

PAK HONOURS CHINA FOR SERVICE TO UYGHUR MUSLIMS

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KASHMIR CENTRAL

A KZINE INITIATIVE

ASSEMBLY POLLS IN J&K

TO BE OR NOT TO BE

**POLITICAL PLAYERS KEEN, CENTRE
NOT REVEALING CARDS**

KASHMIR CENTRAL
Volume 2 Edition 13
27 March 2022

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CENTRAL

MOVE BEYOND SKICC

The UT administration is keen to boost the tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir. The Department of Tourism is spending crores to attract the tourists, which shall benefit all stakeholders. The Tourism Department is organizing many events to promote tourist inflow into the region, but these events are mostly elitist.

Flourishing tourism in Kashmir benefits the people dependent on the sector. It also defines normalcy in Kashmir. In response to the assertions being made by the political class who refute the claims of normalcy, the government presents the figures of tourists visiting the Valley. It cannot be denied that the swelling number of tourists visiting Kashmir each year reflects on the ground situation here.

SKICC- SHERI KASHMIR INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE



Equally, common people not directly associated with the tourism sector should be seen as partners in the events being organized by the Tourism Department. The department should move beyond SKICC, Gulmarg and Pahalgam. The festivals should be designed with common masses as the target audience, and must offer them something to enjoy and cheer.

The various tourism festivals should be organized at places accessible to the common people. If this is ensured, these events shall leave an imprint in the minds of the people. The people will feel joy in this value addition to their life.

The festivals shall not reach their optimum potential if the select and privileged elites benefit from government spending. The effort of the government must be to bring a smile on the faces of the common people.

Why is this important? Because the narrative of “Abnormal Kashmir” is sold to the commoners alone. If there is no hustle and bustle, nothing to celebrate and cheer, they tend to believe the narrative.

Bashir Assad



razor sharp analysis

INCISIVE REPORTING

INVESTIGATE THE TERROR ECOSYSTEM

EXPOSE DECEPTION

RESTORE ORDER

MAKE A SPLASH

INCULCATE DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT



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ASSEMBLY POLLS IN J&K

To Be Or Not To Be

POLITICAL PLAYERS KEEN, CENTRE NOT REVEALING CARDS





PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

by Bashir ASSAD

There are no signs of elections to be held in Jammu and Kashmir anytime soon, though media reports keep referring to them. Rumours are swirling that elections in Jammu and Kashmir may be held simultaneously with Parliament elections in 2024.

Some sources in the government say that J&K elections could be held just before Parliament elections. Others hold forth that elections to the Jammu and Kashmir assembly could be held in the build-up to the Lok Sabha elections.

In February, talk of elections was rife. The major political players were hoping that Assembly elections

in Jammu and Kashmir would be held within 2022. The talk had gained such dominance that all the political forces in Jammu and Kashmir had swung into election mode.

Many bureaucrats serving in the Union Territory confided to friends on many occasions during private conversations about the political fervour building up. The bureaucrats confided that the political leaders who visited them during February would tell them in jest or in seriousness to count their days.

This enthusiasm fizzled out since there are no indications whatsoever either from the political establishment in New Delhi or from the Election Commission of India about holding elections in the

Sources in the establishment say that the Centre is moving cautiously on the issue of resuming elections in the Union Territory. The government has the realization that since this shall be the first election after annulling the special status of J&K, it is no ordinary poll. The government has to take into consideration many crucial factors before it announces the election

Union Territory anytime soon. The leading political players have gone into silent mode on the issue because the Central government and the Election Commission have remained tight lipped with regard to holding the elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

THE GRAVITY OF THE ISSUE

Sources in the establishment say that the Centre is moving cautiously on the issue of resuming elections in the Union Territory. The government has the realization that since this shall be the first election after annulling the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, it is no ordinary poll. The government has to take into consideration many crucial factors before it announces the election.

Meanwhile, the Delimitation Commission is yet to finalize its report on creation and reorganization of Assembly and Parliament constituencies. It is likely that the Commission may ask for another long extension for finalizing the report. That aside, sources inform that the government has to take a grip on many other factors before initiating any talk on the date for J&K Assembly elections.

Authoritative sources agree that there is there is compulsion for the government to hold the Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir, alongside the constitutional obligation. But sources reveal that

special circumstances ranging from security-related concerns for Kashmir to the tenor of the statements made by some political figures are holding the Centre back from announcing the dates.

As reported in many preceding editions of KASHMIR CENTRAL, Pakistan is determined to increase the level of violence in Kashmir in the summer of 2022. The militants have provided glimpses of the way things may take shape this year by reviving the grenade blast culture.

The number of active foreign terrorists has gone up considerably during the last few months. Intelligence inputs suggest that many more dreaded terrorists are at the launching pads across LOC, waiting to sneak in. Intelligence reports indicate that soft target killings by terrorists could rise in the coming months. Political activists are already been targeted; some have been killed. Pakistan's clear objective is to discourage Kashmiris from participating in the elections.

TALKS RIFE: WILL J&K HAVE A CM FROM JAMMU REGION?

There is animated discussion on another issue regarding polls in J&K. The point of debate among many stakeholders is whether the outcome of the elections shall give the government a handle to opt

Sources reveal that special circumstances ranging from security-related concerns for Kashmir to the tenor of the statements made by some political figures are holding the Centre back from announcing the dates for Assembly polls in J&K



PHOTO: DAILYEXCELSIOR.COM

for a chief minister from Jammu region. According to some sources, under the new delimitation plan the prospects of a chief minister from Jammu region are higher than ever before.

