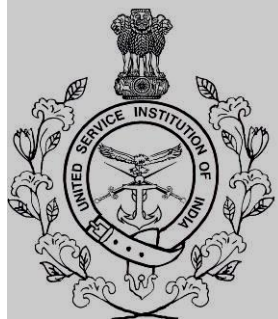


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SUMMER 2016 KASHMIR UNREST: SUMMATION AND ANALYSIS

Kashinath Pandita

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The Dawn of Pakistan dated 30 September 2016, displayed a picture showing people standing in a row for offering prayers and the caption read as follows: Kashmiris on Thursday offered funeral prayer in absentia for the Pakistani soldiers killed in overnight firing by Indian forces on the Pakistan side of the LoC.

Preface

In its issue of 30 September 2016, the DAWN of Pakistan splashed a picture showing people standing in a row for offering prayer. The caption giving Srinagar dateline said:

Kashmiris on Thursday offered funeral prayer in absentia for the Pakistani soldiers killed in overnight firing by Indian forces on the Pakistan

side of the LoC.

Associated Press carried the news under the caption, 'Was it really a surgical strike?'

Kashmiris had offered funeral prayer in absentia when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged in Pakistan in 1976; they offered prayer in absentia for Osama bin Laden eliminated by the Marines. Fifty thousand mourners are reported to have gathered at the funeral of Burhan Wani on 9 July last. Pakistan. *However, no Kashmiri offered funeral prayer in absentia on the death of the renowned social activist and great humanist Edhi of Pakistan.*

Preparatory to Unrest***level a***

In the early spring this year (2016), reports from reliable army and civilian sources said that state sponsored 'non-state jihadis' were assembling in large numbers in terrorist camps close to the Line of Control (LoC) in Pakistan. Their infiltration bids, though mostly foiled by the Indian border security forces, increased in number. Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) of Kashmir intensified recruitment of Kashmiri youth in jihadi networks. Alerted Indian military commanders reinforced their posts and outposts along the LoC and IB. However, some of the jihadis managed to sneak in because in summer when snow melts passes open. ***Moreover, infiltrators often coerce locals residing close to the LoC into collaborating with them at the point of gun.*** If apprehended by Indian security forces, they plead oppressed and forced by jihadis to work as their guides, which may have an iota of truth in it. But if they manage to escape undetected, they zealously conduct the jihadis through secret routes against handsome rewards.

It took jihadis some months to thin out in the Valley and establish liaison with operational commanders. Secret movement of jihadis from Tithwal, Karnah, Lippa Valley and Gurez infiltration segments, partly to North Kashmir strategic towns, but mostly to Anantnag, Pulwama, and Kulgam districts in South Kashmir, continued till the end of June 2016. Evidently, their handlers had done meticulous map reading. The state police could apprehend only some of these jihadis in very few instances but in many cases, they turned away their face for tactical reasons. At one point of time, champions of sedition issued warnings to the state police not to come in the way of jihadis and their jihad. In a few instances, police force had cracked down on the local accomplices of the traitors.

Liaison between Kashmir seditionists-traitors and their Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) handlers was brisk during the summer. Initially, after the demise of Mufti Saeed, ISI believed PDP-BJP coalition may not materialize. Negotiations between PDP and BJP for cobbling coalition stretched over two months and half intensified failure speculation. Subversives were planning for the pound of flesh. However, when to their dismay, announcement of coalition came, entire scenario changed. Moreover, Mehbooba did not resort to the bluff of her father of thanking Pakistan for allowing elections to be held peacefully in the state.

Up to the end of June, the jihadis thinned out in the Valley and their Kashmiri accomplices regularly tutored by JI through unrelenting anti-India vitriolic of the priests (the *maulvis*) in their sermons regularly receiving salary from the state exchequer—laid low and engaged security forces in only sporadic clashes—the hit and run tactics—to keep them engaged in low intensity anti-insurgency operations. The understanding between Kashmir seditionists and traitors, jointly promoted by the JI and ISI, was that vast anti-India and anti-army propaganda would be carried to each and every home in the Valley especially in South Kashmir, which historically has been the origination point and stronghold of Kashmir Jamaat-e-Islami.

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National Conference Antics

level a

For the first time in post-independence history of the state, dynastic rule of the National Conference (NC) met with a potential political rival in the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). Of course, Congress had been introduced in the Valley by late GM Sadiq in the late 1960s, but being of non-Kashmiri origination, besides ignorantly labelled as the party of the Hindu majority of India, it could find very limited space in the Valley. Therefore, Congress posed no serious threat to NC's position and popularity. But PDP with semi-rural base was a different story. When PDP trounced NC in previous assembly election, NC initiated livid campaign of maligning PDP as the handmaid of BJP. Without being forthright, NC meant to

Nursing the phantasm of somehow grabbing the power, Omar Abdullah began to examine several tempting options before him like greater autonomy, withdrawal of AFSPA and Disturbed Area label, J&K share in Indus water, Chenab Valley, Indo-Pak dialogue, etc.

convey to its Muslim constituency that BJP was the extreme right wing Hindu dominated party and PDP, a Kashmiri Muslim dominated party were now locked in a tango. However, ironically, it forgot its own tango with the NDA led by Atal Bihari Bajpayee in New Delhi. Analyzing the reasons for its 2014 election debacle, NC came to the conclusion that PDP had developed bonhomie with Kashmir chapter of JI and also with the militant outfits at a different level.

To a dispassionate observer and historian of contemporary Kashmir, this phenomenon reflected the deep-seated rivalry between the monopolizing group on the one hand, and the emerging party with local credentials on the other.

Omar Abdullah raised the pitch of his criticism of Mehbooba Mufti government. It smacked more of personal vendetta than scratching issues related to governance. What pained him more was the threatening prospect of an end to dynastic rule in Kashmir. Nursing the phantasm of somehow grabbing the power, he began to examine several tempting options before him like greater autonomy, withdrawal of AFSPA and Disturbed Area label, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) share in Indus water, Chenab Valley, Indo-Pak dialogue, etc.

