
The Concept of An Islamic Caliphate

THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC PULLS OF KASHMIR MILITANT MOVEMENT

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[This article was first published in this Journal in November-December issue in the year 1993. The thrust of the article is to underline the ideological underpinnings of the separatist movement in Kashmir. In view of a recent claim by ISIS that it is extending its sway in South Asia, this analysis assumes a renewed significance. Ed.]



Introduction

The ongoing militant movement in Kashmir has resulted in crystallising the attitudes of a section of society towards a new ideology, which is building up as a consequence of interface between religious and ethno-cultural components of Kashmir sub-nationalism. The apparent assertion of the former component has the perilous potential of perpetual strife for the society and polity of Kashmir. The danger has been compounded by introducing a pronounced Islamic character to the movement on the part of some militant groupings. These

groupings, well organised and quite well entrenched in the ongoing militant movement, are building the perception, and appear to be working in the direction of realising the objective of a grand Islamic state. The new Islamic state is perceived to stretch from Kashmir to Pakistan through Afghanistan Iran and Central Asia— a la Caliphate of medieval times. The proclamations of these militant groupings indicate that they would continue to struggle to achieve the goal of an Islamic Caliphate.

The ongoing militant movement in Kashmir, during the course of the last three years, has blunted the ethno-

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cultural edge of Kashmir identity to a major extent. The nationalistic component of Kashmir identity, which has gone into a phase of dormancy, is being sought to be replaced by a complete Islamic orientation.

Kashmir sub-nationalism, in the historic context, had the endurance to resist the onslaught of two-nation theory, which became the over-riding principle of division of sub-continent in 1947. However, during the course of past more than four decades, in the overall Indian socio-political scenario, Kashmir sub-nationalism grew weaker. It consequently resulted in the weakening of ethno-cultural edge of Kashmir identity. There are various factors responsible for this phenomenon. However, an analysis of these very factors is well beyond the scope of the present discussion.

The visible signs towards Islamic orientation of Kashmir sub-nationalism manifested in the mobilisation of students and youth in the later part of the decade 1970-80 in Kashmir society. The conglomeration, predominantly urbanised and educated youth, formed the Students Islamic Federation. Earlier, Islami Jamiat Tulba, the student wing of Jamaat-i-Islami, had assiduously worked to

build the youth cadres to achieve the objective of Islamicisation of Kashmir society. The Iranian revolution provided great ideological inputs to this new mobilisation of youth. Be that as it may, this new orientation and the subsequent mobilisation were, in fact, quite alien to the socio-cultural ethos of Kashmiri society. Due to various socio-historic reasons, the ethno-cultural edge of Kashmir sub-nationalism had remained quite sharp. However, with the demise of Sheikh Abdullah, and the weakening of National Conference party, which symbolised Kashmir sub-nationalism, coupled with corruption and maladministration in Jammu and Kashmir State, provided a fillip to the dissemination of Islamic ideology, and strengthened the ranks of student and youth conglomerations. The rising Hindu fundamentalism and militancy in Jammu and Ladakh regions of Jammu and Kashmir state further consolidated the new mobilisation in Kashmir. It appears that student and youth groupings in Kashmir were the first to recognise the armed struggle as the potential method to realise the objective of Islamicisation of the Kashmir society.

The foregoing observations may not be construed to suggest that Islamic fervour had taken over and swept the entire Kashmir society. In the broader context, at the ideological

level, a horizontal divide was already building up for a long time in Kashmir society. At one end of the spectrum was one school of thought, which based Kashmir subnationalism (or nationalism) on ethno-cultural lines. At the other end, was another school, which sought to base Kashmir subnationalism on Islamic lines. In fact, the interface between the two ideologies resulting in tensions and even violence had been building up long before independence when conversion of dominant political party, Muslim conference, into National Conference took place in 1939. The post independence Kashmir society witnessed the heightening of these tensions to a major extent. Both the political groupings were asserting to organise Kashmir society according to their differential perceptions. The tension between the two manifested in different forms, including inter-group clashes, on various occasions in Kashmir. However, the nationalist current, with an ethno-cultural strand, dominated the socio-political scene. The culmination of these tensions between the two varying perceptions was manifested in mass violence in 1979, as an aftermath of the hanging of Pakistan Prime Minister, Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Jamaat Islami (JI), which was perceived to be party to Mr. Bhutto's fate, had to bear the maximum brunt

of this violence in Kashmir.

