

Being National or Non National: Sheikh Abdullah's autobiography and the History of Kashmir

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BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this dissertation entitled “**Being National or Non-National: Sheikh Abdullah’s Autobiography and the History of Kashmir**” has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. V.J. Varghese, Assistant Professor, Centre for South and Central Asian Studies, School of Global Relations, Central University of Punjab. No part of this dissertation has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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ABSTRACT

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The present study encompasses a preliminary reading of Aatish-e-Chinar, the autobiography of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the most important political figure of modern Jammu and Kashmir. It is presumed here that the autobiographies as quintessentially a modern genre of expression are decisive instruments in the forging of nations, the quintessential political form of modern times. The Aatish-e-Chinar captures the trajectories of Kashmiri nation and nationalism and values that define it and the tendencies it is opposed to. The imagination of being national by Abdullah involved a simultaneous process of exalting certain attributes as national and others as non-national while placing himself at the centre of this historic nationalistic project. His autobiography stands out for its national character and faith in secularism and multiculturalism, overriding the prevalent orthodoxies. The autobiography draws us also to the national politics that made Abdullah to think in terms of remaining independent of both India and Pakistan, which has undergone transformation and change over time— the transformation of Jammu and Kashmir from a nation to a sub-nation as an administrative entity. The narrative is in conversation with its time and beyond in seeking legitimacy for the nation and its troubled historical trajectory.

(Name and signature of student)

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Chapter- 1

Introduction

Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah is considered to be the father of Kashmiri nationalism. He is undoubtedly the tallest leader of modern Kashmir who has championed the cause of Kashmir and its people, making Maulana Zaffar Ali Khan, Editor of then “Zamindar Lahore based Paper”, to name him Sher-e-Kashmir (the Lion of Kashmir). Sheikh Abdullah embodied the Kashmiri sense of patriotism, individuality and attachment to the soil. Its geographical peculiarities and relative isolation and the consequent growth and evolution of a distinctive culture specific to the land are regarded as the major determining factor of Kashmiri uniqueness and identity. Abdullah believed that Kashmir forms a distinct nation as different from India or Pakistan. It was based on such an imagination he fought for Kashmiri autonomy and democracy within Kashmir. At the same time he dismissed Pakistan as a theocratic state and the Muslim League as 'pro-prince' rather than 'pro-people' (Guha 2008: 91). Though he was firm to keep Pakistan out of the picture, he was equally firm on the demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir for his commitment to the principles of democracy and the self-determination of his nation. Abdullah's imagination of Kashmir as a distinct nation made him to argue for Kashmir a status like Switzerland, a neutral state in a volatile neighborhood defined by conflicting interests. His dream of autonomy for Kashmir brought him in conflict with Indian authorities and prolonged imprisonment and finally making the tired and ageing 'Lion of Kashmir' struck a deal with Indira Gandhi in 1974 hoping to regain some elements of the autonomy whittled away during his long years in detention (Jalil 2008). His commitment to secularism remained un-wavered and has taken up concrete social issues such as abolition of landlordism, distribution of land among the tillers, equal rights for women, over religious politicking. The politics of the 'tragic hero of Kashmir' was contentious too, as his adherence to secular politics and compromises with Indian government angered radical elements in Kashmir (Bhattacharjea 2008). He himself and the historical circumstances that fashioned him have been enormously complex. The same Sheikh Abdullah who sided with India in the conflict with Pakistan was later imprisoned by the Indian government for clamoring for autonomy. Irrespective of his valiant fight for the cause of Kashmir he was hated as much as he is adorned in the valley; he was suspected by the government of India though he has been

considered as India's man; multiple pressures impelled him to push for greater independence as well as to give up the claims of autonomy (Guha 2008, Bhattacharjea 2008). The complexity of Abdullah as a historical figure perhaps best captures complexity of the political problem of Kashmir, a chimera in contemporary South Asian politics.

Sheikh Abdullah embodies the Kashmiri feeling of being subjected to foreign rule right from the Mughal times. Kashmir and its people became just a commodity when Kashmir was purchased by Gulab Singh for 75 lakh of Rupees as per the treaty of Amritsar in 1846. The Dogra rule was seen as alien and illegitimate which provided Sheikh Abdullah space to organise the Muslims against the oppressive foreign rule. He was able to give a very powerful articulation to the thoughts and aspirations of the Kashmiri people, and fashioning a Kashmiri nation. By the time the Muslim Conference was converted into National Conference, the valley was united under his charismatic leadership, the nationalistic tendencies laid on the secular lines. The dual adherence to secularism and autonomy made him to oppose the Two Nation theory of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and acknowledged the signing of the accession with India by the autocratic Maharaja Hari Singh, with the promise of granting the special status (Bhattacharjea 2008:122). The autonomy remained an unfulfilled dream; he was arrested in 1953 and Indian government let this process to continue up to 1972, when Sheikh Abdullah showed signs of reconciliation, resulting in the Indra Abdullah Accord. By signing the accord, Abdullah gave up the demand of Self determination and gave finality to the accession with India, but got the assurances of not furthering the inroads in the special status of the state under Article 370.

The Accord of 1975 did not go well with a significant section of the Kashmiri population; so also was the case of neighbouring Pakistan. And Kashmir remains an unresolved problem even today. Though being at the centre of Kashmiri nation and politics, Sheikh Abdullah remain under-studied as a political and historical figure of modern India. More precisely, he hasn't received the attention he deserves, unlike many leaders at the national level. The methodological nationalism would be one reason which attaches lesser importance to leaders at the sub-national level. The literature available on him foregrounds his role in the

freedom movement of Kashmir and the subsequent struggle for autonomy, with competing and conflicting notions. The biography of Kashmiri nation and his own intersect and flow together in most of these narratives. However, the very autobiography of Sheikh Abdullah, namely *Aatish-e-Chinar* written originally in Urdu and published in 1984 has not come under any serious academic exploration.¹

The genre of autobiography hasn't received much of an attention till recent times in historical research due to the unreliability factor attributed to it by modernist historians. At the surface level itself, an autobiography of a political figure who is at the forefront of modern Kashmir history would be enormously useful, as it gives a narration of the time through the life of the narrator, irrespective of the "subjective" elements it contain. Every autobiography is fundamentally a record of a person's real life, lived in a particular time and place. From a considered presumption that autobiographies as historical artefacts, in their lives and afterlives, are crucial resources for understanding history, the present study make an attempt to read and historicize *Aatish-e-Chinar*.² It also presumes that the autobiographies as a modern genre of expression are decisive instruments in imagining nations. The 'self-writing' of the principal leader of Kashmiri nation and nationalism also write the contours of the imagined nation that he spearheads. The autobiography captures his subjectivities as a modernist, nationalist and secularist, which has been constantly in negotiation with each other and with religious and communitarian constrains. The attempt here, the objective of the study, is to capture the notion of nation, as an imagined political community, as enunciated by Sheikh Abdullah and represented in the autobiography. The text identify and exalt the definitive attributes of Kashmiri nation in the author's

¹Though written by the noted Kashmiri author M.Y.Taing and published after Sheikh Abdullah's death, it is considered to be the autobiography of Sheikh Abdullah. It is based on extensive interviews that the author had with Sheikh Abdullah and Taing himself acknowledged that he only acted as an amanuensis, transcribing the reminiscences of Abdullah into letters. It is written in first person. It was first published in English, an abridged and translated version, with the subtitle caption "An autobiography". Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, *Flames of the Chinar: An Autobiography*, Abridged, translated from Urdu and introduced by Kushwant Singh, New Delhi: Penguin, 1993.

² The Study draws from the original *Aatish-e-Chinar* (AeC henceforth) and its translation *Flames of the Chinar* (FC henceforth) are used simultaneously.

imagination as well as invents the others of nation, the anti-nationals, while placing the author himself at the centre of this historic nationalistic project. This endeavour of historicizing an autobiographical text in an attempt to unravel the complicated history of the Nation, which is defined by parallel (sub)national narratives of this kind, would demonstrate the heterogeneous time in which Nations live and the multiplicity of voices they cover up. The methodology adopted here is that of textual analysis with a limited amount of parallel reading of other texts and secondary literature.

The study is presented in three chapters apart from this short introduction and a concluding section. Chapter-2 is a theoretical discussion on autobiography and its usefulness in historical research. It narrates the change of mentality towards autobiography in social science research in general and historical research in particular. It also highlights the importance of autobiography as a political tool in imagining and constituting a nation, similar to the modern genre of the novel, as well as circulating the idea of a nation apart from being a valuable source of cultural history. Chapter-3 traces the evolution of Sheikh Abdullah as a political and historical figure both in the valley of Kashmir as well as in the Indian sub-continent. It highlights the important events and episodes which moulded the personality of Sheikh Abdullah and also the events and episodes which were moulded by Sheikh Abdullah himself. It turns out to be a narration of the history of modern Kashmir through its towering leader and his battle to reinvent the politics of the state on secular lines at the time when communalism engrossed the sub-continent. Chapter-4 reads the autobiography of Sheikh Abdullah, *Aatish-e-Chinar*, to see how he imagines the Kashmiri nation as an imagined political community. He defines the tenets of his nation through his autobiography and identifies the determining factors that make one national and non-national, alongside tracing the trajectory of the Kashmiri nation. The concluding Section summarises the study.

Chapter - 2

Autobiography: Writing History and Speaking to Nation

Autobiography has been holding a position of subalternity for long among various sources of modern history. As a genre it is a quintessentially a modern form of expression, as it offers possibilities of self writing to individuals. Autobiographies not only allow the author to write his/her self-history but also to write about his/her times as all individual self-writing attain its relevance from its historical situatedness. They are crucial windows to contemporary life at large in its social, political, economic, cultural and religious dimensions. The modern objectivist prejudice of demoting autobiography as just fiction has undergone change as historicity of fictions began to be emphasised over its fictionality. Besides its importance in understanding contemporary life, autobiographies are cultural tools in conversation with contemporary times and its realities. Autobiographies in that sense are crucial interventions serving political purposes as they engages with the time of its production and beyond in significant ways. As cultural artefacts of 'self writing' they are not only been fashioned by dynamics of its productive context but more importantly they can fashion and re-fashion the mentality of people and political consciousness of their times, and thereby construe new subjectivities including belongingness into nation.

The term autobiography has been derived from the three Greek words i.e., 'auto' denoting self, 'bios' denoting life and 'graphe' denoting writing. When these words are taken together its meaning is 'self life writing', which offers a brief definition to the concept of autobiography (Smith and Watson 2010: 1). The conventional understanding about autobiography views it as a personal endeavour of writing oneself with a self-centric worldview. For instance, the British poet and critic Stephen Spender cites the dictionary definition of autobiography as "the story of one's life written by himself" but at the same time underlines its inadequacy to the "world that each is to himself" (Spender cf. Smith and Watson 2010: 1). French theorist Phillipe Lejeune defined autobiography as "the retrospective narrative in prose that makes someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality"(Lejeune cf.

Smith and Watson 2010: 1). The prevalent view about autobiography is best represented in popular dictionaries and encyclopaedias. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an autobiography is “an account of a person’s life written by that person”.³ Reverso dictionary defines autobiography as “an account of a person’s life written or otherwise recorded by that person”.⁴ The Collier’s Encyclopaedia defines autobiography as “a form of biography in which the subject is also the author; it is generally written in the first person and covers most or an important phase of the author’s life” (Thakore 2010: 3). Autobiography’s embeddedness in history and its role in representing as well as fashioning history have not been paid much attention in the modernist understandings of autobiography. It was also seen as a single and autonomous genre. According to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, autobiography is not a single unitary genre or form; rather it is a historically situated practice of self-representation, where the narrators selectively engage their lived experience through personal storytelling (Smith and Watson 2010: 18). The historical importance of autobiography emanates from its very character as a product of history, and as a political device in conversation with the present and the future.

The word autobiography first appeared in the review of Isaac D’Israeli’s *Miscellanies* by William Taylor of Norwich in 1797 in the English periodical the *Monthly Review*, but its next recorded use, in its present sense is often ascribed to Robert Southey which he did in 1809 (Smith and Watson 2010: 1-2). Autobiographies may be based entirely on the writer’s memory⁵ and the memory, needless to say, is selective and encompasses essential and interesting details from the past which the author decides to give voice.⁶ The modernist incredulity towards autobiography relies heavily on such personalization of history and selective remembering/forgetting alongside the so called chances of exaggeration. This is the ground on which biographers are given greater credence as they rely on a wide variety of documents and viewpoints unlike autobiographies. The result

³ <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/autobiography> (Accessed on 20 January 2013).

⁴ <http://dictionary.reverso.net/english-definition/autobiography> (Accessed on 20 January 2013).

⁵ <http://www.goodreads.com/genres/autobiography> (Accessed on 20 January 2013).

⁶ Memory and remembering presupposes forgetting. It is the possibility of forgetting that makes it possible to remember certain things and memory draw its significance from the reality of forgetting. (See Araujo and dos Santos 2009, Soyinka-Airewele 1999, Perks and Thompson 1998).

was relegation of autobiographies to a position of nowhere- neither there nor here. At the same time it attained a dual role in the field of knowledge as it is deemed to act both as literature as well as history. It occupied a liminal space, without a space entirely in either but potentially both. The scholars from the fields of History and Literature used to gain inferences from autobiographies, but without granting recognition for the subject as a reliable genre by assuming a calculated distance. James Olney rightly related the situation when he said that earlier autobiography was “a kind of stepchild of the history and the literature, with neither of those disciplines granting it full recognition” (Olney cf. Wallach 2006: 446). The alienation of the genre apparently began to end with the appearance of the critical approach/theory, especially with the emergence of Georges Gusdorf’s influential 1956 essay, “Conditions and limits of autobiography.” Since then the scholarly interest on autobiographies has increased and they began to occupy positions of pivotal importance in studies on identity, subjectivity and nation. The changed context also allowed the historians to use autobiographies as primary sources, though often without a supportive theoretical framework (Wallach 2006: 446). As the subsequent pages would demonstrate autobiographies are retrieved from the positions of subalternity to the centre stage not only as decisive representations of history but also as cultural tools aimed at influencing the course of history.

Autobiography for History

At a general level, the importance of autobiography for the study of history is acknowledged. Anyone who conduct historical research knows well how much important are the personal accounts pertaining to different times and spaces for reconstructing and understanding events, personalities and cultures of the past (Swindells 1995). The Autobiography being the narration of the author’s personal day today happenings, it is pointed out that indirectly enriches our historical understanding, as the writing is consciously or unconsciously brings forth intricate information of the contemporary times, which we people cannot get from any other historical source. The personal narrations and life stories involved in autobiographies can bring forth crucial information on the social and cultural history of the time. But it is cautioned that one has to remain very careful while dealing with autobiography, because it allegedly represents an amalgamation of

both fact and fiction and hence the fidelity of the genre has always been suspected in historical research. At the same time it is acknowledged that competent autobiographies possess the power to bring forward credible and hitherto unknown information or contribute an altogether new dimension to the prevalent understanding about the time of its production (Wallach 2006: 446). In this regard Roy Pascal calls true autobiography as “a spiritual experiment, a voyage of discovery” both for the author as well as reader (Pascal cf. Howarth 1974: 363-364). This approach presupposes a dichotomy of good and bad autobiographies for the purpose of reconstructing history, with a simultaneous call to the historians to place it under an objectivist suspicion. Right from the beginning of the discipline of history there has been advocacy for objectivity as its ruling principle. This has been a defining feature of modern systems of knowledge (Iggers 2005, Kragh 1987). As autobiography is considered to be invariably subjective, the modernist conventions of history disallowed the entry of autobiography in the field of history (Wallach 2006: 447). Autobiography was seen as a kind of chaotic semi genre which does not possess the qualities to be subjected to objective historical analysis (James Olney cf. Wallach 2006: 446). A. J. P. Taylor was unambiguous in his conviction that “written memoirs are a form of oral history set down to mislead historians” (Taylor cf. Thompson 2000: 121). The strong adherence to objectivity in history is traced back to the so called Berlin revolution in the discipline of History inaugurated by the ideas of Leopold Ranke. Ranke and his associates, in tune with the modern notions of scientific knowledge, have adjudicated objectivity as the supreme morality of history. The methodology of history as emerged from Rankean ideas was based on classical philology with its maxim: check the source for trustworthiness and against its own context (Breisach cf. Yilmaz 2007: 179). This school emphasised the uniqueness of the events in historical research, which should be substantiated by the evidence, principally from archival and other primary sources and not in their universality. The secondary sources as a result were accorded lesser credence than the primary sources in its religious crave for facts. It was asserted that the purpose of history is neither to judge the past nor to predict the future, but to say how it really was. This modernist commonsense of history as beckoned by the Rankean school has nourished a clear distinction between history and the interpretative models of literature. Being the founder of historical positivism and the prophet of value-free objectivity, Ranke’s main

concern was to establish correct canons for scientific history by emphasizing the priority of facts over concepts and imagination (Krieger 1977, Pasamar 2011). J.B.Burry, a staunch advocate of objectivist history, was truly reflecting the spirit of the age when he asserted scientific status of history in 1903:

History is a science; no less no more....History is not a branch of literature. The fact of history, like the facts of geology or astronomy, can supply material for literary art....but to clothe the story of human society in a literary dress is no more the part of a historian as a historian, than it is the part of an astronomer to present in an artistic shape the story of the stars (Evans 1997: 23-26).

The Rankean tradition which became the dominant trend in modern historical research obviously leaves no space for genres like autobiography either to be considered part of the discipline of history or a credible source for reconstructing history. However, the hyper scientific approach to history began to be questioned during the time of Ranke itself in significant ways. The German historian and philosopher, William Dilthey, in his book *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (vol.1, 1883), argued that human sciences, which he defined as the sciences of the man and the society, should not behave or adopt the positivist methods of natural sciences (Dilthey cf. Moran 2002: 108). Dilthey was certain that the world can never be interpreted objectively because there is no pure or absolute knowledge outside of human experience (Dilthey cf. Moran 2002: 108).

Autobiography occupied a special place in Dilthey's argument. According to him, autobiography was the highest and most instructive form in which the understanding of life confronts us (Dilthey cf. Thompson 2000: 54). To Dilthey the selective nature of autobiography as well as the influence of the observation was not a disadvantage, instead these features of memory gives autobiography meaning and brings it closer to history (Popkin 2005: 18). Autobiography was a genuine source of knowledge which offers highest form of insight into human experience (Popkin 2005: 18). In tune with the prevailing great men theory of history Dilthey also believed that great autobiographies represents the highest expressions of historical understanding as all human beings are creations of

history (Popkin 2005: 18). This also presupposes the privileging of elite/great autobiographies and ordinary/everyday lives being inconsequential and trivial.

Influenced by the ideas of Dilthey and a few early thinkers like Vico,⁷ Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) further reiterated the point, when he argued that history was necessarily inaccurate and subjective area of knowledge. It was Croce who brought present in the past when declared that 'all history is the contemporary history' which means that the history will be always written in the light of the concerns of the present and is shaped by the ideological tools available to the historian during his/her time (Carr 1990: 20-21). The ground on which the objectivist history relies on has been wrecked by the American historian Carl Becker when he denied the existence of autonomous and value-free facts by declaring that 'the facts of history do not exist for any historian till he creates them' (Carr 1990: 21). The English philosophers of history like R.G. Collingwood and George Trevelyan also conceded that history could never be wholly scientific or objective (Collingwood 1956). Trevelyan has criticised the Rankean school for its "Germanising hierarchy" that presented history as a mere 'chronicle of bare facts arranged on scientific principle and suggested that it was actually a much more complex activity combining scientific imaginative and literary faculties (Evans 1997: 24-26). Needless to say that these formulations contributed to the entry of autobiography as valid source of history into the study of history.