Let us recollect that loot and arson of JI supporters in South Kashmir was unleashed in the aftermath of ZA Bhutto's execution in Pakistan in 1976. However, reconciliation brokered by the Saudi secret service changed the course of history in Kashmir and NC began making U-turn of its earlier policy, vis-à-vis, JI. When the Sheikh described his 20-year old disconnect with power in Kashmir as 'waste and vagary' (*awaragardi*), JI received Plebiscite Front dropouts with open arms. It formed the core of stone throwing sections and street mobilizing mobs.

The D-day appeared with the killing of Burhan on 8 July in a village of Tral area of South Kashmir. Various stories are told of how Special Operations Group (SOG) of J&K Police liquidated Burhan group. Coming together of more than 50,000 mourners at Burhan's funeral shows how widespread and effective anti-India and anti-Army propaganda had been undertaken by dissenting forces. Anarchist movement fuelled by jihad frenzy gripped the Valley and paralyzed law and order in the state. Noting that lawlessness was spreading fast among the rural areas also, Omar Abdullah changed his idiom. To him now Burhan was not a terrorist notwithstanding the fact that during his regime, police had put a prize on Burhan's head. Masked jihadis saluted the dead terrorist with gunfire. The morale of

Jihadis received fillip when NC activists began making common cause with them albeit unofficially.

As seditionists and traitors, Hurriyatists and separatists, Jama'atis and ambivalent NC activists joined hands to forge mass uprising on calls issued by Ali Geelani—the rabid fanatic and pro-Pakistan diehard—security forces and police moved in to maintain law and order. Scenes of protestors and policemen sucked into the vortex of recurring clashes in major towns, streets and squares in the Valley became common. Civil transport came to standstill. Administration imposed Section 144 prohibiting congregations. However, finding this preventive measure ineffective, authorities imposed curfew on the city. Vandals trying to violate curfew fell victim to retaliatory action of law enforcing agencies. People, mostly youth, resorted to massive stone throwing, which caused injuries to hundreds of policemen. Police used pallet guns, which allegedly caused eye injuries to protesters. Hue and cry was raised that pallet guns are used to blind Kashmiri youth. Vernacular press scripted plethora of stories about the pallet guns calling it a scourge. However, no newspaper made even the slightest appeal to the youth to give up guns and stop pelting stones and indulging in activities of lawlessness.

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Pakistan gave media hype to what it called 'unleashing of brute force in Kashmir by Indian Army'. It launched massive propaganda on international forums that India was violating human rights in Kashmir. Islamabad shot letters to the heads of many

western governments, United Nations (UN), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the European Union (EU) and others bringing a plethora of charges of human rights violations against the Indian Army and demanding intervention by world community. Pakistani Prime Minister (PM) wrote to UN Secretary General asking for intervention in Kashmir, but only to be told that UN considered Kashmir a bilateral issue. Nawaz Sharif wrote to the Security Council members and lamented that his voice was not heard. In his address to the General Assembly (GA) he made one point agenda and that was Kashmir. Pakistan lamented nobody was paying heed to Pakistan's cry of agony.

In Kashmir, public strike continued and life remained paralyzed. Opposition in the Parliament, especially the Congress and Left began beating their breast for Burhan and his mourners in the Valley. They raised voice against violation of human rights

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in Kashmir suppressing the news of Burhan Wani group of seditionists' involvement in terrorism-related activities. They complained the PM was not responding to 'critical situation' in Kashmir. The Opposition groups in J&K Assembly, led by Omar, called on the PM and talked for 75 minutes. The result was zero. The PM had asked them a simple question. What role did they play in helping administration return to normalcy in Kashmir? They had no answer. The PM actually

meant to hint that he knew what role the Opposition was playing. Modi decided not to do anything about the strikes in Kashmir, and left the administrative machinery, particularly the Home Ministry handle it the way it thought best.

Impact**level a**

With unrest and turmoil showing no signs of relent, some shrill notes from seditionists and traitors came out asking why ISI was not fulfilling its commitment of launching full-fledged attack on Kashmir. They said only hollow promises were made to them. Sleuths monitoring the ground situation came to know that some youth organizations of Baramulla had conveyed to ISI that if the promised attack did not come without loss of time, they would take up Indian flags in their hands and stage a march in the market of the town.

Paralytic attitude of the Government in Srinagar and no-response from New Delhi served an indication that this could be a long drawn affair. People in Kashmir began looking for way out of this stalemate. In particular, the student community became the pointed target of strike related damages. It meant spoiling their educational career. Those with financial capability shifted their children to educational institutions in other parts of the country. Over 25,000 students were reported to have sought admission

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The youth have been almost left alone to freely indulge in vandalism and highhandedness. They swoop on shopkeepers or bus drivers and threaten them with

dire consequences if they dared to defy the call for strike. However, necessity being the mother of invention, a methodology was devised and after six in the evening, shopkeepers would open their shops partially and let people make purchases of essential goods or medicines. This would dilute the impact of the strike. But of course, for daily wagers, petty shopkeepers, taxi drivers and small scale transporters, it meant a huge loss. About Rs 100 crore loss per day is estimated to be the result.

In the Rajya Sabha with Congress majority, the issue of Kashmir unrest was magnified to the extent of bringing all sorts of allegations against Modi government. Congress and the Left spoke with one voice demanding parliamentary delegation to visit Kashmir to investigate the ground situation.

Led by the current Home Minister Rajnath Singh, a 20-member parliamentary delegation drawn from various political parties arrived in Srinagar for interaction with the ruling as well as Opposition bigwigs. The *Hurriyat*s declined to meet with them; so did Ali Geelani. Even Yechuri's bravado drew a blank. Ali and others refused to meet them, not even opening door of their gate. Yechuri said they were not humiliated because Kashmiris were angry. However, when the delegation reached back Delhi after drawing a flake in Kashmir, the unanimous report of the parliamentary delegation was that more battalions of security forces should be immediately sent to Kashmir to uproot lawlessness and unrest lock, stock, and barrel.

