

303 Allison Drive  
Greensburg, PA 15601

March 10, 1986

The Editor,  
The New York Times,  
229 West 43 Street,  
New York, NY 10036

Dear Sir:

Quietly and without any hue and cry, a proud ethnic community, almost as old as the civilization itself, is slowly being forced out of their lands. Their fate is perhaps neither unique nor unusual in today's tumultuous times. What may however surprize your reader is that this community is a Hindu sect in the northernmost state of predominantly Hindu India.

Kashmiri Pundits, a Brahamin Hindu community, were once the only people living in the beautiful Kashmir valley. Possessing a rich cultural, social and religious heritage that is so unique from other Indian Hindus, these people led a peaceful life until the dark ages fell in 1322 A. D. That year a muslim cavalry of 70,000, led by one Zulqadr Khan who was a descendent of Changez Khan, marched in to occupy the land, convert the people to Islam and destroy the cultural identity of Kashmiri Pundits. Subsequent domination by Persian, Mughal and Afghan kings led to a systematic extermination of the race that was forced either to convert to Islam, flee or die. A brief respite was provided during the Sikh and Dogra rule preceeding India's independence in 1947, but by that time the population of Kashmiri Pundits in the valley had dwindled drastically. In fact where they once numbered in millions, the Census Report of 1921 (undertaken by the Maharaja of Kashmir) indicated the total population of Kashmiri Pundits in the valley to be 60,206.

Today Kashmir is overwhelmingly moslem. Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, that gives Kashmir a great degree of autonomy from the Indian laws, has been abused by the elected muslim rulers of the state to subjugate the remaining Kashmiri Pundits in the valley and confiscate their religious properties on one pretext or the other. Today these people 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 in New Delhi which considers the decimation of Kashmiri Pundits to be a mere inconvenience in the over all politics of the Indian sub-continent.

Just a few weeks back, as a backlash to some Hindu-Muslim differences

on a temple in another Indian state, Kashmiri Pundits were subjected to seven days of terror by the muslim majority aided by the muslim administration in which a number of people died. Atleast 20,000 Kashmiri Pundits have been left homeless (their homes were torched) and, as expected, more will flee their ancient land.

Very truly yours,

*V. Kumar*

V. Kumar

PHOTOGRAPH OF A RECENT DEMONSTRATION BY KASHMIRI PUNDIT WOMEN  
IN NEW DELHI IN SUPPORT OF THE PUNDIT MINORITY IN KASHMIR.



Kashmiri women in New Delhi demonstrate on Feb. 27, demanding peace in Jammu and Kashmir, where Hindu-Muslim clashes took a violent turn last month.

# The New York Times

56, JANPATH  
NEW DELHI-110001

STEVEN R. WEISMAN  
CHIEF OF BUREAU

TELEGRAM : NYKTIMES NEW DEL  
TELEPHONES : 321965 322883  
TELEX : 31 2827 NYT IN

15 April 1986

V. Kumar  
303 Allison Dr.  
Greensburg, Pa. 15601

Dear V. Kumar:

Your recent letter to the editor of The New York Times was passed on to me. As it happens, I have written a couple stories about Hindu-Moslem problems in Kashmir and elsewhere, in part growing out of the recent opening of a religious shrine as a Hindu temple. As you probably know, protesting Moslems, who regard the shrine as a mosque, attacked temples, homes and stores of the Kashmiri Pundits.

I plan to travel to Kashmir soon to write <sup>again</sup> about this problem. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,



Steven R. Weisman