages, they choked every street of the city, and were weeping and wailing. Such was the intensity of their grief that would rent hearts of the hardest of the hard. The funeral procession reached Hazratbal (his final resting place), when the dusk was falling , lakhs of people could not offer even Friday prayers owing to the milling crowds who occupied every available inch of space. The dead body was lowered into the grave by the pallbearers (Army brass) but by his legs first contrary to the dictates of *Sharia*. That was perhaps the parting gift forced on him in his death though unknowingly. "This was the end of the man, as we may say, the best and worst of all his time that we have known, a character for which one would feel deep love as well as deep hatred; he was too distant, too proud, too remote for that. Rather one that compelled distant admiration and reverent loyalty; a man whose every word one would treasure as a pearl of wisdom or "a poisonous shaft." That he had human failings and frailties his followers knew but the constant impression he must have given was that of "character so elevated as to stand aloof from the common run of politicians."

"It would be better," says Machiavelli, "were it possible, to be loved and feared at the same time; but as that is not possible, it is better to be feared; when you have to choose the alternative. Love is maintained by a bond of obligation, which owing to wickedness of

human nature is always broken whenever it clashes with private interests but fear is maintained by a dread of punishment." Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was a singular exception to this adage. He was both loved and feared. In his life, he controlled hearts and minds of the people; in the death he left them in the lurch, grief-stricken, bewildered and at the cross roads of the most critical period of their history.

*"O eloquent, just and mighty death: Whom none could advise, thou have persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world has flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised. Thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with those two narrow words: HIC JACET."*

While all were busy preparing the dead body of the departed soul for burial, another drama was being enacted in the darkness of the night. While two known aspirants to the chair were waiting in the row, yet another person was being coaxed to become at least caretaker Chief Minister and thus fulfill his dream doused on his mind by some astrologers was Devi Dass Thakur. Sensing this unexpected development which had dangerous potentialities from the law and order point of view, the Director General Police, Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah and the Chief Secretary, Noor Mohammad, quietly and unknown to others whisked away Farooq to Devi Dass Thakur's residence where he was enjoying drinks with close friends. On seeing the trio, Devi Dass Thakur and agents provocateurs were taken back and when advised by them (Director General Police and Chief Secretary) meekly agreed to Farooq being announced as Caretaker Chief Minister. Later Farooq was taken to Radio and Television stations where his address to the people was recorded.

## CHAPTER IX

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### FAROOQ AS A CHIEF MINISTER

*"Life is like an onion you peel off layer after layer and you find there is nothing in it."*

J.H. Junekar

Substitute "Life" by Farooq and you have the perfect picture of him. Fickle minded, ebullient, foul of tongue, he appears to be a character straight from George Orwell's Book "1984" fond of doublespeak and double-standard. He was never serious in his life. He always indulged in dramatics and gimmickry to amuse and to play to the gallery and create a stir; and in the process would look ludicrous and become butt-end of ridicule himself. He always hankered after money and followed Somerset Maugham's saying "Money is like a sixth sense; without it you cannot use the other five" in letter and spirit. He enjoys huge appetite for food—"good or bad" and amoral adventures. I am reminded of an episode, which shows his unabashed indulgence in romantics. Sheikh Sahib was striving every nerve to raise finances for Institute of Medical Sciences. The Weston electronics, the premiere TV and other electronic gadgets manufacturing concern of Delhi offered to sponsor Runa Laila, known as Nightingale of Bengal, to give a few performances in Srinagar in aid of the Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura. The performances given by Runa Laila were huge success. She especially captivated the hearts of the audience by rendering some Kashmiri songs in her melodious voice and in her usual inimitable style.

After the performances, we took Runa Laila for a sight seeing tour to Gulmarg. Her father, Murad and her mother chose to stay back as they wanted to do some shopping. When we were half way to Gulmarg suddenly, the air was rent by ecstatic cries as if made by a demented soul. A car driven by Farooq flashed past us. Farooq was all the while making weird cries like a bull in heat. Anyway, after lunch in the Highland Park Hotel, we were relaxing in the lounge when we felt that there was something amiss. Farooq was nowhere to be seen. He had tactfully persuaded Runa Laila to have a round with him and see scenic spots.

When urgent and serious matters of State deserved his attention, he was found indulging in speeding sprees on a motorbike with film actress riding upon the pillion. Often while going to office he would alight from his car and begin directing traffic from constable's beat. One day while going to office he saw a coolie dragging a *Rehra* (handcart) who was finding it difficult to push it being heavily laden with timber. He came down from the car, took out his jacket and started pushing the *Rehra* along with him much to the amusement of passers by. Consistency was never his forte; perhaps he believed in the axiom "consistency is genius of mediocrity." On several occasions, he passed different orders on the same subject and on the same file. He never applied his mind to anything important or not so important. His IQ is less than a child's IQ, and grey matter less than that of a Dolphin. That explains his indulgence in childish pranks and antics. He is no respecter of his elders. He would change his decisions like quick sand.

An amusing incident which gives a classic example of his double speak comes to my mind. One day I was with him to seek his orders on a case relating to purchase of some equipment for the Institute of Medical Sciences. I was not satisfied with the transaction. He while using a four letter unprintable word against late Dr. Ali Jan, a physician of International renown, blurted out "what the hell he was doing sitting in the Purchase Committee". In the meanwhile, R. Dechan an IPS officer from Ladakh dropped in to plead his case for promotion to the next grade. Dechan used to spend hours together with Farooq when he had not debased the office of Chief

Minister. He immediately sent for Ghulam Shah, then Home Secretary and ordered him to process Dechan's case and instructed him to put up the case to him the same day in the afternoon. Dechan was pleased with this un-expected bonanza especially so because Farooq told him to collect the orders personally from him. Upon this, Dechan left the office very happy. As soon as he left the office, Farooq told Ghulam Shah "Don't do anything of the sort; this bastard does not deserve it."

Immediately after he was sworn in as Chief Minister he called a public meeting at Iqbal Park. Being fond of the bizarre and the dramatics, he announced the dismissal of the whole Cabinet and that too when all the members of the Cabinet were sitting at the dais with him. There and then, he dug his own grave. From that day, Devi Dass Thakur and his cohorts started pulling wires for his over-throw. They prepared G.M.Shah son-in-law, to lead the way. Meanwhile during the Election campaign Indira Gandhi decided to make an election tour of the valley much against the advice of the saner elements in Pradesh Congress committee. The response to this tour was not only hostile but also the National Conference goons indulged in obscene and indecent behaviour at the public meeting addressed by Indira Gandhi. She was incensed beyond words and effaced from her heart like dew in the sun, all vestiges of softness towards Farooq. Jag Mohan who replaced B.K.Nehru as Governor finally cooked his goose. Farooq deeply immersed as he was in his pleasure jaunts and indifferent to the writing on the wall, chose to remain unaware of the net that was gradually tightening round his neck.

A.R.Nanda IPS, DIG, CID, then, almost daily kept him posted about the secret meetings being held by G.M.Shah and others but he always pooh-poohed the whole idea. When 14 MLAs defected from National Conference and pledged their support to G.M.Shah, which would reduce Farooq's Government to minority in the legislature, I, as Home Secretary, in desperation rushed to him and advised him to act before it was too late. Instead of seeing reason, he flared up and bellowed, "People are with me, the bastards can do nothing." To sum up, Farooq is captive of his childhood and a prisoner of

teenage, out of which he will never come out. That is why he has become a bundle of puerile prejudices. His whole family knows his failings and weaknesses. After the demise of the Sheikh, when Farooq was again in the wilderness the Government press at Srinagar caught fire and a portion of it was gutted. I was Commissioner Civil Supplies, Printing etc. Governor Jag Mohan directed me to proceed to Srinagar (the offices then were headquartered at Jammu), summer capital of the State and make an inquiry into the causes of the fire. The same day I received a phone call from Surraiya the younger daughter of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah requesting me to bring with me the original agreement executed with the publisher of Sheikh's Autobiography *Aatishi-chinar* which was with me. Anyway, I went to her residence on arrival at Srinagar and handed over the document to her. Probably they wanted to assess how much royalty on the sale of the book would accrue to them.

I am reminded of two other incidents, which show his disregard and disrespect for elders and foulness of his tongue. One day Farooq saw me talking to Khalida, elder daughter of Sheikh Abdullah and wife of G.M.Shah. When he met me, he asked me what Khalida was talking to me about. The war of succession between the son and the son-in-law was at its peak those days. During this period, he saw me one day talking to Maulana Atta Ullah Suharwardy, a respected Legislator from Doda and one of the closest confidants of his father. Next day he sent for me and told me, after using a four-letter word "I am going to cut that bastard to his size. He is circulating all sorts of canards against me." There was, however, no truth in what was reported to him. Maulana did not desert him even when Farooq was in the soup up to his neck.

Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, Chairman People's Conference has admirably summed up Farooq's installation as Chief Minister in one sentence "Sheikh Abdullah has thrown "snuff spit" "*Nasti Thokh*" on the people in the shape of Farooq as a parting gift." The snuff-spit latches on where it falls and does not go off even by rigorous scrubbing, and even if it does, it leaves an ugly stain.

## CHAPTER X

### RISE AND FALL OF GUL SHAH

Jag Mohan had meanwhile replaced B.K.Nehru as Governor of the Jammu and Kashmir State. From day one, he was on the look out for an opportunity to impose his authority and preside over the destinies of the people as an absolute master. No doubt Jag Mohan is an astute and able administrator, a hard task master, capable of sustained hard work and an expert in town planning which has won him international repute. Installation of a Government of defectors was not palatable to his taste, he wanted Governor's rule to be imposed. But that was ruled out by the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, who had staged a comeback with a bang. She wanted to teach a lesson to Farooq. She was still smarting under the insults heaped on her by National Conference goons. She wanted Shah to be installed as Chief Minister. The stage for the *coup d'état* was set with meticulous care. The drama, which had all the ingredients of a melodrama, was set up step by step. Farooq was publicly dubbed as anti-national and a security risk. Pradesh Congress Committee started an agitation, which often turned violent. Even Pradesh Congress Committee office was burnt down with a view to imparting a dimension of seriousness to the situation. Farooq remained oblivious to all these developments and remained smug in the cocoon of

his make-believe world.

Before Pradesh Congress Committee launched the agitation one of my close relations, who has held high political and administrative offices in the successive governments of Sadiq and Syed Mir Qasim came to me one morning very much excited and disturbed. He told me to advise Farooq to see the writing on the wall and behave if he wished to avoid a blood bath, which was sure to ensue otherwise. He informed me that in the convention of Pradesh Congress Committee held at Aharbal in the District Anantnag it had been decided to remove Farooq by hook or by crook even if it entailed casualties and loss of human life. The hardliners in the party were all for violent agitation while the saner elements advised tempo being built up gradually without resort to violence. While the hawks won their point, the doves had no choice but to bow before it. I reported the whole matter to Farooq who brushed aside my pleadings in his usual careless manner.

On 2 July 1984, G.M.Shah and his 14 defectors went to Raj Bhawan on the chosen day and asked Jag Mohan to invite them to form a government as Farooq's government had been reduced to minority. The Governor summoned Farooq to Raj Bhawan and advised him to resign. Though Farooq agreed to do so, he was advised by Handoo, a Minister in his Cabinet and supposed to be a legal and constitutional expert, to suggest to the Governor to summon a session of the Legislative Assembly where they could have a trial of strength. Incidentally, Handoo, a wily and mischievous man and cunning like a fox was the evil genius behind Farooq. Jag Mohan did not oblige Farooq and summarily dismissed him and invited G.M.Shah to form the Government.

G.M.Shah was duly sworn in as Chief Minister along with his 14 associates who all were sworn in as Ministers with Cabinet rank. This Government had the full support of the Pradesh Congress Committee. A co-ordination committee was set up to maintain a liaison between the Government and the Pradesh Congress Committee headed by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, President Pradesh Congress Committee. Incidentally, the co-ordination committee met

several times in the initial stages. As the saying goes, they "finally agreed to meet to disagree." There was clash of personalities of two stalwarts, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, President Pradesh Congress Committee and G.M.Shah, Chief Minister. They were always at loggerheads and ultimately the committee became "*functus officio*."

I was working as Home Secretary during this period. On the day when the swearing in ceremony had to take place, I along with Hamidullah Khan, Divisional Commissioner, was on a round over seeing police arrangement to deal with possible violence by cohorts of Farooq. Both of us then went to Raj Bhawan to watch the swearing in ceremony. After the oath taking, when the new Cabinet was having a cup of tea with the Governor, G.M.Shah sent for me and whispered to me "you have to work with me as my Principal Secretary. I have asked Mir Nassurullah, Chief Secretary to issue orders to this effect immediately." I was very upset. I had been able to escape from this vulnerable job after more than a decade and was extremely unwilling to go back to the precarious position. I begged Mir Nassurullah to spare the ordeal for me. He did delay issue of orders for a day or so. Meanwhile, Khalida sent for me. She told me that for the sake of maintaining continuity of the set-up Sheikh Sahib had established in his lifetime, I have to make this sacrifice. I could not say "No" to the lady who had been always kind and considerate to me.

After taking the oath, the whole Cabinet went to the official residence of Chief Minister where they addressed all officers of the Government. At this meeting, Devi Dass Thakur who was one of 14 members of the Cabinet was more active than others merely to assert his authority and demonstrate to the officers that he was more important and a force to be reckon with. The officers were given stern warning to rise above factionalism and give their best to the charge they held in the true tradition of civil services. For quite sometime, the hirelings of Farooq gave a rough time to Shah. Almost daily violent demonstrations were organised making the life of the community at large miserable. Then, Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, Director General of Police, a master strategist and professionally highly competent police officer, came up with the idea of unofficial

curfew being clamped on the trouble torn areas. This earned the nickname "Gula Curfew" to G.M.Shah. But this proved very effective and soon took out air from the sails of troublemakers and saved many a precious life. G.M.Shah though impetuous, short tempered and given to violent fits of rage, gradually started to establish his authority. He toured the valley and in due course people began to rally round him.

