



THE KASHMIR CHRONICLES

(1986-2023)

NEOTERIC ANALYSES OF A RAPIDLY CHANGING LANDSCAPE

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(COMPILED BY: ANITA LIMAYE)

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Dedication

The so-called Army of the Righteous violated Kashmir with a ferocity not seen during the previous 170 years.

The brutality and savagery that terrorists unleashed consumed most of the non-Muslim minority in Kashmir.

The survivors fled for their lives and began an uncertain life as refugees in their own country.

And yet, 808 Hindu families did not leave Kashmir in spite of the turmoil, violence, and chaos.

They told me that they would not abandon their sacred land of Shiv and Shakti; a land where their forefathers lived, prayed, and died.

They are the true heroes of the Kashmiri Pandit community today.

This book is dedicated to these true heroes of the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Foreword

Dr Vijay Sazawal, a nuclear scientist of Kashmir Valley origin but long settled in the US, enjoys prestigious status as a scientist and an analyst on the Kashmir issue. Additionally, he has maintained a keen interest in the welfare of the few Kashmiri Pandits who continue to hold on to the land of their ancestors with tenacity and perseverance. He is gifted with a facile pen and his articles published in various Indian and US journals are held in high esteem by his peers.

I have known him since my days at the John Knox Foyer in Geneva in the early 1990s where he would be seen sometimes in connection with his advocacy for Kashmiri Pandits. We have maintained our friendly relations over the last three decades. I have benefited from his deep knowledge of geopolitical strategies and its impact on India and the Indo-US relations. He is a superb analyst of political events and personalities and I have great respect for his dispassionate views on many critical themes.

My one-paragraph Foreword is unlikely to make any impact on a reader supposed to navigate through nearly 500 pages of the striking content of this volume. What prompted me to run through this rare document with avidness is its title phrase "Neoteric Analysis." I may say that the phrase has been skilfully chosen to aptly embody the essence of a well-written collection of topical papers related to Kashmir.

This volume is an invaluable compendium of insightful but analytical recounts of some bizarre political happenings in the troubled Kashmir from the year 1986 to 2023. The written material is classifiable into

various genres like formal or informal interaction with resource-oriented persons, topical articles, conference summations, commentaries, press reports, interviews, lectures, highlights of Track II exercise and so on and so forth.

The noteworthy characteristic of this incredible input on a highly contentious subject of the Kashmir question is the tenacity with which the author has held on to the norms of unbiased and unemotional journalism. This is despite himself being a victim of a phenomenon of genocide and ethnic cleansing that happened in his birthplace and to which he has been an eyewitness.

The phrase 'neoteric analysis', I may say, does truly embody the essence of this volume's content. It is Kashmir-centric, a theme that holds in its womb the darkest side of modern colonisation and the sadistic side of contemporary decolonisation. The victimised humanity little comprehends the nuances of a calamitous strategy. It has also become a desk book example of war by proxy in which the proxies lionise their handlers to make their passage to their graves less painful with the cross on their shoulders.

The author is logistically placed somewhat favourably, which has facilitated his access to men and material of consequence. The art of synchronising the two is indeed something like a gift from the gab, which many aspire but only a few can seize.

Uncovering many untold events of the chequered history of the Kashmir conundrum is bound to make Kashmir historians and experts revisit their perceptual aberrations. There is considerable analytical material in the volume that should become a compulsion for the upcoming generation of Kashmir historians and experts to think twice, rather thrice, before scripting their understanding of Kashmir politics. They cannot afford to dismiss what the author has said in a cryptic comment on the dramatic removal of Ghulam Nabi Azad, the Congress

Party leader from Chenab Valley, as the coalition Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir with the People's Democratic Party (PDP). He writes, "Azad was mostly ignorant of the opportunistic, corrupt, and sycophantic nature of Kashmiri politics."

Kashi Pandit

Jammu

25 November 2023

(Dr Kashinath Pandit, formerly Director of the Centre for Central Asian Studies at the Kashmir University, Srinagar, specialises in the history and culture of Farsi/Dari/Tajik and Kashmiri-speaking peoples. He is also a recipient of Padam Shri, the distinguished Presidential award for outstanding service to Indo-Central Asian cultural relations.)



Introduction

Kashmir evokes a multitude of visions, ranging from a heavenly place in the Himalayas to a blighted land where inhabitants have suffered time and again. The last such cycle of violence began in the late 1980s.

