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**Manzoor Ahmad Reshi**  
Ph D Scholar,  
University of Kashmir  
Hazratbal, Srinagar, Jammu and  
Kashmir, India

## Kashmir Insurgency: A Review Paper

**Manzoor Ahmad Reshi**

### Abstract

Unrest in Jammu and Kashmir is not a new phenomenon because separatism has always been a popular concept in the state. Since from 1947, there has always been a strong strand of self-determination in Kashmir politics, no doubt balanced by Kashmiri leaders who have come to an agreement with New Delhi. However the discontentment among the Kashmiri Muslims could never be won over or even be accommodated by the ruling people which resulted in the revelation of insurgency and anti-national tendencies.

Right from the inception of the spontaneous eruption of a violent secessionist struggle in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, much ink has been spilled by different diplomats, academicians, scholars and journalists. With the result, a mass of literature has emerged, purporting to explain the genesis of the conflict and insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir. The paper is an analysis of important works which present the problem from different perspectives. The paper analyses the historical, social, economic, political, religious, and cultural factors underlying the insurgent response from Kashmir. This paper attempts to outline the different theories related to insurgency propounded by different psychologists and sociologists.

**Keywords:** Insurgency, Secessionism, Proxy War, Accession, Tragedy, Democracy, Secularism.

### Introduction

Kashmir, once the paradise on earth and a picnic tourist destination, has been unfortunately burning in the flames of fire for last seventeen years. The catalytic event had been the 1987 elections when the newly formed but unpopular coalition between the Indian National Congress Party and the State's ruling National Conference Party rigged the assembly elections and deprived the dissident groups of representation in the new legislature. Then, during 1988, several youths crossed the Line of Control (LOC) to the Pakistani controlled Kashmir, received training in weapons and returned to the valley well equipped for political insurgency. Mass protests occurred with regard to local issues such as increased power tariff and to the international events such as support for the *fatwa* (edict) against Salman Rushdie. The Kashmir government's violent repression of these demonstrations however worked in favour of the secessionist groups who were trying to garner local support for the cause of Azadi (freedom). Within a short span of time when the situation went bad to worse, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was brought under the President's rule in 1990, and was subjected to massive occupation by the Indian armed forces.

Right from the inception of the spontaneous eruption of a violent secessionist struggle in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, much ink has been spilled by different diplomats, academicians, scholars and journalists. As a result, a mass of literature, though written in haste, has emerged, purporting to explain the genesis of insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir. Owing to the paucity of space it is not possible to review all the works brought out on the subject so far, I have, therefore, chosen a few important works, which present the problem from different perspectives.

In order to understand the issue in a systematic way I felt it necessary to divide the corpus of literature into different distinct categories. The first segment is composed of official explanations. These are completely partisan, partial and tendentious. Knowing that they are intended for the purpose of propagating a particular philosophy relating to any matter so they could hardly be otherwise. Of such works, worth mentioning are *Jihadi's in Kashmir* by K.

**Correspondence:**  
**Manzoor Ahmad Reshi**  
Ph D Scholar,  
University of Kashmir  
Hazratbal, Srinagar, Jammu and  
Kashmir, India

Sathanathem and Sudhie Sexsana and Kashmir in *Strategic Analysis* by K. Subramaniam (published by Institute of Defence Studies).

These works revolve round the project that the militancy in Jammu and Kashmir is nothing more than Pakistan sponsored terrorism who nourishes and breeds it secretly. A step ahead to these above mentioned works is Gurmeet Kanwal's, "*Proxy War in Kashmir*" Kanwal, a senior Fellow at Indian Defence Service Association (IDSA) revolves his view round the argument of Yousuf Bondansky (Director of the US Congress Task Force, Terrorism and Unconditional War fare) who in his, *Pakistan, Kashmir and the Trans – Axis* states that "for Islamabad, the liberation of Kashmir is a sacred mission, the only task unfulfilled since the days of Ali Mohammad Jinnah". Kanwal however adds, that having failed to annex Jammu and Kashmir by force in several wars Pakistan hatched a new conspiracy for its annexation by waging a covert 'proxy war' against India through a strategy of bleeding India by a thousand cuttings.

The Pakistani perspective of Indian discrimination and denial of self-determination to Kashmir is presented by Amin Tahir in *Mass Resistance in Kashmir*, 1995 and by Mushtaq Rehman *Divided Kashmir; Old Problems for India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri people*, 1996 (Institute of Defence /Regional Studies, Islamabad).