Authoritative sources reveal that the government is ready to opt for this experiment because the Kashmir-centric political forces have lost the trust of New Delhi. Under such a scenario, the BJP government at the Centre may opt for this political adventure.

The only challenge before the government is how to address the narrative of "disempowerment of Kashmiris" being played out by the political class of Kashmir locally, and by Pakistan internationally.

KASHMIRI PANDIT EXODUS MAY EMERGE AS BJP'S POLITICAL ARTILLERY FOR 2024

PHOTO:INDIATVNEWS.COM

Parliament elections are just a year and half away. Sources say that at this juncture, BJP is not really bothered about the noises created by the political class of Kashmir. In fact, there are confirmed reports that the exodus of the Pandits from Kashmir valley in 1990 shall be BJP's political cannon for the 2024 elections.

If the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits emerges as the major political issue for the Parliament elections, the top leadership of National Conference and PDP may face the music. Sources say that there is talk among some quarters that NC president and former chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah may be dragged through private party litigations to the court of law.

Despite all these challenges and the emerging political situations, hope prevails among the political players in Jammu and Kashmir. They are hoping against hope that Assembly elections may be held by October this year. The argument they offer is that people are facing enormous problems in the absence of a political government. The political players are taking the ground that people are not being heard, and there is no one to listen to them. They allege that Babus have become more and more arrogant, and there is no window available for the public to express their anger and frustration.

The political actors are consistently attempting to convince the Centre that however corrupt it may be, popular government is always more effective than bureaucratic rule. It remains to be seen when and how New Delhi ends the speculations and provides some clarity about elections in Jammu and Kashmir.



Parliament elections are just a year and half away. Sources say that at this juncture, BJP is not really bothered about the noises created by the political class of Kashmir. In fact, there are confirmed reports that the exodus of the Pandits from Kashmir valley in 1990 shall be BJP's political cannon for the 2024 elections

In Recognition Of China's Exemplary Services For Uyghur Muslims

PAKISTAN GIVES CHINA PLACE OF HONOUR AT ISLAMIC HIGH TABLE



PHOTO COURTESY: CFR.ORG

by Mareaya FAYAZ

The terror ecosystem of Kashmir has consistently projected Pakistan as the saviour of Islam in the Valley. Through Jamaat e Islami, other religious groups, and through militant organizations like Hizbul Mujahideen and others, Pakistan has been painted as the guardian angel of Kashmiris and the guardian of Islam. The news from Pakistan made me pause in wonderment. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was at Islamabad in Pakistan for a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). What about report after report that we have read on the oppression of the Uighur Muslims in the Xinjiang province of China?

In media reports worldwide, China has been accused of committing genocide against the Uyghur population and other mostly-Muslim ethnic groups in the north-western region of Xinjiang.

China has been accused of detaining more than one million Uyghurs against their will over the past few years in a large network of what the state calls “re-education camps”, and sentenced hundreds of thousands to prison terms.

A BBC report in June 2021 said there is also evidence that Uyghurs are being used as forced labour and that women being forcibly sterilised. Some former camp detainees have also

alleged they were tortured and sexually abused.

China has consistently denied all allegations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang. China has claimed that its system of “re-education” camps have been established in Xinjiang to combat separatism and Islamist militancy in the region.

**REPORTS SAY
MUSLIM
RELIGIOUS
PRACTICES BANNED
IN XINJIANG**

The Uyghurs speak their own language, which is similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations. Over the last few decades, the Chinese state has allegedly orchestrated mass migration of Han Chinese – China’s ethnic majority – into Xinjiang. This has been done to allegedly dilute the minority population there. China has also been accused of targeting Muslim religious figures and banning religious practices in the region, as well as destroying mosques and tombs. Uyghur activists say that their culture is under threat of being erased by the Chinese onslaught.

**PAKISTAN HAS BEEN BLIND
TO VICTIMIZATION OF
UYGHUR MUSLIMS**

Pakistan and China are self-proclaimed “iron brothers”. China is constructing China Pakistan

A BBC REPORT IN JUNE 2021 SAID THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT UYGHURS ARE BEING USED AS FORCED LABOUR AND THAT WOMEN BEING FORCIBLY STERILISED. SOME FORMER CAMP DETAINEES ALLEGED THEY WERE TORTURED AND SEXUALLY ABUSED. CHINA HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF TARGETING MUSLIM RELIGIOUS FIGURES, BANNING RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, DESTROYING MOSQUES AND TOMBS



**A Crackdown on Islam Is
Spreading Across China
THE NEW YORK TIMES**

Economic Corridor (CPEC) through Pakistan. Many international analysts have called CPEC China’s flagship project for the colonization of Pakistan.

Pakistan, the self-projected saviour of Islam, has not offered even a word of condemnation over the treatment of the Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. The silence of the Islamic states towards the suffering of the Uyghur Muslims has also been noted internationally.

NEITHER PAKISTAN NOR THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC NATIONS ARE INTERESTED IN HOLDING CHINA ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE PLIGHT OF UYGHUR MUSLIMS. PAKISTAN, WHICH PROJECTS ITSELF AS THE MESSIAH FOR KASHMIR, DOES NOT FEEL ANY PAIN FOR THE OPPRESSION OF UYGHUR MUSLIMS IN CHINA

CHINA’S XINJIANG POLICY AND THE SILENCE OF ISLAMIC STATES

In August 2021, Ayjaz Wani, a Research Fellow at Observer Research Foundation (ORF) Mumbai wrote in a research paper that Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has detained an estimated one million Uyghur Muslims in concentration camps in the Xinjiang province for forced re-education and political indoctrination.