The critique to hyper-scientific Rankean philosophy was further popularised by E.H.Carr in his influential book *What is History?*. Carr has been unambiguous in his conviction that there is nothing called pure facts waiting for the call of historians and "the necessity to establish these basic facts rests not on any quality of the facts themselves, but on an a priori decision of the historian" (Carr 1990: 11). The objectivist and empiricist certainty on the autonomous nature of facts has been totally rejected by Carr when he stated that "the facts speak only when the historian call on them; it is he who decides to which facts to give floor, and in what order or context.....a fact is like a sack - it won't stand up till you've put something in it" (Carr 1990: 11). The disjuncture that got underway with Dilthey

⁷ See (Pompa 2006)

has gained wide currency by the time of E.H. Carr with erudite and conviction. It questioned the very foundation of the scientific and objective paradigm of history as these thinkers denied the existence of facts independent of historians, and a historian independent of the constraints of his/her time.⁸ It is certain that few historians seem to have fully endorsed Dilthey's claim that autobiography provides greater insight into human experience than the history or the argument of Kenneth Barkin that the historians and the autobiographers are of the same type as they engage in almost the same enterprise (Barkin cf. Popkin 2005: 19). The difference in techniques of production is neither completely blurred nor overlooked. The claims of academic history as an objective exercise of relating past as it was and the capability of historian as dispassionate judge working on pure facts at his disposal have been seriously questioned. This resulted in an increased amount of understanding about the subjective terrains in which both history and autobiography are located and not about the sameness of equivalence of both the genres though.

Meanwhile, history has been undergoing transformation in terms of content and focus. The emergence of Annales School significantly contributed to the diversification of history by liberating it from the narrow emphasis on individuals of political or constitutional importance, to encompass on social, economic and cultural aspects of history.⁹ This furthered the possibilities of relying up on soft sources, among which autobiography hold a respectable position (Moran 2002: 110-111). The new attempts to write histories against embedded elitism have further foregrounded the significance of autobiography as an important tool for manufacturing history. It becomes a handy instrument in the endeavours aimed at giving voice to the unheard sites and subjects of history as seen in new histories like women/feminist histories, subaltern histories and histories from below (Bhattacharya 1983, Chaturvedi 2000, Ludden 2001, Prakash 1994, Chakrabarty 2002, Sreekumar 2009, Brownley and Kimmic 1999). The histories of marginalities have thus brought much respect to autobiographies as

⁸ According to E. H. Carr, history is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past (Carr 1990: 30).

⁹ Annales School which started in France in the 1920s and strengthened by the mid century has taken history to a concept of total history, which called for studying every aspect of human life including the history of mentalities (Burgiere 2009, Harsgor 1978, Paret 2009)

they significantly take into account the feelings and the prejudice of historical actors alongside multiple layers of oppression.

The formulations of Hayden White, informed by the so called linguistic turn and postmodern thinking, contributed significantly to understand history as a field of knowledge involving the problems of narrativity. The publication of *Metahistory* (1973) has called the historians to confront the narrative nature of the historical writing and thereby problematised the relation between the history and literature (White 1975). White was clearer in assimilating history to fiction and at the same time diminishes the divide between autobiography and history which earlier historians have created. According to him, the historical contents written by historians are much more invented and the form of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences (White 1987). White thus took a radical position that all forms of narrative are equally fictional. This does not indicate absence of truth or incapability of conveying 'truth', but that all truth and claims to truth are discursive (White 1975, 1978, 1987). Though White has not explicitly addressed the state of autobiography in his theoretical writings, but arguably his formulations about the narrative character of history and its similarity to fiction apply equally to autobiography (White cf. D. Popkin 2005: 34). These new insights invalidated the subjectivity alleged upon autobiography by conventional historians as the very practice of history is not free from problems of narration, its subjective or ideological preoccupations.

After 1980s, there has been a tremendous change regarding the position and place of autobiography, with the emergence of 'New Historicism' as a school of literary and cultural criticism.¹⁰ New Historicism in simple terms is a method based on "parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts, usually of the same historical period" (Barry 2010: 166). Catherine Gallagher, an exponent of the school, explains New Historicism as "reading literary and non-literary texts as constituents of historical discourses that are both inside and outside of texts". Gallagher further emphasised that the practitioners of new historicism "generally

¹⁰ The term 'New Historicism' was coined by American critic Stephen Greenblatt in his book *Renaissance self fashioning; from More to Shakespeare* (1980), Greenblatt 2005.

posit no hierarchy of cause and effect as they trace the connections among texts, discourses, power, and the constitution of subjectivity” (Gallagher cf. from Colebrook 1997: 26).

New Historicist turn is important as it focuses on both literature and history without privileging any of these over the other, producing a sense of what Louis Montrose calls ‘the historicity of texts’ and ‘the textuality of history’ (Montrose 1989: 20). By historicity of texts, he means to suggest the cultural specificity; the social embedment that the texts are having. By textuality of history, he meant that we have no access to a full and authentic past, so we have to rely on the surviving textual traces of the contemporary times. This school of thought thus bridges the gap between the history and literary criticism in significant ways. Stephen Greenblatt rightly argues that it challenged the tradition of treating literary texts a self contained, having formal and thematic unity alongside rejecting the traditional approach to literary history, with its assumption that the historical material is merely secondary, a useful background to the main business of elucidating the text, and that this background can be understood as unified and consistent, a stable point of reference, beyond contingency, to which literary interpretation can surely refer (Greenblatt cf. Moran 2002: 124).

New Historicism therefore called for a new approach to read all the textual traces of the past with same vigour and attention as the traditionally conferred only on literary texts (Greenblatt cf. Moran 2002:124). It emphasised the necessity of dealing with both conventional literary sources and non-fictional forms as traces of subjectivities are deeply embedded in both the historical accounts as well as in the literary sources, underlining the imperative of reading them side by side. Needless to say, autobiography along with all other literary/self creations began to be treated as pivotal in historical research in the new intellectual context generated by the insights of New Historicist thought.

Autobiography and National Imaginary

The role of autobiographies in moulding national consciousness and binding people in the thread of a nation has not captured much academic

attention. Ever since Benedict Anderson's influential conceptualisation of nation as imagined communities, nation has an important problem of research to the level of it becoming a truism.¹¹ For Anderson, nation is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign (Anderson 1991: 6). It is imagined because the nationalistic spirit does not make the people only self-conscious, but it invents the nations where they do not exist (Gellner cf. Anderson 1991: 6). The making of a community of people who imagine themselves as homogeneous in significant ways and being felt as bound together by simultaneity of action is central to the emergence of nation. The imaginative dimension of nation is foregrounded by Seton Watson, for whom nation means the emergence of the feelings of communion among the significant number of people in a community most of which do not know each other, but still in the minds of each lives the image of their communion and this feeling of communion may be translated as imagination. I.e. imagination of nation (Watson cf. Anderson 1991:6).

At the same time it should be acknowledged that the process of constructing and consolidating a national identity is not the result of a single enterprise, but is an amalgamation of various aspects. It involves "the development of behaviors, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate history and culture, concretize and protect the present, and insure the future identity and independence of the nation".¹² Central to the project of forging a nation is certainly a collective imagination of finding homogeneity within the community and defining it against its exterior other, as Anderson has rightly pointed out. Such an imagination is essentially modern and it was through different institutional forms and tools through which such a collective imagination is engendered for forging a national community (Anderson 1991, Chatterjee 1991). Among the major institutional forms through which the imagined community came to acquire concrete shape, "print-capitalism" assumes pivotal importance. It produces a sense of simultaneity through cultural artifacts like novel and media like newspapers contributing to the formation of a national community with

¹¹ See for instance Bhabha 1990, Chatterjee 1991, Pandian 2001, Menon 2005, Guru 2011.

¹² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation-building> (Accessed on 05 June 2012).

common interests between geographically scattered and socially and economically divided populations (Anderson 1991, Holden 2003). The construction of nation through imaginary affinity thus involves significant amount of narration through which not only commonality are forged and circulated, alongside tracing the origin of nation from a primordial past and projecting its full realization in the future. Anderson gave novel a place of high importance in generating this modern imaginary affinity as he underlined the coevalness of novel and nation (Anderson 1991, Menon 2005). The role of autobiographies in forging nations has not been discussed as in the case of novel. Autobiographies arguably have more compelling significance as it can play a crucial role in forging nation as an imagined community. However, the role of national autobiographies in imagining anti-colonial nationalisms, Nehru's Autobiography being some sort of paradigmatic narrative, has not completely missed academic scrutiny (Holden 2005, 2003). Nehru's autobiography took pains to imagine a new nation based on imagined democracy and social justice alongside tracing a cultural unity from time immemorial. The coevalness of unity and diversity defined his imagined India.

Anderson's project of conceptualizing nation has given credence to modern genres of literature like novel in imagining nation and circulating that imagination across. The genres like autobiography could also do the same with some difference. As Philip Holden rightly argued the national autobiographies imagined the nation as not so much a community, but as an individual, newly liberated from the incarcerations of colonialism, ready now to act with autonomy in a newly constituted international public sphere (Holden 2003). The nationalist autobiographies like that of Nehru have been mapping the individual onto national story and involving in a benign act undertaking disciplinary action of the nationalist movement on the chaos of the nation (Holden 2005: 89). Such popular genres alongside newspapers helped to disseminate national languages, consciousness, and ideologies across a broad landmass, previously unconnected by any conception of shared experience or identity (Anderson 1991: 6-7). The formulation of Benedict Anderson that nations were not the determinate products of the given sociological conditions such as language, race, religion; but are imagined into existence, has brought a paradigmatic shift in the study of nations and nation-

states. For him the nations forged across the world lives in homogeneous empty time, cultural and social time of modernity and capital.

Partha Chatterjee's critique to Benedict Anderson has been primarily due to his refusal to subscribe to the idea of homogeneous empty time even when he agrees to the idea that nation as a category was a European import. Chatterjee objected the argument that idea of nation traveled from the West in modular forms to the rest of world including Asia and Africa (Chatterjee 1991: 24-25). The Euro-centric totalizing universal history of the modern world as embodied in Anderson's formulation, according to Chatterjee fails to consider the dynamics of the anti-colonial nationalism and imagining of nation in the colonies. Partha Chatterjee states:

History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized (Chatterjee-II 1999: 5).

For Chatterjee, the molding of nation in colonies like India was far from mimicking the European modular forms. He drew a distinction between political nationalism and nationalism as such, and demonstrated how anti-colonialist nationalism in India produced its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before beginning their political battle with the imperial power (Chatterjee 1991: 2005). This was achieved through a calculated bifurcation of social institutions and practices into material/outer and spiritual/inner domains. While the nation conceded the superiority of the West in the material domain of economy, statecraft, science and technology, it preserved the spiritual domain as the domain of national culture- that of tradition and cultural identity where it claimed sovereignty and exclusivity (Chatterjee 1991: 26-27). The middle-class national elites first imagined the nation into being in the spiritual dimension and then readied it for political contest in the material domain (Chatterjee-II 1999: 6). Chatterjee argued that "the greater one's success in imitating Western skills in the

material domain, the greater the need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture is a fundamental feature of anti-colonial nationalism in Asia and Africa" (Chatterjee-II 1999:6).

Chatterjee's intervention into the debate with insights from the specific case of India has emphasized the fact that modernity and nation in colonized locations were not caricatures of Western modular Nation, but it was the colonial difference that defines the nations in these locations (Chatterjee 1991: 26). He also radically question the very notion of empty homogeneous time not only because of the disjuncture of time between the Western and non-Western worlds also because of the heterogeneity of time within nations. He points to the inherent contradictions of nation when he says, "people can only imagine themselves in empty homogeneous time; they do not live in it. Empty homogeneous time is the utopian time of capital" (Chatterjee 2005: 927). He foregrounds the experiences of women and dalits within nation to drive the point home that Indian nation lives in a heterogeneous time (Chatterjee 2005, 1991).¹³

Chatterjee's conceptualization is crucial in understanding nation making in the context of countries like India. Firstly, it became apparent that imagining nation and its commonalities are deeply political. The constituting elements of the imagined nation involve a selective process in which dominant group's interests would be represented most. This also would mean that anything can be invoked as integral components of the nation as much as anything could be pushed to oblivion. Nation in that sense would be a product of selective imagination. Secondly, the community emerging out of such a selective imagination would not be an inclusive one, nor it represents the aspirations of everyone. The voices that could be heard and reproduced in the age of mechanical reproduction enabled with print and visual capitalism of today would only gain circulation and currency. In such a situation imagination of the elite gets paraphrased as nation and majority would be fixed recipients. Thirdly, the nation thus formed through selective imagination and imperfect participation could only offer heterogeneous time and

¹³ MSS Pandian and Gopal Guru have joined this debate from the point of view of dalits (Pandian 2001, Guru 2011).

unequal entitlements to its citizens. Reading nation from autobiographies has to necessarily engage with these complexities- the problems of national imaginary.

Political Autobiographies and Sub nationalities

The affiliation and even discontents of each individual to his/her nation and the manner in which nation is imagined may be unraveled from his/her autobiography. When the nation is treated as a dispersed category one may have to confront with such a plethora of life-stories, self-writings of the nation. However, as already pointed out, constructing nations is embedded in power and it involves centralizing tendencies. Reading the autobiographies of political leaders who were at the forefront of nationalist/sub-nationalist movement would be a useful to identify such centralizing tendencies. The lives of the author and the nation largely move together in such autobiographies to the extent of merging each other. Such autobiographies are either memories of moulding a national consciousness or attempts to forge nation by addressing the imagined fellow nationals. They strive to create new social imaginary for the nation and personify national sovereignty (Holden 2003: 2).¹⁴ Such autobiographies finds many after-lives in the course of time in consolidating and sustaining the nation, particularly on occasions of crisis for nation by constantly appealing to the nationalist sentiments of the people in order to reify the same.

The autobiography of Nehru is often cited as an example where the story of an individual and nation merge (Holden 2003, 2005). It has been seen successful in carefully mapping the individual onto the story of nation (Holden 2005). Nehru's text has also become a paradigmatic narrative for similar autobiographies by anti-colonial nationalist leaders in other countries.¹⁵ It embodies an intentional narrative

¹⁴ 'Social imaginary' is a concept proposed by Charles Taylor, by which he meant "the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations." See (Taylor 2004: 23).

¹⁵ Philip Holden points out that Nehru's autobiography became a model for a series of national autobiographies written by the leaders of nations emerging from Colonialism, including Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana and Kenneth Kaunda's Zambia Must Be Free. Its influence is seen later in the century in Nelson R. Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom and Lee Kuan Yew's retrospective The Singapore Story (Holden 2005: 89).

strategy aimed at disciplining the nation over cacophony of the imagined nation (Holden 2005: 89-90). It imagines not only the autonomy of the individual while being the "historian of himself" but also of the nation in the postcolonial international public sphere (Holden 2005: 90, 100). Nehru's autobiography has been a consistent resource to reinforce the nation, with its imagined fundamental characters of syncretism, tolerance and unity in diversity, whenever postcolonial India has confronted with counter-nationalist or radical sub-nationalist tendencies. The autobiographies of contemporary nationalist leaders also would serve the same purpose, as nation as an imagination needs to be reinforced time and again particularly under challenges from within in the form of growing sub-national consciousness. National autobiographies from time to time allow the nation to find its after-lives by re-imagining and re-building at moments of legitimization crisis. Autobiographies as a medium have strong appeal among the people and the creative autobiographer's use of symbols, literary language, irony, metaphors, and allegory which enables him/her more accurately to describe how a complex historical reality looked, smelled, sounded, and felt (Wallach 2008: 55).

The study of autobiography of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, written in the early 1980s with a strong national/sub-national consciousness, assumes tremendous importance in this regard. Sheikh Abdullah, the political leader of Kashmiri nationalism, has written/dictated his autobiography at a time when Kashmir was undergoing turbulence and hence has been an important resource to understand how Kashmiri nation has been imagined and how it has been reiterated at the time of a crisis by amalgamating his story with that of the nation. His autobiography has acted as tool to take forward his mission of gaining autonomy for the Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian constitution, and after his death his autobiography became the referential document within the political scenario of Jammu and Kashmir even when his political stature has arguably undergone significant transformation. Such autobiographies are dominated by the writer's "point of view," and attempts to translate that into that of the nation (Weintraub 1975: 824). The decision to write/dictate an autobiography by Sheikh Abdullah towards the fag-end of his life, has been enormously important, as autobiographies converse with the present and future in an attempt to make continuous appeal to the future generations (Eakin 1985: 5). Hence it is just not a

source of understanding Kashmiri (sub)nation and its diverse imaginative constituents and a base for the subsequent (sub)national fiction, but more importantly it is an important tool of political communication aimed at influencing the course of history. Political/national autobiographies are powerful means of persuasion, wherein not only imagined nation takes its rhetoric shape in an attempt to influence the audience to identify with the speaker/author (Gray 1998). Sheikh Abdullah's autobiographical renderings assume significance when it is read as an attempt to address the imagined nation in order to reinforce and reproduce it.

Chapter - 3

Making of Sheikh Abdullah: Nationalism and Moderation

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah is considered to be the father of Kashmiri nationalism and arguably the most dominant political figure of the modern history of Jammu and Kashmir. He remained immensely popular in Kashmir not only during his lifetime but also afterwards, though not free from political controversies in tune with the defining feature of South Asian politics (Vashisth 1968:1). His political self was fashioned under competing notions of nationalism in Kashmir—ethnic, religious and secular- enabling him to make his version of Kashmiri nation which was based on "equality of rights of all citizens irrespective of their religion, color, caste, and class."¹⁶ He was visibly caught in between two hostile nations, multiple religious communities and conflicting affinities in his battle for forging Kashmiri nationalism and pragmatic political considerations in his struggle for the autonomy and self-determination of Kashmir. His choice to remain moderate and independent by not yielding to Pakistan and not yielding completely to India has given him a turbulent political life. He fought for the rights as well as for the independence of his state, which ultimately resulted in his victory for gaining a semi-autonomous status within the Indian union for Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁷ His moderation and secularist predilections have provided political legitimacy to his Kashmiri nationalist movement though it earned him enmity not only from the Indian and Pakistani sides but also from certain factions in Kashmir itself.

Education and Politics

Sheikh Abdullah was born on 5 December, 1905, in a village namely Soura, which is now a crowded suburb close to Srinagar, the capital city of Jammu and Kashmir. His father passed away two weeks before his birth. His father, Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim, started with a small business of trading in Kashmiri shawls and earned his family a middle class status as he turned his business into a

¹⁶“Mohammad Abdullah,” in Encyclopedia of World Biography, http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Sheikh_Muhammad_Abdullah.aspx (Accessed on 5 February 2013).

¹⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/958/Sheikh-Muhammad-Abdullah> (Accessed on 17 December 2012).

medium scale enterprise through his persistence and hard work (Flames of the Chinar – henceforth FC: 3).¹⁸ The death of his father has created tension within the family as his stepbrothers who were elder and having control over the family resources creating troubles within the family particularly for his mother, Khairunnissa, which snatched the happiness of childhood from Sheikh Abdullah (FC: 4).¹⁹ Being part of a middle class family, Sheikh Abdullah started helping his brothers in their business in his early age itself which provided him early lessons of social life and chances of forming his social attitudes. He developed sense of compassion to fellow human beings and remained sensitive to the sufferings of the common people right from his childhood. Sheikh Abdullah himself recollects an incident in which he was sent for the recovery of the moveable property from a weaver of Ganderbal with the court decrees, as the latter owed money to his family. But moved by seeing the weaver's miserable condition, Abdullah set fire the court decrees and returned home. His brothers were visibly angry at his act as he came back empty handed and also destroying the legal papers, but they could not condemn his action (FC: 4-5).