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Dismayed and disappointed, the seditionists and traitors of Kashmir sent frantic messages to ISI that the anti-India movement in Kashmir was crumbling. Asiya Andrabi, the pro-Pakistan leader of Dokhtaran-i-Millat, an organization directly financed by ISI, made a frantic call to al-Dawa and LeT Chief Hafiz to send help failing which the Movement was on the verge of collapse. LeT Chief made public announcement in

Bahawalpur that he had dispatched strong contingent of *fidayeen* (suicide bombers) that had arrived in just 3 days at the launching pads at the LoC in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Agencies think Asiya Andrabi is linked to hawala windfalls. Kashmir groups of seditionist and traitor now expectantly waited for a big strike which they euphorically called the final strike.

Strike

level a

Yes, something did happen. In the third week of September jihadi attack on Brigade Headquarter in Uri took place in which 19 of valiant soldiers were killed. Some security lapse could not be ruled out. Additionally, perfidy of some local helpers will not be ruled out. PM Modi kept his cool and said only one cryptic sentence that the culprits would not go unpunished. The entire machinery of the Indian state came into motion; the defence forces, political leadership, law-making organs, the Government and the print and electronic media, all were galvanized into action. Voices were raised for retaliation. Fiercest debates took place on TV channels and Modi government sensed a challenge whether it would act or not.

Entire Indian nation became restive demanding how long we had to be on the receiving end.

In the aftermath of Pathankot Air Base attack and Pakistan's refusal to co-operate in the investigation that would bring the culprits of *Jaish-e-Muhammad* to book, PM Modi mustered courage to meet the demand to prove his self a resolute and indomitable national leader. From the ramparts of Red Fort in Delhi, he had thundered that India would isolate Pakistan from international fraternity as a terrorist state providing base, shelter, arms, ammunition, and logistical support to the terrorists who undertake terrorist activities in the neighbouring states. The United States issued stern warning to Pakistan to desist from allowing its soil to be used by terrorists for launching attacks on neighbours, Afghanistan and India.

Two Congressmen in the United States tabled a draft bill for declaring Pakistan a terrorist state. President Obama declined a meeting with Nawaz

Seven member countries of SAARC expressed their displeasure of Pakistan allowing terrorists to operate from her soil and four of them refused to participate in Islamabad meet with the result that the Summit collapsed.

Sharif when the latter was in New York (NY) to address UN General Assembly. The Vice President of EU warned Pakistan to stop violation of human rights in Baluchistan or face imposition of political and economic sanctions. In his address to the GA in NY, Pakistan PM unwittingly labelled the slain Kashmiri terrorist leader Burhan as his hero. India immediately reacted and told the GA that here was a clear proof how Pakistan was lionizing and patronizing terrorists. This pushed Pakistan to wall. The world body found that Pakistan was coming to the forum with one-point agenda, namely, Kashmir and Kashmir was a bilateral matter as was

indicated by the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Within Pakistan, many voices were raised in and outside the National Assembly that the country had been isolated and that the foreign policy was a failure. Seven member countries of SAARC expressed their displeasure of Pakistan allowing terrorists to operate from her soil and four of them refused to participate in Islamabad meet with the result that the Summit collapsed.

Forty-eight hours after jihadi attack on Uri military camp—an attack that was condemned by world powers—India, in retaliation, conducted surgical strike across the LoC in three or four sectors and smashed almost eight launching pads killing scores of jihadi terrorists whom their handlers and ISI and army had positioned at the launching pads.

With the announcement of surgical strike by Indian forces, a new and rather baffling drama shaped on Indo-Pak political chessboard. Pakistan totally rebutted India's claim of surgical strike saying there was only exchange of gun fire. Pakistani Army blacked out entire media denying that anything called action had taken place across the LoC. Entire world looked aghast on how Pakistan found itself between the devil and the deep sea. Pakistan had good reason to disown that Indian troops carried out the surgical strike, decimated the jihadis, and destroyed the launching pads. First reason was that it meant humiliation of Pakistan Army at the hands of Indians for the second time after Bangladesh. Pakistani nation would hurl abuse and invective on her army as incapable of defending the country. Second, it was likely to stir internal crisis in the army where fissures between the fanatical younger generation of officers and seniors have visibly appeared. Third, it would prove beyond doubt that Pakistan is home to terrorism and terrorist camps which

had been destroyed. India made a strong and justifiable case of the attack asserting that her forces had not crossed the border and attacked a foreign country. New Delhi said PoK was Indian land and going into one's own territory did not mean crossing the boundary in any way. Pakistan stuck to denial tactics.

Tension escalated between the two countries. Some began to talk of war. Russia upheld the right of India to defend her sovereignty against any external threat. France, Germany, and Japan also supported the Indian military action. Indian political leadership and military top brass assured the nation that it was prepared for any exigency. Entire border with Pakistan was alerted. Like an anesthetized patient, Pakistan Army became paralyzed and inactive. It had to eat the humble pie. Pakistani media was mesmerized to the extent that it forgot to ask the

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Director General of Military Intelligence Officer (DGMO) what his Indian counterpart had told him on line the same morning when India's surgical operation was concluded. A befitting reply was given.

Controversy Fueled***level a***

With Pakistan left dumb-founded, the scene shifted to anti-Modi chapter within the country. Congress, Leftist, Samajwadi Party (SP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Trinamul, and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Opposition leadership joined voices to say that the claim of surgical strike was a bluff and political antics of Modi to garner support for himself. They demanded the proof of having actually conducted the strike. The Congress descended to the depths of disgrace when its Vice President accused Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) of creating Pakistani militant organizations like Jaish-e-Muhammad, etc. Maddened by loss of political power and eroding credibility among the masses, Congress and Co have descended into the depths of vilification and slander of BJP and its leadership throwing to winds the norms of nationalist politics and respect for Opposition.

The real reason for all these parties in Opposition, and mainly the Congress, is that the news of surgical strike was received by the entire nation with great conviviality and triumph. The nation made voluntary expression of thankfulness to Modi for his courage and determination. Congress felt that its public profile received good bashing and that BJP had immensely strengthened its constituency. Congress did good homework to destroy its nationalistic credentials.