His public meetings also began to attract sizeable crowds. Like his father-in-law G.M.Shah is very punctual in offering prayers five times a day, observes fast in the month of *Ramadan* and is well-versed in *Hadith* (sayings of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)). He would go to every sacred shrine of saints of the valley often alone and accompanied by his security officer, Hafeez Ullah Dar, who has recently retired as DIG Police. For about 20 months, he carried on as a stern ruler, a hard taskmaster and a dispenser of quick justice to the aggrieved people who came in their increasing numbers to seek his help. He jealously guarded the interests of the Muslim community and ensured that they received their due in the matter of recruitment to Government jobs, admission to professional colleges and in other walks of life. His significant contribution to Jammu was laying of Bhag-i-Bahu, which he converted into a picturesque picnic spot and building of the architecturally beautiful mausoleum at Budhan Shah, a Muslim saint, near Jammu Airport where people from all communities would throng to invoke his blessings.

Another mausoleum and a Sarai was got constructed by him at the shrine at Shahdara Sharief in Surankote, District Rajouri. This shrine with idyllic surroundings perched precariously on a hillock was approachable only by a bridle path. During Sheikh's time a motorable road was constructed but it could not be taken up to the shrine as it is separated by a deep chasm. Shah engaged the services of the best architects and got a plan, layout and design prepared. The construction was started at a brisk pace as Shah never countenanced slippages nor could he brook any delays. The whole complex was completed on time. This completely changed the whole complexion of the area and turned it into a place of

pilgrimage as also a picnic spot. This shrine attracts thousands of pilgrims throughout India and even Pakistan. The offerings made by pilgrims run into millions of rupees annually. A special officer was appointed to administer the shrine.

G.M Shah was bold and had the guts, to rise in challenge to the highest authority is illustrated by the following episode: During the last days of Sheikh, he had stopped going to official functions being in a very weak state of health. On August 15, the Independence Day of India, Sheikh ordered Shah to take salute at the flag hoisting ceremony. Shah flatly refused and instead went to Ganderbal, a scenic spot and arranged a lunch to which all political nitwits and big wigs were invited as also almost all officers of the Government. Shah personally extended an invitation to me to the lunch. I was in my office and in two minds whether to go or not to go in either case, I was sure to invite the wrath of Sheikh and Shah. Suddenly Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, Director General Police, dropped in and asked me if I was going to lunch at Ganderbal. When I asked what did he advise he said, "No problem, Sheikh is also going there. Let us go half an hour earlier and receive Sheikh Sahib there." Accordingly, both of us headed towards Ganderbal in D.G'S car. When we were almost near the venue of the lunch, a picturesque spot on the banks of the Sindh River, a message was flashed on D.G's wireless in the car that Sheikh Sahib was not going to the lunch. This completely flabbergasted us. We were in a quandary what to do. If we turned back, we will become the cynosure of all the invitees and attract Shah's wrath who had by now spotted us. He called us both. It was indeed a gala occasion, sumptuous lunch of several courses prepared by professional cooks and made romantic by a party of musicians playing lilting tunes for the delectation of the guests. We would have really enjoyed it but for the lurking fear that, the Sheikh would know and take us to task for our temerity to have gone in defiance of his orders. The same evening when we met the Sheikh he gave us a bit of his mind and in no uncertain terms. Later Shah did not attend the Independence Day "At Home" hosted by the Governor, which was a direct affront to the Governor.

I would like to give another sample of his volatile nature. The Indian Home Minister was once on visit to the state. He called on G.M.Shah as a matter of courtesy. During the discussion on some sensitive subject, Shah lost his cool. He thrust his right foot towards the Home Minister saying that he cared two hoots for Chief Ministership and the Centre could have it back. In doing so, the *chappal* (it was summer and G.M.Shah was wearing *chappals*), flew out and fell in front of the Home Minister.

Simultaneously, the BJP, Shiv Sena and the votaries of Hindutva started an agitation against construction of mosques of worship in the secretariat and in the colonies. The hirelings of Farooq also began to give trouble. The lone sane voice in this otherwise mad house of depravity was that of Thakur Devi Dass. He tried his best to bring order in the team, which always tended to run amok. But even he could not with all his credibility of class of British aristocracy, mastering grasp over constitutional and legal matters shore up tottering foundations of the regime. The ill conceived and off the cuff decisions, free hand to corruption and immoral stand off so disgusted Thakur Devi Dass that he several times threatened to resign. Wisdom dawned on Shah but too late.

It is interesting to note here an ironical but historical fact. The rulers of the State from the dawn of independence of the sub-continent and even earlier have been a curious mixture of out and out illiterates, semi-literates, and highly educated. For example, during the Dogra rule a minister by the name of Ganga Ram, practically illiterate but by virtue of his close relationship with the royal family, became a Minister. People would often describe him as "*Tota Bholay Ganga Ram*", i.e. he would repeat like parrot what he was taught. He would ask his Personal Assistant in Punjabi language whenever a file was placed before him "*vada karan ki nikka*" meaning thereby if he would initial it or affix full signatures. Similarly, in the Sheikh's first Cabinet a retired Army officer belonging to Dogra State Forces by the name of Col. Peer Mohammed who was a dunce, illiterate and uncouth was made Education Minister. He would sign files thus "Approved", affixing 'm' as his

signature. Once it so happened that his personal assistant was not near at hand to guide him. He picked up a file, which unfortunately was upside down. He as usual scrawled "m" on it, but he signed it at the bottom, which was the upper side of the file. No wonder young educated men have coined a humorous definition of democracy "Exploitation of educated few by illiterate masses".

The greatest blunder committed by Shah was to nominate his son Muzzafar to contest elections to the Lok Sabha. He was pitted against Begum Abdullah. Even though Muzzy (Muzzafar Shah) was an official candidate, the official machinery, particularly the police, helped the party in a clandestine manner. Even Jag Mohan specially sent for Wattali, DIG police, Hamidullah, Divisional Commissioner, and Nassar-ullah, Chief Secretary, to ensure fair elections, hissing that Begum was to be helped. Both sides indulged in hooliganism, booth capturing and harassment of each others polling agents. The elections were won by the National Conference candidate (Begum Abdullah) and Shah lost his face. The defeat of Muzzafar unhinged whatever little underpinnings Shah's throne had. Shah's Cabinet had two ministers Sheikh Abdul Jabar and a Lady Minister who assumed quite notoriety for their stupidity, adultery and corrupt practices. Both were semi-literate and lorded over their respective ministries like bullies to cover up their lack of education and manners. For the sake of the convenience of Muslim employees of the Secretariat, he got constructed mosques within the Secretariat premises both at Jammu and Srinagar and in colonies where majority of Muslim employees were housed. But all these good deeds were brought to nought by the team members of his Cabinet. Each member considered himself / herself as a despot in his/her domain. Favours were offered at a price; the ministers became the whipping post of political corruption, which ultimately percolated down to the lowest rung of administrative hierarchy. Such was the widespread reach of corrupt practices that earned sobriquet "*Gulashah bai chodah choor*" for the regime. G.M.Shah felt helpless and could not stem the rot. He thought that even a slight reprimand to any member of the Cabinet would bring down his Government.

I tried to convince him every now and then, that the current ministers were at his mercy and not vice versa. A re-shuffle of the portfolios could have done the trick and could have reigned in the berserk horses and mares. But all in vain. To add to his woes, he felt his days as Chief Minister were numbered. Meanwhile Farooq began to woo Rajiv Gandhi who had succeeded his mother as Prime Minister and was a childhood friend of Farooq. The Central Government at Delhi began to look out for an opportunity to ease shah out without attracting public odium in the State and in the country. Simultaneously the Bhartiya Janta Party, Shiv Sena, etc. started an agitation against construction of places of worship in the Secretariat and in the colonies. The hirelings of Farooq also began to give trouble. This did not go unnoticed and the King Makers in Delhi saw to it that Shah with all his pride and prejudices eats the dust.

## CHAPTER XI

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### RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

Being mortally afraid that he might again be thrown out if he gave the slightest hint of being more loyal to the State than to the Centre, Farooq became a tool in the hands of a gang of officers assigned to the J&K cadre from the Central deputation quota. He started persecuting local officers through these power - hungry officers who owed allegiance to Delhi rather than to the State. Trumped up charges were made against otherwise efficient officers who had good of the people and the state at heart. On the political front, he began to mess up things. What is worst the Home Ministry started doubting the bona fides of Farooq as, according to their perception, he was shielding militant Sikh elements who had started organising dewans (religious gatherings in the Jammu province of the state and was cahoots with the elements of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front who too had become active in the meanwhile. It was only his friendship with Rajiv Gandhi that averted danger to his chair from time to time. The disgruntled Muslim youth who began to strengthen their ranks, was another potent factor he had to contend with. But what ultimately proved his undoing was the large-scale rigging of the elections to the Legislative Assembly in 1987.

Various Muslim groups had organised themselves into a united front called MUF (Muslim United Front). They fielded candidates against quite a number of constituencies. After the polling was over, the returning officers to their great consternation found, almost all MUF candidates were winning. They reported this unexpected turn of events to Farooq who in sheer panic made a dash to Delhi to apprise Rajiv about this dangerous trend. Rajiv advised him to turn the tide by rigging. Meanwhile results of several constituencies were held for as long as 48-72 hours. On return of Farooq from Delhi, the inevitable happened. All the candidates of Farooq were declared successful. This sent a wave of resentment against Farooq. To mollify the enraged people he tried his old gimmicks but the die had been cast and he was doomed to go to oblivion.

The Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front came into the open and made their presence felt. Bombs started exploding at regular intervals. An attempt was made on the life of Ali Mohammed Wattali, DIG Police who was alleged to have rounded up a large number of youth suspected to be members of the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front. Farooq was accused of having sneaking sympathy with the anti-national elements and even hobnobbing with them. To cap it all he went to Amritsar and met Bindranwalle, the leader of Sikh militants, and openly displayed at his residence the gift of sword given to him by Bindranwalle. Jag Mohan was watching all this goings on and reporting regularly to Delhi, the honeymooning of Farooq with all the undesirable elements whether true or imagined. He (Jag Mohan) received the green signal and Farooq was kicked out unceremoniously. The Legislative Assembly was dismissed and Governor's rule imposed once again. In his two stints as Chief Minister Farooq acted in a manner that made him a suspect in the eyes of the bureaucracy in Delhi and IB sleuths dogged his every step.

There were two constant irritants, which acted like the thin end of the wedge and touched the bureaucracy in Delhi in the raw namely:-

1. Mufti Bahaudin, Chief Justice, J&K High Court was heckled by authorities that be, in one manner or the other for the reasons given in a separate chapter. Allegations of misuse of power, corruption, etc. were fabricated against him to tarnish his image. Later, he was ordered to be shifted to Sikkim, a small mountainous state, The Chief Justice defied the orders and Farooq defended him.

2. The Legislative Assembly, which had passed the Resettlement Bill and had been returned by B.K.Nehru, Governor, for reconsideration tried to play ducks and drakes when the Legislative Assembly unanimously voted that the Governor should give his assent to the Bill. B.K.Nehru sent for Farooq and presumably told him how far-reaching implications and ramifications the Legislative measure will have if enacted into a law and how embarrassing it would be for the Central Government, quietly acquiesced to its reference to the Supreme Court of India. Since then it is on the shelf of the Supreme Court.

## CHAPTER XII

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### CHANGE OF MASTERS

On dismissal and imprisonment of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in August, 1953 Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was installed as a Prime Minister. Bakshi was known as the Iron Man, with tremendous organising capacity, a natural and innate intelligence, sound judgment about men and matters and an efficient administrator. Though he had no formal education or academic attainments, he often surprised his critics by deft handling of critical and explosive situations. There was a violent reaction to Sheikh's dismissal and incarceration but the Bakshi handled the situation skilfully and within a short period snuffed out the uprising. He ruled by the proverbial carrot and stick; befriended even his worst enemies by his acts of munificence and generosity and introduced measures for public weal, which won wide acclaim.

During his time, a network of roads was constructed linking even the remotest corners of the State. A chain of health centres was established. He rehabilitated artisans and craftsmen who had fallen on bad days, established two Medical colleges, an Agricultural college, one Unani and one Ayurvedic college, and an Engineering college. Bakshi provided generously interest-free loans for higher studies and encouraged the pursuit of professional education. A

number of buildings were constructed which opened up employment opportunities for artisans. Bakshi transformed Pahalgam from a simple scenic spot into a humming tourist resort, dotted with tourist huts for the convenience of tourists and gave a tremendous boost to tourist traffic. A city bus service was started for the first time and in due course a district bus service and tourist services were also introduced. Initially, the common people and sceptics looked at the service with disdain and dubbed it as "Ponda Bus" i.e., a bus that could give you a ride to any destination for one anna (the denomination in vogue then). For proper maintenance of transport services, he created a full-fledged Department of Transport, which rendered signal services to the State at the most critical junctures.

The chain of emporia already established by him, as Deputy Prime Minister during Sheikh's regime throughout India was further improved which provided retail outlets for Kashmiri Arts and Crafts. A sports stadium was established which gave a boost to sports activities. He had a phenomenal memory and remembered people by first names. He held Durbars to listen to the grievances of people and dispensed quick justice. Many a deserving persons were provided with employment and for the first time young men and women could get an opportunity to enter the portals of colleges, professional and academic. He was a hard taskmaster as well as a benign ruler. Verily he can be said to be the architect of modern Kashmir. However, he did not win the hearts of the people but he at least mollified them and tried to heal their wounds.

Like Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, he knew the weakness of the people for grand spectacles and *tamasha* and fun and frolic. Taking a bay from Budshah's (Zain-ul-Abdeen) reign, he organised grand festivals called "Kashmir Festival" (*Jashan-e-Kashmir*) at different places in the valley little caring for the cost and provided many opportunities to the people to relax, watch musical concerts, attend to poetic symposia and indulge in other recreational activities galore. (It is a different matter if the huge sums spent on these festivals became a subject of scrutiny by the Audit and Accounts Dept and the officers responsible for organising the events had a

harrowing time explaining the irregularities noticed in the spending on such festivals).

No wonder he was thus able to rule for 11 long years. The centre thought that Bakshi had become too big for his boots so deeply had he entrenched himself. This did not fit in the scheme of things on the shelf in Delhi and consequently Bakshi became inconvenient for the powers that be. In Punjab another spectre in the shape of Partap Singh Kairon who was in the same genre as the Bakshi was staring the centre in the face. Like Bakshi, he had the guts to defy the centre. These were the inconvenient stalwarts who had to be cut to size and humbled. The Goliaths had to be wiped off the scene. This had to be done with finesse and the thorns torn out without pain to the subject and without attracting public odium. This gave birth to the Kamraj Plan. The inconvenient stalwarts bowed out of the precincts of power without a whimper or murmur from any quarters and were relegated to the limbo.