The education and thinking of the Sheikh Abdullah was influenced by the political milieu prevailing under the Dogra rule (Bhattacharjea 2008: 11). In tune with the usual practice, Abdullah received his early education at the traditional school or Maktab, where he learned the recitation of the Quran and basic Persian texts. Akhun Mubarak Shah, his teacher at the Maktab, with his Sufi temperament made an impact on Abdullah's worldview by instilling the spirit of tolerance, peace and syncretism.²⁰ Later on he was admitted to the government High School in Srinagar and after passing the Punjab University matriculation examination, he joined Sri Pratab College, Srinagar, for an FSc with an intention of going to medical school. After completing the intermediate science examination with a healthy percentage, Sheikh Abdullah was hoping to get the assistance from the state government. It was the usual practice during those days on the part of the

¹⁸ FC used here is the English version abridged, translated from Urdu and introduced by Khushwant Singh, originally published in 1993. The 1995 edition of the same is used here.

¹⁹ Khairunnissa was his father's third wife. The two earlier wives of him died leaving behind three sons and two daughters altogether (FC: 4).

²⁰ Sheikh Abdullah acknowledges the role of this early education in the formation of him – the eternal truths of Quran gave him peace and right path throughout his life (FC: 5-6).

state government of providing assistance to the needy and brilliant students for higher education. The hopes of the Sheikh Abdullah did not materialize as he found his name missing from the list and this was for the first time when Sheikh Abdullah personally faced the discrimination from the part of the government, arguably for being 'insolent and disobedient' Muslim (FC: 7). According to Ajit Bhattacharjea, this was an episode which put Sheikh Abdullah on to the track of politics (Bhattacharjea 2008: 22).

As his dream of joining the Medical College was broken, he joined the Islamia College, Lahore for his graduation. During his stay at Lahore, Sheikh Abdullah was deeply influenced by Allama Iqbal and other politicians of the time and was moved by the pitiable conditions of the Kashmiris in Lahore who has got the nickname of Hato. Therefore his aspiration for fighting a political battle with the Dogra regime was getting stronger which we can access from the commitment he had given to the two exiled leaders of Kashmir, Khawaja Noor Shah Naqshbandi and khawaja Saduddin Shawl, when he retorted, "[L]et the time come,.....God willing we will show our worth" (FC: 17). After the completion of the course from the Punjab University, Lahore in 1928, he enrolled himself in the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), from where he did his Masters in Chemistry in 1930. During his study at AMU and after completing his MSc, Abdulla suffered discrimination for being a Muslim. If it was in the form of denial of scholarship in AMU, it was in the form of denying opportunity to study abroad after completing Masters due to the norm of age limit imposed on Muslim students for getting state support for studying abroad (FC: 10).

The communal discrimination he suffered in his personal life during his education and being coming under the influence of the ideas of leading philosopher, poet and politician i.e. Dr. Allama Iqbal at Lahore (Kaul 1985: 10) and other prominent Muslim leaders like Maulana Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Maulana Shaukat Ali and others at Aligarh during his study period, shaped his political vision (Sharma and Bakshi 1995: 3). This made him think broadly and his political vision got broadened and secularized even while suffering communal discrimination.

Under the Dogra rule, the people of the valley were mostly barred from the opportunities of trade, health, education, employment, industry as well as agriculture due to which they remained backward when the rest of the world was approaching towards the modernization (Chandra 1985: 39). The top most positions in the government services were reserved for the favourites of the Maharaja which were mostly non-Muslims (Thorner 1948: 174). The system of *begar*²¹ that had been officially banned in 1893 was still prevailing within the valley. The peasants were harshly taxed which make the life of the people very pitiable. The textile industry was taxed at the rate of 85 percent; the Muslims were kept aloof from the administrative sector (Pampori 1992: 70), which was dominated by the Pandits who were notoriously corrupt and avaricious. (Lamb 1993: 83-84). During the first five years rule of Hari Singh, out of twenty five jagirs only two were allotted to the Muslims who formed the majority of the state (Chandra 1985: 39). So this uncaring attitude towards the Muslim masses from the part of the administration made them to groan under several disabilities and neglect (Vashisth 1968: 20). Sir Albion Banerji,²² after resigning from the post of Prime Ministership, while highlighting the conditions of the Muslims of the Valley in a press statement said:

Jammu and Kashmir State is laboring under many disadvantages with a large Mohammedan population absolutely illiterate laboring under poverty and very low economic condition of living in the villages and practically governed like dumb driven cattle. There is hardly any public opinion in the state. As regards the press, it is practically non-existent...(Pampori 1992: 71).

As Sheikh Abdullah himself recounts it, it was the event of Sir Albion Banerji's resignation from the post of Prime Ministership of Jammu and Kashmir in 1929 that provided him the immediate provocation to enter into public sphere and political work. Abdullah issued a press statement in Lahore in protest to the

²¹ 'Begar' was the name given to forced labour, which was utilised in absence of the transport to carry essential commodities into or out of the valley, as it requires a lot of human power. For this forced labour, the Kashmiris were not paid (Bamzai 1962: 671).

²² Sir Albion Banerji was seen as a conscientious and enlightened administrator who wanted to end the oppression towards the common people. He was particularly concerned about the fact that there was no rapport between government and the majority Muslim community. As Maharaja opposed his approach he resigned from the position of Prime Minister (FC: 16).

conditions of the common people in Jammu and Kashmir and countering the arguments of some 'loyalist' Muslims of the Maharaja Hari Singh to the Muslim Outlook in Lahore delineating the reality of happenings in Kashmir. The atmosphere was charged and the political milieu of Jammu and Kashmir has reached a stage where people were at a brink of an outburst. As Abdullah himself felt people were in need of a leader who will act as a path finder to channelize their anger and resentment against the Dogra regime for its discriminatory practices and policies to a firm political mobilization. Sheikh Abdullah state in his autobiography:

The year 1930 dawned. How could I have known that the nation was on the brink of an eruption? The trampled pride and hope of the people of Kashmir was like molten lava ready to flow. Nature fanned the embers which were shouldering inside me. It was left to me to take the lid off the volcano's mouth (FC 10).

It was not the Muslims alone who were having the reasons for the resentment under the Dogra rule. The Kashmiri Pandits were also being discriminated as they were barred from the higher positions including the Dogra army for which recruitment was mainly made from outside Kashmir (Bhattacharjea 2008: 28). The valley was pregnant with an explosion due to the sufferings at the hands of the autocratic Dogra regime. On the contrary, the Maharaja Hari Singh, the man brought up in English taste was living a life of comforts and luxury with no heeds towards his subjects, who were living a life of abject poverty (Naqash and Shah 1997: 49). He spends luxuriantly on foreign tours and other delightful activities (Singh 1983: 1). One third of the state revenues were expended on the Maharaja's privy purse, household expenses and military establishment (Thorner 1948: 174).

Youth Mobilization against Discrimination

In 1930, Sheikh Abdullah after completing his Masters Degree in Chemistry from AMU, returned to the Kashmir valley and he got a government job as a school teacher, but soon resigned from his job as a mark of protest against the

discriminatory recruitment policy of the Dogra rule (Bamzai 1962: 731), as the superior posts were denied for the Muslims, while for the non-Muslims, superior posts were given even to such a person who sign the official document by their thumb impression (Bazaz cf. Pampori 1992: 72). So the ongoing oppression and discrimination in Kashmir under the Dogra rule, the influence of the modern ideas as well as of the political awakening in India against the British rule during his stay outside the valley and happenings of the international events like the Russian revolution with its thrust on egalitarianism has collectively drag Sheikh Abdullah in the field of politics (Bhattacharjea 2008: 29, Ganai 2003: 74).

So with this aim, he along with few other educated and unemployed Muslim youths set up what came to be known as 'Reading-Room Party' at Fatehkadal (FC: 17). It was silently done, as political meetings and mobilizations were banned by the Dogra regime. Their work soon caught the public eye and in September 1930 the Reading Room Party sent a memorandum to the authorities complaining against the discriminatory rules in the civil services recruitment. As against what has happened till then, Sheikh Abdullah and his colleague Abdul Aziz Fazil has taken a bold posture before the ministerial council which heard their petition rather than being pacified by the governmental logic and warned of unpleasant consequences 'if recruitment rules are not amended' (FC: 18-19). This earned Sheikh Abdullah the name of an outspoken young leader who was capable of challenging the Dogra autocracy (Bhattacharjea 2008: 30). Soon he initiated efforts to intervene in the public sphere through news papers and periodicals, writing about the plight of common people in Kashmir, mobilizing public opinion within and beyond the valley.²³ These efforts made Abdullah very popular within in no time and he climbed the stairs of leadership swiftly (Bhattacharjea 2008: 30). In line with the general South Asian experience, superstitious beliefs also played their role to his rising popularity, because at that time rumors were set afloat about his spirituality and divine character (Gockhami 2008: 3-4).²⁴

²³ He started writing articles on Kashmir in *Inqilab* published from Lahore. When this news paper was banned in the state, he continued his work through a new weekly namely *Kashmir*, brought out by the same publisher and becoming popular in the valley soon (FC: 19).

²⁴ For example, it rumoured that by a simple touch, Sheikh Abdullah converts boiling oil into ice, his stepping up on a paper ladder, leaves containing the name *Sher-i-Kashmir*. See for a discussion in the case *Gandhi* (Amin 1995, Hardiman 2004).

Sheikh Abdullah thus spearheaded the angry young Muslims of the valley and in the early years of political career he efficiently exploited the communal sentiments in the valley which was seen as natural as mostly the oppressed were Muslims (Bakshi 1998: 11). As it happened in the case of Indian nationalism, he picked up issues of religious importance or incidents wherein religious sentiments were hurt to reach up to the people. The mobilization against an incident in which the holy Quran was insulted, against a protest demonstration was organized in Srinagar on 8 June 1931 (FC: 20-12). It was in this protest meetings Sheikh Abdullah captured the popular appreciation not only by making captivating speeches but also by reciting Quran pleasingly to the audience (Bhattacharjea 2008: 30).²⁵ The time after the Friday prayers was used for meetings and Jamia Masjid in Srinagar was one of the sites of protests and meetings (FC: 20-30). The oratory skills remained his master weapon throughout his political life (Akbar 2002: 73).

The Dogra regime provided fillip to the mobilization of the youth by adding fuel to the fire by way of severe repression. The police firing massacred 22 people on 13 July 1931, during a protest against the arrest of Abdul Qadir, a sympathizer of the Kashmir cause. The merciless act by the Dogra army shook the foundation of the Dogra rule as the intensity and participation of people's protest was unprecedented. The attempts of the Dogra regime to quell popular resentment by imposing martial law and by arresting the leaders in a single sweep only added to the problem. Sheikh Abdullah was among the leaders arrested and incarcerated which only furthered their popularity kindling seamless protests in the valley forcing the government to release the leaders from the prison (FC: 22-25). Such incidents helped Abdullah and his colleagues to significantly broaden the popular base of the movement against the Dogra rule.

The Kashmir crisis captured the attention of the whole Indian sub continent and the Muslim League under the leadership of Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal offered support. As a result, it was decided to observe 14th August as the Kashmir day

²⁵ It was in this protest meeting, Sheikh Abdullah made his debut as an orator and declared a jihad against the exploiters and the Dogra autocracy (Bakshi 1998: 13).

across the whole sub continent as well as in the valley of Kashmir. Immediately afterwards, on the 15 August a memorandum was presented to the Maharaja regarding their grievances which resulted in an accord between the representatives of the Muslims and the Prime Minister Raja Hari Krishen Koul. Though it was seen as a humiliating accord by certain factions, Sheikh Abdullah considered it as important as it has given them the status of a relevant party, apart from giving to them time and space for expanding the movement from Srinagar to the entire Kashmir (FC: 25).

These developments had given chance to Sheikh Abdullah to establish his mastery over the movement not only as a crowd puller but also as a tactical politician (Bhattacharjea 2008: 33). He toured across the state and drew people across the state to the movement. He soon criticized the government for not living up to the accord and therefore starting violating the accord which resulted in his arrest once again on 21 September 1931. However, this had the opposite effect as it led to widespread protest across the princely state. The police action killed 14 people and numerous injured, resulting in further mobilization and public anger. The situation was grave to the extent of attracting the attention of the British colonial authorities, as tensions in Jammu and Kashmir was detrimental to the British interests due to its strategic importance (Bhattacharjea 2008: 35). Maharaja, acting on the advice of the British, not only withdrawn emergency measures but also extended an invitation to the leadership for putting up their grievances. Subsequently the Glancy Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Bertrand J. Glancy was appointed, which tried to ally the Muslim grievances by recommending the restoration of the religious places which were in possession of the government, provision of better educational facilities, grant of rights of land to the occupancy tenants, liberal norms for recruitment to the state service, abolition of several taxes, abolition of Begar etc (Naqash and Shah 1997: 52). The Glancy Commission also recommended constitutional reforms and the formation of the legislative assembly that should be supported by a significant degree of freedom of speech and association (Lamb 1993: 92). Needless to say that these developments contributed to the cause of the common people apart from consolidating Sheikh Abdullah's leadership over the movement.

From Muslim Conference to National Conference

Sheikh Abdullah now finds that the situation was suitable for converting the movement into an organized form and started consultations with his companions. The result was the birth of the 'All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference' on 16th October 1932, with Abdullah as its first unanimous elected president (FC: 35-37).²⁶ Though the political mobilization was largely from the Muslim community, Sheikh Abdullah made it clear that the Muslim Conference would champion the cause of all oppressed sections of society, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. In his first presidential speech Sheikh Abdullah attempted to dismiss the communal colour attributed to the movement:

We have repeatedly declared that the Kashmir movement is not communal; it is a platform to address the grievances of every section of people. We shall always be prepared to help our compatriots, Hindus and Sikhs. No progress is possible unless we learn to live in amity. For that, mutual respect for each other's legitimate rights is an important pre-condition. I repeat, Kashmir movement is not a communal movement (FC: 35).

The methods of political work adopted by the Muslim Conference included holding of annual sessions, influencing the government to restore democratic rights of the people and organizing mass meetings for persuading as well as pressurizing the government for acceding to its popular demands (Ganai 2003: 194). At the same time Sheikh Abdullah was diligent to publically reaffirm the secularist credentials of the Conference (FC: 35). Instead of choosing a sectarian path, Abdullah defined his agenda along secularist lines as representative government and socio-economic reform. This sounded strange to many given the growth of communalism in Indian subcontinent at that time, but his commitment to the principle of universal brotherhood and modern democracy remained firm (Bhattacharjea 2008: 39-40).

However, this was a challenging task as the popular mobilization was largely on communal lines and Abdullah himself felt that he couldn't achieve much of a

²⁶ Lord Birdwood felt that nationalism, socialism and sincere secularism were the principles that governed Abdullah (Birdwood 2005: 44).

success in that direction. In order to popularize the ideology of the conference and connecting more with the people Sheikh Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz started a weekly journal namely the Hamdarad in Urdu on 1 August 1935. As Prem Nath Bazaz put it, "it was mainly through the sober, thoughtful and inspiring writings of this weekly that the Muslim Conference was converted into the National Conference in 1939" (Bazaz 2003: 160). Apart from this, Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, a leading intellectual as well as politician of the sub-continent, advised him that only through unity, there will be happiness, end of turmoil, defeat of the communalism and for the achievement of this goal, the doors of membership be opened to non-Muslim communities. Such efforts gained further momentum following Sheikh Abdullah's meeting with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during the same year (AeC: 227-229). Sheikh Abdullah proposed the change of name of his political party Muslim Conference into National Conference. This move brought Abdullah under heavy criticism from his party comrades- prominent among them was Chowdhury Ghulam Abbas, Allaha Rakha Sagar, Abdul Majeed Qureshi- as well as the enemies of the movement. The Muslim League was critical about the proposal and its supremo Mohammad Ali Jinnah said at Aligarh Muslim University:

I can say with certainty that he [Abdullah] is in the wrong. Having got himself ensnared by the congress, which is thoroughly a Hindu organization, he has put the ship of his community in a whirlpool. I understand that he is doing this out of ignorance and some misunderstanding (Bhattacharjya 2008: 63-64).

Sheikh Abdullah was determined to wage the political struggle on secular path, and worked overtime by making visits across the state. The Muslim Conference was accordingly converted into National Conference at a special session of the Muslim Conference convened on 10th and 11th June 1939. The decision brought legitimacy to the movement as it captured the composite culture of Kashmir. As Bazaz points out:

It was now possible to adapt the freedom struggle to the basic principles and traditions of the composite culture of Kashmir Nationalism seeds of which had been seen during the days of Bud Shah and carefully nurtured by all Kashmir

patriots throughout the long period of five centuries till the purchase of the valley by the Dogras (Bazaz 2003: 165).

This conversion created the rift between the Muslim leadership of the state as many leaders held that non-Muslims are opposing the Muslim interests; for instance the Hindus were seen as the main obstacles in implementing the recommendations of the Glancy commission. Besides this, being educationally forward they would exploit the organization (Bhattacharjea 2008: 61-62, Pampori 1992: 93). But Sheikh Abdullah remained firm to lead the politics of the Jammu and Kashmir along the path of secularism.

Manifesto for a secular polity: Naya Kashmir manifesto and Quit Kashmir Movement

The Second World War stirred up political activity in Jammu and Kashmir as there was no respite of oppression from the Dogra regime. So to overcome such an atmosphere of inequality, the National Conference under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah adopts the Naya Kashmir Manifesto on 29-30 September 1944 at the Sopore session of the National Conference. Its main demands were a constitution featuring secularism, women's equality and socialist programmes. Another pledge of the manifesto was the abolition of landlordism and distribution of land to tillers, something which even Nehru couldn't do for independent India (Bhattacharjea 2008:73). By sticking to the secularist politics he overcomes the communalist persuasions in the high noon of two nation theory of Muslim League as well as captured an identity for National Conference in the Indian politics. Sheikh Abdullah thus not only emerged as a hero within the political battle ground of Jammu and Kashmir, but also made a sounding effect on the politics of the entire sub-continent which was drowned in communal politics.

With the end of Second World War and the arrival of Cabinet Mission in the valley Sheikh Abdullah has started mobilizing the people of Kashmir for the future of the state. He launched the movement for freedom from the Dogra with his influential slogan of Quit Kashmir. The logic of the slogan was quite apparent; it was through British that the Dogras got the authority to rule over Kashmir and with

the termination of the British regime in India, the Dogra authority will also lose its legitimacy and hence had to leave Jammu and Kashmir (AeC: 359-360). Further in a speech at 'Zaindarmohalla' in Srinagar he called the people for contributing one rupee each towards the collection of seventy-five lakh rupees with which they buy back the independence of the Kashmir from the Maharaja (FC: 79).²⁷ The Quit Kashmir movement has taken Sheikh Abdullah to the pinnacle of his popularity. The famous poet, Shorish Kashmiri, while writing about the Quit Kashmir movement unconsciously captures the importance of Sheikh Abdullah in the political battle of Jammu and Kashmir:

Ai Hari singh nava hai sharer bar sey dar
Waqt aur waqt ki badli hui raftar sey dar
Bijliyan kaund rahi hain sar-e-maidan-e-wafa
Sher-i-Kashmir key awaza -i- paikar sey dar
[O Hari Singh! Fear the lightning-laden cries
Fear time and its revolutions
Lightning flashes over the battlefield of faith
Fear the battle cry of Sher-e-Kashmir] (FC: 82).

The Congress party under the insistence of Jawaharlal Nehru extended support to Sheikh Abdullah though its top leadership remained largely hostile to Quit Kashmir movement.²⁸ Nehru invited Abdullah to Delhi for discussions in this regard. Sheikh Abdullah was arrested by the Dogra regime on his way. The news of the arrest leaked and it led to massive protest in the valley and the state repression resulted in the killing of 20 people. Among the deceased was a woman from the Anantnag district named Musmati Mukhti and hundreds of people were arrested (Vashisth1968: 40). Nehru described the situation as "Srinagar has been

²⁷ Maharaja Gulab Singh in recognition of his conduct in the British operation against the Sikh government, was obliged under the 'Treaty of Amritsar' for his adherence to the British interests. Under the 'Treaty of Amritsar', that was concluded in Amritsar on 16th March 1846, British East India company make a sale deed of Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh at the cost of 7500000 rupees and there after Dogras declared themselves as the owner of Jammu and Kashmir (Naqash and shah 1997: 37-39).