Pakistan's official denial of the veracity of Indian surgical strike brought her civilian government and army to loggerheads. More rational segments of her think-tank including a large number of Foreign Service diplomats openly demanded that Pakistan Army contain the terrorist organizations as their terrorist activities in the neighbourhood had isolated Pakistan in the international community. The *Dawn* of 6 October 2016 reported as follows:

In a blunt, orchestrated and unprecedented warning, the civilian government has informed the military leadership of a growing international isolation of Pakistan and sought consensus on several key actions by the state.

On the day of All Parties' Conference, Pakistan Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry gave a separate, exclusive presentation in the PM's Office to a small group of civil and military officials. The meeting was chaired by PM Sharif and included senior cabinet and provincial officials. On the military side, ISI DG Rizwan Akhtar led the delegation. To a hushed and surprised room, Aizaz Chaudhry suggested that while China has reiterated its support for Pakistan, it has also indicated a preference for a change in course by Pakistan. Specifically, while Chinese authorities have conveyed their willingness to keep putting on technical hold on a UN ban on Jaish-i-Muhammad leader Masu'd Azhar, they have questioned the logic of doing so repeatedly.

Civil-Army Spat in Pakistan

level a

Prominent Pakistani newspaper Dawn vividly reported the inside story of an open spat between the representatives of the civilian government and the ISI-army combine. Though Pak PM's office issued three successive repudiations within 24 hours of Dawn story, yet the Editor stuck to his guns and re-confirmed the veracity of the story. Islamabad Government slammed no-exit order on the author of the story and the US expressed grave concern on Pakistan curbing the freedom of press. Since this situation has not only exposed the lies of Pakistan but has also

In a blunt, orchestrated and unprecedented warning, the civilian government in Pakistan, has informed the military leadership of a growing international isolation of Pakistan and sought consensus on several key actions by the state

discredited her army and ISI as promoters of terrorism on Pakistani soil, the following are excerpts of this story:

The foreign secretary's unexpectedly blunt conclusions triggered an astonishing and potentially ground-shifting exchange between the ISI DG and several civilian officials.

In response to Foreign Secretary Chaudhry's conclusions, General Akhtar asked what steps could be taken to prevent the drift towards isolation. Chaudhry's reply was direct and emphatic: the principal international demands are for action against Masu'd Azhar and the Jaish-i-Mohammad; Hafiz Saeed and the Lashkar-e-Taiyyba; and the Haqqani network.

To that, General Akhtar offered that the Government should arrest

Addressing General Akhtar, the younger Sharif complained that whenever action has been taken against certain groups by civilian authorities, the security establishment has worked behind the scenes to set the arrested free.

whomever it deems necessary, though it is unclear whether he was referring to particular individuals or members of banned groups generally. At that point there came the stunning and unexpectedly bold intervention by [the] Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif.

Addressing General Akhtar, the younger Sharif complained that whenever action has been taken against certain groups by civilian authorities, the security establishment has worked behind the

scenes to set the arrested free. Astounded onlookers describe a stunned room that was immediately aware of the extraordinary, unprecedented nature of the exchange.

To defuse tensions, Prime Minister Sharif himself addressed General Akhtar and said that policies pursued in the past were state policies and as such they were the collective responsibility of the state and that the ISI DG was not being accused of complicity in present-day events.

Observers consider it a high-stake gamble by PM Sharif to try and forestall further diplomatic pressure on Pakistan. Two sets of action proposed and agreed to in the All Party meeting could be called the first ever reaction of Pakistan civil society to self-destructive activities of 'non-state actors'. First is that ISI DG General Rizwan Akhtar, accompanied by the National Security Adviser Nasser Janjua, was to travel to each of the four provinces with a message for provincial apex committees and ISI sector commanders that military-led intelligence agencies are not to interfere if law enforcement acts against militant groups that are banned or until now considered off-limits for civilian action. Second, PM Nawaz Sharif has directed that fresh attempts be made to conclude the Pathankot investigation, and restart the stalled Mumbai attacks-related trials in a Rawalpindi anti-terrorism court.

In pursuance of this decision, General Akhtar's inter-provincial tour has begun with a visit to Lahore. While conceding the two suggestions cited earlier, the ISI Chief did mention concerns about the timing of action against several groups, citing the need to not be seen as buckling to Indian pressure or abandoning the Kashmiri

people. In reality, ISI had to buckle partly under the American pressure and partly because of India's campaign of isolating Pakistan.

Impact on Kashmir Situation

level a

It is in fitness of things to assess the impact of tense bilateral relations on the on-going unrest in Kashmir. The strike for call given by the seditionists and traitors is running its fourth month since 9 July. Two things are noticeable. First is that no society can survive in letter and spirit if it is forced to observe complete strike and shut down continually for over a hundred days. As Kashmiri society is surviving, and protests, if any, are only to block the roads and cause chaos in administration, the simple and logical inference is that this is a fake strike and not a real one. People are not facing deprivation that would paralyze life in reality. Food and all essential supplies continued to arrive in the Valley uninterrupted.

The second is that the Central Government has not taken the strike as something really threatening its position in Kashmir. It has shown no urgency to react. One may call this an attitude of benign negligence. We have said that the 2-day visit of the parliamentary delegation drew a flake. The state government also adopted lackadaisical attitude after initially making a couple of laconic appeals for eschewing violence.

As Kashmiri society is surviving, and protests, if any, are only to block the roads and cause chaos in administration, the simple and logical inference is that this is a fake strike and not a real one.

Some Kashmir watchers think that call for strike and shutdown is the patent blackmail Kashmiri seditionists and traitors have practiced over a number of decades. Congress regimes usually showed their willingness to succumb to the blackmail, i.e. obsession with Muslim minority constituency. They made concessions one after the other including largesse to the ring leaders of the sedition. For the first time in post-independence history of the state, the Government headed by Narendra Modi called the bluff. After the former Governor Jagmohan, Modi is the second leader who understood and befittingly responded to this chronic blackmail in Kashmir.

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**Politics
level a**

Behind

Unrest

The Sheikh dynasty found it difficult to reconcile to the verdict of the people of Kashmir who had voted them out and put Mufti in the seat of power. It will take many decades for political class in India

to imbibe the true spirit of political dissent. Independence threw up influential political houses in India that ultimately evolved into ruling dynasties supported by hegemonic political parties with an apex coterie of sycophants with ingrained mutual rivalry. Political commentators coined strange terms for them like Sultans of Delhi, Sheikhdoms of Kashmir, and now Yadav-doms of UP and Bihar.