Meanwhile, the Centre had groomed G.M. Sadiq with the help of D.P.Dhar, the genius who stalked the corridors of power in the state then in the centre like an ostrich among a brood of hens. D.P.Dhar engineered the Treaty for friendship with USSR when he was India's Ambassador there. This was a high mark in his career. His friends often referred to him as Machiavelli incarnate. But Bakshi beat the centre at their own game. To outwit them he foisted a man of his own, Khwaja Shamas-ud-Din, on the chair of Prime Minister (as then called). The centre could not remove this figurehead as that would have invited adverse criticism. But D.P.Dhar was there to oblige them. A diabolical plan was conceived with the help of insiders and other hirelings. This is what happened as I have heard from my elders and gleaned from writings on the subject by those who had inside knowledge about the event, I quote, the Holy relic of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was got removed from the Shrine of Hazratbal in December, 1963. The intention was to kill two birds with one stone, Hazratbal a sanctum sanctorum for the faithful tens and thousands of people from all corners of the valley would converge there throughout the year. Once the Holy relic was removed, the place would cease to have the importance it had

acquired in the life of the people. At the same time, removal of the relic would unleash widespread public resentment that would tear apart the stooge of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad.

Unmistakable hints were thrown here and there subtly implicating the Bakshi family in the unforgivable sacrilege. But the perpetrators of the dastardly act had not bargained for the reaction that was unprecedented and swept in its reach not only the Bakshi and his cohorts but also threatened the very foundations of the accession. The centre had to eat humble pie and quietly managed to restore the holy relic after hoodwinking a highly respected and revered personage Mirak Shah, a saintly person, actively assisted by Maulana Mohammad Sayeed Masoodi, a close associate of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Secretary General of National Conference. Sheikh Abdullah always referred to him as a wily and mischievous man whose beard sheltered thousands of devils. A commission of inquiry was appointed to probe into the removal of the holy relic but its report never saw the light of the day.

The whole sad and sordid episode will ever remain shrouded in mystery. Even the iron man like Bakshi must have become jittery because of court intrigues hatched by the N.C. goons. People close to Bakshi often quoted Bakshi's belief that the safety of Kashmiri Muslims lay in the lion (Sheikh) roaring once in a while from outside (meaning thereby Abdullah's outbursts against Delhi) and strong and stable Pakistan. So long as Bakshi was in the chair he successfully resisted the attempts of the centre to erode the special status of the state. The permit system for entry into the State continued to remain extant till he was ultimately forced by a combination of adverse circumstances to announce, *inter alia*, the abolition of permit system in February 1954. Eventually he was bundled out under the Kamraj Plan and pushed to the oblivion in the wake of the theft of holy relic. He stoutly opposed extension of the jurisdiction of the Election Commission, the Supreme Court of India and application of central laws to the State.

Even today, Bakshi is remembered by the people for his numerous acts of munificence and generosity, forgotten, and

forgiven even the most unsavoury acts of his brothers known as BBC (Bakshi Brothers Corporation). G.M.Sadiq brought down and demolished the whole edifice of so-called internal autonomy by one stroke of pen so to say guided and master-minded by D.P.Dhar who by his clever acts became a Trojan horse in the murky politics of the State. The honorific appellation of Hon'ble Prime Minister was supplanted by the banal designation of Chief Minister as in other States; *Sadar-i-Riyasat* (equivalent in connotation to President of the State) became Governor. Not only had that Sadiq tamely acquiesced to the application of numerous provisions of the Indian Constitution to the State promulgated by a Presidential order. The jurisdiction of Supreme Court and Election Commission of India was extended to the State. In short, the State was brought almost on par with other states with the exception of much vaunted Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which confers special status on the State. This too has been left bereft of any flesh or teeth having already been bared to the bones.

G.M.Bakshi erred only once when he accepted financial integration and integration of services under compelling circumstances. G.M.Sadiq parted ways with D.P.Dhar in due course for his Machiavellian intrigues and overbearing behaviour. He (Sadiq) too was disenchanted and disillusioned and thereby became inconvenient for purposes of the Central Government because he too had the temerity to defy the Delhi establishment. He heavily depended upon the State Bureaucracy. He hated the guts of the corrupt legislators who were saleable and purchasable of any consideration. He would call them dogs. The Centre 'hired and fired' Chief Ministers after Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's dismissal like ordinary employees according as they were convenient and/or inconvenient for purposes of central Government. When Sheikh Abdullah had become difficult to handle and was proving a block to the complete merger and the integration of the State in the mainstream of India's body politic, plans were evolved to remove him from the scene.

The hostile attitude of the Central Government forced the Sheikh to go farther afield and enlist stumbling support of leaders

of countries not so friendly towards India. He started hobnobbing with such world dignitaries as Adlai Stevenson of USA, Chu'en Lai of China, Gamal Abdul Nassar of Egypt, etc. to sell his idea of an Independent Kashmir. Response from them must have been encouraging in as much as it greatly embarrassed India in International fora. A convenient tool to isolate and silence the Sheikh was found in G.M.Bakshi actively aided and abetted by D.P.Dhar, a past master in the art of deception, a great conversationalist and adept in court intrigues and expert in Machiavellian manipulations. In fact, Bakshi was groomed as successor to the Sheikh even when he (Sheikh) was still in the saddle albeit gone berserk. On the fateful day of August 9, 1953 Sheikh Abdullah was dismissed when he had gone to Gulmarg, a tourist resort, with his family, by an obliging Karan Singh, Sadar-i-Riyasat (nomenclature in use then for Head of the State), who surely must have taken malicious delight in toppling the man who had brought his dynastic rule to an ignominious end? The subsequent events form a tragic part of history of the people and unfortunate vale of Kashmir.

In passing, I may mention here that the Bakshi had a keen sense of humour. One day when he was taking a round of Kashmir Arts Emporium at 5 Prithvi Raj Road, New Delhi his attention was caught by a beautiful Kashmiri carpet hanging on the wall. While admiring its design, colour combination and perfect weave, he asked Kh. Ehsanullah the cost of the carpet. He paused for a moment then slyly put a counter question, "Do you want to know the real cost or the cost plus overheads." "Both" countered the Bakshi. Ehsanullah with a mischievous smile replied, "Real cost of production Rs. 10,000/- plus 10,000/- for your Zinda bad (long live)". "And, how much is your share" the Bakshi brusquely retorted. The jibe implied that the labour was often misused by the regime for organising processions etc. which considerably added to the cost as the labour thus employed occasionally drew their wages whether or not they worked. Bakshi's retort implied rumours then current that Ehsaullah claimed his act on all things purchased through him.

Thus, Sadiq also became defiant which was not taken kindly by Delhi, G.M.Sadiq passed away in P.G.I.Chandigarh in 1971 when

the Indo-Pak confrontation had broken out in very mysterious circumstances. It was even alleged by his close circle of friends that Sadiq might have been done to death by slow poisoning. Given the previous history, this was a possibility, which could not be ruled out.

On the demise of Sadiq, Syed Mir Qasim was installed as caretaker Chief Minister and after stage-managed elections, elected as leader of the House and formally inducted as Chief Minister according to the scheme of things already in the shelf in Delhi. More about him in the Chapter "Delhi Accord."

The brief *Bacha Saqa* type of rule of Khawaja Shamas-u-Din who was foisted by the Bakshi when he resigned from Prime Ministership under the Kamraj Plan to thwart the game of the Central Government to pinion the local political leadership in its iron grip was not without comic interludes. Soon after assuming responsibilities as Prime Minister, rather thrust upon him, he directed the Chief Secretary (G.A. Shunthu, a hard boiled bureaucrat inducted to IAS from Accounts service) to summon all employees, high or low including Cabinet Ministers, Secretaries to Government and Heads of Departments in the lawns of the Secretariat at Jammu where an oath would be administered to them personally by the Prime Minister to shun corruption and ensure probity in administration. There was a written text of the oath, which Prime Minister himself read out. It ran thus:

*"Shamas -u- Din, do solemnly affirm / declare in the name of God etc."*

The whole concourse instead of announcing their own names repeated the name of the Prime Minister. Thus the whole arrangement made meticulously for the occasion ended in smoke albeit hilariously.

It would be interesting to note here that Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was not only an austere administrator but also a man capable of taking hard and most unpleasant decision. When Dr. M.Habibullah, a qualified scientist who started his career in Drug

Research Laboratory and elder brother of Bakshi's son-in-law, Mir Nassarullah, was first appointed as Director Industries and then Secretary Industries and Commerce, he created waves in the whole administration by exposing the hollowness of the public sector. Habibullah had a God given gift of a fertile imagination and often would get spasmodic brain waves, which he earnestly tried to translate into reality. In fact, it was he who started the process of Industrialisation of the valley albeit at a modest scale. As Secretary Industries, he felt that soporific management of the few sick and almost moribund public sector undertakings needed a jolt so that realisation that their prosperity was dependent on flourishing of their charges, dawned on them, and that the pampered labour could get a foretaste of what would be the result if their source of sustenance ceased to exist.

Before submitting usual budget estimates in the prescribed manner, he introduced what he called "performance budget" indicating initial investments made in the undertakings. The annual expenditure incurred and the losses suffered. These "performance budgets" were submitted by him direct to the Prime Minister who in turn placed them before the Cabinet. The whole council of Ministers was staggered to find that the State had suffered losses running into billions of rupees. The Prime Minister decided and the Cabinet agreed to close all factories, which had suffered the highest losses. Accordingly the following units were closed and the labour working there laid off:

1. Joinery Mill, Pampore, Kashmir.
2. Drug Factories at Jammu & Kashmir.
3. Drug Farms Jammu / Srinagar.
4. Leather Tanning Factory, Shalteng, Srinagar.
5. Sole Leather Plant Jammu.
6. Bat Manufacturing Factory at Miran Sahib, Jammu.
7. Match Factory and Santonine Factory Baramullah.

No other Government could have dared even to reduce the expenditure incurred on these white elephants much less close them.

When Bakshi was eased out of the precincts of power, under the Kamraj Plan he, before bowing out, brought all the public sector undertakings under one umbrella and created a conglomerate of J& K Industries, a corporate body incorporated under the Companies Act. The whole idea was to ensure his stranglehold on the most volatile section of population, i.e. the organised labour working in these undertakings. He brought Aga Muzaffar IAS Officer of the J & K Cadre, a brilliant officer and ambassador of India, in the Caribbean Islands, as its Managing Director and made himself as Chairman. I was also seconded to the Corporation as in charge Sales/Purchases. But unfortunately Bakshi was hunted and hounded by his successors and fell a victim to political vendetta.

Aga Muzaffar started re-appraisal of the closed units and restarted them one by one. During the short period of 5 years, the otherwise sick and moribund undertakings started to turn the corner and some even started to break even. It was all possible because of the imaginative approach to the problems of each undertaking and allowing the management free hand in their day-to-day affairs. They enjoyed wider delegation contrary to the stultifying hold of financial and administrative controls, prescribed by Governmental Rules and Regulations.

On the removal of Khawaja Shamas-u-Din, G.M.Sadiq was installed as Chief Minister. By profession a lawyer, G.M.Sadiq belonging to a very well to do family, was shrewd, a man of impeccable manners, polished and debonair sartorially, a voracious reader, progressive in outlook and very much influenced by the communist philosophy. He was Health and Education Minister in Sheikh Abdullah's Cabinet. Whatever his contributions in the political field which has always been considered dubious and suspect, he gave a boost to and patronised art and literature. He collected a group of so-called progressive writers, artists and litterateurs and organised a cultural front. The front discovered and encouraged many a writer, artist and persons well versed in

fine arts who made a mark in their respective fields. Amongst them may be mentioned Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din, who created a name for himself as a columnist, short story writer, satirist and made full use of his abilities in producing humorous skits. Akhtar won the Sahitya Academy Award for his short story "Pond Rich" describing the inner most feelings of a man gone off the rocker. Another notable person who won many laurels in verse libre, in Kashmir, was Dina Nath Nadim.

The members of the Front though ostensibly advocating and practising communist philosophy of thought were basically wedded to their own faith; communist outlook was only a facade. This is clear by the following incident related often by Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din to his circle of friends much to their amusement. "One day Akhtar went to Nadim's place at Jawahar Nagar colony early in the morning to look him up as a courtesy. He rang the bell but there was no response. He opened the door and went up to the first floor. There he found Nadim's wife busy with her usual chores. When he enquired about Nadim's whereabouts, she told him he was in the attic on second floor. He got surprise of his life when he found Nadim singing Bhajan before an idol. This was a communist supposed to be an atheist worshipping like a Hindu zealot. Akhtar vowed there and then that he would do penance and seek forgiveness of Allah for having strayed from the true path of Islam."

This was the brand of communism practised by the so-called progressive members of the Front and their mentor, G.M.Sadiq. One quality that put Sadiq head and shoulders above the common run of politicians was his cool and calm exterior. Whatever the provocations or situations he would remain unruffled. The official class usually joked that even if an atom bomb was dropped on Kashmir Sadiq would care less and continue chewing the cud (He was fond of chewing betel nuts all the time). During his time, Kashmiri Pandits started an agitation on the mistaken notion that Muslims were usurping their jobs and blocking their admission to professional colleges; and that they were being ignored deliberately simply to make room for Muslims in various careers. This was a travesty of facts. For the first time Muslim educated young men and

women started queuing up for government jobs and for admission to professional institutions. To the extent they succeeded in getting jobs of admission for various technical trainings, of course on competitive merit, quota of Kashmiri Pandits was reduced proportionately. Earlier the community monopolised the jobs and trainings and were their exclusive preserve. The times had changed; Muslim young men and women, who in the none too distant past only yearned for the privilege, were now in a position to compete on their own strength. Even so, there was no significant depletion in the strength of the community either in government jobs or in the professional institutions. Nevertheless, they held the entire Government to ransom. Here again the whole fracas was masterminded by D.P.Dhar simply to make Sadiq uncomfortable and keep him in turmoil.

Needless to mention, even after over four decades of the so-called freedom, this particular community preponderates in senior and junior positions in Government and professional institutions. When the Kashmiri Pandit agitation was at its peak, a group of Muslim young men waited upon Sadiq and Qasim to plead for protection as according to them, Kashmiri Pandits had marked Muslim houses and were planning to attack Muslims with the help of CRP and BSF. Sadiq was furious and rebuffed them "go and betray Mujahids for paltry sums". The National Conference hirelings were alleged then (early July 1965) to have shown the hideouts of infiltrators from across the border and had them caught.