Wani noted, “While the West has deplored China’s actions, the major Muslim countries have defended and even welcomed the policy. China has exploited its economic and diplomatic clout and the growing indebtedness of the Muslim world to subdue any criticism of its actions in Xinjiang.”

So this is the bare truth. Neither Pakistan nor the Organization of Islamic Nations are interested in holding China accountable for the plight of Uyghur Muslims. Pakistan, which projects itself as the messiah for Kashmir, does not feel any pain for the oppression of Uyghur Muslims in China.

It is we Kashmiris who fail to recognize that Pakistan is using Kashmir as a tool to further its own geo-political interests globally. Those Kashmiris who regard Pakistan as the saviour and protector of Islam must wake up to the harsh reality. Pakistan is killing us Kashmiris daily. Pakistan is making death and doom dance in our streets. Let us save our Kashmir from this scourge.

THE FUROR OVER KASHMIR FILES

Whatever One's Personal Bias, The Central Theme Of The Movie Cannot Be Contested

by Sheikh SAMEER

Kashmir Files has created a furor. It is among the few Indian movies around which there is hot debate across India and also abroad – wherever there is Indian or Pakistani diaspora. There is appreciation. There is criticism. Everybody has an opinion about

it – even those who have not watched it.

In the socio-political and media circles, the critics of the movie say Kashmir Files trivializes the issue of the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. They charge the makers of the movie with exaggeration of the events and concealing the other side of the story.

Everyone has the right to make a film over any historical event. So does Vivek Agnihotri, the writer-director of Kashmir Files. Globally, cinema has fictionalized events in order to present specific narratives. Every film seeks commercial value. It also aims to influence mind space.

On both these counts, Kashmir Files is doing well. It is earning handsome revenue. Reports suggest that it is impacting and influencing minds. Thousands from the Kashmiri Pandits community who suffered these terrible times correlate themselves with particular characters in the film.

On the political front, the film has created a storm. Even the Prime Minister spoke about it.

THE DEBATE OVER THE MOVIE

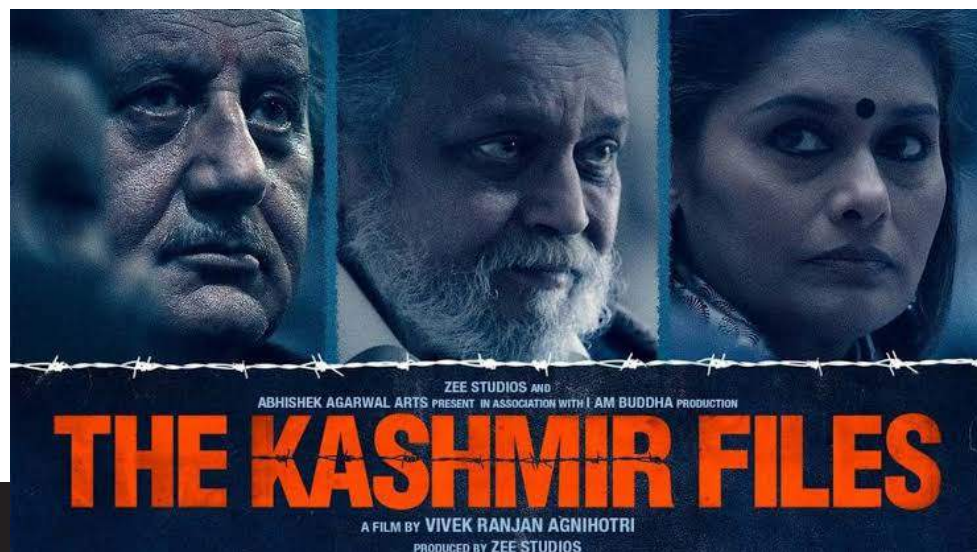
The film certainly brings to the fore a vital chapter of Kashmir's contemporary history. Unfortunately, the debate over the film has been reduced either to statistics, or around the communal narrative of Hindu versus Muslim. It is saddening to see the arguments and counter arguments being reduced to the number of killings on either side.

The political class of Kashmir is very critical of the film. They draw the comparison of which community has suffered how much by producing figures of those killed by terrorists. There is an attempt by both sides to score brownie political points over the catastrophe.

It is naïve to talk about statistics and polarize the atmosphere. Whatever be one's personal narrative, there is no denying that the Pandits suffered immensely. Equally, there is no denying that the Kashmiri Muslims too suffered immensely. The film should have united the people in acknowledgment. There should have been united response of condemnation of terrorism. Though late, the majority community in Kashmir should have apologized for being mute through the colossal crisis of 1990, irrespective of their compulsions.

BJP has very limited stakes as a political force in Kashmir. The party should have responded over the issue carefully. But it won't, because it is always in election mode. And in Indian politics everything is fair and nothing is unfair when the ultimate aim is luring electoral support.

There is no denying that Pandits and Muslims - both communities suffered immensely after Pakistan lit the fires of terrorism in Kashmir. The film should have led to united condemnation of terrorism. Though late, the majority community in Kashmir should have apologized for being mute through the colossal crisis of 1990, irrespective of their compulsions



Pandits Were Killed For Their Religion

Muslims Were & Are Being Killed For Opposing Jihadist Ideology



As an observer who has watched Kashmir closely, I have reservations regarding the narrative of Kashmiri Muslims versus Kashmiri Pandits which is playing out since the release of Kashmir Files. A constant comparison is being made regarding the numbers of those who fell to the bullets of the terrorists from the majority community of Kashmiri Muslims vis-à-vis the minority community of Kashmiri Pandits.