National Congress Chief Omar Abdullah and many more rabble-rousers in Kashmir grumbled that the Centre was not showing any concern for the 'innocent' fatalities taking place in the Valley. The Opposition raised a hue and cry about pallet guns used by the security forces alleging that it caused blindness to the targeted

street demonstrators, and was violation of human rights. Local press, especially the Valley-based vernacular press, began pouring venom that there was an anti-people regime in place. They splashed photos of persons with eye injuries and gave them provocative captions. A plethora of accusations was brought against the Government.

Taking cue from the hue and cry raised about alleged violation of human rights—actually abetted by the ISI through its JI conduits—by the seditionists and the Opposition in concert, Pakistan stepped up propaganda campaign on international level to malign India for violation of human rights of Kashmiris. Islamabad shot letters to the heads of governments of the European Union, Security Council members, and UN Secretary General. It dispatched a team of 22 representatives to western capitals to campaign against India violating human rights of Kashmiris. That no cognizance was taken by anybody is clear from the report of Pakistan Foreign Secretary to the Special Committee already mentioned earlier. Ironically some leading newspapers of Pakistan questioned the credentials of some of the team members of Pakistani delegation to western countries.

The reason why no country showed any interest in Pakistan's litany of complaints was that for long they are convinced that Pakistan is the cradle of terror which it exports to other countries.

The reason why no country showed any interest in Pakistan's litany of complaints was that for long they are convinced that Pakistan is the cradle of terror which it exports to other countries. Terrorist attacks happening anywhere in the world have direct or indirect link to one or the other 'non-state' terrorist organizations

based in Pakistan flourishing under the patronage of her army and intelligence establishment.

Only China maintained pro-Pakistan stance. However, India caught Beijing on the wrong foot when China obstructed India's application to the Security Council for categorizing Jaish-e-Muhammad Chief Azhar who is the prime culprit of Mumbai and Pathankot attacks. India told the world body that by supporting a leader of a terrorist organization whose jihadis and suicide bombers were indulging in bloodshed in Kashmir, China was indirectly supporting terrorism in Kashmir for political aggrandizement. Covert shielding of Azhar has to be understood in the background of China's sizable presence in the disputed Gilgit-Baltistan region, besides her inroads into Wakhan arm that separates Kashmir from China. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, worth 46 billion US dollars, is an added factor to this narrative.

The question is why don't these leaders make fervent appeals to the terrorists to shun violence and give up the gun? Why don't they launch a campaign to educate the local population not to harbour terrorism and not to lend them logistic support like guidance, shelter, safe haven, etc.?

Bilateral Dialogue

level a

As turmoil continued in the Valley, NC leaders and even the Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti began rhyming the old slogan of India-Pakistan bilateral talks. This has been the refrain of Hurriyat (M) pontification as well. Even political leadership of second rung in almost all parties, the Opposition or the mainstream, have also been repeatedly doling out this piece of advice more to New Delhi than Islamabad. This is another facet of blackmailing.

Their reason for offering unsolicited advice to the Indian Government is that strained relations between the two countries resulting in frequent firing and shelling across the LoC causes fatalities among innocent civilians besides damages to their property, houses, cattle, and standing crops. Yes, that is precisely what is happening. But the question is why don't these leaders make fervent appeals to the terrorists to shun violence and give up the gun? Why don't they launch a campaign to educate the local population not to harbour terrorism and not to lend them logistic support like guidance, shelter, safe haven, etc? Why don't they ask the people to report the presence of terrorists in their locality to the nearest police or army post? Why do they stage demonstrations and rallies when holed up terrorists fighting the security forces are gunned down? Instead of going to the root of the problem in Kashmir, they are raising peripheral issues. By pontificating about bilateral talks, these leaders want to convey a message to the Kashmiri secessionists and traitors that they affirm Kashmir is a dispute between the two countries and Pakistan is a party to it, and that any bilateral solution can be possible only when Pakistan's concerns are taken care of. If these self-styled leaders had any sympathy with the border dwellers that become targets of enemy shelling, they would have long back taken preventive measures like shifting the border population to safer places or building underground bunkers along the border in Kashmir where the affected people would take shelter during firing.

The 4 month-long strike and *hartal* in Kashmir cannot be sustained. Transporters have warned that they can no more bear the losses inflicted on them as the interest on the bank loans is accumulating, and they are unable to pay unless they work normally. More than 25,000 Kashmiri students have sought admission in different educational institutions outside the Valley, most of them in Jammu

because of unending shut down of schools and educational institutions in the Valley. About 3,000 students prospected to be admitted to the Srinagar NIT are under the looming cloud of uncertainty. Some of them have decided to find other avenues and abandon the NIT. This is a big loss to the state and the nation as a whole. Geelani, the active force behind the strikes, is now inviting segments of civil society like the members of Srinagar Chamber of Commerce, Bar Association members, media persons, and others to convince them about the fecundity of his call for strike. Obviously, his call is losing steam because the Central Government is not reacting. This relegates Kashmir unrest and its seditionists and traitors to ignominy.

Strategy

level a

Looking in retrospect, confrontation between Kashmir seditionists and the Union was inevitable. Congress regimes sidetracked it taking shelter behind fragile accords—the bio-dynastic panacea for Kashmir ills at the cost of national interests. While lending overt and covert support to the dynastic rule in J&K, Congress failed to feel the pulse of the masses of people. Itself a pathetic victim of dynastic

Dynastic rule has the tendency of becoming cesspool of corruption and nepotism, the two disastrous facets that subverted India's position in Kashmir.

rule, Congress failed to understand that while owing to its diversity Indian society would take a long time to array itself against dynastic rule, compactness, and localization of Kashmirian polity would not absorb the flexibility with which Congress carried the cross. Dynastic rule has the tendency of becoming cesspool of corruption and nepotism, the two disastrous facets that subverted India's position in Kashmir. By taking ill-conceived and short-sighted decision of handing

over power to Sheikh Abdullah in 1975 when he was not even an elected member of the legislature, handing over of power to Dr Farooq Abdullah after his father died in harness, dismissal of Dr Farooq Abdullah from power in 1984 in hush hush manner and induction of his brother-in-law in his place, and finally, closing its eyes to blatant rigging of 1986 assembly election, Congress rule at the Centre prepared ground for mass resentment, which deepened when the Congress-NC coalition treated the Opposition with disdain. Rigging of 1986 assembly election could be called the last nail in the coffin of collapsing Congress-NC coalition rule in Kashmir.