A group of writers viewed that the Kashmir crisis has historical roots, so it is necessary to go back into the history to understand why conflict escalated in Jammu and Kashmir in 1980's. They argue that conflict has its origin in unfinished partition of 1947. Such statements may be accepted at the general level, but few analyses are specific in identifying the causal connection between historical events and more recent developments. These are *Kashmir in the Cross Fire* by Victoria Schofield, *The Origin Of A Dispute; Kashmir 1947* by Shanker Jha, *Three Compromised Nationalisms, Why Kashmir has been a Problem* by Varshney Anshutosh and *Pakistan, India and Kashmir; A Historical Review* by Cheema Pervaiz Iqbal.

Another set of works tries to seek the genesis of Kashmir crisis in the fraudulent "instrument of accession and occupation of Jammu and Kashmir State by Indian forces". British historian Alastair Lamb, in *Kashmir; A Disputed Legacy* Challenges the validity of instrument of Accession and claims that after an apparently meticulous investigation of the British archives he came to the conclusion that the instrument of Accession was not signed by Maharaja of Kashmir on 26<sup>th</sup> of Oct. 1947, a day before Indian troops arrived in the valley. Lamb in his another work, *Birth of a Tragedy; Kashmir 1947* concludes that not only was India's legal claim to state of Jammu and Kashmir "fraudulent" but that the territory's accession was the outcome of a planned conspiracy between the Indian Congress Leaders, the Kashmir government and senior British army officials.

However, Prem Shanker Jha's *Kashmir 1947, Two Rival Versions of History* offers a direct rebuttal to Lamb's recounting of the events. Jha provides counter historical material and testimonies to prove the validity of accession and opines that the Kashmir crisis is a product of power politics: The seed was sown by the British policy in the last days before the transfer of power as London tried to work out ways to safeguard what it considered to be its vital interest in the middle east and south-east Asia for its geo-strategic interests.

A second body of literature is of journalistic genre. The quality of these works is uneven. Some are remarkably honest accounts of the origin of the crisis in general and militancy in particular. While others are quite partisan, partial and anecdotal. One of the best straight forward narrative accounts of the sources of the (Kashmir) insurgency can be found in Ajit Bhattacharjea's *Kashmir; The wounded valley*, 1994. Bhattacharjea, a distinguished Journalist, traces how a series of Indian national governments showed scant regard in their dealings with the Kashmiris. This reckless disregard for the rights and privileges of Kashmir population in his view, contributed to the birth of the insurgency Bhattacharjea's view is unpretentious and direct but lacks an analytical edge. Why for example did the insurgency break out in the late 1980s and not earlier?.

Other Indian Journalists have also made useful contribution to our understanding of the sources of the insurgency. One of the better, historically grounded accounts is M. J. Akbar's, *Kashmir: Behind the Vale*. Akbar not only traces the tortured history of the state's integration into India but also accurately portrays the unscrupulous behaviour of Indian central government during the days of Indra and Rajeev Gandhi that contributed to the rise of violent separatist sentiments in the late 1980s. Akbar's account accords well with Bhattacharjea's perspective but suffer from the same limitation. He traces the sources of insurgency with care but fails to explain the timing of the rebellion.

Another highly reputed Indian Journalist of Akbar's generation Talveen Singh, in *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors* has provided a breezy account of the political chicanery that bred the insurgency. She pulls no punches in identifying the guilty men and women of Indian politics who bear much of the blame for the breakdown of the federal relationship between India and the state in 1980s. She views that 1947 Kashmir has nothing to do with the militancy at all, but the popular uprising which has at times to assume the proportions of a civil war has everything to do with miss-governance by Kashmir's rulers and serious mistakes by those who ruled from Delhi. And all of this happened not just post 1947 but post 1983. The central problem with her work is its propensity to rely on the telling anecdote rather than providing a deeper and more probing analysis.

Another Indian Journalist of some repute, Manoj Joshi, has written a compelling and breath taking account of the immediate origins of the insurgency. His book, *The Lost Rebellion: Kashmir in the Nineties* provides a remarkable picture of the mistrials world of insurgency. According to Joshi, besides partition question, Pakistan sponsored terrorism and series of political mishaps, mishandling and outright misuse of power by political parties and successive central governments with regard to Kashmir issue is main reason for Kashmir militancy. However the very cogency (regarding Kashmir insurgency) of his writing is the principal drawback of his work. What is the reader to make of Joshi's account of the precise timings of the infiltration of particular insurgent groups and the activities in the valley? Admittedly, Journalists have access to variety of sources. However, in the absence of access to these sources, one is forced to wonder how Joshi could have acquired this fine-grained knowledge of the exact activities of a range of insurgent operations.