Sadiq also appears to have got disillusioned by the arm-twisting methods of the centre and the particularly hostile attitude of Delhi bureaucracy towards the people in general and administration in particular. But he refused to get cowed down. Even though a large group of legislators rose in revolt against him and went to Delhi to prevail upon the central Government to remove Sadiq, he simply ignored it. He would refuse to see senior bureaucrats from Delhi who till then used to dictate terms to the Chief Ministers. He heavily depended upon State bureaucracy and kept legislators and other political nitwits at a safe distance. He would call legislators as "Dogs" who could be purchased for a song.

## CHAPTER XIII

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### REMINISCENCES

The following events took place during the period before the Sheikh was hoisted by his own petard:

(a) The Muslims of Jammu province bore the full brunt of the holocaust resulting from the partition of the sub-continent. Millions were displaced from their homes and hearths, lakhs were murdered in cold blood as in the East Punjab, millions fled to Pakistan with bare lives and only a few hundred who survived the blood-bath remained behind. Some took refuge in the valley. The helpless Muslim refugees from Jammu who lost everything in the carnage and depredations at the hands of Hindu zealots and hands of fully armed RSS provoked and aided and abetted by Tara Devi wife of Hari Singh and Police and Army, were packed off in police trucks by the Sheikh to be pushed across the border much against the advice of saner elements. The unlucky and unfortunate survivors met a horrendous fate as hundreds and thousands were butchered by RSS bands at Miran Sahib and Samba the two border towns in Jammu province. Women were raped, abducted, or absorbed

in Hindu families by a systematic and inhuman process of proselytisation.

(b) A large number of persons who could pose a threat to Sheikh's leadership and to forestall re-grouping of elements opposed to accession with India were banished from the state and their properties confiscated after declaring them enemy agents under the law specially enacted for the purpose namely, "Enemy Agents (confiscation of Immoveable Property) Ordinance."

In this context may be mentioned:

(1) Mirwaiz Maulvi Mohammad Yusuf Shah, the moving spirit behind the Muslim Conference, with a very large dedicated cadre of followers,

(2) Chowdry Ghulam Abbas,

(3) Chowdry Hamidullah, both Muslim Conference leaders from Jammu and parted ways with the Sheikh when the Muslim Conference was converted into the National Conference in 1938,

(4) Chowdry Faiz-Ullah,

(5) Ghulam-ud-Din Wani (he was also a member of the Azad Kashmir Cabinet)

(6) Mr. Naqashbandi, (He was Station Director of Radio Pakistan, Islamabad at the time of his death), and most of others.

Some of his opponents chose voluntary exile to escape from the horrible fate, which otherwise they would have met had they stayed in the State. It would be of interest to reproduce a press note issued on the subject during this period:

"In exercise of the powers vesting in him under "Enemy Agents (Confiscation of Property) Ordinance 2004" the Hon'ble officiating Head of the Administration has been pleased to take action against certain persons guilty of actively co-operating with and assisting the enemy. In this connection, orders have been issued for the confiscation of the immoveable

property belonging to Sona Ullah Wani of Sopore, Ghulam-ud-Din Wani of Baramullah, Ashiq Hussain of Srinagar and Mir Waiz Yousf Shah of Srinagar. The Jagirs of the Sultans of Kahori, Kathai and Dupatta and the Raja of Hiker have been resumed and all their immoveable property wherever situated in the Jammu and Kashmir State confiscated. All Jagirs belonging to Brig.Rehmat Ullah Khan have been resumed and all pensions payable to him stopped, and all his immoveable property within the territories of Jammu & Kashmir State confiscated. It is stated in the order that besides his own active co-operation with and assistance to Major Aslam was commanding an enemy unit at a place near Pattan last October. Similarly, the entire immoveable property belonging to A.R.Effendi in the State has been confiscated. Mr. Effendi and his equally disloyal son are at present engaged in most unwholesome and disloyal activity in Pakistan."

(c) Elections to the constituent assembly were organised and managed in such a manner that all the 75 constituencies returned National Conference candidates almost unopposed. They were later dubbed as the 75 nodding heads of Sheikh Abdullah.

(d) On 5 November 1951, the constituent assembly was convened with G.M.Sadiq as its President. Sheikh Abdullah made a policy statement in the Constituent Assembly the main burden of which was that it was the commonality of ideals of National Congress, namely, secularism, democracy and an egalitarian society based on social justice that impelled the Sheikh to throw the lot and link the fate of the people of the State with that of India.

(e) The Constituent Assembly passed a resolution prescribing a separate flag for the State.

(f) A few battalions of a force called J& K Militia were raised by selection from the rag-tag voluntary force gathered during tribal invasion of the State according to the prescribed Army standards. The Force was trained by Indian Army

personnel under Brig Billimoria (later promoted Major General) who was its first commandant. The Sheikh used to be given guard of honour by the smartly turned out contingents whenever he paid a visit to their lines in Hapt Chinar, which was quite often. This completed the cup of happiness of the Sheikh and boosted up his ego and re-inforced his belief that he indeed was an absolute ruler of a sovereign State. But Sardar Patel and other Hindu leaders at Delhi did not like the Kashmiris holding arms and forming an army of the Kashmiri Muslims. As such, the J & K Militia was later disbanded and a selected few personnel absorbed in the re-named Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry Battalion and merged with the Indian Army.

(g) When in the wake of tribal invasion and open confrontation between India and Pakistan, India referred the dispute to the Security Council, Sheikh Abdullah accompanied the Indian delegation to present the case to the Security Council where he delivered a speech in a clear fashion often digressing from the written text and harping in the oft-repeated argument of rejection of the Two- Nation theory on which Pakistan was founded etc, etc.

(h) During the last days preceding his dismissal and arrest in August 1953, Sheikh Abdullah addressed a series of public meetings, in which he was highly critical of the Central Government jolted Delhi and galvanised them into speedy action before the Sheikh would run amuck and do irreparable damage to the painstakingly built up edifice of tenuous accession. These meetings were attended by Muslim youth in increasing numbers where they openly raised anti-India and pro-Pakistan slogans and the Sheikh would smile and laugh, which they mistook for his tacit consent to raising of such slogans. The law and order enforcement agencies also took no notice of the dramatic shift in the loyalties and deemed it as change of stance by the Sheikh vis-à-vis India.

(i) The Muslim youth got an opportunity to give vent to their pent up emotions promoting a euphoria, which could neither be damped nor doused.

Many a satirical poems were composed ridiculing "National Government of National Conference." A sample is given below:

"I have heard that Qadir Charvan (a ruffian type of National Conference worker. Liver curry is called Charvan in Kashmiri language) is selling Pakistan salt (Rock salt of Khewra mines in Pakistan.)". Apart from supply of other items of daily consumption of which source was that part of the Punjab now under Pakistan, rock salt supplies to which people were used completely stopped as a result of closure of Uri road ( connecting the State with Pakistan) by the tribal.

*"There he is bubbling, raving and ranting through his toothless mouth (Qadir had lost most of his teeth), and wobbling on teetering legs (his gait was ungainly)". What, a baldhead and a man with twisted legs dares exhibit arrogance.*

The poem is in Kashmiri and can be appreciated only if recited in that language with its charming rhyme and rhythm. Mahjoor who for all practical purposes, was considered a poet laureate of Sheikh Abdullah's court and had composed revolutionary poems during the early days of the people's struggles against Dogra Rule was asked by the Sheikh to write the history of the freedom struggle. He was stationed at Delhi in Kashmir House at 5-Prithviraj Road, in the early fifties. The writer also happened to be in Delhi those days in connection with a training course. During a chat with Mehjoor when I enquired how far his work had progressed, he threw up his hands saying "What history, it has been distorted; you have changed your stance, you have changed your destination, you have become wayward and forgotten the pledges you made to the people. What an irony of fate, the movement of the march has been brought to ignominy, changing the centuries old traditions, ethos and history of a nation which had a proud past but has now a dismal future."

This was from a man who waxed eloquent in praise of Sheikh Abdullah round whom he wove a halo at once spiritual as well as revolutionary and projected him as a saviour of the people, a social reformer and harbinger of bright future rolled into one. Later in frustration, he could not contain his real feelings and composed a poem, which warmed the hearts of people. The refrain of the poem was "My heart is with Pakistan." Again making comparison of Kashmir as part of India and Pakistan, he bewailed

*"Do they provide oil and salt only to the chosen and favoured few?*

*Is there such chaos, confusion, and stark injustice:  
Is there a Mehjoor alone and isolated throwing pearls to hens.*

Figuratively it implies that Mehjoor's pearls of wisdom are falling on ignoramuses who are deaf and dumb.

Another sample of satire on Sheikh Abdullah and Baig is given below:

*"If wisdom has forsaken the tall man (Abdullah was more than 6 feet tall) what happened to the twisted arm man (Beig had a twisted left arm); why the son of a midwife (Bakshi's mother was a midwife) could not do penance and atone for the sins of Sheikh and Beig."*

The song expressing feelings about Pakistan became so popular that women on festive occasions would invariably include it in their repertoire of poetic compositions and sing in "Wan Wun" (A form of chorus sung by women on such occasion with their arms holding each other's back, they sing making rhythmic motions and tapping their feet with the rhythm of the song).

In the early days of the freedom struggle spearheaded by Sheikh Abdullah, Mehjoor eulogised him thus:

*"O ye tenderer of Gardens, usher in a new spring and create an atmosphere where flowers of different hue would sprout out and nightingales would dance around them; Cause earthquakes, bring storms, demolish the old order but bring a new spring etc.etc."*

This then was the scenario of the valley immediately preceding the dismissal and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah. It was but natural that the people reacted violently to this "betrayal" as Sheikh Abdullah termed his dismissal and refusal to redeem solemn pledges given to the people many times. Many precious lives were lost but Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad being worldly wise and fully conversant with the psyche of the people was able to snuff out the agitation by his policy of appeasement and placation and chastisement according as the situation demanded.

If Sheikh Abdullah acted as a demi-God, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was down to earth pragmatic in his approach to peoples' problems with whom he established a rapprochement. He had a phenomenal memory and knew most of the people by name. He had an uncanny sense of judgment and disarmed his detractors by his acts of munificence and generosity. It is important to note here that when the Instrument of Accession was signed, the Indian Government rushed troops by air. Amongst them was a regiment of Sikhs known as Patiala Tigers. The regiment had tasted blood of Muslims in the carnage following the partition, immediately on arrival indulged in picking out Muslims for sniper shooting. Hundreds of innocent civilians were murdered in cold blood. The most gruesome part of their shooting spree was witnessed near Rambagh, a residential area on Airport road where they murdered a wedding party mercilessly during the night when they were returning with the bride and left the dead bodies scattered around the Rambagh Bridge. Because of rigor mortis, the dead bodies assumed grotesque shape. This in-human act of brutality caused a furore and the whole population was infuriated and seething with rage. They took the bodies in a procession raising slogan against India. When the procession reached near Palladium cinema where temporary Headquarters of volunteer force of the National Conference had been set up, Mohiuddin Kara, a cousin of Sadiq, who had become a hero during the Quit Kashmir Movement by his underground activities, during 1946 snatching a rifle from a volunteer, fired a few bursts in the air. Then he tried to instill fear of reprisals from the Indian Army in their hearts. Simultaneously he

assured the crowd that the guilty would be located and punished. But for his brazen act of treachery, the intensity of the frenzy and anti-India feelings would have spelt finish to the accession. The regiment met their deserts and not a single soldier remained alive. They particularly became targets of tribals who were vying with each other to kill these what they called "*Ballwala Kafir*" or hairy headed infidels.

Kara and Maulvi Saeed played yet another, what people in general called a treacherous role in 1965 when the student agitation spearheaded by Youth League was at its peak. Both of them had assured the Pak authorities that infiltrators if sent for guerrilla warfare would be fed, guided and hideouts provided to them. But when they did come, they betrayed them by disclosing their hideouts to the Indian Intelligence Agencies.

For obvious reasons the period from 1947 to 1953 has been left tenebrous. But this was both the darkest as well as the brightest chapter of the history of Kashmir. This was best of times for some and the worst of times for others. This period saw the introduction of relief measures for the general good of far-reaching socio-economic significance. This period also saw worst kind of repression let loose on poor masses and in particular on the intelligentsia, the educated and the youth. Such was the terror and fear generated during this period that tortures and atrocities of the Spanish inquisition pale into insignificance. A police officer by the name of Ganderbali was foisted on the people who used to devise such inhuman methods of torture, which would send waves of terror down the spine of unsuspecting victims. Hot iron would be pressed against vulnerable parts of the body of the victims, which left scars and wounds for life. People would be sent to prison on mere suspicion and Qadir Ganderbali saw to it that they were completely chastened. The Muslims in particular if suspected of having even sneaking sympathy with Pakistan were hounded out by police and C.I.D. and subjected to tortures beyond description. Unnatural offence was committed with young and innocent boys rounded up for raising pro-Pak slogans. A special force of goons known in ordinary life as "*Surwala*" (oeioke selling broken rice) persons making nocturnal

forays into houses for burglary and petty larceny "*Kuftan Fafeer*" in short the whole spectrum of what Shakespeare called ragamuffins of society was recruited to a Force called "Peace Brigade." They were paid an honorarium of 29 rupees and fifteen annas and hence dubbed as "29.15". The force was used for strong-arm methods and arm-twisting of detractors and dissenters of the regime.

The Ganderbali will live in the memory of his victims as perennial nightmare. This tyrannical man whose very name reviles abhorrence used to himself plant explosive devices near and around C.P.L (now known as A.L.C.) and detonate them with a view to rounding up unsuspecting and innocent people of the area and generating a wave of terror. Hundreds of persons were arrested accused of planting these bombs and for trumped up charges of sabotage. They were sent to prison without trial, tortured and released only when they were forced to act as informers. The Government of India was very pleased with him for these acts of brutality and bestiality; terrorism and inhuman behaviour unheard of in a civilised society and awarded him a President's Police Medal. The monster of a man, met his deserts in his lifetime. It was fated that his victims wailing and suffering should bring down wrath of God Almighty on him while he lived and retribution should visit him on this earth. It so happened that on Independence or Republic day every time when investiture ceremony was proposed to be held for the award, it rained heavily and the ceremony had to be cancelled. Later on, the medal was pinned on his rotten chest quietly and without any fanfare. This loathsome beast was ultimately floored by a fell disease which was not only painful but also led to rotting of his insides inwards and his body gave out a horrible and nauseating stench. He died in this condition. No one offered even *Namaz Janaza* to him and he was buried like an unclaimed dead body.