Changing Scenario

level a

Sheikh Abdullah was convinced that struggle for independence of J&K (or Kashmir Sultanate of his ambition) was futile after Pakistan split into two parts never to reunite

As discussed earlier the reason for Sheikh Abdullah to reconcile to the hard facts of current history in 1974, led to the signing of another accord between the Kashmir and Indian leadership (Indira-Sheikh Accord). It was the defeat of Pakistan leading to emergence of Bangladesh as another independent state in the sub-continent. Sheikh Abdullah was convinced that struggle for independence of J&K (or Kashmir Sultanate of his ambition) was futile after

Pakistan split into two parts never to reunite. However, he did not mean to delink Kashmir from larger Muslim world—Pakistan and beyond.

After the execution of Bhutto in 1976, large scale assault on the Jamaat-e-Islami activists in Kashmir by NC goons became a matter of much concern for Saudi Arabia and its Wahhabi propaganda machine. Saudi secret service *al-Akhbrat* had

succeeded in making inroads into Kashmir. The episode of NC assault on Kashmiri JI in the aftermath of execution of Bhutto activated Saudi intelligence in the Valley. Sheikh Abdullah was advised to forge reconciliation. Nevertheless, Saudi intelligence became pro-active and sometime later Sheikh Abdullah chartered a plane and headed to Saudi Arabia for *umra* along with his entire clan. What transpired between him and Saudi Arab leadership is not known.

Sheikh's interaction with the Saudis was not something new. It has a history albeit mostly unknown. Here, are some digressions to throw more light on the subject.

Sheikh Abdullah said to Ayub Awan, the Pakistan's Director of Intelligence Bureau in Mecca in 1965: Please don't let me go back to India. Keep me anywhere you like in your northern areas or locate me in Sinkiang and let me call upon the Kashmiris from there to give you full support. The source of this piece of information is a Pakistani journalist, Altaf Gowhar, who wrote on 'Operation Gibraltar' in *The Nation* of 19 September and 3 October 1999.

The Sheikh had told Awan, 'If I call upon them (the Kashmiris) to rise in support of the plan (Operation Gibraltar), their response could be overwhelming.' To Awan's surprise, Ayub Khan showed no interest in what the Sheikh had conveyed. ZA Bhutto was opposed to accepting the Sheikh's help because in the words of Altaf Gowhar, 'if the plan succeeded, the credit would go to Sheikh Abdullah. Bhutto didn't like that' (*Contemporary Kashmir Politics* by Kashinath Pandit, New Delhi 2008, pp 224 et seq)

After dismissal from power, the Sheikh remained interned in Indian prisons. Nehru saw to it that his friend's son Dr Farooq was not deprived of fatherly care and

affection and that his educational career was not disrupted. Farooq, admitted to some Medical College in London, created a circle of his PoK friends who made a strong diaspora in cities like Birmingham, Luton, and etc. This diaspora numbering nearly a million people and located mostly in the metropolitan city have played the most crucial role in raising the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and later on selling the JKLF to Pakistan intelligence agency called ISI. (See Hashim Qureshi's book *Unveiling of the Truth*)

In London, Farooq Abdullah had come close to the Mirpur-Poonch Chapter of PoK diaspora. In a JKLF rally in Mirpur in 1974, he shared the stage with the JKLF stalwarts, Amanullah Khan, Khaliq Ansari and others, and at one point of time while addressing the rally in support of *aazaadi* of the Valley held a Kalashnikov high in the air together with Ansari saying 'this will decide the fate of Kashmir'.

Strike Call Enfeebled

level a

The visit of 22-all party parliamentary delegation to the Valley in August spelt the disaster for the dissenters in Kashmir. Not only the extreme right leadership like Owaisi, even Leftist leader (Yechuri), considered being goody-goody with Ali Geelani and other Hurriyatis, was given cold shoulder. Geelani disallowed Yechuri even to enter his house. On its return to New Delhi, the parliamentary delegation recommended that more CRP battalions be sent to Kashmir to

The visit of all party parliamentary delegation to the Valley, in August, spelt the disaster for the dissenters in Kashmir. Not only the extreme right leadership like Owaisi, even Leftist leader (Yechuri), considered being goody-goody with Ali Geelani and other Hurriyatis, was given cold shoulder.

control the blackmailing crowds.

It became clear to the seditionists that NDA was in no mood of talking to them. The stalemate continues though there were clear signs that the entire drama of stone throwing and hartals would soon fizzle out.

The Uri Attack

level a

Pakistani rangers and army continued intermittent shelling and firing at vulnerable point along the LoC from where the jihadis could infiltrate. They were given cover to cross over. Most of these bids were foiled by the alert Indian troops though some did manage to sneak in and join the underground conduits to carry on their nefarious designs of sabotage and subversion. Thus, intermittent firing and shelling continue from both sides.

On 22 September news came that terrorists had launched attack on a part of

On 29 September, there was news that the army had launched surgical strike at midnight which continued till 4 AM and many casualties were inflicted on jihadis including some Pak army personnel and eight of their launching pads located close along the LoC on their side were smashed to rubble.

Brigade Headquarter in Uri in the early hours when troops were still asleep or just rising and 19 jawans lost their lives in the jihadi attack. Entire nation was outraged and there was anger on all sides. It was the biggest attack in which so many jawans were killed. The situation became tense and with that the war of words between the two countries became louder. Will there be a war or not? Will Pakistan use nuclear weapon in such eventuality or not? What will be the reaction of foreign powers to India declaring a war on

Pakistan? Questions like these filled the air. Pressure was mounting on the PM and his government to react.