But the fundamental question which needs to be asked is this. Were the Kashmiri Muslims killed by terrorists because they were Muslims? Was it declared on posters for the Kashmiri Muslims: Leave Kashmir or you will be killed?

Did the terrorist organization that targeted him issue a statement that the man had been killed solely because

he was a Kashmiri Muslim? No.

The suffering of the Kashmiri Muslim community can be summed up this way. Kashmiri Muslims are the sufferers of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism not because they were or they are Muslims. They were killed because they didn't toe the line of the terrorists. They were killed because they didn't subscribe to deadly radicalism. In hundreds and thousands, they were killed because they identified with one political party in Kashmir, and not with another which drew strength from terror ranks.

Religion was not the basis on which the majority community of Kashmir has suffered colossal losses. There were killed and they continue to be killed because they did not toe the line of the terrorists. For over 30 years, Kashmiri Muslims have been killed for their liberal secular outlook which rejects jihadi thought. They are being killed for their ideas and affiliation. They are being killed for not adhering to the ideology that drives terrorism in

The tragedy which fell upon Pandits was solely on account of their religion. They were threatened, intimidated, maimed and killed because their religion was different from what the terrorists claimed to be guardians of



PHOTO: THE QUINT.COM

Kashmiri Pandits were hounded out of their homes and hearth because they were Hindus and they were in minority. It is not me who is saying this. All of us in the majority community may not acknowledge this, but we are all aware of this. The posters pasted on the houses of the KPs declared this. These slogans echoed from the streets where they lived. The Mullahs screamed this from the mosques, on blaring loudspeakers. The youngsters influenced by deadly exclusivist ideology shouted this. Last but not the least, the political narrative was this.

Kashmir. They are being killed because they earn bread and butter for their families by working with JK Police. They are being killed for rejecting the deadly extremist ideology.

It is in this context that the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits must be seen. There should be honest admission by those who represent public sentiment

in any capacity that the human tragedy which fell upon Kashmiri Pandits was solely on account of their religion. Kashmiri Pandits were threatened, intimidated, maimed and killed because they had a different religion. They were killed because their religion was different from what the terrorists claimed to be the guardians of.

For over 30 years, Kashmiri Muslims have been killed for their liberal secular outlook which rejects jihadi thought. They are being killed for their ideas and affiliation. They are being killed for not adhering to the ideology that drives terrorism in Kashmir

NO ONE CONSOLED THE PANDITS WHEN THEY NEEDED IT THE MOST

Another important distinction which we need to understand is that there was no one to console the minority community of Kashmir at the time when they needed it the most. I must speak about the sympathy and empathy of some members of the majority Muslim community towards their Pandit neighbours. Some counted few helped their Pandit friends. Most just conveyed their helplessness with the prevailing situation of terror. For many, even the expression of helplessness was cosmetic and ceremonial.

Many in Kashmir are saying that Kashmir Files distorts reality. Many are claiming that it concocts stories to deepen the horror. Others are stating that it conceals



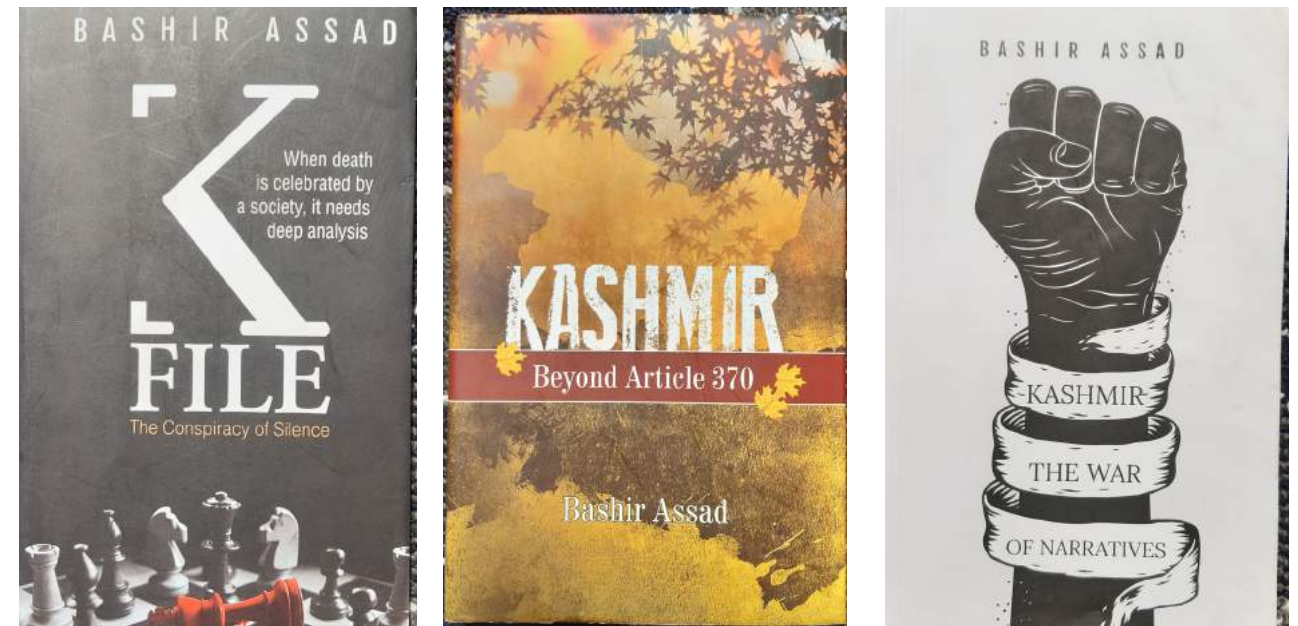
the other side of the story. Whatever be one's personal belief, narrative or bias, the central theme of Kashmir Files cannot be contested.