²⁸ As Sheikh Abdullah described it both the Indian National Congress and Muslim League were opposed to the Quit Kashmir movement (FC: 79).

transformed into a graveyard” and the state responded by banning his entry into the valley (FC: 80).

Defying the ban Nehru travelled to Kashmir to support Sheikh Abdullah at the time when his presence was of utmost importance at Delhi as negotiations were in progress with Cabinet Mission on transfer of power. As a result his decision to visit Kashmir at that point in time did not go well with his comrades at Delhi; but more shockingly Nehru faced the black flag demonstrations from the Pandit community of the valley (FC: 80). Eventually Nehru was successful in convincing the Congress leadership to support Quit Kashmir movement, resulting in a visit of Mahatma Gandhi into the valley. The arrest of Sheikh Abdullah and the resultant protests did not suppress the popular resentment, on the other side, the visits of Nehru and Gandhi further widened the gap between the National Conference and the Muslim League alongside increasing the confidence of Sheikh Abdullah in the Congress leadership (Puri 1981: 43). The movement squeezed Muslim Conference of its importance and made Sheikh Abdullah as the supreme leader of the state (Puri 1981: 44). He was almost personified with the people of the entire state, as his defense counsel Asaf Ali said during his trial, “[I]t is not the trail of one individual; it is not the trail of Sheikh Abdullah; it is the trail of the entire people of the state” (Vashisth 1968: 3).

Sheikh Abdullah and the Instrument of Accession:

The Indian independence Act paved way to independence and partition of India and was applied to British India, leaving the choice to the princely states to join either with India or the newly created Pakistan. They were not allowed to remain independent (Hassan 2009: 2). The accession was made mostly on the bases of factors like communal interests, geographical location etc (Burke cf. Naqash and Shah 1997: 64). The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir had to make a decision in this regard. The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir and its bureaucratic leadership wanted to remain independent both of India and Pakistan. Realizing the impossibility of the same, they started thinking of making their choice. On the basis of the criteria given, all the reasonable people presumed that Kashmir would form part of Pakistan (Bazaz 2003: 316). The high profile political

circles of Jammu and Kashmir also hold the same line and can be well understood from their declarations. For instance, the working committee of Kisan Mazdoor Conference declared in resolution on 5 September 1947 that there was no other alternative but to join Pakistan.²⁹ The resolution said justified it in terms of its Muslim majority and geographic specificities:

The overwhelming majority of Kashmir's population is Muslim. The state is contiguous with Pakistan territories. All the three big high ways and all the rivers of the state go to the Pakistan. For these reasons the Working Committee is of the opinion that the state should accede to Pakistan....The working committee holds the view that the majority of the population desires to accede to Pakistan and the welfare of the 39 lakh peasants and workers also lies in this (Bazaz 2003: 319-320).

Similarly the Kashmir Socialist Party, consisting of Kashmiri Hindus also spoke in the same tone.³⁰ Its resolution on the 18th September 1947 states that:

After mature considerations the party has arrived at the decision that in the best interests of the poor and backward people accession to Pakistan is desirable. The Party impresses upon the Maharaja that without any further unnecessary delay he should make an announcement accordingly (Bazaz 2003: 321).

It is argued that even Mahatma Gandhi realized the situation. In a letter to Prem Nath Bazaz on 5th May 1934 he said:

Knowing that Kashmir is predominantly Mussalman it is one day bound to become a Mussalman state (Bazaz 2003: 342).

²⁹ Kisan Mazdoor Conference was a political party which came into being in 1945 under the name of Jammu and Kashmir Kisan conference, later changed to Kisan Mazdoor Conference in 1946, under the president ship of Abdul Salam Yatu. The main motive of this party was to defend and safeguard the rights and interests of the peasants in the state. This party attained a great fame among the peasants and other working class who were suffering under the tyranny of the elite class, apart from being living in the abject poverty. (Bazaz 2003: 220-21).

³⁰ Kashmir Socialist Party, mostly comprised of Hindus came into being in 1942, when within the valley National Conference and Muslim Conference were busy in fighting with each other, ignoring their main target of freedom. So Kashmir Socialist Party tried to take the lead and started the process of making the people politically and economically aware (Bazaz 2003: 189).

As these resolutions apparently suggests going by the logic Muslim majority even the Hindu organizations supported accession to Pakistan. But what happened in reality was the opposite. It was Sheikh Abdullah, who with his dynamic personality, having a huge mass magical appeal, changed the scene towards India.

Sheikh Abdullah too dreamed of an independent Jammu and Kashmir, the only thing which he shares with the Maharaja Hari Singh. So the same trait comes to the forefront when he was released from the prison on 20th September 1947 and he started working towards freedom of the state from the Dogras and formation of a responsible government in the state. Sheikh Abdullah was of the opinion that the final decision regarding the future of the state should be taken by the elected government, but not by the Maharaja (Bhattacharjea 2008: 105). Sheikh Abdullah in his address in a rally held on 2 October 1947 at Huzoori Bagh said:

When I went into the prison, I took a last look at undivided India. Today it has been broken into two fragments. We the people of Kashmir must now see to it that our long-cherished dream is fulfilled. The dream of freedom, welfare and progress. No decision however, is possible while we are slaves. It is, therefore, imperative to set up, without delay, a representative Government which chalks out a plan to safeguard the rights and interests of the people of the state. 'Freedom before Accession' should become our resounding slogan (FC :86).

Sheikh Abdullah had given an impression that he may not go in line with what the Indian National Congress has wished him to be. He said in another meeting:

It is a fact that Indian National Congress has extended full support to our movement. But the question of accession will be decided in the best interests of the people of Kashmir. Our first priority is to get rid of the Dogra domination. Then if the people decided to accede to Pakistan, I will be the first one to sign my name (FC: 86).

At the same time, he did not spare Pakistan for its 'Two Nation Theory' which has spread the poison of communal divide across the whole sub continent. During his conversation with the two Pakistani envoys, Dr Mohammad Din Tasir and Sheikh Sadiq Hasan, who came to Kashmir to negotiate with the National Conference on accession to Pakistan, Sheikh Abdullah again reiterated his demand of freedom before the accession. He was firm that the Kashmiris will not tolerate the dictations from outsiders (FC: 88). Nonetheless, Sheikh Abdullah made attempts to secure some assurances from Mohammad Ali Jinnah by sending his confident lieutenant Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq to Pakistan (Vashisth 1968: 47).

As both the countries were seemingly not ready to concede the demands of Abdullah, he was keen to make the state an independent state, a type of buffer state between India and Pakistan (Sharma and Bakshi 1995: 15-16). Sheikh Abdullah has taken a safe position by preferring to sit on the fence wherein he was waiting for an appropriate time and terms favorable to him to agree for accession with anyone (Vashisth 1968: 47). But the happenings in the state did not allow Sheikh Abdullah to convert his dreams of independent state into a reality, instead was rather forced him to support the accession with India. The residents of Poonch and Mirpur demanded accession with Pakistan when the Maharaja visited those areas, which made the latter apprehensive about their loyalty to him (FC: 90) as he himself was trying his best to remain independent of these two countries. In response the Maharaja unleashed a reign of terror by persecuting the people, arson and burning down of their houses (FC: 90). The two areas were densely populated by the demobilized soldiers who have participated in the world war-II. So against this oppression these demobilized soldiers rose in revolt and were joined by hundreds of young men of the state, who resigned from the services of Pakistan Armed Forces in order to participate at home in the national war of liberation (Bazaz 2003: 324). The tribal Muslims also joined the revolt countering the state oppression resulting in the trampling away of the Dogra army and moreover, within no time these disturbances spread up to Muzaffarabad (Bazaz 2003: 323-324). Here at Muzaffarabad, the Maharaja had deputed thirteen thousand soldiers comprising of both Hindu Dogras and Muslims from Poonch and Mirpur. The Muslim soldiers from Poonch and Mirpur revolted against the state and joined the revolt (FC: 92). As a result Muzaffarabad fell to the 'rebels' on 22

October and they started proceeding towards Srinagar, looting, plundering and destroying whatever on the way (Bazaz 2003: 325). A force of 200 soldiers under the command of Brigadier Rajendra Singh was sent to fight the rebels back, only a dozen came back alive (Bazaz 2003: 325). The Maharaja has packed all the valuables and left the valley for Jammu.

This more or less marked the end of the Dogra rule. But Sheikh Abdullah at the same time realized that the success of the tribal's would be detrimental to the interests of the state and he himself. As his demands were turned down by Mohammad Ali Jinnah and his relationship with the Pakistan leadership being unpleasant, in order to secure his position he looked towards India with the leadership of whom he was having good relations (Vashisth 1968: 47). Sheikh Abdullah's claim to be the sole representative of the state has found sympathetic response from India.³¹ This was arguably because the Indian leadership under Nehru was certain that Sheikh Abdullah will support the accession with India, when he will be given the option between India and Pakistan.

Sheikh Abdullah was quick in forming a local militia, consisting of members Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities to counter the tribal onslaught. He motivated people for this "counter revolution" by comparing the tribal raids with the atrocities of Pathan rule, dark shadows of which were still alive in the minds of the Kashmiris (Bazaz 2003: 325). This ensured Sheikh Abdullah the support of the people in the valley to beat the tribal attack. Sheikh Abdullah's bold posture against the tribal war on Kashmir led to his elevation the Chief Emergency Officer on 27th October 1947. Interestingly, the oath taken by him to assume the office declared loyalty to the Maharaja Hari Singh, which was truly against the spirit of Quit Kashmir movement.

I Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah son of Mohammad Ibrahim, who has been appointed as the Administrator solemnly promise that I shall remain loyal to

³¹ This claim is contested. It is said that there were other political parties having mass appeal but they were banned deliberately, its top leadership were imprisoned by the Dogra regime and even their indoor meetings were banned, on the other hand the National Conference was allowed to grow, held the public meetings freely without any interference from the Dogra state (Bazaz 2003: 322). This gives the sense of a pre-planned move at the behest of Indian intervention, though there are no published evidences to support this (Birdwood 2005: 85).

his Highness Rajrajeshwas Maharajadhiraj Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Ji Bahadur Inder Mahinder Separ-i-Saltanati Englishe, ruler of Jammu and Kashmir and his heirs and successors and shall honestly discharge the duties that are to be entrusted to me (Bazaz 2003: 333).

So it seems that the Quit Kashmir movement carrying heavy slogans was not a revolutionary struggle but was a domestic quarrel on the share of powers between the Maharaja and the Nationalists (Bazaz 2003: 334). However Bhattacharjea justifies this move by saying that in the hey days of the partition, the only thing which Sheikh Abdullah shares with the Maharaja Hari Singh was the independence of the state and in order to achieve this motive, he accepted the overlord ship of Maharaja because within the bars, he could do nothing to achieve this end (Bhattacharjea 2008: 103). On the same day the instrument of accession was signed by Maharaja Hari Singh, represented by his Prime Minister Mehr Chand Mahajan, with the government of India. This decision was fully supported by Sheikh Abdullah because of India's pledge to secularism and democracy (Vashisth 1968: 48) as well as the recognition of Pandit Nehru of Kashmir's desire for self-determination (Bhattacharjea 2008: XIV). The instrument of accession includes the provision of plebiscite that will be held after the normalcy returns in the state (FC: 95). As per the accession instrument, three sectors, that is Defense, Communication, Foreign-affairs, were transferred to India (FC: 95). The Indian army soon landed in Srinagar and with the assistance of local militia it successfully pushed the tribals back. The accession came at an important time, as it happened when the whole Indian subcontinent was burning under communal fire; it became an important tool for the central leadership to counterbalance the communalist turbulence (Bhattacharjea 2008: X). Mahatma Gandhi saluted the sense of secularism exhibited by Sheikh Abdullah in the following words:

It must be evident to the outsider, as it is to me, that Kashmir must be lost to the invaders, otherwise called the raiders, if Sheikh Abdullah Saheb's effort to hold together the Muslims and the minority [in the valley] fails....My sole hope and prayer is that Kashmir become a beacon of light in this benighted subcontinent (Tendulkar cf. Bhattacharjea 2008: x).

Even at this point in time both the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah hoped to attain independence for Jammu and Kashmir. Their interests soon came into conflict when Maharaja was asked to handover the post of Prime Minister to Sheikh Abdullah. Unwilling to consent the proposal, he led anti-Muslim violence in Jammu, provided the ammunition to the Hindu communal parties and campaigned for full integration of the state with Indian union. The government of India was also apparently moving slowly on the issue of transferring powers to Abdullah through lengthy procedures (Bhattacharjea 2008:122-123). This left Sheikh Abdullah puzzled and he felt cheated by India. He was not in a position to seek help from the Pakistan also at this stage, he was still harping on independent status guaranteed by the UN (Bhattacharjea 2008: 122). The Prime Ministership of the state came to him subsequently on 5 March 1948. Though couldn't move much ahead with the independent status issue. Among the promises encapsulated in the Naya Kashmir Manifesto, he successfully abolished the Jagirdari system and land was distributed to the tillers without compensation (FC: 110). This has earned Abdullah a permanent place in the minds of the common people of Jammu and Kashmir. Besides, he was instrumental in securing a special status for Kashmir under Article 370 within the Indian Constitution, by virtue of which Jammu and Kashmir is having its own constitution, own flag, its own Prime Minister, own Legislative Assembly and more importantly it put an end to the Dogra rule (FC: 110). The Jammu pro-integrationist forces were not happy with the arrangement and demanded complete merger of the state with the Indian union. Abdullah on his part regarded the full application of the Indian constitution to his 'country' as 'unrealistic, childish and savoring of lunacy' (Birdwood 2005: 251). Reacting to the protests for complete merger, Abdullah pushed for "greater independence" (Bhattacharjea 2008: 170). Sheikh Abdullah began to doubt India as they were declaring Kashmir as an integral part of India as well as declaring their commitment of holding plebiscite within the state (Birdwood 2005:245).³² The Indian government lost balance while trying to appease Indian public sentiments on one hand and those of the people of Kashmir on the other hand. Master Tara Singh, a prominent Akali leader from Punjab, even advocated that since "Kashmir

³² Statements made by Indian leadership re-affirmed his doubts. For instance, Sir Gopalswami Ayyangar, a member of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, told the Constituent Assembly on 17th October, 1949 that "in due course even Jammu and Kashmir will become ripe for the same sort of integration as has taken place in case of other states" (Birdwood 2005: 268).

being a majority Muslim state belonged to Pakistan but that it should not be allowed to go now and refugees should be asked to settle in it” (Bazaz 2003: 596). The disillusionment of Abdullah is evident in his often quoted speech in Ranbir Singh Pora region of the Jammu division on 10th April, 1952:

We have acceded to India in regard to defense, foreign affairs and communication in order to ensure a sort of internal autonomy.....If our right to shape our destiny is challenged and if there is resurgence of communalism in India, how are we to convince the Muslims of Kashmir that India does not intend to swallow us? (Puri 1981: 30).

In addition, Abdullah could not remain inattentive to the provocative speeches of the Hindu right wing outside Kashmir. The founder of Jan Sangh, S. P. Mukherjee, put the case bluntly in his speech in Patiala: “if the Muslims of Kashmir do not want to remain with us let them go away, but Kashmir must be ours. This is a vital matter for the security of India.”³³ Mukherjee believed that no appeasement could persuade the Kashmiri Muslims to become loyal citizens of India and that a strong government must be established with or without the consent of the local Muslims in order to make Jammu and Kashmir an integrant part of India (Birdwood 2005: 249). Sheikh Abdullah saw Constituent Assembly as a continuation of Jammu and Kashmir’s freedom struggle as he believed that it would guarantee that the state would never become just another state (Lamb 1993: 193). Meanwhile, Abdullah was made to explore avenues of a settlement. Accordingly on 9th June, 1953, the working committee of the National Conference came out with four possible alternative proposals for a peaceful and honorable solution of Kashmir issue:

- a) Overall plebiscite;
- b) Independence for the whole state;
- c) Independence for the whole state with joint control of foreign affairs, and
- d) Dixon plan with independence for the plebiscite area.

When Nehru was apprised of these developments, he got “highly disturbed by Sheikh’s attitude” (Noorani 2008). So this changing stand regarding accession as

³³Syama Prasad Mukherjee’s speech at Patiala on 20 April 1953, (cf. Birdwood 2005: 249). He believed that Abdullah’s three nation theory will lead to the Balkanization of the region.

well as his disclosures to the foreign visitors was most irritating to the Indian government (Lamb cf. Hassan 2009). So Pandit Nehru “finally came to the point that there is no alternative but to remove Sheikh Abdullah and install Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad in his place” (Mullick cf. Bhattacharjea 2008: 187). So accordingly Sheikh Abdullah was dismissed and then arrested for plotting with “enemy agents” to take Kashmir into Pakistan on 9 August 1953 (FC: 125). A. G. Noorani has questioned the whole argument by pointing out that neither the Sheikh nor the ‘emissary’ he was allegedly going to meet would have escaped the Intelligence Bureaus’ surveillance. The dismissal and arrest of Abdulla did not go well with the people of the valley and they used to commemorate the same on 9 August, every year by tagging it as the murder of democracy, something that continued till the conclusion of Indra-Abdullah Accord in 1974 (Gockhami 2008: 6).

Sheikh was obviously not toeing the line Centre wanted him to. This disappointment of Nehru was evident from the statement he made in parliament in this regard on the 10th of August. He justified the action of the Central government as “will of the majority” in an indirect reference to Sheikh Abdullah stated that “the community of ideals and principles which had brought Kashmir and India together” has been violated (Birdwood 2005: 241-242). There are many who believed that the charges against Abdullah were ‘constitutionally’ false (Noorani 2008, Birdwood 2005). Noorani calls the 1953 episode as “centre inspired, directed and organized coup” (Noorani 2008) and Birdwood was convinced that the action no way represents the “will of the people” (Birdwood 2005: 241). Even, Director of Intelligence Bureau, B.N. Mullick, later confessed in his memoirs that Sheikh Abdullah was not actually planning to take the state of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan, but was angling for special status just short of independence (Mullick cf. Lamb 1993:198-199). The action further alienated the people of Kashmir and eroded India’s moral physique in the international scenario (Puri 1981: 131-32).

Arguably the situation was a result of mismatch in expectations- Nehru was disillusioned because his dream of integrating Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian union through Sheikh Abdullah and Abdullah for failure in achieving self-determination or independent status. The newly appointed Prime Minister Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad unleashed a reign of terror and corruption became the meal

of the day (FC: 128-29). In this regard P.N. Bazaz wrote: "citizens were put behind bars with no obligation for the government to inform the detainee about the grounds of its detention, for at least a period of years. Press censorship was clamped. Many newspapers had to suffer for being critical of the policies of the Government and the misdeeds of the party workers" (Bazaz cf. Naqash and Shah 1997:109). The removal of the Sheikh Abdullah also cleared the path for a smoother integration of the state with the Union of India (Naqash and Shah 1997: 110). The members of the Constituent Assembly apparently were under the categorical directive that they should do nothing which goes against the constitution of India before the constitutional relationship of the state was finalized with India (Ram cf. Naqash and Shah 1997: 110). But Sheikh Abdullah remained firm on his demand of self-determination, which was not only gone un-conceded but also resulted in his long term imprisonment and elimination from power for 22 years.

The Constituent Assembly on 6 February 1954 confirmed the state's complete accession to India. The Anti-autonomy elements left nothing unturned to seek an abrogation of Article 370 (Naqash and Shah 1997: 113). Further, in March 1956 Nehru in a famous speech in the parliament withdrew the option of plebiscite to the state. The reasons he cited for this change of position were the continuing presence of Pakistan army in areas of Kashmir being held by it, the Constituent Assembly approval for Kashmir's merger with India and acceptance of Indian constitution and Pakistan's military alliance with the capitalist block with an alleged intention to seek military solution (Naqash and Shah 1997: 111). It was clear that Nehru has changed his mind and withdrawn from his promises to the leadership and people of Kashmir (Naqash and Shah 1997: 112). After suppressing the pro-Abdullah faction within the party as well as in the Assembly, Sheikh Abdullah was released in January 1958, with an expectation that he would fall in line now. But Sheikh Abdulla refused to cow down, remained firm in his conviction and refuse to accept Kashmir as an integral part of Indian Union. Sensing this, Sheikh Abdullah was again arrested on the charges of hatching the conspiracy case of annexing the state with the Pakistan in May 1958 (Naqash and Shah 1997: 113).

