

Sunday Tribune-Review

©Tribune-Review Publishing Co. 1990

VOL. 102 NO. 133
13 SECTIONS, 164 PAGES

WORTHY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
JUNE 17, 1990

★ 1.05 BY MOTOR ROU

Kashmir's Hindus: Minority people in a troubled land

By Richard Robbins

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Vijay Sazawal is worried that he will never see his native Kashmir again, and that his "people," the tiny Kashmir Hindu population, will soon be scattered to the four corners of the globe — so much so that as a people they will cease to exist.

"I cannot tell you how worried I am," Sazawal said, sitting in the living room of his home in the Chestnut Hills Farm development, north of Greensburg. "I cannot even explain to Indian Hindus how I feel."

Kashmir's distress is cause for worldwide concern. A recent headline in *The Washington Post* screamed "Asia's Nuclear Nightmare." The story detailed the political and cultural crisis gripping Kashmir, an Indian state militarily divided between Hindu India and Moslem Pakistan. Some U.S. security analysts fear that in the event of hostilities between the two countries — enemies since independence in 1947 — one or the other will resort to nuclear weapons.

Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, has surmised that "if fighting does erupt between India and Pakistan (over Kashmir) each side must assume that the other will deploy and possibly use an atomic bomb. ... No one knows how to prevent the next Indio-Pakistan border conflict from becoming atomic."

Indian Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh has told his people to be "psychologically prepared" for war. Benazir Bhutto of

Pakistan has threatened a thousand-year struggle.

The next few months may very well determine peace or war. Already hundreds have died, mostly Moslems in clashes with Indian security forces.

Kashmir Hindus, numbering 100,000 out of a total Kashmir population of 8 million, have also died, but most — an estimated 90 percent — have fled south into India. Reduced to living in refugee camps, Kashmir Hindus face a bleak future: unwanted in the land in their birth, misunderstood in India.

Sazawal, manager of the defense materials programs at the Waltz Mill Westinghouse Electric plant and a naturalized U.S. citi-

zen since 1984, said Kashmir Hindus living outside of Kashmir and India have raised approximately \$60,000 for refugee relief.

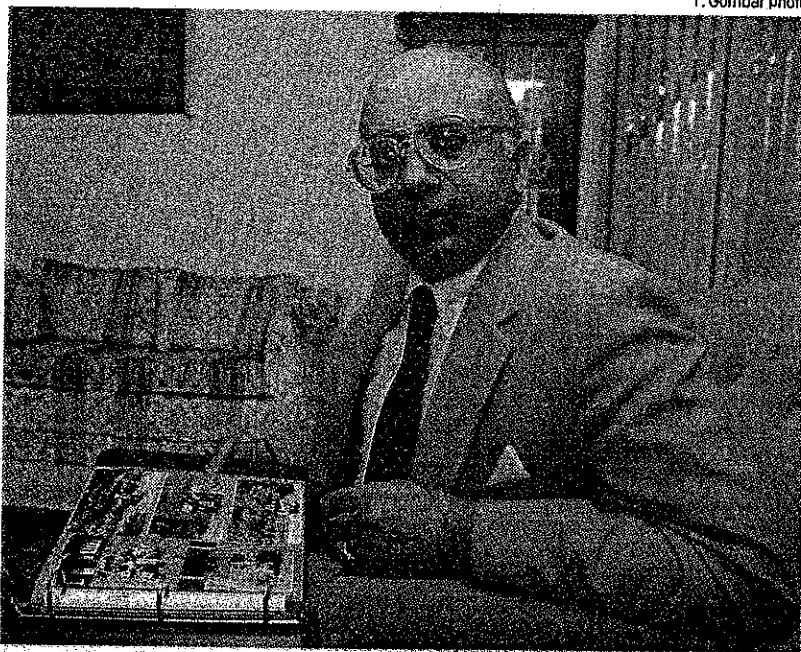
"It makes my heart sick to see these photographs," Sazawal said, opening to a magazine with a picture of Kashmirians crowded into a camp.

Sazawal is concerned that his parents, still living on the outskirts of Srinagar, the capital city, will be next. However, Sazawal's father, a retired pharmaceutical distributor, has told his son not to worry. "He said he has avoided difficulty because, retired, he doesn't go out much."