In the beginning of the decade 1980-90, a substantial mobilisation, led by students and youth, had succeeded in mobilising a visible section of Kashmir society towards its ideology to organise and regulate the society on Islamic principles. The new youth grouping also attempted to organise an International Seerat Conference in 1980, which was, however, banned by the State government. Over the years, it appeared that the concept of restructuring the society on Islamic lines had been disseminated at various levels of Kashmir society. The pattern which got reflected in the events in the coming years confirm this assumption.

It is equally important to note that the emergence of Independent Central Asian Republics, and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan further heightened the perception of religion-political groupings that the goal of forming an Islamic Caliphate would not be a formidable challenge. The event of withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan was repeatedly cacophoneyed by the ideologues of Caliphate ideology to boost the morale of their ranks. With the onset of militancy in Kashmir in the year 1989, these very ideologues asserted

that the ongoing militant movement was very vital to realise the objective of an Islamic Caliphate.

The New Pattern

In the first phase of militancy in Kashmir in the year 1989, the pattern to be followed by the Caliphate ideologues became quite visible. The thrust appeared to bring about structural changes at the cultural levels of Kashmir society. Thus, in the first instance, all Cinema houses, beauty parlours, wine shops, bars and video centres were bannished in society. An Islamic code of conduct, particularly for women, was formulated and sought to be imposed in society. The coercive strategies were equally adopted to bring about changes on these lines. In fact, some militant groupings were ubiquitous to oversee the enforcement of the new code. Gradually, it became imperative for all Muslims to present themselves, at least for the morning prayers, in the Mosques, which had proliferated in the last one decade in Kashmir.

Slowly and steadily, an attempt was made to discourage the people to seek remedies through normal judicial processes under the laws of land. The eloquent articles and discourses were published in the local vernacular press to focus on the virtues and

expediency of Islamic laws over the secular laws. A *Central Darul Shariah* (The Central authority to adjudicate according to Shariah Laws), comprising Islamic scholars and Ulema, was formed. Initially, civil matters of inter-personal nature involving disputes pertaining to marriage, divorce, dower, property and compensations etc. were sought to be adjudicated through this new authority. Although, out of court negotiations and arbitrations involving civil matters, were not uncommon in Kashmir society, in certain, cases, the criminal matters, involving alleged murder, theft and dacoity were brought before *Darul Shariah* for adjudication. The mode of investigating into such cases on the part of *Darul Shariah* and its subsequent decisions were duly publicised in the local press.

Manifestations of Ideology

In the year 1990, there was a proliferation of militant groups in Kashmir. Generally, majority of these groups advocated Nizam-e-Mustafa (System based on Islamic Shariah Laws) as the objective of their struggle in Kashmir. Islamic State and/or linkages with Islamic State (Pakistan) became the predominant theme of the majority of these groupings. Gradually, the term 'freedom' was replaced with 'Jehad',

which according to them was launched 'to reorganise the society by imposing the laws of God and inviting the people to truth.'

At the outset of the current militant phase in Kashmir, the prominent and well organised militant grouping, Hizbul-Mujahideen (HM), the militant wing of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) had made it clear that HM stood for: "Islamisation of socio-political and economic set up, and unification of Ummah."¹ However, the real ideology to achieve the objective of an Islamic Caliphate was manifested in the year 1992, when Kashmir society had already undergone the phase of militancy for two years. The militant groupings with pronounced Caliphate ideology made it clear that the present struggle in Kashmir was, in fact, *Jehad*. These groupings rejected any dialogue, even tripartite talks on Kashmir, unless these resulted in the emergence of an Islamic Caliphate. To these groupings, the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir had no relevance.

In November 1992, the Women's conglomerate, *Dukhtaran-i-Millat* (DM), engaged in the ongoing movement, said in a Press conference: "The merger of Kashmir with Pakistan was the first step towards the unification of Ummah.

Any other solution to Kashmir problem would be un-Islamic. Since we wanted to establish an Islamic Caliphate world over, the unity of Ummah was a pre-requisite for that purpose. Caliphate could not be established on merely a part (of the World). The entire Muslim Ummah should have one Caliph alone".²

In another statement, HM, asserted that: "Our aim is the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate World over. We do not believe in ideological or geographical boundaries".³

Another grouping, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen (JM), maintained that: "The demand of the right of self-determination was distorting the image of the ongoing movement. It is struggle for the establishment of Caliphate. Any other solution, except the merger of Kashmir with Pakistan, would be deemed as a sell out."⁴

And yet another grouping, Allah Tigers (AT), asserted that: "The present struggle would continue until the goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate was achieved."⁵

Jamiat-ul-Ulemai Islam announced that: "The establishment of Caliphate was our goal."⁶ "According to DM: "Islam and Independence were two contradictory slogans."⁷

In March, 1993, a new grouping, "Tehrik-i-Ahyay-e-Khilafat (The movement for revival of Caliphate), through an advertisement in the local press, announced that this grouping had been silently working for the revival of Caliphate in Kashmir. According to this advertisement, many dedicated activists had been working for the revival of Caliphate silently, away from the publicity, for a long time⁸. However, subsequently another grouping appeared as Tehrik-e-Khilafat-e-Islamia (TKI) i.e. Movement for Islamic Caliphate, on the scene, which seems to have replaced the earlier one.