Then there is the *Jammu and Kashmir Issue* (called the *Kashmir issue* for brevity), a conundrum of sorts created when British India was divided into Pakistan and Bharat (India) in August 1947. When this division occurred, Kashmir joined neither country, though it did eventually accede to India about a month later after Pakistani forces invaded Kashmir, both its regular army and tribal hordes under its command.

Ever since, there have been two facets to the Kashmir issue. One that is known globally involves India, Pakistan, and Kashmir - in effect, the global problem is projected as a "three-party problem." The United Nations Resolutions of 1948 project the Kashmir issue that way. Closer to home, however, the Kashmir imbroglio has a different facet - the one resulting in local political opportunism and instability, a rise in Islamic religious extremism, a deepening divide between the rich and the poor, and a breakdown of the rule of law in Kashmir. This toxic mix of unsavoury ground realities kept bubbling until it burst in the late 1980s, resulting in the ethnic cleansing of the Kashmiri minorities - particularly Kashmir Hindus called Pandits - from the valley.

Peace has been elusive to Kashmir for over seven decades. Numerous attempts by global powers, regional countries, multilateral agencies, and cerebral think tanks have been unsuccessful in resolving the Kashmir issue. The author's insight into understanding and resolving the Kashmir issue differed significantly from various textbook approaches followed until recently. Under the Constitutional structure

of the State that existed until 2019, he proposed new and innovative methods to bring peace, justice and prosperity to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. After the paradigm shift of 2019, the author's past and present analyses provide a solid foundation for the new decisions that will be required to be taken by the Government, the civil society, and ordinary citizens to build a peaceful and prosperous Kashmir.

The author's vision stems from his unique two-way perspective on the issue. On the one hand, his recurrent interactive dialogue with government officials, political analysts and security experts specialising in South Asian affairs from the world over, and on the other hand, the multiple visits the author has made to the valley to get a first-hand assessment of the situation as well as seek inputs from those on the ground in Kashmir – the common people, civic and academic leaders, religious minorities, journalists, security officials, local and national politicians and bureaucrats. The wealth of real-time data that was collected and assimilated into papers and reports on Kashmir was not only appreciated by various policy Think Tanks both in the U.S. and India but also by senior government officials in both countries. He was frequently invited by the U.S. Department in Washington, and by the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi for discussions to garner and comprehend “retail politics” in the valley.

This book differs vastly from various other books on the subject of Kashmir. Unlike those which are primarily historical in nature, this book presents topical analyses of the events that transpired during the past three decades and how these had an effect on the policies related to Kashmir and its people. Additionally, this book is a conglomeration of the content from the website www.kashmirforum.org and a window to over thirty years of the author's work. The years spanning from 1986 to 2023, apart from reflecting the author's work in this book, are also noteworthy in so far as the history of Kashmir is concerned. The dark period began on 20 February 1986 when homes and shrines of the Kashmiri Pandit minority were destroyed by unruly mobs led by political leaders from the majority community who were never held

accountable for their crimes. That started a long period of ethnic cleansing that was made worse by poor governance, Islamic insurgency, and the breakdown of law and order in Kashmir. On the other hand, 11 December 2023 is a symbolic date when the Supreme Court of India, in a unanimous decision, announced that Indian sovereignty and its Constitution reign supreme in J & K and the powers that were granted to the state under the Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution were temporary and should have been withdrawn over time, giving its consent to the Parliamentary decisions made previously in this regard.

For the purposes of providing the reader with a cohesive set of policy messages as these evolved historically over time, the book has four main parts.

Part 1 provides key presentations and discussions on the global facet of the Kashmir issue and how it became a global issue at a time when independent India was a nascent country with ill-prepared politicians and bureaucrats who were skilfully exploited by a retiring superpower in league with the next emerging superpower.

Part 2 highlights the inconsistencies and inadequacies in the Indian policies on Kashmir and how Pakistan adeptly manipulated Indian political hubris time and again to prolong the conflict in Kashmir.

Part 3 provides a unique insight into the local politics in Kashmir, with “deep dives” into many burning issues of the day to bring out the malignancies in the political and bureaucratic architecture of Kashmir that fanned the flames of anarchy and terror.

Part 4 addresses the unfortunate state of Pandits, the minority community in Kashmir today. Abused in the good times and ethnically wiped out in the bad times, Pandits, who were the only people living in Kashmir until Islam knocked on its doors in the 14th century, have resilience, fortitude and survival instincts that are second to none. The only thing they have lacked historically is the political insight to make good decisions regarding their future.

The book in the closing sections includes a few documents that may be of interest to the reader.

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Scor