B.P.L. Bedi, a known Communist had settled in Kashmir with his wife Freda Bedi during this time as Sheikh's personal guest. He was advising Sheikh and his team as to how to organise the National Conference as a cadre based outfit patterned on communist commissars. It was Bedi who authored "*Naya Kashmir*" embodying

socio-economic programme and constitutional and political set up of the state. Accordingly a well organised chain of command was devised and set up consisting of Mohalla Committees, Halqa Committee and Central Committee. These committees kept the whole population falling in the respective areas of their operation under constant vigil and recalcitrant and dissenters hauled up and punished. Scores of incidents have been narrated by hapless people, victims of this tyranny, banished from the State and tortured beyond human endurance.

In the wake of the holocaust of partition, while the valley remained by and large unaffected, the Muslims in Jammu, the winter capital of the State, were massacred, their women folk gang-raped or abducted and their property looted or destroyed. Some of the refugees numbering several thousands from Jammu somehow managed to come to the valley where they were kept in camps. After sometime, they were loaded on to police trucks for onward, despatch to Pakistan. Some were killed en route to Pakistan at Samba, Mirran Sahib, etc. The convoys were organised by Sheikh Abdullah under his personal supervision. Krishen Dev Sethi, a highly enlightened member of the National Conference Party, progressive in outlook and unbiased and a genuine democrat has mentioned this sordid episode in his autobiography. He writes, "When I came to know about the despatch of Muslim refugees from Jammu to Pakistan I remonstrated with Sheikh Abdullah and warned him about their unpleasant memories that such a course would leave and also tarnish his image, besides changing the complexion of population of Jammu province of the State. Muslims formed over 50% of the population taken together immediately preceding the partition. He retorted, "Why should I care for them. They have never acknowledged me as their leader." This speaks volumes about Sheikh's vindictiveness and his callous attitude to human suffering. At the back of his mind, he knew that the helpless body of devastated Muslims posed a potential threat to his power base if they joined forces with pro-Pak groups in the valley, and that would spell end of his dream of becoming an absolute ruler of the State of Jammu & Kashmir.

When the tribals were knocking at the doors of Srinagar city (only 6 km away from the centre of Srinagar city) the Jammu Hindus, who were left in the lurch by Maharaja Hari Singh who fled at the dead of night (October, 47) along with treasures, some 28 tongawallas (horse drawn carts) volunteered to take some families to Jammu in their tongas. After braving the hazardous journey through the treacherous Banihal pass, the caravan of tongas reached Nagrota, a peripheral town of Jammu. The R.S.S. thugs were lying in wait there. As soon as the caravan reached an open space in the out-skirts of Nagrota, the caravan was ambushed, the tongawallas were brutally murdered, their tongas burnt to ashes and whatever little possessions the unfortunate tongawallas had were looted. No tears were shed on this grim tragedy by anyone in authority in the State or the Centre and the event was hushed up.

## CHAPTER XIV

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### LIFE AND WORKS OF SHEIKH ABDULLAH

Although Sheikh Abdullah had no pretensions to being of a philosophical bent of mind, he would often, when in an expansive and relaxed mood, hazard his opinion on various aspect of life, which I called random thoughts. Some of the examples are given below:

On Faith, he would often in his earliest public life begin his speeches with the following verse of Allama Iqbal:

*O: ye falcon prefer death to livelihood that thwarts your flights (to heaven)*

His favourite theme was "Faith in God and self confidence". He did live up to this dictum.

On past, he opined that the past shows us what we were, present represents what we are and guides us to shape our future in the light of experiences and lessons. We must, therefore, consider our past as a source of inspiration, for lessons to be drawn and for rectifying past mistakes and for charting a course for future, we must, however, not live in the past or be its prisoner. Once we do so, we will be never able to improve our future.

On public servants and public bosses, he would say that a good public servant ought to give advice, which is best according to his sights and leave the decision to the political bosses. Once a decision is made, the public servant should faithfully take it to the logical conclusion unless it impinges on his conscience or involves gross violation of rules or the laws of the land. A public servant must remember that a political boss has to contend with certain compulsions while in office:-

(a) Compulsions of the constituency, which returned him/her. He or she has to nurse the constituency with an eye on the future and meet urges and aspirations of his/her voters so that he /she comes up to their expectations. He/she has to be on the right side of the rank and file of the party and accommodate them as far as possible.

(b) Compulsions of office he /she holds, he /she has to maintain his/her dignity in office he/she holds and exercise powers within the reasonable bounds of do's and don'ts of the office. The office should not look like a sinecure for him/her.

When a Commission of Enquiry comprising Justice Sikri of the Supreme Court of India was appointed in the wake of the Rajouri Agitation to look into the grievances of regional imbalances, Sheikh Abdullah appointed unofficially a Committee of officers under the Chairmanship of Noor Mohammad, then Chief Secretary, to co-ordinate and process views from the people of the valley to be presented to the Commission. I was one of the members of the Committee. I missed to attend a meeting of the Committee one day. When the Sheikh asked me, why I could not attend it I said I had lot of work to do and missed the meeting. Then I added, "After all this is a labour of love for me and I can do it only when I have time to spare." On hearing this, the Sheikh flipped his top and roared "No! You are wrong; where larger interests of the community are at stake, it becomes work of worship and sacrosanct. You cannot take liberties with a work of this prime importance. This should be treated as my standing directive in all such cases."

Incidentally, it may also be mentioned that some of the members of his clan believed in the balance sheet of vices and virtues. If virtues outweighed vices, the path will be straight to paradise and the vice versa. If it showed parity, the God being merciful and compassionate, would ignore the slight tilt in the balance and forgive your sins/vices.

On power, he would say that power is a means to an end and not an end in itself. It is an instrument, which enables you to shape your destiny and to achieve your goals. Minions of the administration are nothing but tools for achieving your goals. So long as they are useful to you handle them with kid gloves but once they cease to be useful your administrative apparatus, discard them.

About youth, he would say that we must have youth who are healthy in body, mind and soul. These are the three pillars, which can ensure a balanced development of a healthy generation. By three pillars, he meant (a) physically well developed. (b) properly educated and (c) pious in thought and action.

On manpower development, he was of the opinion that the most important element in any scheme of things is the human factor. If the human factor fails, even the best-conceived schemes drawn up with meticulous care are apt to go awry and flounder how so ever an efficient system we may have evolved for their execution. Manpower development by intensive and extensive training assumes special significance in this context.

From the very beginning, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was enamoured of the idea of an Independent Kashmir with him as its sole arbiter. Soon, however, the idea became only a will o' the wisp. When constraints of office and restraints placed on his freedom of action and Praja Parishad agitation assumed virulent proportions. The dream receded much beyond his reach and became only a mirage. Subsequent to August 1953 coup d'état the Sheikh was completely disillusioned and disenchanted despite his chameleon somersaults and daring honeymooning with some world leaders whom he tried to sell the idea and enlist their support. But these vicissitudes in his life did not completely obliterate the desire and

the consuming passion to rule the land of his birth as an unquestioned and uncrowned monarch. When he accepted the Chief Ministership of the State following the Delhi Accord, the idea was resuscitated albeit with different dimensions and contours. When Pakistan declared Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, and other northern areas as centrally administered northern areas he was very upset and directed Yusuf Tairing to prepare well supported by historical documents showing these areas as part of Kashmir. He was till his end toying with and working for the idea of a Greater Kashmir comprising the valley including Kargil District, Muslim majority areas of Doda, Bhaderwah and Kishtwar and parts of Udhampur District namely Ramban, Batote, Gool Gulab Garh, Banihal and Poonch and Rajouri Districts of Jammu province with minor adjustments for reasons of topography.

It was with this objective in view that a special Division of R & B Department was created reviving and converting the old Mughal Road linking Rajouri District with Shopian of Pulwama District in the Valley into a permanent and all weather road. Similarly, work on construction of Daksum (in District Anantnag) Kishtwar road was started in right earnest. This road was to provide a link with Kishtwar, Doda and Bhaderwah. The Central Government was also asked to upgrade, improve, and realign the Batote-Doda road, which was subject to frequent landslides and resultant closure of the road for days on end.

While the road link between Daksum and Kishtwar was established and thrown open to traffic though subject to certain restrictions as the road had yet to be black topped and made all weather road, the Mughal road project had to be shelved as Defence Ministry objected to it on the ground of it being a security risk. With the death of the Sheikh the dream of a Greater Kashmir, has got consigned to the dustbin of history for the time being; who knows the project may get resurrected in the none too distant future.

During his first phase of Prime Ministership Sheikh Abdullah introduced welfare measures of far reaching socio-economic significance. This earned him the goodwill of the peasantry in

particular and common masses in general in that they freed them from the clutches of usurers, moneylenders and big landowners. In this context may be mentioned:-

1. The Distressed Debtors Relief Act.
2. The Restitution of Mortgaged Properties Act.
3. The Debt Conciliation Boards set up under Temporary stay of Realization of Debts, Ordinance;
4. The Big Landed Estates Abolition Act.
5. The Land Reforms Act. (Actually enacted during the second stint as Chief Minister). Under this law, expropriated land was transferred in proprietary rights to the actual tillers unless the landlords proved that land was in their self-cultivation.

Under the Big Landed Estates Abolition Act, all lands in excess of 182 kanals were expropriated without any compensation. These land reforms completely revolutionised the whole Agrarian set up. The landless peasantry became overnight owners of land. In addition to poverty alleviating measures, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah also introduced educational reforms changing the concept, content and structure of education in consonance with the needs and exigencies of the time: For the first time a script for Kashmiri language was evolved and introduced. It is a different thing if the script fell in desuetude.

Another dose of educational reforms was introduced on the recommendation of an Experts Committee under the Chairmanship of L.K.Jha, then Governor of the State. Details of this have already appeared in the press and need not be given here.

In the field of Administration, a unique experiment of "Single Line Administration" was made the basic objective of which was devolution of powers to the Districts and from the Districts to Blocks (a group of villages).

With the object of imparting a sense of belonging and participation to the people in the whole planning process from

plan formulation to execution and ensuring a balanced development of the various parts of the region, District Development Boards were constituted for each District composed of elected elements. (Legislators) and prominent citizens of the area under the chairmanship of the D.C. concerned who was designated for this purpose as the District Development Commissioner. Consistent with the principle of "Delegation of responsibility must be accompanied by delegation of authority/powers," a revised scheme of delegation was introduced which enabled the District Development Commissioner to formulate and sanction the execution of plan projects/schemes approved by the District Development Board up to the prescribed ceilings without reference to higher authorities.

The progress of annual plan schemes was reviewed by the Cabinet by turns at the District Headquarters itself. Thus, Government was taken to the doorsteps of the people and whole planning process was made need based.

Begum Abdullah being herself from a family of Gujjars, took keen interest in the improvement of their quality of life. A Board was set up on the pattern of District Development Boards. A special allocation was made in the plans for the economic improvement of these communities.

Attempts were made to change their nomadic character and make them sedentary when they could pursue traditional avocations. Well-designed colonies were carved out for their rehabilitation. The objectives were indeed laudable but selfish leaders of this community made the Boards as the stepping-stone for the advancement of their interests. Nor could the community change their centuries old habits.

Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah was offered a purse of half a million rupees by his admirers on his 75 birthday. He, however, declared that he had a life long ambition to set up an Institute, which would have all the super-specialities in the different departments of medical care with a complement of 500 beds. The people responded to this call enthusiastically and voluntarily made generous donations for the purpose. Big industrial houses,

charitable and philanthropic organisations as also individuals made handsome contributions to this cause.

The project was conceived and brought to fruition under a well thought out plan under an autonomous governing Board. The main objective was that the Institute should be able to provide patient care not otherwise available in the State and the people saved from expenses and time consumed in having the necessary treatment in Chandigarh or Delhi.

One day when I was sitting with Sheikh and discussing some official matters with him long before he was overtaken by illness, an admirer of his known for legal his acumen and an expert in legal drafting dropped in visibly excited. When Sheikh enquired what was in his bonnet that excited him, he placed a copy of the State constitution before him and drew his attention to sub-sec 2 of sec. 6 part III thereof.

For a proper appreciation of the implications of this provision, it is reproduced below-

"Any person who, before the 19<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1954, was a State Subject of class I or class II and who having migrated after the first day of March, 1947, to the territory now included in Pakistan, returns to the State under a permit for resettlement in the State or under the authority of any law made by the State Legislature shall, on such return, be a permanent resident of the State."

The law on the State subject was originally framed in June 1927 as will be clear from sub-sec: 3 ibid

"In this sec, the expression "State Subject of class I or of class II" shall have the same meaning as in State Notification No: 1-1-/q4 dated 20/4/1927 read with the State Notification NO: 14-L dated 27/6/1932."

The expert assured him that the State Legislature was fully competent to enact a law and the Government could frame rules under it to provide for return of people who migrated to Pakistan. The Sheikh was very happy and said, "let us give a jolt to the centre. Prepare a draft Bill which will be introduced in the Legislature as a

private members Bill." A draft Bill was accordingly prepared and introduced in the Legislature and passed. This unexpected development shook Delhi from its very foundations. Needless to add, it sent jitters throughout the bureaucracy, political circles in power and in opposition and caused a furore throughout India. Later development have been briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. The Act has yet to receive verdict of Supreme Court of India.

"Sheikh Abdullah's legacy to Kashmir," writes Marie D'Souza, "is the Hazratbal Mosque; its pre-eminence among all the valley's Mosques is due to a sacred relic it houses believed to be a single hair of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Hazratbal Mosque is situated on the banks of the Dal Lake, a poem in white marble; Sheikh Abdullah built the present mosque a dramatic departure from the traditional Kashmiri Mosques."

## CHAPTER XV

### EPILOGUE

History alone will judge what were the influences and motivations which forced Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to throw the lot of the people and the state with India despite pleadings by his close associates, admirers and Muslim intelligentsia to consider all pros and cons of all the alternatives before him.

Looking back analytically at the sequence of events preceding and following emergence of the two sovereign states of India and Pakistan on the world map, one can hazard a guess that the following were possibly the factors responsible for influencing his judgment. He strove every nerve to put an estoppel on the question of accession in the N.C. Convention held for the purpose, and overruled the arguments adduced by his colleagues, friends and associates for acting otherwise. It must be remembered in this context that Sheikh Abdullah had completely fallen a prey to the charms of the charismatic personality of Pt. Nehru and probably made fast commitments to him and closed his mind to all other influences the day Muslim Conference was converted into National Conference.