The Making Of **K FILE** The Conspiracy Of Silence BY BASHIR ASSAD

by Bisma Nazir

Kashmir Files is the hot topic of debate these days. The year is 2022. Life comes up with interesting coincidences. It was around 2012 – ten years ago – when Bashir first started saying, “There is a book in my head. I need to write it.” Talking about the book, he would become quiet and contemplative. At times he would say, “I can see the flow of the chapters. I can read the words of my book in my head. They keep moving about in my thoughts. I need to write the book.”

Perhaps those years he was debating within himself the wisdom of putting down in black and white all that was swirling in his head. He was as much agitated as he was pained about sad state of Kashmir. Perhaps Bashir knew that he was going to reveal the untold, unspoken, unvarnished and inconvenient truths on Kashmir. It was not easy. Sometimes in his contemplation, he would say: I want to write to save my Kashmir from what it is becoming. My book shall bring to light many hidden truths of



In February 2019, pained by the suicide bombing by a blooming Kashmiri youth, Bashir wrote the first chapter of his book. It was riveting. It had raw, throbbing energy marked by pain, loss and realism. *K File* is searing

Kashmir.

The years went by. Around 2018, Bashir started referring to the book more and more.

In February 2019, pained by the suicide bombing by a blooming Kashmiri youth, Bashir wrote the first chapter of his book.

It was riveting. It had raw, throbbing energy marked by pain, loss and realism.

Bashir has always been an articulate, dynamic orator. He always speaks with strong conviction and pleasing humour, and builds an easy connect with his audience. It is the same even now.

The contemporary history and geo-politics of Kashmir perhaps gave Bashir no room for gentle hu-

mour in his book. *K File* is searing.

Bashir borrowed a rundown laptop from a friend to write the chapters. Through those years of extreme financial hardship, the only thing that kept him going was his conviction that he owed it to his motherland and his people.

Finally, he finished the book at 18 chapters. Then started the search for a publisher.

All those publishers who turned Bashir away later regretted their decision. Renu Kaul Verma, MD of Vitasta Publishing, New Delhi, took the leap of faith so essential for publishers. In about three months of submission of manuscript, she published the book.

Within days of its release, *K File: The Conspiracy of Silence* acquired a life of its own. The book seemed to be running into readers' hands everywhere. Readers from India and abroad started listing *K File* on social media and book review platforms as a must-read.

The scorching truths of Kashmir jumped from page after page. Readers posted their adulation on social media day after day and give it four-star to five-star rating consistently. Reviewers acknowledged the merit of the book and its deep, underlying honesty. *K File* went into reprints fast.

Once, Bashir was walking with his friends at Connaught Place in New Delhi when they passed by

LOG INTO KASHMIR @
kashmircentral.in

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The First Lines Of K File That Bashir Wrote After The Pulwama Attack

**Terrorists are not born.
They are manufactured.**

The February 14 gruesome terrorist attack on CRPF convoy at Lethpora on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway has left the security agencies and the Kashmir watchers red-faced. Honestly, I was not surprised by this bloodiest act. It was the biggest attack in the history of militant Kashmir, but I was anticipating it given the amount of churning that has happened in the Kashmir society over last few years.

In Kashmir, when a mother or a sister is asked whether she would like to appeal to her militant son or brother to return, she surprises you by saying, "If he returns we will kill him with our own hands." This actually gives us a clue about how grave the situation in Kashmir is.

Apologists will still try to somehow counter my argument by saying that it is the anger against the state, and that there is political radicalization in Kashmir. But how can one brush aside the video messages released often by militants, which establish that the current phase of violent uprising has more to do with global jihad than with any local grievances whatsoever...



Jain Book Shop. One of his friends spotted his third book in the shop window – Kashmir: The War Of Narratives. He took Bashir into the store and asked the store owner, "Do you have the other books by Mr Bashir Assad?"

The store owner promptly produced *K File* and Bashir's second book, *Kashmir Beyond Article 370*. Then he gushed on about *K File*. He spoke about how the book was still selling so much, how it had been avidly read nationally and internationally. When he was introduced to the author, the store owner was overjoyed. "We have sold so many copies of *K File*, you will not believe it," he told Bashir. This was the account of just one book store.

In the following pages, KASHMIR CENTRAL reproduces the chapter on Kashmiri Pandits in *K File: The Conspiracy Of Silence*.



The Tulip Garden in Srinagar is home to about a million tulips

Your window to news, views, exposes, scoops
and exclusive features that bring to you

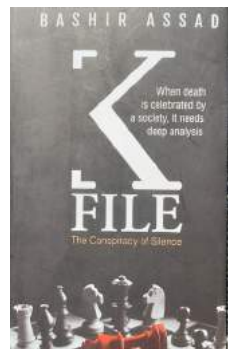
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A KZINE INITIATIVE

From **K FILE: THE CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE**

By Bashir Assad
Vitasta Publishing, 2019



Chapter 10 **EXODUS OF KASHMIRI PANDITS**

The unfortunate exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990 had a major impact on how Kashmir's contemporary identity was defined and shaped. The exodus subjected the entire community to the worst kind of human tragedy. It also changed forever the political identity of Kashmir valley.