Prime Minister and the Defence Minister were locked in serious and crucial consultations with the army top brass. PM said in a cryptic remark that perpetrators of this crime would not go scot free.

On the morning of 29 September, there was news on the AIR that the army had launched surgical strike at midnight which continued till 4 AM and many casualties were inflicted on jihadis including some Pakistani Army personnel and eight of their launching pads located close along the LoC on their side were smashed to rubble. India suffered no casualties and the operatives returned safe to the base camp.

Pakistan denied any attack had taken place, and the denial continues. Within the country, the Opposition created great fuss and vitiated the atmosphere saying that no surgical strike had been made and that the Government was bluffing the people as she was garnering public support in view of the forthcoming elections in Uttar Pradesh. Freedom of expression is misused and mutilated by irresponsible media. Partisan press gave strong media hype to tell people that there was no surgical strike. However, the Defence Ministry maintained total silence and did not react. But the unbridled Opposition politicized the narrative and thus tried to undermine the prestige and respect of the Indian armed forces. Sections of biased press in India spoke the language of Pakistan and GHQ as far as the story of strike was concerned. Now that nearly more than 5 months have passed when that episode happened, comments and remarks and hints are being dropped by sections of Indian and foreign press about the veracity of the surgical strike. People have begun to forget what falsehood Opposition tried to spread. Nevertheless people in

the Valley are convinced that this is a big lie spread by Modi government and that no harm has been done to 'the darlings of Pakistan Army'.

Attacks by jihadis at various places in the Valley, and particularly along the border have not stopped. Those who have already infiltrated and are hiding in their hideouts do come out occasionally and launch an attack on police post or gun down an innocent man. Security forces engage them wherever they raise their heads and deals with them as is desirable. They do so to create an impression that there was nothing like surgical strike by India and their jihad continues as usual.

World powers did not react on India's blitzkrieg, only President Putin of the Russian Federation generalized the event by saying that all sovereign countries had the right to defend their sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, no country censured India for the act just because Pakistan had denied the veracity of Indian claim. Should or should not have the Indian Defence Ministry released the video recording of the attack is a defence matter and only the Defence Ministry is competent to decide on such sensitive issues. However, and strangely, while Pakistan admitted that the Director General of Operations (DGMOs) in New Delhi talked to his Pakistani counterpart on phone in GHQ and gave him details of the Operation, why did not Pakistan civil society and media ask their DGMO what his Indian counterpart had conveyed to him?

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Leaving aside the debate whether the blitzkrieg took place or not, the bare news by itself had profound impact on Kashmir's alienated population. For the first time, Kashmiri youth, brought up in an atmosphere of total mental segregation realized that India could retaliate massively and effectively if it decided to do so. Till now they were brought up under the over-imposing impression that India being a soft power, had no guts to retaliate the attacks of Pakistan. For the first time they also began to concentrate on the harsh reality that Kashmir may never achieve *aazaadi*, a dream for which they are making sacrifices.

Another impact of the surgical strike was that J&K Chief Minister Mehbooba

The peripheral issues like AFSPA, etc., have been relegated to back burner in the light of Defence Minister announcing that field commanders in Kashmir were given powers to react to incidents of militancy as they found fit and advisable.

Mufti began to feel stronger in dispensing administration of the state. She came out with more forthright speeches on current situation of Kashmir and lashed out at the separatists for being responsible for burning of about 27 school buildings by miscreants and forcing students to discontinue their education owing to senseless calls given by separatist leadership. There was a marked change in her body language as well. The peripheral issues like AFSPA, etc., have been relegated to back burner in the light of Defence

Minister announcing that field commanders in Kashmir were given powers to react to incidents of militancy as they found fit and advisable.

Hurriyat factions and separatist began realizing their tactical mistake of declining to meet with and talk to the parliamentary delegation that had visited Kashmir in August 2016. The former Hurriyat (M) faction, Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat is on record saying that it was a mistake not to talk to the All Party Parliamentary Delegation when they came to Kashmir. Relations between the two factions of Hurriyat are by no means cordial. Actually, ISI is trying to balance the two, the so called hardliner and the softliner. Some segments of local population like the Bar Association and the Chamber of Commerce, sympathetic to Hurriyat, had suggested for breakthrough in the 4-month old impasse.

Three members delegation led by the former Minister of External Affairs Yashwant Sinha landed in Srinagar in the month of October and reportedly had talks with separatists and secessionists. What transpired between them is unknown but a press release issued by Sinha on his return to New Delhi said that pellet gun should be banned and detained persons released. Some people thought this was Track II or part of official lobby but on looking at the composition of the delegation (Wajahat Habibullah and Kapil Kak), many Kashmir watchers were disposed to dismiss it as a pack of opportunists that had not found any space in NDA dispensation.

The State Department has been asking Islamabad to do more to in not allowing Taliban and other terrorist groups using her soil for launching attacks on neighbours.

Sharif at General Assembly

level a

Pakistan Premier Mian Nawaz Sharif arrived in the United States to address the UN General Assembly in its annual meet. Relations between Pakistan and the United

States had somewhat soured as US held Pakistan responsible for giving sanctuaries to Taliban, especially the Haqqani group, The United States repeatedly told Pakistan not to allow terrorists to use its soil for launching attacks on neighbours. Haqqani, an intrepid Taliban commander in Afghanistan has been giving sleepless nights to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and American troops in their operations in Afghanistan. At the same time, the United States official circles concede that Pakistan Army is involved in action against the Taliban and TTP in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. This notwithstanding, the State Department has been asking Islamabad to do more to in not allowing Taliban and other terrorist groups using her soil for launching attacks on neighbours. Amusingly, in a rare move, the Pentagon has submitted its annual report to the Congress, which, by no means can be considered salutary for Pakistan.

Some observers are disposed to think that after Gurdaspur and Pathankot terrorist attacks, India mounted a forceful campaign on international level to isolate Pakistan in the international community on the basis of giving support and encouragement to various terrorist groups but listed by the UN Security Council among banned terrorist organizations. Recently five top retired bureaucrats and Generals of Pakistan published an article in the Dawn newspaper suggesting that Pakistan should wind up terrorist camps and bases in its soil, revise its seven decades old policy towards India, show flexibility on Kashmir dispute, and restore its image as a modern democratic state.