But after 1962 polls, Bakshi showed his reluctance to permit New Delhi to make further constitutional inroads into the state and he disapproved the attempts to abrogate Article 370 (Puri 1981: 153-154). This ultimately resulted into its dethronement and installation of G.M.Sadiq as the Prime Minister, during whose tenure many other provisions of the Indian constitution were extended to Jammu and Kashmir, eroding its autonomy.³⁴

It was during the regime of G.M. Sadiq, that Sheikh Abdullah was once again released in April 1964 with the withdrawal of conspiracy case against him. But Sheikh Abdullah remained firm on his demand of self determination (plebiscite) and while addressing a meeting at Hazratbal, he said that “the intentions of the ruling party of India are not good and freedom cannot be achieved by imploring anybody and thus in view of India’s present attitude you will have to think of some other means” (Aziz cf. Naqash and Shah 1997: 115). Meanwhile, New Delhi was increasingly coming to the realization that solution to the Kashmir problem will remain a mirage without the cooperation of Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh Abdullah was accordingly released, he was invited to Delhi to meet Nehru and at the request of Nehru he visited Pakistan so as to bridge the gap between the two in an attempt to bring President Ayoub Khan and Nehru to talking table for a final solution to the Kashmir. President Ayoub Khan of Pakistan held extensive talks with him and agreed to come down to Delhi for talks with Nehru to explore various avenues to solve the Kashmir problem (FC : 154-155). But the sudden demise of Nehru derailed the plan and Sheikh Abdullah returned quickly to India to pay his respects for the departed Indian Prime Minister whom he held in high esteem in

³⁴ The provisions include the extension of Article 248, 249, 250 of the Indian constitution to the state of Jammu and Kashmir which powers the Central government to interfere in the state matters under the pretext of defending Indian Sovereignty, allows centre to legislate on any matter enumerated in the state list, allows the parliament to legislate on any matter that was not enumerated initially in the Union List respectively. Besides this the application of the Article 365, allowing the central government to impose the president’s rule and article 357, empowering the parliament to confer on the President the power of the state legislature to make laws, were also applied to the estate of Jammu and Kashmir. Another drastic amendment abolishes the office of the Sadri-e-Riyasat and Prime Minister with Governor and Chief Minister respectively. In 1967, three sections of the Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People’s Act were amended to bring it on part with the Central law, so accordingly placed the state elections under the Jurisdiction of the Central Election Commission (Tremblay 1997: 484, Naqash and Shah 1997: 115-117).

spite of breach of promises and arrests.³⁵ Sheikh Abdullah soon left for Hajj pilgrimage, during which he also visited many countries as well, through which he acquainted them with the happenings of the state and his demand for a free and impartial plebiscite in the state (Naqash and Shah 1997: 115).³⁶ Sheikh Abdullah also met Chou En-Lai, premier of Communist China in Algeria, which alarmed the Indian authorities as China was considered to be a staunch enemy of India and this led to the arrest Sheikh Abdullah again, under Defense of the Indian Rules in May 1965.

Sheikh Abdullah was released again from detention in January 1968, though he sticks to his demand for self-determination. Rounds of incarceration have only augmented his popularity as seen from the rousing welcome accorded to him on his release. He was presented with a substantial purse collected through public donation, which he earmarked for constructing a hospital in Srinagar. In the mid-term elections held March 1971, when Sheikh Abdullah supported the Plebiscite Front led by Mirza Afzal Beg to contest the election, the Indian government banned the Plebiscite Front and both Sheikh Abdullah and Afzal Beg were prohibited from entering into Jammu and Kashmir (Bhattacharjea 2008: 229). The strategy of Indian government was arresting and releasing Abdullah at regular intervals, something that continued for about 20 years covering the best part of Sheikh Abdullah political life. Sheikh Abdullah was getting old, his health was deteriorating and at the same time the conditions in Pakistan was deteriorating. All these made Sheikh Abdullah to start negotiations with the Indian government, which remained firm on their stand on accession (Lockwood 1975: 252-254). This is clearly reflected when Sheikh Abdullah in an interview with Times (London) on 10 March 1972 said that, "Our quarrel with the government of India is not about accession but it is about the quantum of autonomy" (Puri 1981: 176). He has written it in his autobiography too:

³⁵ He brought some ashes of Nehru and immersed them at the confluence of the Indus and Jhelum (FC: 156).

³⁶ During his foreign tour they visited Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Egypt, and Britain, though their itinerary also includes Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and France, but were forced to cut short their tour by the Indian authorities (FC: 158-160).

I assured the Centre that we had no differences with them regarding the accession. We only want Article 370 [of the Constitution guaranteeing autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir state] to be maintained in its original form (FC: 164).

He was released accordingly on 5 June 1972 and Abdullah deputed Mirza Afzal Beigh with full authority to discuss with any representative of Indira Gandhi towards a greater autonomy formula for the state (Naqash and Shah 1997: 119). The negotiations culminated into what is known as 'Kashmir Accord' or Indra-Abdullah Accord in 1975, and as a result Sheikh Abdullah was back in power after 22 years, but now as Chief-Minster. The Kashmir Accord was important for its duality – it formalized the finality of the state's accession to India, but at the same time fortified the special status of the state as enshrined in Article 370 of the constitution of India (Naqash and Shah 1997: 120).³⁷

Though the many were dissatisfied with this, Sheikh Abdullah remained the most popular political leader of Kashmir as shown by his landslide victory in the 1977 elections. The 'tragic hero' of Kashmir became Chief-Minister after the elections and died on 8th September, 1982, towards the end of the tenure, after having dominated the political stage of Kashmir for more than half a century. His life and politics has thus become a living testimony of fashioning Kashmiri nationalism beyond communitarian confines and reiterating the specialty of Kashmir. His life trajectory and fighting spirits underwent transformation in tune with changing times and political realities, but Kashmiri exceptionalism remained the prime pillar of his politics even when circumstances forced him to become purposefully pragmatic.

³⁷ The Accord confirmed that whatever laws has been applied during Abdullah's absence in power (from 1953-1975) in Kashmir will not be abrogated (Naqash and Shah 1997: 120).

Chapter - 4

Defining Nation: Reflections from Sheikh Abdullah's Autobiography

Tu bara-e-wasl Kardan aamdi

Nai bara-e-fasl Kardan aamdi

(You have entered this world to unite; not to divide mankind) [FC: 172]

Sheikh Abdullah ends his autobiography *Flames of the Chinar* with this couplet by Maulana Rumi that underlines the supreme moral obligation of remaining united in the nation against divisive tendencies. Curiously, the couplet is also the closing note of a chapter on Kashmiri Pandits that essentially calls them to join the “mainstream” of the nation which was constructed under his political leadership- a nation initially drawn energies from communal solidarity against state discrimination but switched to secularist ideals once its majoritarian fundamentals were firmly established. The notion of nation as encompassed in Kashmiriyat and as constructed during the political mobilisation under Sheikh Abdullah rhetorically carries such a spirit of accommodation, as nation is imagined around the imagined geography of Kashmir and its culture over its multiplicity of ethnicities. It is such a nationalist agenda that made Sheikh Abdullah the central figure of modern Kashmir. He has been influential and controversial alike. One could hate him, or love him; but seldom ignore him, while trying to understand modern Kashmir. He laid the nationalism of the Kashmir on secularist lines, reclaiming it from religious and ethnic locations. However, Sheikh Abdullah was well aware of the fact that his brand of nation was being challenged from various quarters and the very decision to construe an autobiography was arguably to intervene in the seemingly changing course of history.

As Mohammad Yusuf Taing, through whom the autobiography of Sheikh Abdullah got transcribed into letters, has put it the autobiography has been what Abdullah “owe to the future,” a debt he pay to the future generations (FC: xi). His autobiography in that sense is not merely a chronicle of memory that runs through his life and time for reminiscence, but importantly it engages with the present and future generations. Every text is in conversation with the present and posterity.

Sheikh Abdullah, being at the centre of modern Kashmiri politics, had strong political messages to the present and future generations and edifies them in his notion of Kashmiri nation. He was successful in forging a nation along secularist lines with the principles of syncretism and cohesion, though with a Muslim majoritarian undercurrent, for modern Kashmir irrespective pressures from within and outside. Dissidences to his form of nation have been assuming diverse manifestations. The increasing dissent can be gauged from the election results itself. National Conference won all the 75 seats in Jammu and Kashmir general election in 1951; it has dwindled over time to reach 50 in the 1977 general elections. Abdullah and his Kashmir was constantly under pressure from India and Pakistan, the former to gain complete ascendancy over Kashmir and the latter to establish their foothold over Jammu and Kashmir. "Al Fateh" an extremist organization was gaining currency in the valley and have hijacked an Indian Airlines plane from Srinagar to Lahore in January 1971 (Qasim 1992: 128-129). National Conference itself has undergone trials and tribulations including dissidence within, merger with Congress and compromising with independent/special status for Kashmir with the Indian Union. All this arguably eroded the legitimacy and support base of Sheikh Abdullah's notion of Kashmiri nation and there was an urgency to reiterate its basics in order to rejuvenate and reproduce it against the odds. The autobiography turns out to be an important tool in such a political enterprise. This chapter attempts to construct the nation emerges out of Sheikh Abdullah's autobiographical narrative, which embodies his politics and message to the present and to the generations to come.

Generally speaking, the nation means "a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself" (Guibernau 2000: 989). Nation is broadly used here as conceptualised by Benedict Anderson as an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991: 7). Anderson brought the political and discursive domains of nation together by seeing it as "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1991:7). This imagination usually is an outcome of some mobilisation of political nature and involves a simultaneous process of homogenisation and othering. Homogenisation involves forging uniformity by

overlooking heterogeneities within and othering involves inventing its cultural and political others, against which nation is defined. As Ashis Nandy explained, it presupposes an ideologically tinged, ardent form of "love of one's own kind" and some degree of fearful dislike or positive hostility to "outsiders" (Nandy 2006: 3502).

However, nations in erstwhile colonies are not complete European imports as the former has their own imaginative contribution in the making of their nation (Chatterjee-ii 1999: 5). The European modular forms of nation cannot be replicated throughout the world as every nation exercises its freedom of imagination that often undo/reform the European readymade model (Chatterjee-ii 1999: 5). As against the universalist claims, nations differ in their imaginations about nationalism, secularism, modernity, democracy, civil society and political society (Menon 2010: 386, Vijayasree 2007: xiii). This also indicates that construction of nations as political communities is neither natural nor rely upon primordial affinities. They are constructions with political intentions in which often the elites play the lead role (Smith 2001). Such constructions need constitutive narratives and myriad forms of mobilisation. Sheikh Abdullah's autobiography by way of remembering the formation of nation and the struggles through which it got its consolidation, not only map the trajectory of Kashmiri nation with its legitimization history but also turns out to be a constitutive narrative in itself. However, no nation, or its constitutive narrative is possible without concrete historical circumstances which allows the nation to get fashioned or a constitutive narrative to take shape.

Against Dogras and Unifying Muslims:

Nationalistic feelings were present in the valley right from the beginning and that was the reason that the political entity of Kashmir had retained a strong sense of autonomy even while being associated with many big empires of both South Asia and Central Asia. This was partly due to its geographical location and partly due to its distinctiveness in various spheres of life. By the time Indian subcontinent came under the rule of the Delhi sultans, Kashmir had its own indigenous rulers independent of the Delhi rulers. Even during the time period of the Mughal rule in

Kashmir, the Mughal governors of Kashmir enjoyed considerable amount of autonomy due to the distance factor. Aggressive integrationist approaches by the imperial forces frequently led to local uprisings and rebellions. From 1846 onwards, Kashmir came under the indirect rule of the British. The later administered this territory through their trusted ally, the Dogras of Jammu. It was around this time that the political unit known as 'Jammu and Kashmir' came into existence. Ironic it may sound, the Dogra Maharajas of Jammu were officially designated as the Maharajas of Kashmir, a territory which they had bought and which they claimed as their property and never as their home (Bazaz 2003: 122).

It was the anti-people rule of the Dogra kings that provided the necessary setting for the emergence of Kashmiri nationalism/nation. It was anti-Muslim in diverse ways. Sheikh Abdullah gets on to the narrative of the anti-Dogra ideology that formed the foundation of Kashmiri nation by narrating the anti-Muslim policies from his own life experiences. Recollecting his childhood Abdullah says that "[d]uring those days, Muslim families rarely sent their children to schools" due to "their abject poverty and the indifferent and discouraging attitude of the rulers (FC: 5). After completing FSc, contrary to his expectations, he did not get state support for studying medicine because being a Muslim boy he had to prove that he is good in "bowing and scraping" (FC: 7). Admissions to even Science courses to the Muslims was done not as a recognition to their merit but as a favour. Abdullah's application to a Bachelor's seat in Prince of Wales College at Jammu was rejected as he spoke against this injustice to the Principal (FC: 8). Abdullah's desire to go abroad for higher studies after his MSc in AMU also was disillusioned due to the age bar imposed by the state on Muslim students (FC: 10). But perhaps unlike his other Muslim counterparts who have undergone similar experience, Abdullah was determined to respond to the "communal discrimination" it involved.

This was also apparently a result of the growing political awakening in the subcontinent during the early twentieth century against foreign rule.³⁸ The discourses of nationalism, rights and democracy were taking roots in the minds of

³⁸ For Sheikh Abdullah the Dogra rule over Kashmir was indeed a foreign rule; He writes that Dogras were not part of Kashmir, instead they purchased the entire valley of Jhelum from the British by paying them seventy-five lakh rupees in 1846 (FC: 2).

at least among the western educated leaders, who were taking efforts to disseminate these ideas to the masses in order to dislodge the foreign rulers. Within Kashmir the modern political consciousness started around the discourse of rights particularly of the Muslim majority including protection to their places of worship (Rai 2004: 208-223). Sheikh Abdullah confesses that his education at AMU, at a time when it had turned out to be the nerve centre of Muslim unrest, has been crucial as it was impossible for him “to remain indifferent to this highly-charged emotional environment (FC: 10). Abdullah also writes that it was also at AMU he got the glimpses of Mahatma Gandhi for the first time, whose “simplicity and informality” captivated him apart from the “new spirit of freedom” he infused (FC: 15). AMU thus arguably gave him force of Muslim unrest as well as Gandhian nationalism.

Sheikh Abdullah’s narrative places he himself at the centre of transformation in Kashmir. On his return from AMU, he found a nation on the brink of eruption due to the discrimination towards majority Muslims.

How could I Have known that the nation was on the brink of an eruption. The trampled pride and hope of the people of Kashmir was like molten lava ready to flow. Nature fanned the embers of protest which were smouldering inside me. It was left to me to take the lid off the volcano’s mouth. The valley of flowers was about to burst into flames (FC: 10).

The nation is here imagined and equated with Muslims. Abdullah’s conviction at this stage was that “the ill-treatment of Muslims was an outcome of religious prejudice” (FC: 13). The condition of the common Muslim folk was nothing less than pathetic, forcing many of them to often seasonally migrate to the plains of Punjab for making a living. Abdullah narrates that their plight has brought tears into his eyes as they were living like “dump driven cattle” and he “saw them begging” often (FC: 15). However, Abdullah started his political mobilisation from the elites, immediately after returning from AMU by making use of the animated situation in the aftermath of Albion Banerji’s resignation as Prime Minister in

1929.³⁹ The discriminatory policies of the state in public recruitment and provision of scholarship allowed Abdullah to initiate the Reading-Room Party along with a few other educated Muslim youth near Fatehkadal. It is recollected that as the number of youths in the Reading-Room Party steadily increased, braving political surveillance, Abdullah as the General Secretary of the party, gained more political visibility through publishing articles in the newspapers and magazines alongside representing the Muslim case to the government through petitions (FC: 18-19). He narrates the manner in which he carved a niche for himself in the Muslim elite circles, disagreeing and fighting the loyalist Muslims of the Raja (FC: 20-21). His roles as General Secretary of Reading-Room Party, convenor of a committee of Muslim elite, advocate of independence and “loyalty to the nation” found their common course and destinies (FC: 20-23). As testified in his autobiographical narrative, the idea of freedom and solidarity of discriminated Muslim majority have come together in the making of a nation as imagined by Abdullah at this stage.

The idea of nation thus germinated from elite locations needs concrete incidents and strategies of mobilisation to reach the people.⁴⁰ The police firing killing 22 people and injuring hundreds on 13 July 1931 proved to be such an incident which virtually lifted the “lid of the volcano” of the Muslim disenchantment, allowing it progressively expanding in geographic and demographic terms.⁴¹ Abdullah equated the atrocity with that of Jallianwala Bagh (FC: 22). He also builds an analogy with the storming of Bastille, which kick started the French revolution, when he recollects that it was on the same day in 1789 the French revolution has started (FC: 23). The people who were killed became the martyrs of Kashmiri nation and day became the Martyrs Day of the Kashmiri nation as the incident became central to the formation of nation. Abdullah recounts that “[S]o

³⁹ Sir Albion Banerji resigned in protest against the oppressive rule of the Maharaja Hari Singh due to which the conditions of Kashmiri people were very pathetic.

⁴⁰ See (Arakotaram 2009) for the elitist nature of Kashmiri nation, the history of its conversion into nation of people. Rogers Smith’s people-building model (Smith 2001) is used as the theoretical frame to construct this argument.

⁴¹ The incident took place when a man namely Abdul Qadir, a non-Kashmiri servant of the visiting British Officer, made a hatred speech against the Maharaja’s rule and gave a call for rebellion, due to which he was arrested and was put on trial in camera on 13 July 1931. People on the same day assembled outside the Jail and when they were ordered by Governor Raizada Trilok Chand to disperse, people pelted him stones. Then the Governor ordered the police to fire in which twenty two people were killed and hundreds were injured (Bhattacharjea 2008: 31).

long as Kashmiri hearts beat to the national anthem, the Khanqah-e-Naqshbandia will remain the symbol of defiance, dignity, and pride” (FC: 24). The Jama Masjid of Srinagar and Khanqah-e-Naqshbandia were the centres of the popular mobilisation, though Abdullah registers his anguish that “Hindu press of the Punjab projected our movement to be communal” (FC: 24).⁴² Abdullah’s autobiography also captures the emotional outburst in forging and circulating national solidarity when he describes the observance of 14 August 1931 as the Kashmiri Day at the burial ground of the martyrs “where people wept at the sight of the martyrs’ children” (FC: 25). He also foregrounds the pain he has taken in the mobilisations, not being arrested and jailed but also travelling extensively in rural Kashmir “to broaden and strengthen the popular base of our movement” after striking a truce with the government (FC: 24-25).

Abdullah’s narration centralising his role in “our movement” has construed in such a manner to naturalise his unanimous election as the Founding President of Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference when it was formed in 1932. Though the energies and membership of the conference came from the Muslim community, Abdullah was in pains to dispel the communal tag attached with it in his maiden presidential address.

We have repeatedly declared that the Kashmir movement is not communal; it is a platform to address the grievances of every section of people. We shall always be prepared to help our compatriots, Hindus and Sikhs. No progress is possible unless we learn to live in amity... I repeat Kashmir movement is not a communal movement (FC: 35).

Abdullah paint himself here as an advocate of a secular movement, right from the beginning, though his strategies of mobilisation were along the communal lines as demanded by the political circumstances. He also recounts that his attempts to take the other communities along and form a joint organisation was “not welcomed” within the conference (FC: 36). At the same time he acknowledges the growing communal tensions between Muslims and Hindus at this stage,

⁴² Abdullah recounts that the transfer of Pathar Masjid was joyously celebrated in the city, which became another centre of their political movement (FC: 31).

particularly after the acceptance of Glancy Commission in April 1933 under the pressure exerted by the Muslim Conference (FC: 37-39).