TKI asserted that: "Islam did not recognise nationalism or territorial patriotism. The slogans based on ethnicity, race, gender or nationalism were false. These slogans had divided Muslims into minorities. The real Islamic ideology was the ideology of Caliphate, which transcended race, gender and territorial boundaries. We should make it a programme to promote this very ideology."⁹

These assertions, on the part of these militant groupings, added new and complicated dimensions to the Kashmir problem. TKI again asserted:

"As long as Caliphate of God was

not established and supremacy of Islam not recognised at individual, collective and governmental levels, till that time sacrifices would continue to be offered to achieve this sacred purpose. Any one acting as an impediment, or impeding this process, would not be tolerated at any cost."¹⁰

JM proclaimed that:

"The slogan that future of Kashmir would be decided by Kashmiris has given rise to an evil, which was distorting the Islamic identity of present movement, and reducing it to a mere democratic movement. From Islamic viewpoint, the people's opinion has no importance. God and Prophet's (PBUH) law is the superior one, and should be obeyed. Barring this, no group or individual can decide anything."¹¹

Extension of Afghan Struggle

In August 1992, in a press conference, answering a question on foreign help, HM spokesman said that:- "it depended on the leadership of HM to invite thousands of Mujahideen from outside. Whenever there would be a need, they would be called to Kashmir."¹²

In September, 1992, Voice of

America (VoA) broadcast the interviews of an Afghan, an Indonesian, a Malayasian and a Sudanese, who had joined the militant ranks in Kashmir. In September, 1992, a local daily published the interviews of an Afghan, a Sudanese and an engineer from Bahrain. According to them, all of them had participated in 'Jehad' in Afghanistan, and after accomplishing the task there, they had moved towards Kashmir¹³.

In October, 1992, Harkut-ul-Mujahideen (HUM), believed to comprise Afghan Mujahideen in its ranks, issued a statement, asserting that: "Kashmir movement was an Islamic movement and needed to be seen in the same very perspective. In fact, Kashmir movement had originated in Afghanistan."¹⁴

In a revealing interview, an Afghan, Khan Mohammed, revealed that he was the Amir (Chief) of Kashmir branch of Harkat-e-Jehad-i-Islami (HJI), and had entered Kashmir in November 1992. According to him, he was accompanied by several other Mujahideen. HJI had branches in nineteen countries of the world. He said that the decision of Afghan participation in *Jehad* in Kashmir was taken by the World President of HJI, Mualana Saifullah Akhtar, under whose orders, he and his colleagues,

had moved to Kashmir. He further said that very soon, thousands of Afghan Mujahideen would move towards Kashmir, which included the well-known Afghan Commander, Nasrullah Langadyal¹⁵.

The strength of Afghan Mujahideen, who, under the command of militant groupings are addressed as 'guest Mujahideen' in Kashmir, is estimated to be about one thousand.¹⁶ According to local press reports, quoting military sources, these 'guest militants' had their head quarter at a high attitude mountain and dense forest of Pir Panjal range, somewhere between Kokarnag and Doda.¹⁷ According to these reports, more than half of these 'guests' comprised Afghans, Sudanese, Turks, Arabs and Central Asian nationals.

The Linkages

The concept of an Islamic Caliphate seems to have originated from Pakistan. In fact, Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan (JIP) is at the vanguard, providing various inputs, and articulating this perception of an Islamic Caliphate. JIP ideologues assert that the ongoing militant movement in Kashmir was vital to realise this objective.

The Amir (Chief) of Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistani, Qazi Hussain

Ahmad, speaking on Kashmir Solidarity day in Rawalpindi in February, 1992 declared that "a great Islamic State spreading from Kashmir to Central Asia would emerge after the independence of Kashmir."

In February, 1992, the first two-day summit of Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) was attended, apart from its three original members, viz; Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, by Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kirghisistan and Tajikistan. The meeting called for the implementation of UN resolutions on Kashmir.