1. From the beginning, the Sheikh wished to be the unquestioned and sole leader of the people. He never wanted to share this position with any of his compeers. The one-track train

of thought was strengthened by Pt. Nehru who led him up the garden path by assuring him that the J&K would enjoy complete internal autonomy if it acceded to India when the sub-continent was freed from British Yoke.

2. Mr. Jinnah had faith in the British sense of justice and equity and adherence to the rule of law. He was satisfied that consistent with the principles of partition plan J&K being Muslim majority state would ipso facto form part of Pakistan more so because India would have, geographically speaking, and no access to the state. That being so, the Qaid-Azam did not take Sheikh Abdullah seriously and ignored him. Incidentally, I am told by an authoritative source, a contemporary of the Sheikh, that Qaide-Azam had an intense dislike for the Sheikh. When a group of Muslim youth called on him when he was on a visit to Srinagar, and expressed doubts about the intentions of the Sheikh, he remarked "Oh yes; that tall man who sings Quran and sells Quran." Possibly emissaries of Sheikh Abdullah namely G.M. Sadiq and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad who were deputed to discuss the question of accession with the leaders of Muslim league might have given a distorted and misleading version of their talks with them. A journalist whose name I have forgotten who was writing the history of the freedom struggle of Kashmiris told me (though there was no documentary evidence to support it) that the late Liaquat Ali Khan was prepared to guarantee greater and wider internal autonomy to the state if it decided to accede to it; and that he told them that he was prepared to sign on the dotted line if the emissaries could spell out the quantum and extent of autonomy they wished.

The Emissaries rushed back to Srinagar to apprise the Sheikh of this development. But he had gone to Delhi. They made a dash to Delhi and went to Pt. Ji's residence where the Sheikh was reported to be in a meeting with Pt. Ji, Vallabh Bhai Patel and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. Bakshi sent a Chit to the Sheikh giving the gist of their talks with Liaquat Ali Khan. On seeing this chit, Sheikh Abdullah smiled and passed on the chit to Pt. Nehru, who after glancing at it simply crushed it into a ball and threw

it into a dustbin. Alas, Qaide-Azam's faith in the British sense of justice proved misplaced, as he had not reckoned with the deliberate bungling by the Radcliff who offered Muslim majority areas of the Punjab to India on, so to say, a platter with a silver crest. Sheikh Abdullah being vindictive by nature saw an opportunity to hit back and hastened to welcome the decision of Maharaja Hari Singh to accede to India albeit pro-temp pending ascertainment of wishes of the people on restoration of normalcy in the state.

3. When India and Pakistan became a reality, pro-accession elements were at pains to convince Sheikh Abdullah that Pakistan, a country truncated geographically, militarily and administratively with scant resources to sustain it, would not last long and eventually merge once again with India. The Sheikh who had already a closed mind on this issue, believed these worst forebodings of the Prophets of doom.

Unlike Pt. Nehru, Sheikh Abdullah was not a visionary. He did not look beyond his nose. He believed more in dogmas than in visionary nuances, "A shallow man," wrote Emerson, "believes in luck." So Sheikh Abdullah like a Shallow man, believed in luck and assurances given by a man of the stature of Pt. Nehru.

During the last days of his life, he was smitten by remorse and mortification and such was the intensity of his sadness that he always appeared on pins and needles and wallowed like a tormented soul. Realisation of the gamble that failed to pay off had dawned on him but too late when things had gone beyond his control.

In fact, all this was disclosed to me and the Late Mir Tawoos, who was then Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir Division and was accompanying the Sheikh on the first leg of his tour towards Distt. Baramulla. Mir enjoyed full confidence of the Sheikh and took liberties with the Sheikh. He (Mir) knew all the weak and strong points of the Sheikh's character and would worm out his innermost thoughts, which in his normal frame of mind he would seldom share with others. The Sheikh was

reminiscing about his early days in politics and was in a very expansive mood. Mir seized on this opportunity and provoked the Sheikh to go down the memory lane and recount some interesting incidents relating to the period of his early association with Pt. Nehru. Although he did not say so in so many words the main burden of his outpourings was what is assumed above. No doubt, the Sheikh had genuine admiration for Pt. Nehru and his depth of vision; he never forgot or forgave the unkindest cut at his hands namely his dismissal and incarceration in August 1953. Mir asked the Sheikh bluntly, why he did not mention these important facts in his autobiography *Flames of Chinar*, to put the records straight and for the benefit of the posterity. He shook his head sadly and said that Nehru family particularly Indira Gandhi being temperamentally vindictive would not take kindly to these home truths and would make his life miserable.

4. Sheikh Abdullah who had an eye on the political and social scenario of the sub-continent, apprehended that Pakistan's political arena will be dominated by Nawabs, Jagirdars, Zamindars, Waderas, Rajas and Sardars known for their highhanded methods, and that they would swamp the whole valley. The internal autonomy assured by the Muslim League Leaders even if given on paper would ultimately prove a dead letter. Attempts will be made to grab land by those in power in Pak to create palaces for their delectation and the people would be yet again in a new yoke. A wise crack by late Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf Shah was often quoted by Pakistan watchers in Kashmir.

It is said that Mirwaiz was asked by a political bigwig if there was plebiscite in both parts of Kashmir-Azad Kashmir and Indian held Kashmir, what would be the result. The Mirwaiz paused for a moment then said, "In Azad Kashmir, there will be no vote for Pakistan and in the valley 100% people will vote for Pakistan." Then he explained the paradox thus, "In Azad Kashmir people have come to know you fully, while the people in the valley have not seen you in your true colours." This precisely was the belief of Sheikh Abdullah also.

The subsequent tale (of tragedy) has to be viewed in this backdrop. The negative results of this tale of tragedy would become evident if an impartial student of history delves deeper into the causes and effects of failure on political and economic fronts in the state despite billions of rupees pumped into the state by Delhi.

The Machiavellian doctrine of statecraft namely "to exercise the art of ruling without reference to morality" was in full play in the J&K ever since the state became a disputed territory. The state was unfortunately ruled without morality; morality was subordinated to political expediency. In the beginning, Delhi followed the axiom "wrangle not so that the people be not vexed." Kashmir was proudly projected as a show window of Indian secularism at least at the official level. But Kashmiris continued to be looked upon with suspicion. They were never trusted. The so-called internal autonomy of the state was an eye sore and a constant irritant for Hindu Youths of Jammu and Amritsar. The memory of Kashmiri Burqa-clad women is even now fresh in the minds of the people. They would taunt them as "Band Gobi (Cabbage)."

Sheikh Abdullah was never given rest or allowed to settle down by non Muslims of Jammu. A pernicious agitation by Jammu Praja Parishad "Peoples group of association" disturbances created by pro-Pak elements fomented, fanned and financed by Intelligence Agencies of India and Pakistan notably I.B. (Intelligence Bureau) and I.S.I. took much of his time. The Praja Parishad, the brainchild of Maharaja Hari Singh's camp followers never reconciled to the abolition of Dogra Rule and self-imposed exile of Maharaja. The party was dominated by elements inimical to Muslims as a whole. The lion, sans teeth, sans bite and reduced to a meek lamb was caught in a helpless situation.

On the socio-economic front, the story is still more dismal. Heavily subsidised rations bred a dangerous sense of somnobolence.

The people were systematically reduced to a state akin to "Lotus eaters" by implanting on their minds the concept of "fast buck with least effort" by successive regimes. To begin with, education was

made free from primary to university, which promoted only pursuit of Lord Macaulay's "Three Rs" at the cost of academic excellence. It encouraged aimless drift from primary to secondary and from secondary to post-secondary education without any pre-planned objective. The university and colleges became "clerk manufacturing concerns." They produced only drones who became square pegs in round holes in real life. This had a deleterious effect on the whole structure of society. The pyramidal edifices based on faulty foundations came crashing down in due course.

The only silver lining in this otherwise tale of dismay and distress was that the professional institutions, medical colleges and engineering college produced a good number of doctors and competent technocrats. But a saturation point was soon reached and jobs became scarce.

The state is the largest single employer but there was limit to openings in the government. Apart from causing brain drain pursuit of professional education produced technocrats far in excess of requirements. The excess manpower trained at considerable cost somehow or other had to be absorbed irrespective of the need for them. This led to besides cost escalation of projects, dichotomy of technical supervision and still large number of engineers and doctors remained unemployed.

On the non-professional front, educated unemployed roamed roads with nothing worthwhile to do. Some enterprising young persons who valued dignity of labour chose whatever avocations they could lay their hands on. Three fourths of Auto rickshaws and Taxis are managed and run by the educated un-employed most of whom were and are Graduates and even post-graduates. In Islamabad, Distt. Anantnag an M.A. in English literature became a vendor of smoked fish.

This readymade force eventually became the nucleus of freedom fighters.

It was in this situation that the new fangled idea of self-employment was brought. But the real objective of the scheme, namely to inculcate in the youth the "dignity of labour," was lost in

the welter of cash incentives, subsidies and soft loans. Cash incentives, subsidies and soft-loans were the prime concern and by and large, the educated unemployed hankered after these easy benefits losing sight of the otherwise far-reaching and real and long lasting gains that would have flown to the self-employed in the long run.

On the industrial front, no worthwhile attempt was made to make long-term productive investments. Nor was private sector encouraged in real terms to set up feasible enterprises. Here again they were doped with incentives and subsidies which became the prime concern rather than the viability of enterprises.

In this context it may be interesting to note that while Sheikh Abdullah was on a tour of Bangalore he was taken to two Industrial giants there BHEL (Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd) and BEL (Bharat Electronics Ltd.). He was informed that two industries provided employment to about 70,000 families.

On return to the state, the Sheikh wrote to Mrs. Gandhi P.M to consider as an adjunct or as a satellite or ancillary unit to BEL setting up of a unit for production of electronic goods to mitigate unemployment to some extent, which had assumed alarming proportions, and create an opening for a reasonable strength of available work force. It was reasoned that the valley was ideally suited for an electronics unit for:-

1. It had pollution-free atmosphere;
2. A large work force was readily available who because of their innate aptitude for imbibing skills for delicate operations could acquire necessary know-how and expertise much quicker;
3. Transportation costs would not be prohibitive because of long haulage as the finished product would be of low density and high value.

The communication on the subject did not evoke even acknowledgement let alone approval. It is true that apart from economic disincentives operating against Industrial ventures in

the valley, in general, such as lack of entrepreneurial skills, shyness of capital, long transport haulage (the nearest rail head was nearly 500 km away) and what is more non-existence of means of production and distribution or P+D \* M5 i.e., men, materials, money managerial skills, market considered sine qua non for any industrial venture. These were and are inhibiting factors in the way of industrialisation of the valley. The only enterprises that may have scope would be the ones based on locally available raw materials such as woodbased industries (joinery, furniture making etc) chemical based (resin and turpentine) silk based (silk yarn) and wool based (sufficient graded wool can be produced in the valley considering the tremendous amounts of meat consumed in the valley). They can be economically feasible and financially viable only if medium scale and most modern plants are set up. Timber is available in plenty despite merciless deforestation by unscrupulous forest lessees. Similarly, resin can be drawn from District Rajouri forests, which can sustain a medium scale industry for considerable time to come. Wool tops will, however, have to be imported and carpet making on which a large section of population is dependent could be sustained.

There are vast mineral deposits and according to Middle Miss, a British Mineralogist, workable deposits of bauxite, lignite, coal etc. if properly prospected by latest techniques and machines can very well sustain a number of mineral based Industries. This demands concentrated and devoted attention. The Ladakh region is also full of mineral deposits; and sapphire mines of Paddar Kishtwar are already known for purity etc. throughout the world.

The handicrafts even otherwise famous all over the world for their beauty, craftsmanship, and particularly the whole spectrum of 'objets d'art' created by deft and nimble fingers of the Kashmiri artisans with consummate skills perfected over the centuries, have a tremendous scope and can command world wide market. But that is dependent upon a special imaginative tourism promotion drive both intensive and extensive. Middle East especially the Gulf countries have a great potential. It has not been hitherto fully tapped. Special tourism promotion schemes can be thought of with accent

on the valley being socially and from religious point of view, congenial for tourists from the Gulf in particular and Arab world in general. Had the problem been tackled in this light, probably there would have been a different tale to tell.

The fruit industry occupied an important segment of States economy even before independence. There were numerous varieties of fruits to suit all palates and taste buds. The "Ambri" variety of apples was so much in demand that it constituted an essential part of continental breakfasts/dinners. Even two pieces of this variety of apple would fill the whole room with sweet scent and all pervading aroma. This rare variety was completely neglected as growing of the delicious variety, a quick growing species, was encouraged. When orchards of this variety flourished and brought some prosperity, some how or other and in a mysterious way, it was infected and infested with a disease known as scab, which completely devastated it. Then the industry was made heavily dependent on insecticides and fungicides manufactured by multinationals. This, however, could not stem the rot.

The major sources of income/revenue of the state have been (i) Tourism (ii) Handicrafts and (iii) Timber.

No serious attempt was made to encourage foreign tourism, which could have yielded rich dividends. While millions were spent on promoting less important places and deserts of Rajasthan, precious little was done to sell Kashmir, the "Eden of the East" and "a paradise on earth."

An enterprising young man went to Europe with a large stock of slides on Kashmir and on his own volition showed these colour transparencies to a cross-section of people collected by one of his friend settled in Europe. The audience were spellbound by the breathtaking beauty, and went into raptures over the feast of colour, majestic mountains and meadows and meandering brooks and transparent lakes and springs, abundance of game, big and small. They made anxious enquiries about Kashmir and in what part of the world it was. The land was unknown to Europe, although Tourism Department of the G.O.I have a chain of their offices in every part of Europe. They never effectively projected Kashmir and had neither the information nor any brochure on Kashmir in their vast inventory of Tourist literature. Similarly, the internal tourism

though increasing year after year did not have much of spread effect. It would mostly consist of conducted-package tours where each individual from the place of origin carried items of provisions and victuals.

On the illusory burgeoning tourists traffic, vast investments in the hotel industry were encouraged which ultimately became in fructuous and brought it tumbling down for a variety of reasons especially due to disturbed conditions in the Punjab.

Handicrafts were the sole survivors of this insidious and wrong perception of and unimaginative handling of the economy of the State, because of their abiding value for connoisseurs and lovers of arts and crafts.