Sheikh Abdullah's autobiography also captures the internal schisms within the Muslim community and competing interests and people for capturing the leadership of the emerging Muslim national solidarity. The autobiography lambasts at the Muslim elite who are referred to the "loyalist" – the loyalists of the Dogra rule who are allegedly making compromises with the Hindu regime for their personal benefits and power. Moulvi Yusuf Shah and his family's influence over the Muslims was described in the autobiography with resentment apart from delegitimizing the family due to the feud between the Mirwaiz brothers (FC: 39-40). Yusuf Shah was seen as succumbed to "interested parties who wanted to create discord among the Muslims and weaken the movement" (FC: 39). It is pointed out that Yusuf Shah attempted to discredit Abdullah by accusing him of being a Qadiani (FC: 39).⁴³ Things were gone to the extent of inviting Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal's intervention calling Abdullah to patch up the internal difference to ensure the success of their mission (FC: 41). However, Abdullah's reiteration of his Sunni descent and identity is coincided with his near silence on the expulsion of Ahmadiyyas from the Muslim Conference, indicating the exclusionary nature of Muslim Conference under Abdullah even when he was waging a battle to establish his leadership over the Muslims of Kashmir.⁴⁴ The reason attributed by him for this move was the alleged attempt of Qadianis to "use our movement to preach their beliefs" and Ahmadiyyas with their commitment to proselytization "could fan the flames of internecine strife" in the movement (FC: 32-33). He also specifies in the autobiography that "[E]veryone knew that I was a Sunni, of the Hanafi sect" and have no links with the Ahmadiyya sect (FC: 39, 32). Abdullah reiterates this as he has been time accused of being a Qadiani/Ahmadiyya not only by Muslims outside Kashmir like the All India Majlis-e-Ahrar but also his opponents in the valley and within the Sunni sect. The attempts of All India Majlis-e-Ahrar to support the

⁴³ This discord has resulted in Yusuf Shah severing his links with Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and setting up a separate Azad Muslim Conference.

⁴⁴ Abdullah acknowledges that the 'Young Men's Muslim Association' came into being the "avowed objective of saving the Muslim Conference from the domination of the Ahmadiyyas (FC: 41). Arakotaram acknowledges that the Kashmiri nationalism was having such an exclusionary optic towards the Muslims in Jammu too (Arakotaram 2009), while the Muslims in the valley itself are heterogeneous as they hail from different communities (Raghunath 2006).

Kashmiri Muslims were viewed with suspicion; they are criticised for accepting the Raja's offer of being government guests "at a time when the people were being mercilessly killed by the government forces" and trying to build their own organisation by collecting "huge amounts of money in the name of Kashmir" (FC: 31-32). All these testify the complicated nature of nation formation in Kashmir as seen in the autobiographical narrative of Sheikh Abdullah – which represented a simultaneous attempt of homogenising the Muslim community by making use of the anti-Dogra sentiments on the one hand and making it exclusionary in significant ways on the other. The nationalist imagination it presupposes mobilised its energies along the communitarian lines by articulating itself against its enemy – the foreign, oppressive and illegitimate Dogra regime.

From Communal to the Dream of Secular:

It was in 1939 the Muslim Conference was converted into National Conference. Sheikh Abdullah acknowledges the intervention of two Kashmiris, one a Muslim and the other a Hindu, in making this "revolutionary step in the politics of Kashmir" – Dr. Mohammad Iqbal and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (FC: 49-50). Being imagined as a new nation formed against foreign rule, Abdullah was convinced about the support it requires from larger movements that works with same motto.⁴⁵ At the same time Abdullah reiterates the essential nationalist credentials at large of the movement he spearheaded:

From its very inception, the Muslim Conference was essentially a national organisation. Now the time had come to mould its external shape in consonance with national demands (FC: 49).

Abdullah elaborate the pains he has undertaken in making the "revolutionary step". He had to deal with the suspicions of his Muslim comrades as well as accommodate the other communities. He recollects that some members of the Kashmiri Pandit community under pressure from their communities, for apparently influencing the National Conference policies in their favour has resigned from the organisation and complained to Nehru about Abdullah's Muslim preferences (FC:

⁴⁵ The change was necessary if the Kashmiri leaders wanted the support of Indian National Congress, confesses Abdullah (FC: 49).

50-51). He also recollects that sections of Muslims, under the influence of the Majilis-e-Ahrar tried to disrupt the new secular demeanour of the organisation in their attempt to take it back to its communal roots (FC: 50-51). He was at the receiving end of this dual grilling, “being pulverized, being caught in the obscurantist grinding mill-stones of the Hindus and the Muslims” (FC: 51). From this phase onwards, the idea of nation involved in Abdullah and his movement is thus imagined beyond the Muslims to accommodate other communities. In the first annual session of the National Conference held at Baramulla in late September 1940 Sardar Budh Singh was elected as its president (FC: 51). At the same time, Abdullah was still aware of the fact that his primary constituency was the Muslim community. The same chapter that recounts the conversion of Muslim Conference into National Conference ends with reiterating his commitment towards the wakf, with a couplet from Mirza Ghalib:

Go mein raha raheen-e-sitam hai rozgar

Lekin tere khayal sey ghafil nahin raha

(Although I remained burdened by the oppressions of employment

But I was never oblivious of your memory) [FC: 53]

He narrates his services to the Islamic Endowments Committee, aimed at recovering mosques from the government and constructing or renovating new/old ones and thereby catering to the religious needs of the community apart from organising charity towards the marginalised through the Endowment Committee (FC: 53-54).

The emotional appeal of throwing open “our movement to all religious groups” has been complemented by a concrete political and economic agenda that could serve as the rallying point for the masses irrespective of their communitarian affiliations. The Naya Kashmir Manifesto reinvented the Kashmiri nation from its communal locations to class considerations with a considered political agenda of opposing oppression and supporting the oppressed (FC: 57). Sheikh Abdullah considers the manifesto as a revolutionary document, providing material and political legitimacy to the new Kashmiri nation:

We had learned from experience that the real reason for conflict was not religion but a clash of interests between different classes and groups. The primary objective of our movement was to oppose oppression and support the oppressed.... 'New Kashmir', as it was termed, was a revolutionary document. It assured the safeguarding of rights of women workers and weaker sections of society (FC: 57).

The economic manifesto of new Kashmir nation thus contained the promise of imagining nation beyond religious and community lines with a predilection towards the cause of the oppressed and the weak. This apparently provided the much needed moral legitimacy to the Kashmiri national movement among the ongoing movements against colonialism, foreign rule and oppression. Abdullah narrates how this promise was met by the National Conference when it came to power in Kashmir after independence with him as the Prime Minister. The Jagirdari and Chakdari systems were abolished as promised by the Naya Kashmir Manifesto without compensation to the landlords.⁴⁶ Abdullah recollects that it was indeed a difficult task as it involved a communal angle since majority of the Jagirdari and landlords were Hindus and oppressed peasants were Muslims. It was executed braving the strong opposition from the Hindu landed gentry and against the wishes of people like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (FC: 108-09). Abdullah also narrates his determination to end rural indebtedness caused by excessive interests and forced labour without payment beating "the trap laid by my enemies stretched from Srinagar to Jammu till Delhi" (FC: 109). The discrimination and consequent under-representation of Muslims in state service were also addressed successfully alongside attempts to provide education to the marginalised.

The political decision to be open to all communities and the economic manifesto to align with oppressed and the weak was coincided with an imagination of seeing Kashmir as a site of syncretism and shared culture of different communities. This imagination of Kashmiriyat asserts a distinct Kashmiri identity as shared by the Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and other communities of the region

⁴⁶ Abdullah recollects that "we abolished 396 big jagirs and took away four lakh acres from little over nine thousand land owners. Some two lakh peasants were given property rights over their land" (FC: 108).

(Arakotaram 2009). National Conference under Sheikh Abdullah became emblematic of Kashmiriyat.⁴⁷ Sheikh Abdullah's autobiography captures the spirit of Kashmiriyat in the beginning itself as he quotes the saying and mottos of his secular ancestors (both of Muslims and Hindus) to make an entry into his narrative. These quotations underline the common and shared culture of Kashmir alongside the imperative of living together: (FC: xii).

"I broke my sword and fashioned a sickle" _____ (Nund Reshi)

"Kashmir...By the power of the spirit.....yes

By the power of the swordnever" _____ (Kalhana, Rajtarangini)

"Jis khaak ke zamir mein ho aatish-e-chinar

Mumkin nahin ke sarad ho woh khaak-e-arjumand" _____(Dr. Mohammad Iqbal).

Enemies of Nation: Internal and External

Nation and national identity creates enemies in order to define it against such adversaries and seek its legitimization. The enemies are invented by nation and its proponents with such a political aim (Eco 2012). Umberto Eco explains the political overtones of this exercise of invention lucidly:

Having an enemy is important not only to define our identity but also to provide us with an obstacle against which to measure our system of values, and in seeking to overcome it, to demonstrate our own worth. So when there is no enemy, we have to invent one (Eco 2012: 2).

An enemy who is supposedly threatening the values of nation that one represent and promulgate would be used in the nationalist narrations to reify the values of nation through a "process of creating and demonising the enemy (Eco 2012: 3). Sheikh Abdullah too defines his notion of nation against the enemies he construct and the values/vices they represent. Such a construction is done along two poles in his autobiography – internal and external. The internal enemies are

⁴⁷ Every nation as an imagined political community involves the politics of inclusion and exclusion. For instance, it is pointed out that Kashmiriyat excluded Muslims of Jammu and Poonch and the Dogra Rajputs from the new Kashmiri identity (Arakotaram 2009: 28).

those in Kashmir who doesn't follow the principles of Kashmiriyat and violate the canons of nation, the external enemies are foreign to the nation geographically and dogmatically. Internally Sheikh Abdullah had to contest with existing lines of solidarity in the valley to reinvent the people into a new national solidarity. For instance, before the emergence of Sheikh Abdullah on to the political scene, the valley was spiritually headed by the two Mirwaiz's i.e. Mirwaiz-e-Kalan (Senior Mirwaiz) and Mirwaiz-e-Khurd (Junior Mirwaiz). They were held in great esteem and by virtue of their spiritual authority Mirwaizs exercised enormous influence on the Muslim population of the valley. However, Abdullah reminds us that the Mirwaiz brothers were at loggerheads and as a result of which they couldn't mobilise the people against the oppressive Dogra rule as they were busy in fighting each other on petty issues (AeC: 177). Among the two, the senior Mirwaiz was more popular; having the greatest say in the whole valley and the consent or support of the Mirwaiz family was a must for anything important (AeC: 179). He admits that the Mirwaiz family had differences with him "at a personal level as well as with our liberation movement" (FC: 149). However, Abdullah confesses that he received support in the earlier period for his political carrier from the existing Mirwaiz Molvi Mohammad Yousuf Shah as Mirwaiz himself was influenced by the freedom movement during his stay at Deoband (AeC: 179). This growing popularity of Sheikh Abdullah made Mirwaiz apparently uncomfortable as it reduces his grip over the people. Abdullah recollects that though Yusuf Shah attended the first annual session of the Muslim Conference, he did not fully support it for he feared that "it has eroded his family's monopoly of leading the Muslims" (FC: 39). Abdullah had to engage with the authority of the Mirwaiz brothers, particularly the senior Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf Shah, in order to build his sphere of influence along the path of modern politics. The autobiography right from the beginning engages the senior Mirwaiz and de-legitimise his politics and his commitment to the nation is portrayed as doubtful. When a Kashmiri nation was in the making the Mirwaiz brothers were at feuds and the young leadership under Abdullah was successful in bringing a rapprochement between the fighting brothers in the initial stages (FC: 22). The senior Mirwaiz is portrayed as being influenced by diverse elements that work against the nation including the Dogra king and some "reactionary elements" within the Mirwaiz factions (AeC: 180). He not only sowed the seeds of mistrust in the new movement and formed a new political party under

the name of “Azad Muslim Conference” but also acted hand in glove with the Dogra ruler. Mirwaiz did it on the support and directions of Dogra rulers and their associates (AeC: 762). Abdullah was unambiguous that the real motive behind the formation of Azad Muslim Conference was protecting the interests of the Maharaja and his associates, against whom the Kashmiri nation was waging its battle (AeC: 762). Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf is also portrayed as someone vulnerable to praise, recognition and sycophancy; and acting against the fundamentals of Kashmiri nation. Abdullah recollects how Mirwaiz has allied with the Dogra rule in the aftermath of massive protests against his arrest on 21 September 1931 and the subsequent communal tension and state repression:

Raja Hari Krishan Kaul was a cunning politician. He invited Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah and told him that in the eyes of the government he was next only to the Maharaja. He also said that the government was prepared to accede all the just demands of the Muslims but they would have to wait for the appropriate moment. The Raja persuaded him to send a telegram to the Viceroy stating that the situation in Kashmir had returned to normal, and that all Kashmiris were loyal to the Maharaja would peacefully sort out their differences. The Maharaja was very pleased. He invested Kaul with a robe of honour plus an annual stipend of Rs. 600 (FC: 28).

Many a times Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah has acted as the informal representative of the government in peace and settlement talks with Abdullah and his group (FC: 27-28, 149-51). In order to delegitimize Sheikh Abdullah’s credentials to lead a Muslim dominated nation, Yusuf Shah gave currency to the rumour that the former is close with the Qadiani Sect (FC: 31-34). Abdullah also recollects that Yusuf Shah’s animosity with him and the nationalist movement he spearheads resulted in open fights between the followers of Sheikh Abdullah and Mirwaiz popularly known as ‘Sher’ and ‘*Bakra*’ (AeC: 185), which proved to be a great set back to the freedom struggle. Abdullah also points out that Mirwaiz openly supported the autocratic Dogra ruler, which was very clear, among other things, from his open criticism of the Quit Kashmir movement (AeC: 768). The autobiography demonstrates that the senior Mirwaiz remained ‘enemy’ to the nation throughout his life as shown by opportunistic politics and capacity of aligning with anyone, one

after another, to serve his agendas against the interests of the nation. He not only sent telegram to the Viceroy declaring the confidence of Muslims in the Raja when they were fighting against the Dogra rule and formed Azad Muslim Conference to “safeguard the interests of the Maharaja and his coterie,” but also was in support of state accession with the Pakistan and when the bid of taking the state with Pakistan failed, Mirwaiz Mohammad Yousuf fled to Pakistan (FC: 149-50). After Yousuf Shah’s shifting to Pakistan, in Kashmir valley his vacant post was filled up by his son Molvi Farooq with the help of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and with the support from some circles of Delhi (FC: 150). The Mirwaiz family became close to the Congress administration from there. However, Abdullah recollects that Mirwaiz changed his affinity again when he raised opposition at the behest of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, to the Indira-Abdullah Accord of 1975 (FC: 150). Sheikh Abdullah also narrates that when he raised the demand of plebiscite, Molvi Farooq on the instructions from Delhi attempted to divert the attention to some other issues by aligning with the Congress (AeC: 768). It is also pointed out by Abdullah that Mirwaiz was quick in joining the Janata band-wagon upon the defeat of Congress. The Mirwaizes were thus portrayed as the antithesis of Kashmiri nation, always letting down its interests by aligning with the opposite blocks. Mirwaizes are thus demonised as who doesn’t share the fundamentals of the nation and its interests and attempting defeat it- making them enemies of the nation within Kashmir.

The notion of nation as constructed by Sheikh Abdullah is not only contested from within, but also from outside. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the supreme leader of Muslim League, is perhaps the best embodiment of this external enemy who did not share the ideals of Kashmiri nation and was attempting to disrupt it. Jinnah has been portrayed as a political leader who frequently change his positions and has no respect for people. In 1935 when Jinnah visited Kashmir he was stated to be exhorted the Muslims to respect the sentiments of the non-Muslims (FC: 59). But later on, as he became the chief advocate of the two nation theory and Pakistan, in a meeting at Delhi, Jinnah advised Abdullah “not to trust on the Hindus, otherwise you will regret later” (AeC: 309-310). Upon the request of the Abdullah Jinnah has agreed to advice the Muslim Conference to merge its identity with National Conference in Kashmir. But to the disappointment of Abdullah in 1944 when he came to the valley he turned his face off from his

promises and asked Sheikh Abdullah to sort out differences by talking with Chaudhri Ghulam Abass, the leader of the Muslim Conference (FC: 60). Abdullah realised that his inclination towards the Muslim Conference became pronounced as his communalised notion of nation got firmed up (FC: 60).

Muslim Conference was seen by Jinnah as the right route to take Kashmir to Muslim League and Pakistan. Jinnah thus threatened the notion of nation as cultivated by Abdullah with its commitment to secularism because of his communalist politics and communalised nation. Moreover, the principle of democracy which Abdullah placed at the heart of his nationalist imagination was least respected by Jinnah. This was clear from his response to the question posed by a National Conference leader Ali Mohammad Tariq, i.e. whether the future of Kashmir would be decided by the people of the state. Jinnah's reply was that "let the people go to hell" (AeC: 319). Unsurprisingly, a nation grown in self respect and democratic principles could not appreciate this: "[W]hen people learnt about this they were quite hurt" (FC: 60-61). Sheikh Abdullah's dissent with a nation made on religion and lack of respect for people made him unacceptable for Abdullah. He stated it clearly to Jinnah that the latter's nation have no place in Kashmir: "you are the leader of the Muslims of Hindustan on other side of Kohola, but not of this side [Kashmir], where you have always supported the autocratic rule of the Maharaja and therefore suggested him to remain out of the political affairs of the state" (AeC: 314). Abdullah was convinced that Jinnah's nation cannot represent the entire Muslims of Hindustan and therefore stressed the Muslims to "cultivate brotherly relations with Hindus" (FC: 61). Jinnah was very disappointed with Kashmir as his imagination of nation did not gain ground in Kashmir for which he never excused the National Conference and its members (FC: 61). Sheikh Abdullah has also been certain that the Kashmir problem has been made complicated by the inflexible attitude of Jinnah (FC: 61). Jinnah thus did not get an entry into the Kashmiri nation and remained its external enemy due to the fundamental mismatch in the imagination of nations.

Mirwaizes and Jinnah embodies the internal and external other of Kashmiri nation in Abdullah's narrative as they remained inimical to the imagined fundamentals of the nation. Sardar Patel was also painted in same vein. For

Sheikh Abdullah, Patel was a Hindu fanatic and always tried to secure the interests of Hindu revivalists and at times supported the Hindu communal tendencies (FC: 71). Abdullah also points out that Patel's primary support was not to the people who were fighting for the freedom, but to the Hindu ruler of the state which was against the basic principles of Kashmiri nation (AeC: 344). Patel did not trust Abdullah and his intentions and allegedly planted Hasan Walia, a high ranking officer of intelligence, to gather intelligence from the state for the Home Ministry (FC: 71). The conflicting notion of nations they shared, found Patel and Abdullah falling to a heated argument when they meet with each other. Abdullah also informs that Patel organised a working group in his Ministry for removing Sheikh Abdullah from the power and installing a parallel leadership in Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad (FC: 72). This acted as one of the factor responsible for the removal of Sheikh Abdullah from the power on 9 august 1953 which arguably led to the end of the dream of an independent Kashmir nation. Sheikh Abdullah's notion of nation based on secularism and people's power went in conflict other nationalist imaginations and Abdullah subtly invents such tendencies as the enemies of his nation through a few individuals.