Commenting on the outcome of ECO meeting, the well known columnist of Pakistan, Mushahid Hussain wrote in *The Nation*: "For Pakistan, ECO is a convenient bridgehead for Central Asia, and this element is certainly a plus also for the struggle of Kashmir people as well, since Kashmir itself is an extension of Central Asia, both geographically as well as culturally".

A hurried look on the developments in the newly Independent Central Asian societies reveals that barring Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, other countries are in the ferment of strong Islamic movements. However, even these two States cannot hold to

their professed secular credentials for too long in view of the growing ferment in Uzbekistan. The events in the Farghana Valley is an illustration to the point.

The pattern, which was followed in Kashmir in 1989, appears to be in tune with the one being followed by Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan. There, the Jamaat in the first phase is attempting hard to discourage, and eventually banish all forms of audio-video entertainments. There are occasional outbursts against television programmes also. In this case, Pasban, the militant youth grouping is supplementing the efforts of Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan to enforce the dictates of Jamaat, while there are several militant groupings in Kashmir to enforce these very dictates in the society. However, the objective appears to be similar, i.e, bringing about structural changes by changing the cultural values and norms and uniting Muslims societies on the basis of the ideology of the Caliphate.

The newly independent states of Central Asia are still watching over the ramifications of the first phase of the dissemination of the Caliphate ideology. The Muslim countries, which are sending economic packages to these republics, are equally eager to supply religious and

theological packages to these countries. There appears to be a great rush of Islamic scholars and delegations, apart from trade and economic delegations, from Libya, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia to Central Asian Republics. Saudi Arabia seems to be at the forefront to help the Islamic revival in Central Asian Republics. Saudi Arabia is reported to have poured in one billion dollars into these republics. In Tashkent, Saudi Arabia has pledged \$ 7 million to the Religious Board for Islamic studies. The Saudi based Islamic Bank is negotiating a \$30,000 loan to build new religious school dormitories.

The perceptions of an Islamic Caliphate got further heightened with the attempts on the part of Pakistan to revive the Silk Route, which historically linked Kashmir with Central Asia. The Pakistan Minister of State for Economic Affairs said in an interview in Karachi last year that Pakistan would be holding talks with China on a proposal to join Central Asian Republics, Kirghyzistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan with Karakoram highway.

Flash point

The foregoing analysis of religious and ethnic pulls of Kashmir sub-nationalism promoted by the

ongoing militant movement, and apparent assertion of the Islamic component indicates that Kashmir society will have to endure the turmoil and strife for a longer period. The juxtaposition of new cultural patterns with the objective of bringing about structural changes at the cultural level in a society is an arduous task. It is important to note that the responses to the patterns, which are sought to be introduced in Kashmir society, have already started manifesting themselves. In the first instance, the women in Kashmir did not accept the new code sought to be imposed on them whole hog. In the same manner, the confidence of people in the normal judicial process is gradually being restored, and more and more people are now moving towards courts for adjudication and redressal. In the same manner, the cultural component of Kashmir sub-nationalism is occasionally also attempting to reassert itself.

The other militant groupings, perceived to represent the cultural identity of Kashmir, are equally attempting to assert their positions. They talk about UN resolutions on Kashmir and/or propose the right of self-determination as a means to resolve conflict in Kashmir. These groupings also propose tripartite talks between India, Pakistan and Kashmiri people to resolve the

Kashmir tangle. Such a position becomes an antithesis of the assertion of the ideologues of the Caliphate in the sense that they too occasionally mention these methods to resolve Kashmir conflict. However, they subject the outcome of any resolution to the emergence of an Islamic State leading to an Islamic Caliphate. They further assert that any decision on Kashmir should be within the framework of the Quran and the Sunnah. The groupings, which do not recognise the Caliphate ideology, are quite vehement in their assertions. They articulate the other viewpoint in these words:

“The misfortune of Kashmiri people is that during the past four hundred years, Kashmiri leaders, in place of seeking the national liberation, have been importing the masters from outside. Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs and Indians were

imposed by Kashmiri political and religious leaders themselves on Kashmiris. Even today, many a Kashmiri leader were dancing to the tunes of their foreign masters.”¹⁸

Thus, it is clear that the assertions of the groupings spearheading the movement for the Caliphate, have great potential to come into conflict with the other perception in Kashmir society. Moreover, the resolutions of the groupings at the vanguard of Caliphate ideology would make the resolution of Kashmir problems a complex affair, which has wider ramifications for the peace prospects and conflict resolution in the south Asian region.

The strife and conflict would not remain confined to Kashmir alone. It has the potential to spill over to other countries including the Republics of Central Asia. ■

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Note: All the publications cited above are published in Urdu language from Kashmir except Citation No.1, which does not carry any print line.