The state started a crash program of training youth in carpet weaving. Weavers became available in abundance and carpet-weaving looms were installed in every hut and house in rural areas. Demand picked up especially in export markets. All sorts of carpetbaggers with unearned wealth joined the race for earning more easy money.

Exports reached the peak and brought all-round prosperity, as its spread effects were far-reaching. It is important to note here that foreign buyers prefer to strike deals on deferred payment (credit) basis because of high cost involved in ordered shipments. Suddenly one fine morning all incentives were withdrawn and credit sales were stopped. This had a crippling effect on the trade.

A nelson's eye was turned to the degradation of environment. Forests were mercilessly devastated by unscrupulous lessees enjoying patronage of corrupt politicians and bureaucrats depriving the valley of its vegetative cover. This disturbed the ecological balances and eco-system of the valley, which is well nigh impossible to rectify now. Concurrently, timber girdles substituted by iron girdles by the Indian Railways gave a setback to the timber trade. Paramilitary forces stationed in forest areas felled trees illegally in their hundreds denuding the areas mercilessly and transported the timber in Army trucks without any let or hindrance. No doubt, later on, the instructions of army high command efforts were made to

plant trees for purposes of regenerating the denuded areas, but it would take ages to cover these areas to restore their pristine glory.

Encouragement to depend on subsidies, incentives and soft loans, lack of entrepreneurial skills, shyness of capital combined to stultify the whole gamut of productive enterprises, which fell out sooner than started.

Reeling of silk and manufacture of silk fabrics was state monopoly and brought sizeable revenue to the state during pre-independence era. According to a rough estimate, about two and a half million families drew their sustenance from this industry. The quality of Kashmir silk was considered the best compared to other qualities of silk producing countries. The fabrics manufactures from Kashmir silk fetched ready markets and were in great demand. The silk industry also promoted the handloom silk, which commanded a vast market.

It was indeed unfortunate that the state was not able to produce disease-free silkworm seed. A number of experiments were made on the advice of the Central Silk Institute of Research a subsidiary of the Central Silk Board, still production of parent seed became a far cry. Then silkworm seed was imported from various sources-Korea, Japan, Italy etc. the cocoons produced from this seed were found infected with a disease known as pebrine and all other diseases. Fall in affected manufacture of fabrics both machine made and hand made and resulted in under-employment of skilled work force. The silk industry suffered heavy losses. Farmers who in the pre-partition days used to queue up for hours together for receiving silkworm seed for rearing of cocoons, switched over to other more gainful employment. This almost crippled the industry, which these days has probably become moribund.

This then was the picture and the scenario that had emerged even after four decades of planning and rule of thumb under which the wheels of Government were made to grind but alas at a snails pace.

It was indeed equally unfortunate that Government of India bureaucrats never cared to formulate a pragmatic, well-defined and clear-cut policy in regard to Kashmir, which could have guided the political bosses to deal with various situations. Whatever policy there was, it was characterised by ad-hocism. The result was that instead of finding long-term solutions to the problems besetting the people, the powers that be only re-acted to various emerging situations. They only touched the tip of the iceberg not the core thereof.

Ms. Tavleen Singh, an intrepid Indian journalist, known for her bold investigative journalism has admirably summed up the dithering but stoic and callous approach to Kashmir problem by Indian policy makers in her piece entitled "what is a few lives, if shrine can be saved?" which appeared in the Indian Express. Is reproduced below S.M.A was not far wrong when he declared more in anguish than in anger that the "people of J&K considered themselves strangers in their own land whom Indian policy makers treat as a part of the landscape."

"If only Kashmir did not have any Kashmiris in it the Government of India could have solved the problem long ago. It has, despite what the BJP thinks, a clear, coherent policy on Kashmir and the buildings in it are far more important than the people are. The people are, in fact, expendable and if by some miracle, a cloud of poison gas wiped them out altogether then so much the better. The best recent example of this policy in action is, of course, the Hazratbal crisis. The objective of the siege was to save the mosque and its sacred relic and nothing else mattered. Not the people inside the shrine and not those in the rest of the valley. So much so, that when some interfering Kashmiri lawyers went to court to demand that the people inside the shrine be given food, clothing and water the new Chief Justice, J&K objected on the grounds that there was no guarantee that the militants inside might not also get their share.

The Kashmiri people have, in fact, become a terrible irritant. Half the Indian army is stationed in the valley to protect them from the evil designs of Pak-trained militants and what do they do? They constantly take to the streets and yell, "Indian dogs go back" at our brave troops.

Our security forces are, after all, only human. So, when they hear disgusting slogans of this kind, their blood boils so they shoot. And, then these wretched Kashmiris have the nerve to go and get killed. Look, what happened in Bijbehara. I mean what business did half the town have to come out in a massive demonstration against the Hazratbal siege? Did they not realise that the purpose of the siege was to protect the sacred relic? In any case, the procession came onto the main national highway when the people had been specifically warned that no marches would be allowed to Hazratbal.

So, what choice did the BSF have but to put to fire the vast crowd from both sides? Fifty people died and at least another hundred were injured. Many of them were women and children but when I visited Srinagar's Bone and Joint Hospital to interview the injured. I found that BSF had been quite humane. They had tried not to kill but to maim. Most of the injured will not die although many, including a few teenage boys, will lose a leg or two but did they appreciate this? Not at all. Even in the hospital wards they shouted anti-India slogans and insisted on telling reporters that our brave security forces were 'brutes' for firing at unarmed people. How ungrateful can you get?

In Srinagar it was the same story. There was total curfew last Friday and it was strictly imposed. When our BSF and CRPF jawans saw people peering out of windows and doorways they made their intentions clear, "get inside you swine" we heard them shout, "Otherwise you will be beaten up like never before." "Kheench key jab danda paday ga phir pata lagega." It was only when they still insisted on coming out in protest against the siege that teargas and bullets were used. What else could our brave boys have done? So, a few innocent people got killed, so what? The shrine was still intact; was that not good enough? And, are we not doing all this only for the sake of these miserable Kashmiris? Why can they not understand how much we really love them?

The Hazratbal siege would have been a huge success. Just as Operation Black Thunder was, if it had not been for these stupid Kashmiris and their inability to understand that we are really there to protect them from the militants.

The other reason why we are finding it hard to solve the Kashmir problem is the constant interference by the foreign press. What business did such large number of foreign correspondents have to turn up in Srinagar? Not only did they turn up but also they actually insisted that they had the right to wander around the city?

When they were denied curfew passes for reasons of their own safety they forced their way out of the Ahdoo's Hotel, where they had been confined, and started marching towards "downtown" Srinagar where all the protests were taking place. The authorities had no choice but to bundle them into buses and take them on a tour to prove that the situation was tense but under control.

But, because the Kashmiris are so keen to 'internationalise' the problem they started pouring out of their houses as soon as they saw foreign TV crews and, for their benefit, they waved their arms about and shouted, "Hum kya chahtey? Azadi." Srinagar's Senior Superintendent of Police, Shri Ram Lubhaya, who had been kind enough to accompany us tried to explain, over the sound of the teargas guns, that the protests were only for our benefit but these foreign correspondents never listen.

At the press briefing, in the afternoon, they insisted on asking insulting question about casualties and human rights abuses. "How many killed today?", "None," smiled Additional Chief Secretary (Home), Mehmood-ur-Rehman. "No casualties at all except for one person who was injured." But these foreign correspondents are like terriers once they get their teeth into something they hang on to the bitter end.

"Oh yeah." They sneered, and how many electric shocks today, how many roller treatments? Can you believe this? Can you believe that they would dare to be so offensive about methods that have become necessary to bring these treacherous Kahsmiris to heel? How can we implement our Kashmir policy without the help of interrogation centres like Papa I and Papa 2? Would those Kashmiris listen to us unless they were persuaded to with a little bit of torture? Electric shocks after all, do not kill; they merely leave a few scars, which fall off in no time. But, these foreign correspondents can think of nothing but human rights. Human rights, indeed, why

don't they go to Bosnia to see what human rights violations really are?

Something that has become necessary for our Kashmir policy to succeed, is total press censorship. The BBC and all other foreign television networks must be banned for constantly referring Indian administered Kashmir. Kashmir is an integral part of India and will always be. We cannot help if the Kashmiris have a problem with that.

Every time I write about Kashmir, I get angry letters from 'Patriotic, right thinking Indian.' "I hope this piece meets with their total approval."

It is not, therefore, surprising that the Kashmiri youth born, bred and brought up in this none too happy atmosphere felt restive and responded to the clarion call of freedom fighters with such an alacrity and intensity that has astounded all Kashmir watchers. What followed constitutes a painful chapter of Kashmir's contemporary history.

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**APPENDIX I**

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**MARTYDOM OF  
MAQBOOL BHAT**

Late Maqbool Bhat, who was languishing in the Central Jail, Srinagar for the alleged murder of an Intelligence man, which lacked any concrete or circumstantial evidence, was shifted to Tihar Jail, Delhi, a high security prison, on the ground of being a security risk. He was sentenced to death by the district and Sessions Judge, N.K Ganjoo who was killed by Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front in 1990. Earlier also attempts were made on his life. We in the home Department every now and then received hand written posters through the Intelligence Agencies threatening dire consequences if anything happened to Maqbool Bhat.

The IB was aware of this. The Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front activists had become a little more aggressive and oneday hand written posters were found pasted on walls, electric poles, etc, threatening that the National Highway and Jawahar Tunnel would be blasted. This sent panic waves in the Home Ministry and its intelligence wings, wireless messages flooded the Home Department making anxious enquiries about the arrangement the State had thought of to meet this threat. Matters came to a head when Mahtre of the Indian High Commission in London was murdered allegedly by Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front. The IB apprehending that

Maqbool Bhat in jail could prove more serious danger than out of prison in sheer panic advised his petition being rejected by President of India and that his death sentence ought to be confirmed and carried out. One afternoon when I was with Mir Nassurullah, Chief Secretary, he received a telephone call from the Home Ministry. He was being advised that a senior officer of the Home Ministry was being flown by a special plane of B.S.F. to get black warrant (Death sentence) for Maqbool Bhat and that arrangements should be made to secure it post-haste from the sessions court. I distinctly remember the words Mir Nasrullah used while talking to the caller on phone. He said rather in a harsh tone "I am nobody's flunkey, why send a Home Ministry officer, what for I am here?"

Anyway, next morning a Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry came and was lodged in the State Guest House. He would ring up Mir Nasrullah, Chief Secretary every half an hour in order to know the progress in the matter. Mir Nasrullah was left with no choice but to ask the Law Secretary to go to the court and have the needful done quickly. The Law Secretary almost sat over the head of the judge, Thakur Hari Singh, got the black warrant and rushed it to the Joint Secretary who left the same evening for Delhi. After a few days, we heard that Maqbool Bhat was hanged in Tihar Jail. This Martyrdom of the intrepid, courageous and dare-devil type of founder of Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front galvanised the rank and file of the front who openly made daring operations, bombs started exploding here, there and everywhere at regular intervals.

The hanging of Maqbool Bhat was considered by the common people as a revenge killing militating against the principles of justice and equity. The martyrdom of Maqbool Bhat of Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front gave a new momentum to the activities of the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front and militancy.

## APPENDIX II

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### TOUR TO IRAQ

Noori Al Faisal, Minister for Religious Affairs and Auqaf, Government of Iraq, extended an invitation to Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and his family to pay an official visit to Iraq sometime in 1980. Obviously, his reputation had travelled beyond national frontiers and especially in Muslim countries. Actually, he had delivered an address in Jeddah in late fifties which created quite an impression on the gathering. The Sheikh was somewhat hesitant to accept the invitation for fear of creating misgivings in the minds of central leaders who might impute ulterior motives to it. His hobnobbing with world leaders none too friendly to India during the years he was out of power had brought him nothing but long periods of imprisonment. Be that as it may, the pressures from his family members were too much, and he could not resist it for long. Acceptance was conveyed to the Government of Iraq. Fortunately, the Government of India agreed presumably they did not wish to displease freshly tamed lion without teeth.

Preparations were accordingly made for the tour. An itinerary was drawn up in consultation with Iraq Embassy officials. Elaborate project profiles were drawn up by us and areas identified where Iraq through either Government or private enterprise could consider

equity participation in financially viable and technically feasible projects.

The Sheikh however could not muster enough courage to discuss participation of Iraqi Government in joint ventures, as prior clearance of Government of India had not been secured for it. The Iraqi Government placed almost the whole first class area of a 747 Jumbo Jet at the disposal of the Delegation. I was also included in the Delegation. At the Bagdad Airport, a warm and enthusiastic welcome was accorded to the delegation. All the high ups of the Government were there to receive the delegation. The Sheikh also briefly spoke to the press in an impromptu press conference but in ever guarded manner.

The delegation was lodged in Jadria Palace and accorded the same protocol as to Heads of States. A large fleet of limousines was placed at the disposal of the delegation. Whenever the motorcade of the delegation would leave for any city or town, it was heralded by motorcycle outriders and pilot cars wailing sirens. In short, the delegation was feted beyond expectations. Visits were arranged to all holy cities such as Najaf, Karbala, Basra, Kuifa etc. At each place where the delegation went, almost the whole population turned out to welcome the Delegation and the Governor of the place read welcome address followed by sumptuous lunches. Visits were also arranged to places of historical-cum-religious interest such as Archaeological finds of Babylonian civilisation, ruins of palaces of Cyrus, Suliman Park, and Alhala etc. At every place, the Delegation was received with open arms and entertained lavishly in the true Arab traditional hospitality.

Arrangements were also made for the delegation for performing umrah. An interesting incident took place at the Jeddah Airport; the Governor of Jeddah had personally come to receive the delegation and insisted that the Sheikh and his entourage would be the guests of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Ambassador of Iraq who was also at the Airport to receive the delegation was apologetic and pleased that the delegation might continue to be the guests of the Iraqi Government. But the Governor of Jeddah was adamant that as

the delegation was on the soil of Saudi Arabia they should have the privilege of playing host to them. This interesting debate continued for about 25 minutes and ultimately the decision was left to the Sheikh.