Unique Nation: Imagining the Difference

Sheikh Abdullah's and his imagined nation retained an ambivalent relation with India and its dominant imagination of nation. Sheikh Abdullah was pragmatic to enlist the support of the Indian nationalist leadership in his fight against the Dogra rule. Though usually it is said that the nature of political struggle in Kashmir resembles with the political struggle of the India, Sheikh Abdullah has always places the nationalist struggle under his leadership on a high pedestal as it was much more forward looking, bright minded and benevolent than its larger Indian counterpart (AeC: 221). Right from beginning Sheikh Abdullah was keen to forge the Kashmiri nation along secular lines, it was the crucial reinforcement from Nehru and Iqbal made him re-invent the nascent nationalist feeling of Kashmir from its communal bearings to secular path i.e. a nation founded on the consciousness of national solidarity, in which everyone will be equal and will actively participate in the political process irrespective of the religion, caste, language etc. But at the same time, for Abdullah's nation was much more than its

secular credentials; its independence and predilection towards the subjugated and welfare to everyone as enshrined in the Naya Kashmir Manifesto were also equally important, through which also Abdullah claimed a difference for his nation.⁴⁸

Abdullah's imagination and urge for a free and independent nation, different and distinctive from India, is visible from the telegram he has sent to the Cabinet Mission, when consultations were going on Indian independence. Abdullah candidly stated his imagination and intentions regarding his nation and the right of Kashmiris to decide the destiny of their nation:

We Kashmiris want to inscribe our own destiny and we want the Cabinet Mission to reaffirm the correctness of our stand... Ours is a unique land. Its physical beauty is unparalleled. Its strategic importance for military operations is undisputed, located as it is at the meeting point of the Chinese and Russian frontiers. Ours is also a unique polity. We have a tradition of communal harmony and joint struggle; consequently, all communities and classes are supporting this joint national demand (FC: 78).

However, at the outer domain of politics, Abdullah still sought the help of Indian nationalist movement and remained open to it. This was the case even as late as the time of Quit Kashmir movement which was launched in 1946 along the lines Quit India Movement, by giving the ultimatum to the Dogra rulers to leave the valley. Abdullah articulated that it was on behalf of British the Dogras were ruling over Kashmir, and when the British reign make its form the India, the Dogra rule also will expires and becomes illegal (FC: 78-79). Abdullah was arrested for raising the slogan of Quit Kashmir and was sentenced for three years rigorous imprisonment, the protests against the same and the police repression resulted in the death of at least twenty people (FC: 78). The Indian National Congress supported the Quit Kashmir movement and when Sheikh Abdullah was arrested, Pandit Nehru himself came to Kashmir for the support of Abdullah, at a time when

⁴⁸ This received good scholarly support. The manifesto was seen as a blueprint for the welfare state, far in advance of its times at least in India (Taseer 1973: 379).

Jinnah described the movement as “the movement of lumpen proletariat, instigated by foreign elements” (FC: 81-82).

As India gained independence, the Indian National Congress, apparently ensured the release of Abdullah before the term of his imprisonment by impressing/forcing the Maharaja (FC: 86). It was seen as a measure to win the confidence of Sheikh Abdullah for the accession of Jammu and Kashmir with the India. However, such collaborations in the outer political domain did not retract Abdullah from asserting the individuality of Kashmiri nation in its spiritual domain of exclusivity. His nation was to be free from both India and Pakistan. After the release he surprised the Indian leadership when in a public meeting he demanded “Freedom before Accession” (FC: 85). He asserted the individuality of Kashmiri nation and the supreme right of its people to decide its destiny in another meeting:

We are facing the question of accession to India or Pakistan, or keep our separate identity.....It is a fact the Indian National Congress has extended full support to our movement. But the question of the accession will be decided in the best interest of the people of Kashmir. Our first priority is to get rid of the Dogra domination. Then if the people decide to accede to Pakistan, I will be the first one to sign my name (FC: 86).

Abdullah also hinted that the division of India into two independent nations has created an ideal context for achieving an independent Kashmir nation.

When I went into prison, I took last look at undivided India. Today it has been broken into two fragments. We people of Kashmir must now see to it that our long-cherished dream is fulfilled. The dream of freedom, welfare and progress (FC: 86, emphasis added).

Up on his visit to Delhi, Sheikh Abdullah reiterated his nationalist stand of remaining independent when he said that, “Kashmir needs peace to decide her future, she will not tolerate any external interference. Any effort to pressurize us will result in revolt” (FC: 88).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ This type of attitude of Sheikh Abdullah has been attested in another speech where he said that “if the four millions of the people living in the Jammu and Kashmir were bypassed and the state

Sheikh Abdullah was also proud that his nation is different as it could maintain communal harmony within the state when entire sub-continent was engulfed by the monster of communalism (FC: 87). The nation is thus portrayed as one that is adhering to highest values of civic life above the divisions of communalism. When communal violence leading the killing of thousands in the rest of India, "Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims of Srinagar filled the streets to welcome" Abdullah on his release from prison on 20 September 1947 (FC: 85). Abdullah asserts the difference of Kashmiri nation in this regard by invoking Mahatma Gandhi's appreciation of the harmony prevailing in the valley when he said that Kashmir is a ray of light in the darkness of hate and strife (AeC: 899). This arguably strengthened Sheikh Abdullah's argument for remaining independent of both India and Pakistan. The pressure to join either India or Pakistan at this stage has been resisted by Abdullah on the logic Kashmir has to be freed from the illegitimate autocratic rule of Dogra king, as "slaves of an autocrat, and as such, had no say" (FC: 88). Pakistan was not ready to accept any of the demands of Sheikh Abdullah; instead they instigated a tribal attack on Kashmir, which compelled the Maharaja to go for the accession with India.⁵⁰ His dream of remaining independent is visible in the papers of the accession too, as he made the accession limited to only three spheres- communication, foreign affairs and defence.

Sheikh Abdullah also supported the accession with India due to this, because Kashmiri nationalists tended to treat Indian National Congress as their ally (Puri 1983: 187). Besides this, apparently on the both political and economic counts, India simply had more to offer the Kashmiri people than Pakistan. India was committed to secular democracy, while Pakistan was a feudal state (Wirsing 2007: 202). Abdullah's animosity towards a nation formed on the basis of religion stands out in his narration. Though acceded to India due to the crisis created by the tribal

declared its accession to India or Pakistan, he (Sheikh Abdullah) would launch a "Do or Die" struggle" (Sharma and Bakshi 1995:13).

⁵⁰ Abdullah narrates that "[O]n the question of accession, the Maharaja wanted an independent Kashmir. Before he was compelled to sign the Instrument of Accession, he had written to Lord Mountbatten stating that in view of Kashmir's location and composition of its population, he wanted independence. But Pakistan's short-sighted policy of invasion of Kashmir left him no alternative. There was no choice but to accede to India and ask for military help" (FC: 91-92).

raid and plunder from the side of Pakistan, Abdullah believed that it should be ratified by the will of the people. It was accepted by India as evident from the letter of Governor General, Lord Mountbatten to the Maharaja accepting his request for accession.

Under the special circumstances mentioned by you, my government accepts the accession of Kashmir to the Indian Dominion. In the case of States, where the question of accession is a controversial one, it should be accomplished according to the will of the people. My government feels, that as soon as the raiders are beaten back and peace is restored in Kashmir, the question of accession should be decided according to the will of the people (FC: 95).

Nehru reiterated this commitment of self-determination by Kashmiri people in his address to them (FC: 100). Kashmir was thus provisionally accepted into the Indian Union pending a free and impartial plebiscite, a commitment Nehru repeated in a letter to the UN secretary-general.⁵¹ Though Sheikh Abdullah also was instrumental in bringing Indian army to Kashmir to fight Pakistani tribal raiders, organising the Kashmiri resistance to the raiders “to protect our national existence” (FC: 94), and supporting the accession, he not only stood firm on his demand for referendum, but also called for communal peace in India and good will of the majority Hindu community be extended to the Muslims of Kashmir. In an interview with the British Press in Delhi on 1 December 1947, Sheikh Abdullah said:

The Kashmir episode may well have paved the way for communal peace in India. The accession of Kashmir, which has an 80 per cent Moslem majority, to the Indian Union will depend upon the goodwill shown to Moslems by the Hindu Majority in India. Our present accession to India is only tentative and is subject to confirmation by referendum. If India wants the people of Kashmir to elect for the accession to India, there must be communal peace in India (Birdwood 2005: 245, emphasis added).

⁵¹ The latter states that, “The government of India wants to make it clear that as soon as the raiders are driven out and normalcy restored, the people of the state will freely decide their fate and that decision will be taken according to the universally means of plebiscite or referendum” (Korbel 1954:98).

At the same time Abdullah registers his joy of defeating the designs of Pakistan, with which he did not want his nation to be affiliated and describes the Pakistani defeat as a victory of public opinion (FC: 81-107). After assuming the position of Prime Ministership of Jammu and Kashmir, however, Sheikh Abdullah started working on making the promises of Naya Kashmir Manifesto a reality and keeping the question of independence temporarily aside. It was thought that translating the proposals in the Naya Kashmir Manifesto would make Abdullah's case for independence powerful (Hassan 2009: 5).⁵²

Alongside, the values to which Kashmiri nation adheres, Abdullah also wanted to make his nation materially self-sufficient. His vision was towards "a self-sufficient Kashmir" that do "not want to extend a begging bowl towards the centre" (FC: 109). The materiality of the nation is addressed through interventions like the launch of 'Grow More Food' campaign (FC: 109-111). Abdullah has been vocal on this as seen from his public speeches too. At a public gathering at Hazratbal Srinagar, on 26, 1952 he stated:

The relation of Kashmir with India is based on three subjects that is, defence, communication and foreign affairs. With regard to the other matters Kashmiri people are independent and free. This I alone have not spoken but there is an agreement on it and the Indian parliament has confirmed it.....We had entered into this Agreement with the idea that it will continue, if they (some Indian leaders) are not happy with it, it is not my fault or that of Kashmiris.....The people of India should not think (as Pakistan did in 1947) that the life of 40 Lakh people of Kashmir depends on Indian trade, Indian money or Indian Army (Gockhami 2008:74).

Besides this, he also boosted the honour and morality of the nation by reaffirming the need to have stronger material foundation:

It would be better to die than submit to the taunt that India was our bread-giver. Kashmir is not eager for India's aid (Gockhami 2008:12).

⁵² Widmalm (2002) states that the distinction of ideas of Kashmiri nationalism from the Indian and Pakistani nationalism can be made from the Naya Kashmir Manifesto (Widmalm cited from Hassan 2009: 5).

This also explains his series of reforms along the lines of Naya Kashmir Manifesto including land reforms, liquidation of rural indebtedness, steps to improve education, including the education of the women, and so on (FC :110).

Engaging India: Politics of Affiliation and Adjustment

Sheikh Abdullah's and his nation's affiliation with India has been stressful. His dream of retaining the independence and difference of his nation was at its peak when the Indian constitution was being framed out. He articulated the reason for his disagreement with total accession with India: "we did not want to exceed the items which had been transferred to the centre under the instrument of accession. The central leadership, however, wanted our complete merger. But our special circumstances and the objectives of our movement could not allow it" (FC: 113). Sheikh Abdullah's efforts from here onwards were mainly to secure a special status within the Indian constitution under the article 370. Sheikh Abdullah's vision for the future of Kashmir was different from the leadership of India; he wanted a plebiscite under the supervision of the UN in which the people of Kashmir would exercise their sovereign rights in deciding their future (FC: 114-15).⁵³ It was with this intention Abdullah convened the Constituent Assembly which was opposed by New Delhi (Naqash and Shah 1997: 100, FC: 115). The convening of the Constituent Assembly, according to Abdullah, worried both India and Pakistan. The latter felt that India is violating the UN resolution on plebiscite and India wanted the Constituent Assembly should not be acting against the interests of India and it should ratify the accession to India (FC: 116). Abdullah concede the high Indian pressure on him to fall in line with the Indian position (FC: 116-18). The 'Delhi Agreement' perhaps represents these tensions at its best.⁵⁴ Abdullah

⁵³ Indian leadership's take on the issue was clear from N. Gopaldaswami Aiyangar's resolution on Article 370, which stated "[T]his article proposes a special status for Kashmir because of its special circumstances. The state is not in a position to merge with India. We all hope that in future the State of Jammu and Kashmir will get over the hurdles and completely merge with the Union, like the rest of the states (FC: 113).

⁵⁴ Delhi Agreement came into effect in order to sort out the constitutional deadlock between the State and the centre. Through this agreement, India agreed and reiterated its solemn pledge to give special position and status to the state in the constitution with complete internal autonomy, hereditary rule was abolished by an elected head of the state, fundamental rights incorporated in the Indian Constitution were to be applied to the state, the jurisdiction of the Supreme court was extended to the state to the extent of inter-state disputes, fundamental rights and to matter of

also informs that changing his earlier position, with the passage of time, Nehru changed his earlier position on Kashmir and apparently wanted to abolish the unique privileges extended to the state. For Sheikh Abdullah the autonomy provisions were not open to revision (Hewitt 2001:143). He communicated his displeasure and inability in this regard clearly to Nehru, that “I will gladly lay down my life for the cause but I cannot barter the rights and aspirations of forty lakh Kashmiris” (FC: 118). The limited autonomy which Sheikh Abdullah has gained for his state under the Delhi Agreement was strongly resented by elements at the Centre, but also eventually kindled separatist tendencies of Sheikh Abdullah. The organised attempts to portray Abdullah as a communalist made even Nehru questioning his secular credentials (FC: 122).⁵⁵ He apparently revolted for his nation and warned Indian leadership that no one should or could subjugate a people by force (FC: 123).

Sheikh Abdullah reiterated the difference of his nation and sought its autonomy. He was clear that the sacrifices made by Kashmiris are for their nation, not to become pawn to India or Pakistan.⁵⁶ He conceived Jammu and Kashmir as a nation as India and Pakistan and hence wanted equal status alongside India and Pakistan (Bhattacharjea 2008: 176, Malik 2005: 151). Along with the allegation of becoming communal, Abdullah testified the continued discrimination against the Muslims prevalent in all the central departments also worried him (FC: 122). He shares his shock when he learned about a secret circular by the Indian army not to

defence, foreign affairs and communication, the separate state flag was allowed along with the continuation of the union flag and the emergency powers of the President of India were to apply to the state “only at the request or with the concurrence of the government of the state.” When the state government showed reluctance in implementing that provisions in which government of India was interested, there were protests led by the Praja Parishad with full support of fundamentalist Hindus in order to make the full implementation of the Delhi Agreement possible (Kaul: 1985 62-64).

⁵⁵ Abdullah cites a letter dated 28 June 1958 from Nehru to support this (FC: 122).

⁵⁶ This is confirmed by other sources too. In one of his speech during this phase he said: “[T]he basic thing is that we have not given sacrifices in Kashmir to pawn ourselves either to India or to Pakistan but to achieve freedom for the people of Jammu and Kashmir State. The message which the martyrs have left for us is that they have performed their duty and now it is the Nation, (Quom) which has to perform its duties. This duty is not to join either Pakistan or India but to secure freedom for all the people of the state. We will adopt that path in which we will find that our freedom, honor and future is safe” (Gockhami 2008:77-78).

recruit Muslims in the army (FC: 122).⁵⁷ He narrates that such discrimination was prevalent in all other Central departments too. His opposition to this and reiteration for retaining the autonomy of his nation led to the removal of Abdullah as Prime Minister on 09 August 1953, on charges of anti-national activities, though the immediate provocation were something else (FC: 118-20).

Abdullah's arrest and making Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was a well thought out strategy by the Centre, in which to Abdullah's anguish Jawaharlal Nehru was also an active participant, to take away the autonomy accorded to Jammu and Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah noticed visible change in the conduct of Nehru prior to this: "I noticed that Jawaharlal was not the same man; clearly his confidence was shaken. I was amazed to see him speaking quietly with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and his friends. Whispering in corners had started" (FC: 116-117). He also confesses that it became clear later to him that Nehru sent secret letter to Karan Singh on 27 July 1953 ordering for his arrest (FC:125). His arrest and loss of power did not deviated Sheikh Abdullah from his commitment to his nation and its distinctive entity.⁵⁸ This made him more popular and he remained the hero of the valley and the symbol of Kashmiri nationalist aspirations (Puri 1981: 131). Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad apparently was not ready to take up the Prime Ministership in the presence of Sheikh Abdullah, as Karan Singh has mentioned that "Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad made it clear that he could not undertake to run the government if the Sheikh and Beg were left free to propagate their views" (Singh 1983:161, FC: 124-33). The news of his arrest spread like the wild fire, generating violence, arrests and killings (FC: 127).⁵⁹ However, Sheikh

⁵⁷ To Abdullah's question why the Muslims of Kashmir were not recruited to the army, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army General Cariappa replied that "their loyalty to India was doubtful" (FC: 122).

⁵⁸ Sardar Ibrahim Khan former President of Pakistan Administered "Azad" Kashmir in his book did not hesitate to praise Abdullah, "Sheikh Abdullah suffered incarceration for more than ten years. In these sufferings he bore insult and humiliation with courage and steadfastness. He stood by his convictions. No temptation came in the way of Sheikh Abdullah in his stand on the question of the inalienable right of the people of Kashmir vis-à-vis the question of plebiscite. No sufferings or humiliation could make his mind change. His family bore insults and privation. They all stood firm and faced the might of the Government of India for twelve years or so" (Taseer 2005:316).

⁵⁹ B.N.Mullick has put the toll of deaths during the protests nearly to sixty persons (Mullick 1971:46). Mir Qasim in his autobiography has mentioned that after the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah, "Srinagar was in total chaos. Bakshi Saheb's own house, despite the police guard, was under

Abdullah had to watch attempts made to make amendments into the special status provided under article 370 of the Indian Constitution to Jammu and Kashmir.

Sheikh Abdullah clearly sees the hands of Delhi in his dethronement, arrest and the entire conspiracy involved in the same.⁶⁰ Everything seemed going opposite to what he has dreamed as this session of Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly confirmed the legality of accession to the Indian Union.⁶¹ When the political atmosphere got animated following the decision of Constituent Assembly to apply Indian Constitution over Jammu and Kashmir, and declaring it as an integral part of India, Sheikh Abdullah, under arrest, went restless as he couldn't join the agitation for self-determination:

I was so disgusted with the organisation that I could not bring myself to participate in any (FC: 132).

Sheikh Abdullah narrates how his own nationalist colleagues acted against the nation for power and under the machinations from the Centre. His dismissal and arrest was described as a result of a high handed conspiracy in which these colleagues and elements from Delhi colluded. Nehru was apparently impressed upon by these elements that Abdullah is conspiring against India with its foreign enemies. Abdullah writes that his trip to Gulmarg with his family was misrepresented to Nehru as he is going to meet an emissary from Pakistan (FC: 125). He describes the conspiracy against him as embodied in his dismissal and arrest in which his internal and external adversaries of his nation came together:

When I opened the door I saw Raina standing there who informed me that my house was surrounded by the State army. The Superintendent of Police, L.D. Thakur, accompanied by an ADC of the 'Sadr-e-Riasat', entered the room.

attack. He was nervous and wanted to step down as Prime minister in favour of Mr. Sadiq" (Qasim 1992: 70).

⁶⁰ Sheikh Abdullah requested the Speaker of the Assembly i.e. Sadiq Sahib to allow him to attend the session of the Constituent Assembly, when he was under arrest, which was rejected. Sheikh Abdullah says that the rejection letter was not drafted by the state government, but has come from Delhi (FC:132).

⁶¹ Sheikh Abdullah condemned the application of the Indian constitution over Jammu and Kashmir as an encroachment on the autonomy of the state (Puri 1981:151).

The ADC handed me a sealed envelope from Kiran Singh which contained the order for my dismissal. Then he handed me another envelope containing a memorandum, signed by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Pandit Sham Lal Saraf and Pandit Girdhari Lal Dogra in which they expressed 'No Confidence' in me. The next item presented to me was the warrant for my arrest (FC: 125).

Abdullah also recollects how his adversaries in Kashmir has spread rumours that he declared the independence of Kashmir and appealed to the UN and US send their troops to bring about separation of Kashmir from India (FC: 126). Abdullah couldn't understand how he became an anti-national for standing for his nation; he also shares his utmost anguish in being accused as conspiring against India while attempting to dismiss the charge.