Next to Joshi from this genre is Mrs. Malini Prathasathy; Associate editor of *'The Hindu'*. She in "Facing the realities in Kashmir" argued that "the real challenge to the India's sovereignty over Kashmir does not come from across the borders but from the continued violation of social contract with the Kashmir people." In 1947 Kashmir had acceded to India conditionally and if the accession by the Maharaja could be proved authentic, India's commitment was beyond the accession to its people.

Second to Malini is Peer Gias-ud-din. In order to analyze the genesis of militancy in Kashmir Peer in *Understanding: The Kashmiri Insurgency, 1992*, had tried to make an in-depth study of Kashmir conflict. Besides analyzing the designs of Pakistan since 1947, exposure of state leaders, their wavering attitudes (particularly of Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah on the eve of partition) and Anglo American intrigues, Peer tries much to uncover the bungling of central leadership, conditions leading to insurgency and various attempts by center to forge a politico-economic system that would damper the genuine aspirations of Kashmiris - erosion of article 370, installation of puppet regimes, denial and curbs of democratic urges and rigging of elections which he argued provide the basis for militancy and other fundamental movements in Kashmir. However, in spite of this masterly approach he seemed to have exhausted his much energy in rubbing the ulamas; as the exploiters of Kashmiri Muslims society.

Being the most vexed issue with international dimensions Kashmir crisis attracted the attention of a large number of foreign scholars. British Journalist Victoria Schofield in *Kashmir in the Cross Fire (1996)* and *Kashmir in conflict* highlights many causes such as Indian malpractices and also attributed political and economic causes to the emergence of militancy in Kashmir.

Finally, a third segment of literature on the Kashmir insurgency is of the academic variety. The quality of these analyses covers a wide spectrum. One of the first academic analysis of the Kashmir insurgency was of the Indian-American scholar Raju G. C. Thomas's edited book, *Perspective on Kashmir; The Roots of conflict in south Asia*. This collection has a large set of essays dealing with every conceivable aspect of Kashmir dispute. The principle strength of this work is its comprehensiveness as Thomas has made honest attempt to represent a range of conflicting viewpoints and analysis. No doubt the quality of some essays in the volume is uneven but the volume amounts to remain a most useful source of divergent perspectives and explanations for the origin of the Kashmir dispute and the outbreak of the insurgency.

A somewhat more theoretically self-conscious work is *Kashmir in Comparative Perspective* by Sten Widmalm, a Swedish academic. Widmalm's evidence and analysis is sound and presented in a concise fashion. He argues that the insurgency can be attributed to the restoration and the subsequent dismantling of democracy in Kashmir. He emphasizes with support from the original sources that as long as democracy performed fairly well; violent conflict in the area remained at a low level. And as political intervention from the Centre increased the incentive to resort to violence grew. Finally, this led to the widespread conflict, which broke out in 1990 after a rapid escalation in Violence in 1989. This argument is compelling no doubt, but the author minimizes the value of other factors.

Another early account of the insurgency and the larger problem of Jammu and Kashmir is Vernon Hewitt's *reclaiming the past? The Search for Political and cultural unity in contemporary Jammu and Kashmir*. Hewitt's book is a workman like effort at providing a historical account of the Kashmir problem and the origin of the insurgency. His account, which is quite fair-minded, has serious limitation i.e. it makes a scant attempt to engage the literary body of theoretical literature on ethnic violence, separatism and self-determination.

Sumantra Bose, another academic of Indian origin, has attempted to write a particularly theoretically driven account of the origins of Kashmir militancy or insurgency. In his book *The Challenge in Kashmir, Self-determination and Just Peace, 1997* Bose attributes the Crisis to the post 1947 'history of denial of democratic rights and institutions to the people of Jammu and Kashmir'. Tracing the reasons for the rupture between India and Kashmir, he says it has been caused by constant anti-democratic authoritarian policies of successive New Delhi Governments to Indian Jammu and Kashmir. He states that, the people of Kashmir had acceded to India keeping in view the secular character of Indian constitution. The constitution, which set before them, the goal of secular democracy based on justice, freedom and equality for all without any distinction. But what happened with them it was only after twenty years, when Sheikh Abdullah said, "The fact remains that Indian democracy stops short at Pathankot (the last major town in Indian eastern Punjab before the Jammu region). Between Pathan Kot and the Banihal (a. mountain pass that connects the Jammu region with Srinagar) you may have some measures of democracy, but beyond Banihal there is none. What we have in Kashmir bears some of the worst characteristic of colonial rule."