Sheikh Abdullah smilingly clinched the controversy by saying that since the members of the delegation were guests of the Government of Iraq right from Delhi, it was only fair that they were given the privilege of playing hosts to them till the conclusion of the tour. The Governor of Jeddah grudgingly accepted the verdict. But even so, a full floor of a leading five star hotel was booked by the Governor for the delegation and left the choice to Sheikh saying if he so wished the delegation could shift to that hotel. After performing umrah the delegation returned to Bagdad and was lodged in the Hotel Rashidia (newly constructed) for delegates to some international conference then proposed to be held at Bagdad but later abandoned due to tension on the border between Iraq and Iran. The Jadaria Palace was occupied by the Prime Minister of Kuwait. After a stay of a couple of days more in Bagdad the delegation returned to Delhi in a 747 Jumbo Jet of Iraq Airways.

It will be interesting to note another incident, which happened outside the Mecca Muazema. An official photographer had accompanied the delegation to keep a photographic record of the visit. After performing umrah, all of us came out and wanted to have a photograph taken of the members of the delegation in "Ahram". While a still photograph was taken and the photographer, Ghulam Nabi Shah of the State Information Department, was preparing to take a shot by a movie camera, two or three Arabs, locally known as Muttawa, pounced on Shah, snatched the movie camera and were about to smash it when Shah, with tears in his eyes, pleaded that he was not aware that photographs/ movie shots were not allowed in front of the "Kaaba". Then he added that it was a delegation headed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

On hearing this, Muttawas deprecated it all the more saying "Tauba Tauba, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and taking photographs." Anyway, the Indian Embassy official who was acting

as Liaison Officer managed to get back the movie camera. A documentary was also prepared of the visit from the beginning to end and released for public viewing under the title *Ziarat*. This made quite an impression and sky rocketed the stock of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. I also drafted a travelogue of the visit on behalf of the Sheikh which *Srinagar Times* a local Urdu newspaper, brought out in a special supplement.

The supplement sold like hot cakes. Later the Information Department also brought out a special supplement in offset print and glazed paper profusely interspersed with photographs of the visit. This had wide circulation and nearly 10,000 copies were sold within a week. Both supplements made hefty gains. The positive outcome of the visit was:

- (a) It boosted the image of Sheikh Abdullah throughout the Arab World as a great leader of Muslims;
- (b) locally the sagging reputation of the Sheikh got a shot in the arm and an under - pinning though eventually it collapsed in the wake of some stern measures taken by the Government to crush violent protests and agitations launched by the youth on account of certain incidents touching on religious susceptibilities.

## APPENDIX III

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### **SYNDICATE AND INDICATE**

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad accepted the Integration of services and financial integration under certain internal compulsions much against his wishes. A couple of officers were deputed by the Centre on the initial constitution of I.A.S. (J&K Cadre). He managed to avoid induction of more officers from the Centre till he demitted the office of the Prime Minister, Jammu & Kashmir.

The IAS, which was the successor to the ICS, of the British time, differed not in content but only in details from ICS and continued to be looked upon as a steel frame despite its downward swing owing to immoral surrender by most of its members in the name of committed bureaucracy. The ostensible objective of the service was:

- (a) To pave way for national integration and for ensuring mobility of talent vertically and horizontally;
- (b) To provide unbiased, efficient and impartial service insulated against extraneous influences and pressures from political and other interest groups.

While the underlying principles might have been dictated by the exigencies of the time, it failed in achieving these otherwise laudable objectives in J&K for the following reasons:

- i) The quota fixed for J&K cadre was 50% by promotion and 50% by deputation from the central quota. Regrettably some of the officers deputed under the central deputation quota not having gone through the mill and being direct recruits to the service suffered from colonial hangover; the foundational training being such. They swaggered about like viceroys and considered themselves as superior to the local officers. They thought they were in a colony and their assignment to J&K was meant to help perpetuate central rule;
- ii) They being alien to the culture, language, customs and history of J&K state became misfits and proved square pegs in round holes;
- iii) The facilities and amenities available to them and which were provided for the asking by the ever obliging local officers either out of fear or for currying their favour bloated their heads and they behaved like lords among their "puny" subjects;
- iv) By and large, local officers purely for their ethnic, cultural and social affinity with the population were normally preferred for district posting. This was not to the liking of the direct recruits who yearned for such posting for vast authority inherent in such a posting and perks attached to it;
- v) At one point of time it so happened that eight top slots in the Judicial, Police and Administrative hierarchy were occupied by local Muslim officers; namely:

1. Mufti Baha-ud-Din

Chief Justice, J&K High Court.

A legal and constitutional luminary whose judgments on various criminal, civil and constitutional cases have been quoted in AIRS.

2. Noor Mohammad

#### IAS, Chief Secretary

An extraordinarily intelligent officer who created a forceful impact on civil services as a whole. He rose to the highest slot in the administrative hierarchy by sheer dint of his efficiency, mastery over the English language and complete grasp of administrative nuances. He had passed after M.SC, the competitive examination of K.A.S. with distinction and was appointed as Secretary on his induction to IAS in 1952-1953

3. Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah

IPS, Director General Police

Professionally a highly competent policeman who made a significant and signal contribution in the re-organisation and restructuring of the police administration in the state.

4. Mufti Mohammad Maqbool,

IAS, Addl. Chief Secretary & Planning Commissioner.

The officer spent more than a decade at the centre on various important positions before he was inducted in the State Cadre.

5. Sheikh Ghulam Rasool

IAS, Secretary General Department

A brilliant officer, quick at the up take and a genius in solving intricate and complex administrative matters. He brought lustre wherever posted and proved his mettle as a planner and administrator.

6. Munshi Mohammad Amin

IAS, Home Secretary

A competent officer with vast administrative experience.

7. Ghulam Shah.

IAS, Law Secretary

A legal and constitutional expert who made a mark in legal drafting. His dissertation on the expression "May" earned him kudos from the Central Law Ministry where he was doing a stint in

legal drafting. He had done his LLM from Stanford University USA. Most of the criminal and civil laws in the State were drafted by him during his tenure as Law Secretary for over two decades.

#### 8. Ghulam Ahmad

IAS, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister, Secretary Information, Fisheries, Parks & Gardens, Hospitality, Protocol, Auqaf, and Hajj Affairs). (The author)

This setup according to the perception and perspective of the Home Ministry of India was not conducive to Central interests, and they were out to demolish it.

The hardliner from Central deputation quota set in motion a chain of intrigues and circulated baseless and unfounded canards against local officers to besmear their reputation and tarnish their image. The obstreperous officers ganged up to create a lot of noise and to denigrate and demoralise local officers.

An orchestrated campaign was launched against them through the Delhi English press. The press corps of the English press based in J&K was dominated by one particular community. Needless to mention, the local officers at the helm of administration secured the positions in their own right and by virtue of their seniority and efficiency and not as a matter of favour. The internal jealousies in the service vitiated the whole atmosphere and brought about a polarisation in the two categories of officers.

It is true that during the time of Syed Mir Qasim the local officers would often meet and exchange views on matters of mutual interest and generally to devise means to clear the name of local officers and to save them from calumny and besmear campaign launched by the gang. This was dubbed as syndicate and C.M / Cabinet set rumours afloat that it was this syndicate, which settled all administrative issues before they were even considered.

The central officers formed their own association though unofficially which local officers called "Indicate".

The details of the doves and hawks in this category of officers are given below:

1. R.K.Takar, IAS (A knickerwalla known member of R.S.S)

2. Ashok Jaitly, IAS (A highly educated, enlightened officer with a progressive outlook. In Janta Rule at the centre, he was Special Assistant to George Fernandez, which incurred him the wrath of Home Ministry. When Indira Gandhi came back to power, he was tossed from pillar to post for quite sometime).

3. Wajahat Habibullah, IAS (A cultured officer belonging to an illustrious family (Dove))

4. Jaleel Ahmad Khan, IAS (A fence sitter).

5. Ashok Kumar IAS, (Belonging to an illustrious family known for their emancipated out look).

6. Mahmood-r-Rehman, IAS (He belongs to a nationalist family of UP. He married the daughter of a very senior local officer presumably to ensure his acceptability as an honourable member of Kashmiri society; unfortunately, he became a tool in the hands of the disgruntled direct recruits and unwittingly set in motion a vicious campaign and calumny against local officers. May be, he also prevailed upon the young Chief Minister (Farooq Abdullah) to cut them to size which could open up doors for direct recruits for advancement of their career).

7. S.D.Singh (Probably the only officer the in whole bunch of direct recruits who had picked up a smattering of Kashmiri language. He could carry on conversation in Kashmiri, though with a marked accent).

There were other scores of Junior and Senior IAS officers who however, did not create any appreciable impact.

1. Amar Kapoor, IPS

Suave, sweet of tongue, mild mannered and a persuasive talker, Amar Kapoor was alleged and rumoured to be indulging in many unsavoury and unethical acts quite unbecoming of an officer of his rank and calibre. He has since passed away in tragic circumstances. His detractors say that he met poetic justice.

2. M.N. Saberwal. IPS.

A polished gentleman, well read and courteous to a fault. He refused to fall in the net of the "Gang".

### 3. Veerana Aivalli, IPS

An officer lacking in initiative and courage. He always sought sheltered postings. He acted like a hound with his leash in the hands of Mehmood-r-Rehman and Farooq Abdullah. He later managed his posting as Vigilance Commissioner. And set him upon local Senior Officers to harass them and involve them in imaginary cases based on trumped up charges. But as the saying goes, "Untruths have no foundation and collapse like a house of cards".

This groupism, jealousy, and factional fighting in the IAS was a contributory factor for the dissatisfaction in the service in particular and people at large in general.

## APPENDIX IV

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### **LAST WILL OF SHEIKH MOHAMMAD ABDULLAH**

A few days before his death when Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's life was hanging in balance, apprehensions were expressed both in official and private circles that in the absence of any clear directives to the party as to the course of action they ought to take after his death, there would be complete chaos and confusion and saboteurs and agents provocateurs would be happy to fish in troubled waters and create a situation which could only lead to bloodshed. I hit upon an idea that we might prepare a statement projecting it as his last will and exhorting the people to carry forward the mission of National Conference, which was not only an organisation but also a movement. I called my Deputy, Yaseen Baig, an able and renowned writer of prose and verse, two days before the death of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to draft such a statement on the lines indicated to him. He drafted the statement in such a forceful and emotion packed language that it seemed poetry in prose. I could not get an opportunity to get it signed by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as he was getting frequent angina shocks.

I showed the statement to Farooq also and he appreciated it. Sheikh could not, however, sign it before his death. I had a signature

stamp of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's signatures prepared earlier, which was in custody of the General Manager Government Press, Srinagar. I called Mr. Sharma, the General Manager of the Press, and advised him to affix the stamp on the statement and have sufficient number of copies printed for circulation on the day of his funeral procession. Mr. Sharma rose to the occasion and overnight printed the required number of copies, which were then widely circulated to the people. This then is the truth of the "Last will" of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, captioned in Urdu, Akhari wasiyat.

## APPENDIX V

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### **GOVERNORS OF THE STATE**

The following were the persons who donned gubernatorial mantle from time to time in the State:

- (1) Bagwan Sahay: The first Governor assigned to the State after the Head of State was renamed as such instead of Sadar-i-Riyasat. Late Mr. Sahay was highly cultured person, polite, courteous and deeply interested in the welfare of the State.
- (2) L.K.Jha: His contributions in various fields were indeed signal, which made a lasting impression on the minds of the people. In fact, his and that of his wife Mekhala Jha's names became household name throughout the length and breadth of the State.
- (3) B.K.Nehru: Highly enlightened, cultured, learned and emancipated person who brought lustre to the office of Governor. He genuinely in democratic traditions and freedom of speech and expression. Because of frequent troubles and incidents of violence, preventive detention law was resorted to every now and then. A large number of youth in particular and people in general were detained without trial. Copies of detention orders were required to be submitted to the Governor to keep him informed about the law and order situation in the state. He had retained a large bunch of

detention orders which otherwise had to be returned to the Chief Secretary. One day he summoned me (I was functioning as Home Secretary then) and Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah, D.G. Police, to his chambers for a chat. After treating us to a cup of tea followed by delicious shami kebabs and offering me a cigarette of his own brand, he mildly enquired about the number of detenues we had in different places of detention. When he learnt that more than 500 persons were in detention without trial, he lost his cool.

He then gave us a sermon on freedom of expression, value of individual liberty, democratic principles and advised us that we should immediately set free all detenues except those against whom there was sufficient evidence to warrant preventive detention. He gave a long discourse on modern concept of incarceration, which in the changed times laid greater stress on reformative rather than punitive measures. All in all a loveable person who personified, the best of Nehru traditions.

(4) Jag Mohan: In his first stints as Governor, he became a darling of the masses by his hard work, quick decisions, even handed justice and abiding interest in development work. No wonder, Hamidullah Khan, Divisional Commissioner, of Kashmir Division then (one of his favourite officers) summed up his popularity thus;

"If there were elections now, and two ballot boxes were placed side by side in the name of Jag Mohan and his opponent, Jag Mohan's box will be filled by votes to the brim, and his opponent's box will be thrown in the gutter."

When for the second time, he was installed as Governor of the State in the wake of troubles created by secessionists, he acted differently and wished to rule with an iron rod and in the process trampled under foot all norms of decency in a civilised society. His admirers justify his stern actions on the ground that the motivating factor was patriotic fervour and deep love for his country. But then, should this condone atrocious actions which earned him the nickname of "Jag Wattul" (Jag Mohan, the scavenger) and "Jag Qasai" (Jag Mohan, the butcher).

#### Mr. Jag Mohan's Frozen Turbulence

Mr. Jag Mohan in his book My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir has not depicted certain events in their true and real perspective. His book is at best an "Apologia" for what he did as Governor of Jammu & Kashmir State. While he has recounted its history, by and large, faithfully more because contemporary or ancient history not lost in the mists of the hoary past can neither be distorted nor mirrored from tainted glasses. But there are certain incidents, which he has tried rather lamely to justify on fallacious arguments. I will take only one incident and that is an exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from the valley. He has more than once challenged to prove that it was not he who forced them to move out of the valley but the threat of militants. He has repeatedly asked the persons accusing him of forcing them out of the valley to produce the truck registration numbers, which were provided to various families of the community to facilitate their exit. In the first place, no one was aware that Jag Mohan was going to engineer their exit from the valley en masse for ulterior motives. Secondly, the move was so sudden that everyone in the valley was taken by surprise. There are a number of families who agreed to move out much against their wishes only because they were pressurised to do so through the police. A few families, for instance, in Jawahar Nagar colony, took leave of their Muslim neighbours with tears in their eyes. I was myself a witness to these heart-rending scenes.