Throughout India, this episode created a sensation. How did a patriot, praised by Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi for his straightforwardness, turn into an enemy of the country? It was repeatedly claimed that I had gone to Gulmarg to meet an emissary of Pakistan. But this cooked up charge did not say that all the officers who accompanied me were Hindus. Another story doing the rounds was that I had entered into a conspiracy with the United States for the independence of Kashmir wanted to turn Kashmir into another Korea (FC: 127).

Abdullah argues that the cold war politics and Pakistan's alliance with the capitalist block has been used by India to retract from its commitment of self-determination on Kashmir. The Indian stand sounded logically strange to Sheikh Abdullah:

This was strange logic. Kashmir had done nothing to deserve it. Instead of Pakistan being penalized for its acts of commission and omission, the Kashmiris were penalized (FC: 135).

The demand for self-determination became the watch word for Sheikh Abdullah's nationalist politics from then. The incarceration of Sheikh Abdullah and the retraction from the principle of self-determination not only caused the first breach between the Indian union and the people of Kashmir, but also in the

international sphere, the reputation of the India got damaged (FC: 134-36).⁶² Despite the political compromises made by Bakshi with the Central government, Abdullah remained firm on this even after he was released following intervention of Nehru as testified by his address to the people after his release:

But I could not bring myself to surrendering to oppression. I addressed myself to the people of Kashmir and said that their fate could not be decided either by Karachi, Delhi, Moscow or Washington. They, the people, were the real masters of Kashmir and only they will decide its fate! (FC: 139).

At the same time Sheikh Abdullah was realising his limitation to manoeuvre without power. He tried to dispel his alleged anti-Indian sentiments and re-affirmed his commitment to the ideals India represents irrespective of ill-treatment and incarceration:

My comrades felt that we could not continue to hitch our wagon to a country in which we were treated so badly. I told them that we were wedded to certain ideals, so long as Indian propagated those we could not snap our ties. The ideals of socialism, secularism and democracy have no place in Pakistan. We must stay with India and continually work towards our goals (FC: 143-44).

Abdullah was also trying to convince Jawaharlal Nehru for self-determination as well as cautioning about the dangers to colluding with his internal adversaries, which is apparent from his letter to Nehru:

In 1953, he [Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad] misled you, I wrote to Nehru, 'which resulted in the traumatic episode of 9th August, Then too, I was accused of plotting with a foreign power to make the state independent but the charges could never be substantiated...I was opposed to the Kashmir policy of the Government of India. I believed the only correct procedure of solving this problem was that the people of Kashmir should be allowed to use their right of self-determination (FC: 141).

⁶² The Time news magazine while writing over the Abdullah's detention states, "[T]he most obvious flaw in the shining moral armour (sic) of India's Jawaharlal Nehru has been the case of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah" (Times cited from Puri 1981: 131)

Sheikh Abdullah also recollects how he valiantly faced the conspiracy case and came out of it as the charges were baseless, though rounds of arrests and detentions preceded the dropping of the case. He points out that the dropping of the case was seriously objected by his internal adversaries, which outwitted the aspirations Nehru and 'cultured and decent politicians like C. Rajagopalachari:

He was unhappy with the way things were and wanted the conspiracy case to be dropped. In July, during his Kashmir visit, he made his views known to the concerned people. Bakshi's fraud and deceit, however, outwitted Jawaharlal's aspirations (FC: 144).

The confident Abdullah shares his happiness, though he has undergone tremendous trouble for the same, when the conspiracy case was exposed as a fake one. He narrates:

To produce the drama of the conspiracy case on the Kashmir stage, the two players, 'Bakshi' and 'Delhi' displayed their best talent. It took five years and cost two and a half crore rupees. But falsehood has a rotten core. Their vile accusations were fully exposed before the public, and the case became a joke (FC: 144).⁶³

The long detention and house arrest of Sheikh Abdullah also spread massive discontents among the people leading to tensions on even incidents of non-political nature. The theft of the revered Moe-e-Muqaddas (Hair of Prophet Mohammad) from the Hazratbal Mosque, fanning massive popular resentment and violence in the valley was such an incident (FC: 145-46).⁶⁴ The foundations of the Bakshi government were shaken. At one level, this episode arguably underlines the spiritual sphere of the nation, but importantly the accumulated political anger in

⁶³ Abdullah narrates with a sense of gratification: "The prosecution leveled various charges, such as, that we established contact with Pakistan to procure money, arms and bombs and that this was done to start a bloody revolution in Kashmir. Fictitious documents were presented and large sums were paid to individuals who came forward to give false evidence. We attached very little importance to this prosecution because it was based on falsehood and perjury. But it appears to be a Godsent opportunity to expose the double-dealings of the Indian leaders (FC: 142).

⁶⁴ The house and property of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was attacked, because people believe that he was behind the theft (Bhattacharjea 2008:215).

the valley. Nehru was quick to realise that the underlying factors behind the agitation “were not just religious, but predominantly political” (FC: 145-46). As part of this realisation Sheikh Abdullah was released in 1964. Jawaharlal Nehru, in realisation of his failure in Kashmir, was keen to solve the Kashmir crisis by repairing the damage done to the valley (FC: 76). Abdullah apparently did not compromised with the idea of retaining autonomy for Kashmir in the plan Nehru and Abdullah accordingly worked out for Kashmir. The plan was reportedly for a confederation between India and Pakistan, with Kashmir as an autonomous enclave (Bhattacharjea 2008: 219).⁶⁵ Abdullah went to Pakistan with such a mission for talks with President Ayub Khan, with the backing of Nehru, was not successful as Ayub Khan rejected the idea of confederation even before Abdullah could take it out (FC: 154-55).

The attempts to solve the Kashmir fiasco under the next Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri did not succeed as he was not able to rally his colleagues around his view point (FC:155). Abdullah recollects that when he proceeded to perform Hajj in 1965 along with his wife, he used the opportunity to highlight the issue of Kashmir to the international community and was trying to get their support for the right of self determination for the Kashmiri people (FC 158-60). This created uproar in the Indian parliament as if Abdullah was running a campaign against India abroad; he was called back and was once again arrested, he had to remain in confinement with periodic gaps up to 1972.⁶⁶ The continuous confinement and Delhi’s rule in Kashmir through Abdullah’s adversaries and Indira Gandhi’s firm posture along with his deteriorating health made Abdullah to soften his stand eventually.⁶⁷ Sheikh Abdullah looked for the another option then, dropped his demand regarding the self-determination and begin to stress on the originality of article 370 of the Indian Constitution, under which Jammu and Kashmir was

⁶⁵ With hopes making his State, Abdullah used the term ‘Kashmiri Muslim’ to describe his nationality in his passport application in 1965 (Puri 1981:40).

⁶⁶ The restrictions on Abdullah's freedom have been a tacit admission of New Delhi's failure to solve the problem of Kashmir's status (Lockwood 1969: 384).

⁶⁷ The demand of self determination from the Indian government seems useless to Sheikh Abdullah as they never considered it (Bhattacharjea 2008:229). National Conference also began to lose to political and electoral significance as it was declared illegal and hence could not contest elections (FC: 164).

provided a special status. Accordingly Sheikh “assured the centre that we had no differences with them regarding accession. We only wanted Article 370 to be maintained in its original form” (FC: 164).⁶⁸ This opened space for negotiations and release of Sheikh Abdullah, eventually leading to the Indra- Abdullah Accord or Kashmir Accord.⁶⁹ The political pragmatism of Abdullah arguably led to this, as his attempts keep Jammu and Kashmir a separate and autonomous nation did not succeed. He strived to retain the special status the Article 370 with an assurance of no more further inroads. Sheikh Abdullah became the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir on 24 February 1975, with the support of the Congress party. Such compromises did not allow Abdullah to compromise on the honour of his nation; he thought the subsidy rice being sent from Delhi was a tool applied by the Indian government to appease the people of the valley and considered it both apolitical and amoral (FC : 165).⁷⁰ His address to the State Assembly richly captures this:

I have made it clear that I do not believe that the people of this state, or of this great country, should be made to live on doles and charity. I want a place of honour and dignity for them, the poorest and humblest of our citizens. I want the peasants, the factory workers, the low paid employee— all who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow—to feed themselves, and their children’s and their families, on their own steam, unaided by the crutches such as food subsidy (Wani cited from Bhattacharjea 2008:236).

Yet, Sheikh Abdullah’s autobiographical narrative brings out the battle he fought for his nation, its autonomy and self-determination and conditions under which he was agreed for the Kashmir Accord. Though the accord has not gone well with the entire valley, he still managed to retain the special status for Kashmir. His narrative maps the historical trajectory in which a nation finally becoming a sub-nation in administrative terms. He left behind what he dreamt about his nation,

⁶⁸ He used the same language in an interview with Times (London) on 10 March 1972 in which he said, ‘there is no quarrel with the Government of India over accession; it is over the structure of internal autonomy’ (Times cited from Puri 1981:176).

⁶⁹ It was through this accord, Abdullah gave finality to the accession of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian union. When demanded the pre-1953 position for his state, was refused by the Indra Gandhi by saying that “The clock can’t be turned back” (Naqash and Shah 1997: 120).

⁷⁰ This step was taken to demonstrate that Kashmiri’s could resist New Delhi’s bribes (Bhattacharjea 2008:233).

but devoted himself to the future of the nation and its material welfare (FC: 169). He philosophise his long political career and the change it took towards the end of it under the realisation of waging a losing battle by quoting the lines of Iqbal:

Safar zindagi ke liye barg-o-saaz

Safar hai haqeeqat hazar hai majaz

(The essence of life is movement

Motion is reality

The rest is illusion)

(FC: 169).

Gendered Sacrifices: For the Nation and for the Family

Sheikh Abdullah hardly resorts an emotional language in his autobiography, but the miseries and sacrifices he has undergone for the nation he believed in stands out in the narrative. The descriptions about the political struggle against the Dogra rule are thick with the fighting spirit of the oppressed. Different from many of his own colleagues who compromised on the question of independence, autonomy and self-determination, and sought positions of power and prestige, Abdullah self-writes himself has valiantly fought for what he believed in and remained the object of attack from diverse quarters- radical elements of both Muslims and Hindus in Jammu and Kashmir, his own colleagues who were after power, central leadership of India, leadership of Pakistan and so son. Imprisonment is a technology of discipline in modern societies (Foucault 1979) and Abdullah's life is apparently a good testimony of it. He sacrificed almost two decades in confinement with short intervals for the cause of his nation.⁷¹ He get on to long hunger strike in prison in order to get better treatment for himself and his fellow prisoners (FC: 34). He has to stand numerous arrests, harassment, suppression, killing of people and violence in his long political career for the nation. He has to suffer dethronement from a position to which he is democratically elected and staunch vilification

⁷¹ The imprisonment lasted for about nineteen years except for three relatively brief periods of freedom. On these three occasions, he was released in 1958, 1964 and 1968, but then was rearrested after some time because of his continuous insistence on the right of self determination.

campaign from multiple quarters. He let the reader know that he has to ignore often his family responsibilities for his political commitment. He even missed the marriage ceremony of his beloved daughter Suraiya, when the government of India did not allow him to leave the prison even for a day to attend the marriage (FC: 45). There are occasions in which he couldn't console his children. Abdullah narrates one such incident when he was in jail:

My son Farooq visited me in Kud, with his spirits low and his cloths tattered, he asked me, 'Papa what are we to do?' The only solace I could offer was to have faith in God (FC: 130).

While Abdullah was making sacrifices for the nation in the political/outer domain, his wife Akbar Jahan Begum has devoted her life for the family. Sheikh Abdullah appreciates that Jahan Begum introduced order into turbulent life and has patiently faced all the trials and became his "source of strength and inspiration" (FC: 44). The familial virtues and readiness for sacrifices for her husband who is in the political battle has been applauded by Abdullah.

In my absence, she ran the house single-handedly and never complained. It was her untiring effort that resulted in my children completing their education notwithstanding my continued absence from the domestic scene. My wife was a perfect homemaker whose main concern was to look after her children's problem (FC: 44).

Akbar Jahan thus becomes a perfect modern woman in Abdullah's narration in tune with the nationalist imagination in India that defines spiritual/inner domain for women and outer/material domain for men (Chatterjee 1989). Akbar Jahan Begum fulfilled the duty of being an obedient religious minded wife. Having completed her responsibilities of rearing children, she also transgressed her domain when she joined the agitation during the Quit Kashmir movement while Abdullah was in prison to keep alive the movement active in her husband's absence (FC: 44). During the tribal raids she also devoted herself to help the victims by organising a Red Cross team (FC: 44). Abdullah points out that she balanced the conflicting demands of being a wife, mother as well as a political

leader and she faced all the indignities with the courage and fortitude (FC: 44). Though she was elected to the parliament in the elections of 1977, as expected from a devoted wife and homemaker she shuns her political career because of ill health of Sheikh Abdullah to take care of him and due to other household pressures, though she continued working for the education of women, poor and destitute children (FC: 45).

The autobiography of Sheikh Abdullah thus construes a nation through the narrative and places his subjectivity at the centre of it. More than the compulsions of writing an autobiography at the fag-end of his life, it was necessitated by historical circumstances when his notions of nation were challenged in an unprecedented scale. He firmly writes the biography of nation through his autobiography and writes himself over it. It is with such an authority, political and textual, he calls upon the Kashmir pandits to join the 'mainstream', which speaks also about nation's authority as well as its shades.

Chapter - 5

Conclusion

This study has been a preliminary attempt to read the autobiography of Sheikh Abdullah in context. Aatish-e-Chinar and its abridged English version Flames of the Chinar is read to unravel the notion of nation it embodies. Sheikh Abdullah and his idea of nation remain controversial not only within Kashmir but also across South Asia as it engendered conflicting perceptions. The autobiography brings forth the life he lived and that of the nation he led, as both merges in pivotal ways and map out the trajectory of the nation with the twists/turns and reconfigurations it has undergone over half a century of its life.

In the recent past, autobiography has attained a respectable position in the field of historical and cultural research. The modernist protocols of knowledge has given an ambivalent position to autobiography, neither history nor fiction, and historians refused to consider it as a valuable source of history. But with the passage of time, the fictionality of history and historicity of artefacts that are considered be part of fiction has been acknowledged, which brought autobiography back into the historical research. Though the role of novels in forging nations has been acknowledged widely, autobiographies did not receive much of an attention in those lines. It is presumed in this research that autobiographies, through its production and circulation, can play a role in the making of nation. Like any other cultural artefact it can contribute to the shaping of history and its course, and it could assume multiple historical functions in its possible afterlives. Autobiographies are crucial political interventions as they converse with the present and future in an attempt to influence it and the appeal and meaning an autobiography generates across times would also be different. Sheikh Abdullah's autobiography in that sense is not just a source of understanding Kashmiri (sub)nation and its diverse constituents as imagined by its foremost leader and a master narrative from which most of subsequent national literature receive their derivations, but more importantly it is an important tool of political communication aimed at influencing the course of history. Arguably Sheikh Abdullah uses his autobiography as means of persuasion, wherein not only imagined nation takes its rhetoric shape in an attempt to influence the audience to

identify with the speaker/author in an attempt reinforce and reproduce the imagined nation.

The Kashmiri resistance to the illegitimate Dogra rule has been passive till 1920s. It was from the 1930s it received a nationalistic articulation with the coming of Sheikh Abdullah and the resultant movement of Kashmiri freedom struggle. His charismatic leadership transformed the deep resentment against the Dogra rule in Kashmir into a nationalist movement, mobilising its energies initially from communal discrimination and subsequently reinventing itself into secularist membership and agendas. Though he used communal resentments to mobilise the movement he firmly believed in secularism. He not only resorted to demonstrative measures like changing name of his political outfit from Muslim Conference to National Conference but also resorted to concrete measures aimed at catering to all sections of the society that are oppressed and exploited. He rhetorically emphasised the unity among the masses irrespective of creed, religion and sex and tried to stick to the proclaimed secularist commitments in his political struggle. Crucially, he refused to subscribe to the two nation theory of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and at the time of partition contrary to the Muslim majority logic refused to accede Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan, instead joined the Indian side because of his impression on the secular leadership of the Indian union. He also led the Kashmiri resistance to the tribal incursions from Pakistan. His determined commitment to secularism and the interests of the marginalised people is reflected in the Naya Kashmir Manifesto and the steps he has taken to bring the promises made in the manifesto into reality when he assumed administrative authority of the state as its Prime Minister. The abolition of landlordism and distribution of land to the tiller has been applauded as a measure well ahead of its times that even Jawaharlal Nehru was not able to take within the Indian union. Though he consented to the accession to India, he was not ready to compromise on the question of autonomy for Kashmir and right of self-determination to the people, which brought him in confrontation with the central government. The confrontation led to his arrest and confinement for almost two decades with short intervals. The incarceration of Abdullah further flamed nationalism within the valley and Sheikh Abdullah received tremendous popular sympathy within the state as well as outside. However, political circumstances, the adamant posture of Indian

government and collusion of his own colleagues with Indian federal agendas made him unsuccessful in his battle for an autonomous niche for his nation as an administrative entity. He was forced to dilute his demand from independence to autonomy, autonomy to self-determination and from self-determination to protection of special status under Article 370 of the Indian constitution. This culminated into the 'Kashmir Accord' between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi in 1975, which brought him under strong criticism within the valley. Despite this, he is respected as the man who led the liberation movement of Kashmir against the Dogra autocratic rule and also the one who ensured the special status for his state within the Indian union.

The autobiography of Sheikh Abdullah is an exposition of the nation of Abdullah, the historical circumstances that fashioned it, the values it stood for, the adversities it confronted with and the principles and people it opposed. Nation is used here as an imagined political community which would assume different constellations in different locations. His autobiographical narrative through his own life story and the biography of the national movement he led through, speaks about the nation he was leading and the principles it represented. Even while emphasising the secularist principles to which the nation is adhered to, Abdullah's narrative acknowledges the Muslim majority undercurrent of the movement. He narrates the discrimination against the majority Muslims by the Dogra rulers through his personal experiences which led to the making of Muslim Conference, and the internal schism within Muslim community which prevented them rallying together against the Dogras. After establishing its dominance the nation/movement was subsequently thrown open to all communities in an attempt to save it from the perils of communalism. Abdullah also writes the internal and external opposition he had to face for re-defining his nation along secular lines. He also justifies the nation in its material foundation as something emanating from the solidarity of the exploited and oppressed belonging to all religions, sects and gender. Abdullah also sought legitimacy for the new nation from the shared culture of Kashmir, defined by the spirit of living together and values of syncretism.

Abdullah also defines his nation against its enemies. The values of the nation he believed in othered the values being represented by the Mirwaiz family,

who were trying to make use of their spiritual authority over Kashmir for their personal gains. They not only failed to mobilise the oppressed Kashmiris against the Dogras, but were opportunistic in their political decisions as they were aligning with different forces against the nation and its interests. Muhammad Ali Jinnah too had no place in the psyche of Abdullah's nation for his two nation theory based on communalism and his lack of respect for people and democratic values. The Hindu revivalist tendencies and authoritarian federalism as represented by Sardar Patel has also been denied a place in Abdullah's nation. Abdullah imagined his nation as superior to the nations of India and Pakistan. He justifies his decision to support accession with India as a result of Pakistani aggression and its communal foundations. At the same time, Sheikh Abdullah's imagined nation retained an ambivalent relation with India and its dominant imagination of Nation. He also narrates the circumstances under which his demand for complete freedom of the nation has undergone change. It progressively declines from independence to autonomy to self-determination to special status under Article 370. Towards the end, his attempt was to make his nation materially independent and self-sufficient alongside retaining the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir without further inroads into it. The personal sufferings he undertook for the nation also stand out in the autobiography, making the nation a product of innumerable similar sacrifices. At the same time, his appreciation of his wife as a perfect modern homemaker and the call to the Kashmiri Pandits to join the mainstream of the nation points to the patriarchal and political authority of nation and thereby its limits.

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