Yet even the couple's friendly

PLEASE SEE KASHMIR/A10

T. Gambar photo



Sazawal: Uneasy about homeland

Sunday Tribune-Review

VOL. 102 NO. 133
13 SECTIONS, 164 PAGES

WORTHY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA
JUNE 17, 1990

* \$1.00
BY MOTOR ROUTE

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Kashmir's Hindus: Minority people in a troubled land

KASHMIR FROM/A1

Moslem neighbors have urged the senior Sazawals to leave.

Vijah Sazawal fears that when his mother and father are forced out they will leave behind pretty much all they own. The Hindus who have fled so far have arrived in India carrying only what they must in order to survive. "I think most were told to either leave in a hurry or be killed," Sazawal said.

Both his sister and her family and his wife's sister and family are now in Delhi. They arrived in the flood of other Hindus who fled Kashmir between January and April of this year.

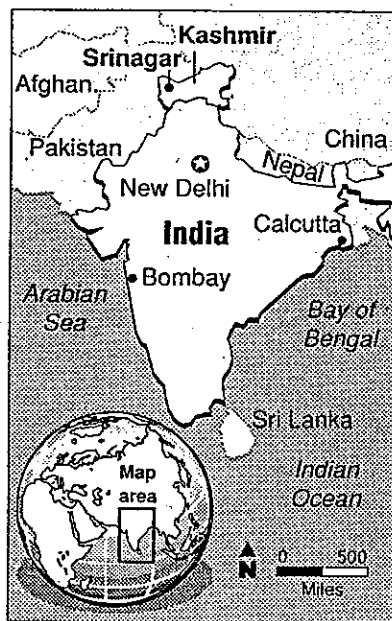
Sazawal hasn't been back to Kashmir since 1985. He came to the United States in 1972 to attend Michigan Technological University, where he eventually received a doctorate in engineering. He joined Westinghouse in 1975 and moved to Greensburg the same year.

"My wife and I came here (to the U.S.) with no intention of staying," he said. "We were on our honeymoon and thought of it as such. But then I got my degree and the children arrived. Children put down roots."

In the event he had decided to return to Kashmir, Sazawal said he would have faced certain discrimination. The majority Moslems, he charges, had rigged Kashmir society so that only Moslems get the best jobs or enter the best universities.

His father, he said, encouraged him in his determination to break free of such treatment. "He told me to be everything that I could be," Sazawal said. "He didn't want me to live my life facing restrictions."

Sazawal is shocked by events in his country. As a child, he said, he shared classrooms with Moslems, and he counted Moslems among



his best friends. "As a child, I grew up with my friends and neighbors without any prejudice or ill will," he said. "There was complete religious harmony."

He blamed recent changes on two factors. First, official Indian policy allows the Moslem majority in Kashmir to rule pretty much without interference from the central government. Second is the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, aided and abetted by "lazy and often corrupt" Moslem civic officials, a frightened clergy grasping for power and influence, and the impoverished condition of the mass of Moslems.

The Indians are not the oppressors in Kashmir — though they are often portrayed as such in the international press, Sazawal said. Instead, under the Indian version of state's rights, the Moslem majority has been allowed to rule Kashmir without reference to mi-

nority rights.

"Kashmir Hindus have been abused by the elected Muslim rulers," Sazawal said. "They have been reduced to second class citizens in their own land, with extremely limited economic and educational opportunities."

"What is unfortunate is that this is being done with the tacit approval of the Indian administration which considers the decimation of Kashmiri Pundits (Hindus) a mere inconvenience in the overall politics of the Indian subcontinent."

Sazawal fears the ferocity of Islamic fundamentalism, which he sees sweeping away values of tolerance and religious moderation. He points to the Islamic revolution in Iran, as well as troubles brewing in Morocco, Algeria, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. Even China, with a concentration of Moslems living near the border with Pakistan, is not immune from internal upheaval fomented by extreme Moslems, he said.

Sazawal applauds the position of the United States on the Kashmir question. In an unusual display of unity, the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China have agreed that the future of Kashmir should not be decided by vote of the populace, as outlined in a United Nations resolution. With numerous and often contentious religious sects, India would eventually unravel under the pressure generated by religious convictions if every test of national authority were put to a vote, Sazawal said.

He thinks the U.S. and other nations should take more seriously the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism.

Above all, Sazawal is worried that his people will be scattered and extinguished — never more to live together in peace in their homeland.