In its fight against the autocratic Maharaja rule, Kashmir had asserted a political identity which transcended narrow religious limitations. This identity was shaped by Kashmir's secular cultural ethos, which had laid the foundations for an inclusive, pluralistic society.

Even though the Muslim identity was politicized first, it did not define the politics of Kashmir. The leadership at that time decided consciously to strengthen the social fabric by asserting the politically inclusive identity. This was resisted by Mullahs in Kashmir and Panjabi Muslims in Jammu region. They could not succeed in diluting this inclusiveness of Kashmir politics.

When militancy erupted in 1990, it dealt a blow

to this inclusive character. The question which pits Kashmiri Pandits against Kashmiri Muslims is this: Who was responsible for the mass exodus of an entire community which seems to have lost its home and hearth forever. Kashmiri Pandits blame Kashmiri Muslims, particularly militants.

On the other hand, the popular narrative among Kashmiri Muslims about the exodus is that Governor Jagmohan drew them out under a sinister plan to bulldoze Kashmiri Muslims. Kashmir's politicians, particularly the ruling class, could have connected the dots regarding the exodus. They conveniently remained silent on the issue at critical times. They speak about it occasionally now, but not in context. The politicians too held Jagmohan responsible for this act, whenever they spoke from political platforms.

Kashmiri Pandits have consistently rejected the theory that there were government plans behind their exodus. They insist that they were forced to leave by the militants and their over-ground supporters. Sometimes the debate over the exodus be-



PHOTO: THELOGICALINDIAN.COM

It will be injustice on the part of Kashmir's Muslims to blame Jagmohan for everything that happened. Hundreds of incidents can be quoted as testimony, which will make it abundantly clear that militants and their overground sympathizers threatened, maimed and killed KPs in good numbers, taking into account their ratio in the population

comes so murky that it overshadows the conflict. The question of who benefitted from the exodus sometimes takes centre stage.

Reservation for Kashmiri Pandits in government jobs, reservation for their children in educational institutions across the country, monetary relief, salaries and other benefits – these figure in the debates both in and out of Kashmir on the issue. Kashmiri Pandits speak of what they went through, and how difficult their life was. The debate over exodus is highly polarized and political, bereft of the human angle.

Even the literature that has been written since 1990 by writers from both communities is often prejudiced, biased and communal. It never speaks of the tragedies and sufferings of the other community. Post militancy, Kashmir produced a host of writers from both communities. They confined themselves to their respective communities. They did not speak

about how the collective conscience of the Kashmir society was hurt by violence beyond redemption.

There is a trend among Kashmiri Muslim writers. Each one would take an orphan to the grave of his father killed by Indian security forces, and make the child cry. The orphan is stimulated to stay at the grave of his father to forever cry, wail and mourn. He is not inspired to leave the tragedy behind and move forward in life.

Writers compete in making people cry and mourn. The same pattern is followed by most Kashmiri Pandit writers. The invisible hands behind the exodus are debated more than the return of the Pandits to Kashmir.

It was a strange stroke of fate that during this critical period of Kashmir history, Mufti Muhammad Sayeed was India's Home Minister. He served in this capacity from December 1989 to November 1990. At

In order to weaken Farooq Abdullah politically, Mufti Mohd Sayeed influenced Prime Minister VP Singh to appoint Jagmohan as the Governor of the state. Jagmohan had dismissed Dr Farooq Abdullah as CM in July 1984, in his previous stint as Governor. Farooq was not on good terms with Jagmohan

From left: Farooq Abdullah, Rajiv Gandhi and Mufti Sayeed with others



PHOTO: HINDUSTAN TIMES/THEKASHMIRWALLA.COM

K

The Pandits were first targeted by JKLF militants. JKLF took no time in threatening them and hounding them out of the valley. Soon Hizbul Mujahideen, backed by Jamaat-e-Islami, emerged on the scene. Cries for Nizam-e-Mustafa resounded. Was it not reason enough for the Pandits to leave? Or were they too supposed to shout 'Yahan kya chalega, Nizam-e-Mustafa'?



PHOTO: TREKEARTH.COM

that time, Dr Farooq Abdullah was the chief minister of Kashmir. He was also Mufti's chief political rival.

In order to weaken Farooq politically, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed influenced Prime Minister V.P. Singh to appoint Jagmohan as the governor of the state. Jagmohan had dismissed Dr Farooq Abdullah in July 1984, in his previous stint as Governor. Farooq was not on good terms with Jagmohan.

Mufti knew that the appointment of Jagmohan as Governor would irritate Farooq and make him quit. Farooq had earlier publicly stated that he would quit as chief minister if Jagmohan was made the Governor. But the Central government went ahead.

Jagmohan was appointed as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir on the night of January 19, 1990. Farooq resigned the next day.

The Rajiv-Farooq accord of 1986 also had a significant political impact on Kashmir.

GM Shah's government was dismissed on 12 March 1986, by Jagmohan during his first stint as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. Shah's government was dismissed following communal riots in south Kashmir.

Farooq was made caretaker chief minister to supervise the elections scheduled for the next year. The accord didn't sit well with Mufti, who at that time



Prime VP Singh shaking hands with Farooq Abdullah, as Mufti Sayeed looks on

Mufti went to his home town Bijbehara to mobilize workers for a cynical plan. There was tension in Jammu over the construction of a mosque near a temple. With Mufti's tacit approval, some temples and other Pandit properties were set ablaze in Bijbehara, Anantnag and Shopian in South Kashmir, and Sopore (hotbed of Jamaat e Islami) in North Kashmir

was Tourism Minister in Rajiv's government. Mufti was waiting for an appropriate opportunity to sabotage the accord. The Meerut riots of 1986 provided him the opportunity.