Bose at length makes it clear that the people of Indian held Jammu and Kashmir had high expectations of Indian democratic system, but it was particularly galling for them to be denied the civil liberties, democratic rights of participation and representation in the Indian Union. Besides it Bose jumped further by saying that Indian held Kashmir's Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhist may have been unhappy with this situation, but they would not take up armed struggle (with Pak support) because their ultimate allegiance and utility lies firmly with India. But for most of the Muslim population especially in the long suffering valley India's democracy had been exposed as a crude hoax by the end of 1989 and their rage spilled over in early 1990. Next but very close to Bose in explanations is Bulraj Puri. Puri's *Kashmir Towards Insurgency, 1993* tries to convey that, Kashmir insurgency was not accidental but had simmered for years before it exploded fully in the beginning of 1990. The main factors which he claims bred the outbreak are, that the democratic institutions were never allowed to acquire roots in Kashmir and the institutional opposition was not allowed to grow there. Puri states democracy in Kashmir was projected as an impossible option and demand for democracy was censured as anti-national. "It seems as if in the Kashmir, democracy and Nationalism was incompatible, as if the importance of national integration allowed no possibility of any experiment in democracy", Says Puri. This denial of democratic rights deepened the roots of alienation in the Kashmiri people and provided space for the secessionist and militant forces.

In his work, Dharendra Sharma, the Professor of Science

Policy and Director of Centre for Research and Industrial Policy Research for Asian Community New Delhi, treats Kashmir crisis as creation of Indian people who had withdrawn from their commitments, which they made with the Kashmiri people. Sharma Vehemently highlighted that, since 1947 whenever Kashmiri leaders insisted on withdraw of troops or asked for plebiscite, New Delhi used repression to silence the voice of Kashmiris. However in 1980's highly educated and ambitious new generation of Kashmir's arrived at the scene and New Delhi again imposed its own choice on Kashmiris, rigged the elections and crowned the corrupt regime to rule the state. With this the smoldering discontent reached to its climax but Indian government continued to govern the state with the help of military repression, which ultimately led to emergence and rise of militancy in the valley.

Last but most prominent to the scholarly discourse on origin of Kashmir insurgency is Sumit Ganguly's, *The crisis in Kashmir*, 1997. In exploring the democratic roots of the Kashmir crisis Ganguly applies Samuel Huntington's formula of a negative and a conflictual relationship between modernization and developments to explain the rise of militant movement in the Kashmir. Following Huntington Ganguly argues that social mobilization, unless accompanied by robust political institutions, breed's political instability. In the view of Ganguly with the expansion of growing educational attainment and media exposure a new generation of Kashmir's had now emerged. This generation is far more conscious of its political rights, privileges and political developments. According to Gaungly this generation unlike the previous one was not ready to accept everything as their lot but resorted to violence when they did not find any other way to give outlet to their discontents as happened in 1980's.

Besides the above-mentioned explanations several writers have attributed the crises to discrimination against Muslims in favour of Hindus in Government employment. The columnist and freelance Journalist Prem Shanker Jha in *Frustrated Middle Class- Roots of Kashmir's Alienation*, 1991 had argued that this imbalance is the most important underlying cause of the conflict and points out that if the problems were only that democracy has been denied in Jammu and Kashmir, the fathers of the young men leading the uprising today would have revolted much earlier. More likely Jah is referring to poor democratic records from 1947 to mid-1970's. In other words if democracy were a cause of the conflict in the eighties, the 1950's and the 1960's would have produced an even more violent uprising since there was less democracy then.

However Jha's argument can be easily refuted. If inequalities between Pandits and Muslims were the real under lying reasons why did the Muslims not revolted earlier against the Hindus, for example during 1950's or the 1960's when discrimination in some respect has been even greater than 1980's?

Keeping in view the above mentioned corpus of literature presented by cross sections of the society, it becomes clear that there is no dearth of hypotheses concerning the cause of insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir. But at the same time the controversial interpretations of different schools of thought, make it difficult for one to understand what actually lies at the root of the problem. Certainly we cannot get at the root of the problem unless we thoroughly probe into the background of those elements that blazed the trail of insurgency in Kashmir.

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