Mufti resigned from the union cabinet in what he termed as his protest against the mishandling of the Meerut riots by the government. Back in Kashmir after his resignation, Mufti addressed a public rally at the sports stadium in Anantnag. There, he invoked Islam and said that he stood for the safety and security of Muslims. During his time as chief minister, GM Shah had sparked communal passion in Jammu by building a mosque close to a temple.

From Mufti's perspective, the Rajiv-Farooq accord meant another six-year term for Farooq Abdullah as chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Mufti had been making overt and covert efforts since long to see himself in the chief minister's chair. Now the CM

office seemed out of his reach again.

Mufti had also realized that the Congress in Kashmir valley was not strong as far as the number game was concerned. Staying in the Congress, Mufti wanted to change the discourse in Kashmir from secular (represented by Sheikh Abdullah and later his son) to religious. This is why he had convinced Jamaat e Islami in 1972 to contest the elections. Mufti's calculation was that though Sheikh was a secularist, he was equally popular on the religious platform. Mufti's objective was to somehow dilute Sheikh's monopoly over the religious platform (which was till then the traditional Sufi form of Islam) to create space for himself.

After addressing the public rally at Anantnag, Mufti went to his home town, Bijbehara, to mobilize his workers for some cynical plan. There was tension in Jammu over the construction of a mosque near a

temple. With Mufti's tacit approval, some temples and other Pandit properties were set ablaze in Bijbehara, Anantnag and Shopian in South Kashmir, and Sopore (hotbed of Jamaat e Islami) in North Kashmir.

The state went into elections in 1987 and Dr. Farooq Abdullah made a comeback. The elections are considered the most controversial in Jammu and Kashmir. Allegations of massive rigging put a question mark on the authenticity of the results. Come 1989, the valley was in the middle of a violent uprising.

We must try to understand the exodus of Kashmiri pundits from two angles to put things in context. One: Was there any link between the vandalisation of Pandit properties in 1986 in some select areas of Kashmir, and the exodus of 1990? Was the agenda of exodus set in 1986? Or did the exodus happen with the inception of militancy?

It is known in Kashmir that Mufti engineered the 1986 vandalisation of Pandit properties. Come 1990, he was the Home Minister of India. Mufti is the only common link between 1986 and 1990. It may have been a mere coincidence. This remains a subject of investigation.

Let us consider the opposing narratives of Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims. KPs have consistently and unequivocally stated that they were driven out of their homes by the Islamic militia and their overground sympathizers. Muslims maintain that it was Jagmohan who drove them out. To me these are the two glasses half-full. Maybe we should pour them into one.

It will be injustice on the part of Kashmir Muslims to blame Jagmohan for everything that happened. Hundreds of incidents can be quoted as testimony, which will make it abundantly clear that militants and their overground sympathizers threatened, maimed and killed KPs in good numbers, taking into account their ratio in the population.

If some Bajrang Dal goons shout in New Delhi, 'Ek dhakka aur do, Jamia masjid tod do', it is seen as an obvious threat to Muslims in Delhi. Shouting 'Yahan kya chalega, Nizam e Mustafa' equally tantamounts to a threat for the Pandits. It is true that militant commanders and Jamaat leaders would give sermons in mosques, asking Pandits to stay back as second class citizens. Then there were criminally-minded men who would knock at the doors of Pandits in the dead of night to threaten them for various reasons, other than those stated by the militants. No

What The Loss Of Kashmiri Pandits Has Meant For The Valley

The Kashmiri Pandit youth suffered immensely following the mass exodus. Uprooted from their homeland, they had to face very difficult situations. They could have easily produced a huge militia. That did not happen. The Kashmiri Pandits focused on education and became part of the Indian mainstream, benefitting in diverse ways.

This whole gamut must be examined from the local perspective. After the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in the early 90s, Kashmir is now largely a homogeneous society. The pluralistic character of Kashmir society is now a thing of the past. While the Kashmiri Pandits were here, the competition was for better education. The happy intermingling of Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits have few parallels in the world. But a positive competition was always there.



PHOTO: OPINDIA.COM



It is known in Kashmir that Mufti Sayeed engineered the vandalism of Pandit properties in 1986. Come 1990, he was the Home Minister of India. Mufti is the only common link between 1986 and 1990. It may have been a mere coincidence. This remains a subject of investigation

Kashmiri Muslim can deny that every Pandit household was threatened in one way or the other by militants or criminally-minded men who had their own agenda. Most of them wanted to occupy the properties of Pandits by hounding them out.

The Pandits were first targeted by Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) militants. This was time when a significant number of Pandits may have decided to side with the new narrative of Azadi. JKLF took no time in threatening them and hounding them out of the valley. Soon Hizbul Mujahideen, backed by Jamaat-e-Islami, emerged on the scene. Cries for Nizam-e-Mustafa resounded. Was it not reason enough for the Pandits to leave? Or were they too supposed to shout 'Yahan kya chalega, Nizam-e-Mustafa'?

Now for the charges that Jagmohan drove them out. I would say Mufti drove them out by engineering activities that caused them to fear for their lives. I have referred elsewhere to the comment made by the Home Secretary to the J&K government, who wished Geelani a long life because he was helping the Indian

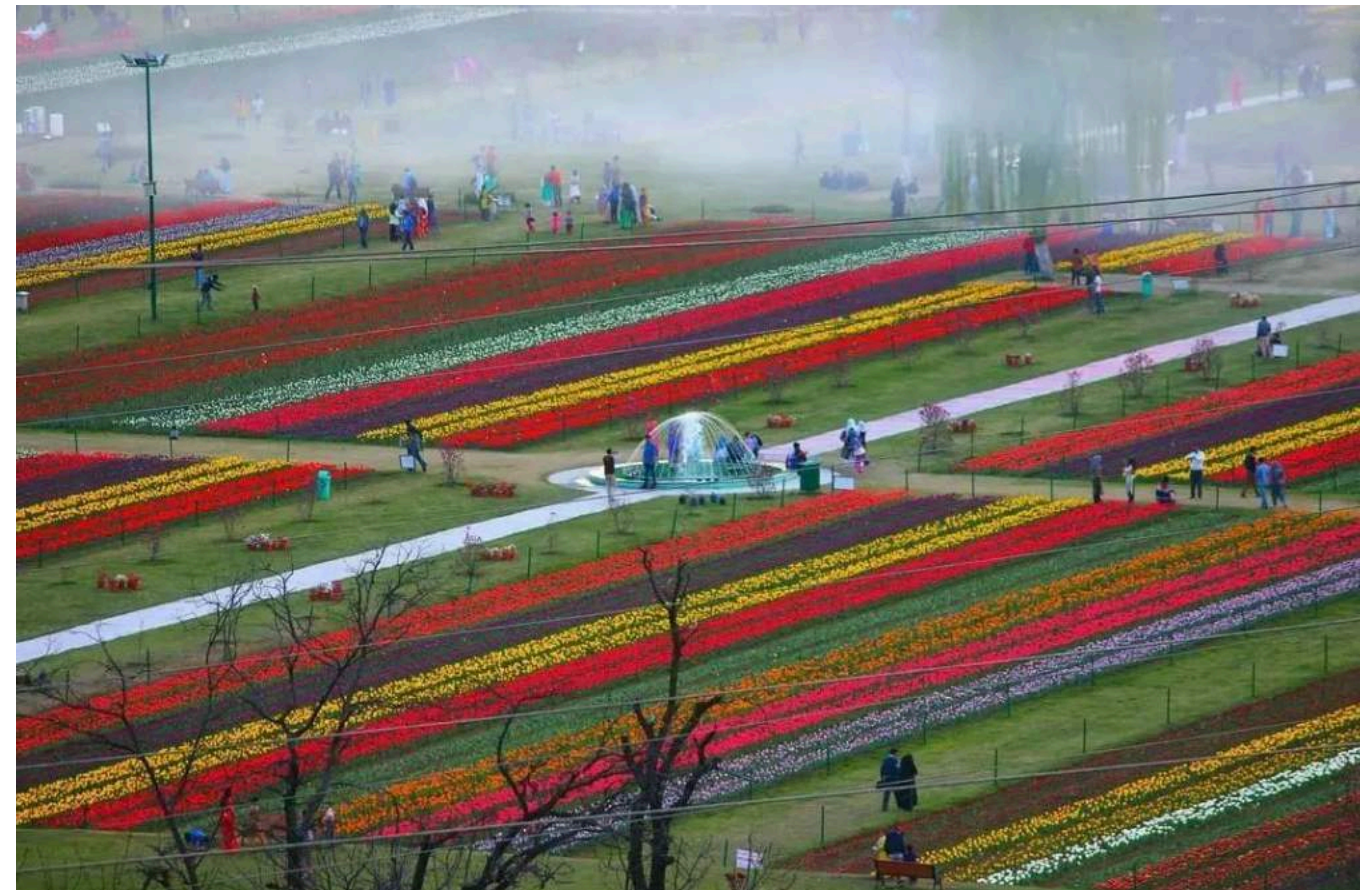
state so much.

Those who drove out the Pandits did not know they most damaged the cause of Kashmir, and helped the Indian state to the hilt.

Jagmohan perhaps arranged the logistics and helped the Pandits to move out of Kashmir at a point when they were totally unsafe, and felt threatened.

Kashmiri Muslims cannot exonerate themselves of the responsibility that the Pandits had to leave their homeland. We should accept it, apologize for it and ask the Pandits to return back to build Kashmir collectively. The terrorists who emerged as leaders always maintained that they were ready to welcome Pandits back with open arms. Shabir Shah was among the first few youngsters who, along with only a few of his workers, hounded Pandits out of Anantnag. Shah would later visit migrant camps in Jammu in solidarity with Pandits, and would issue statements asking them to return. Kashmiri Muslims by and large want the Kashmiri Pandits back. The political class has done politicking on the issue, and has never been serious about their return.

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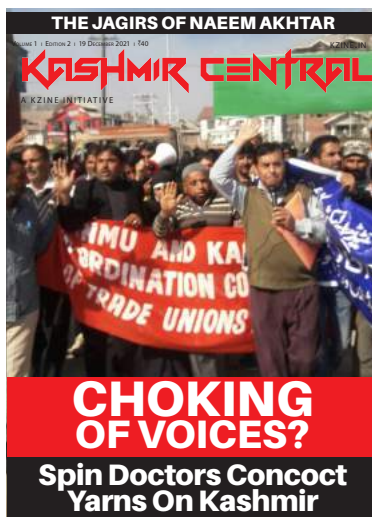
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