His address to the UN General Assembly in NY, the typescript of which was reportedly handed over to Mian Nawaz Sharif only hours before he stood up to address, was considered un-statesmanlike by a large section of Pakistani print media. He wailed and lamented about Kashmir and made Kashmir dispute the one-point agenda he had brought to NY. Pakistani prestigious weekly magazine *Friday Times* considered it counter-productive. He had

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lionized Burhan Wani, the Hizbul commander who was gunned down by the security forces on the night of 8-9 July in a village in Tral in Kashmir. Exercising the right to reply in the GA, the Indian representative said that Mian Nawaz had clearly eulogized a dreadful terrorist and it showed that Pakistan supported terrorism in Kashmir, which in turn proves that Pakistan has rendered all help to the terrorist in Kashmir.

After the Pentagon's report to Congress and tabling of a bill by two Congressmen that Pakistan be declared a terrorist state, and the State Department not attesting that Pakistan had done enough to contain terrorism on her soil, the US Congress declined to accord sanction to military assistance of US\$ 300 million to Pakistan Army for conducting anti-Taliban operations in KP. President Obama advised Pakistan to dismantle terrorist camps that were launching attacks on neighbouring countries. The President declined to meet with the visiting Pakistani Prime Minister.

Nawaz Sharif's Kashmir tantrum at the GA was meant more for the consumption of Kashmir seditionists and their local mercenaries than for the world community. The

seditionists had been angrily reminding ISI of its promise of Pakistan launching a massive attack on the Indian Army installations in Kashmir once internal saboteurs propelled by it had taken the unrest to its climax in the Valley. When Pakistan would launch the promised attack, was the refrain of their demand.

With the United States changing its Pakistan goal posts, with India and her civil society ignoring the procrastinating turmoil in Kashmir and with mounting pressure from Kashmir seditionists and traitors for Pakistan to fulfill her commitment, Pakistani ISI activated the jihadis of Jaish-e-Muhammad, the banned terrorist organization of Maulvi Azhar, launched an attack on a part of the Indian Army Brigade headquarter in Uri and gunned down 19 soldiers in the wee hours when they were still asleep. The news set some cheer to Kashmir seditionists/traitors. One could find new glow in their eyes when the news was broken to them.

The hilarity of Kashmir seditionists-traitors on Pakistan jihadi attack on Uri Brigade was short lived; the news of Indian blitzkrieg came like a bolt from blue to them. Emotions evaporated in thin air, and despair and despondency gripped them hard.

PM Modi kept his cool and did not say more than one small and cryptic sentence that perpetrators of the crime would not go unpunished.

A week later, on the night of 28-29 September, the Indian Army conducted the surgical strike on at least eight launching pads of terrorists in PoK along the LoC in which nearly 35 jihadis including about 9 Pakistani Army officers were gunned down and launching pads razed to ground. Pakistan denied that any attack on these launching pads was made.

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The Final Nail

LEVEL A

The first and effective impact of surgical strike was that it shattered the dream

Four months long strike had begun to show its adverse results. Small industrialists, shopkeepers, daily wagers, people connected with tourism industry, and horticulturists began to show signs of weariness and fatigue.

of Kashmir seditionists-traitors that India was incapable of striking back militarily. After all, the Kashmir jihadis, while undergoing brainwashing courses in jihadi camps in PoK, are told that India is a soft state incapable of matching Pakistan's military prowess. It forced Kashmiri day-dreamers to revisit their approach to gun culture.

The second impact was that India showed absolutely no sign of succumbing to their blackmail. The blackmail could not be sustained and that at the end of the day they had to return to normalcy. The seditionists had already lost whatever support there was from the Indian Left and other parties opposed to BJP just because by refusing to meet and talk to the parliamentary delegation, the Hurriyatists had stonewalled the doors of dialogue. Four months long strike had begun to show its adverse results. Small industrialists, shopkeepers, daily wagers, people connected with tourism industry, and horticulturists began to show signs of weariness and fatigue. Pakistan began to feel the negative impact of overplaying Kashmir rhetoric at various forums. Increasing

terrorist attacks at various places inside Pakistan, subsequently claimed by such terrorist group as have been listed by the United States, further tarnished the image of Pakistan and the world community began to recognize her as the fountain head of global terrorism.

In this volatile background, came the master stroke of PM Modi. On the night of 8 November, he dramatically announced that 500 and 1,000 notes of the Indian currency were no more valid from midnight. He also announced the schedule and mechanism of changing the big notes from banks. This news came like a bolt from blue for the people who were involved in transacting black money, drug money, and fake currency notes. To all of them the announcement came like death knell.

For some years, Pakistan's ISI was reported to be printing fake Indian currency of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 in government printing press with special paper and ink purchased from Germany and Switzerland. Pakistan had stolen the templates for this purpose from Germany and raised moles in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Dubai, Thailand, and even China which undertook smuggling of this fake currency into India. According to a report these fake notes were of the value of 4,000 crore. In short, black money had risen to become parallel economy in India. It meant disaster for the Indian economy. In his crucial announcement of the night of 8 November, PM Modi said that the situation had come to a pass in which there was no alternative to demonetizing big notes.

A well-connected web was working towards pumping fake currency, hawala money, and illegal remittances in Kashmir. In the past, some persons involved in hawala were caught but owing to political pressures these arrests were not pursued. The Congress was fully aware of the role of black money in destabilizing the economy,

but it never took any serious action to control the menace. At least 11 cases of hawala and black and illegal money are registered with the police in J&K but no action is taken. Many powerful persons sitting at strategic seats in the state are reportedly involved in black money.

The announcement broke the backbone of seditionists-traitors combined in the Valley. Overnight, the 4-month long strike and stone throwers disappeared from the scene. Grapevine has it that each stone thrower was handed over Rs 500 early in the morning for his activity throughout that day. The balloon of 'unrest', 'violation of human rights', 'suppression and oppression of Kashmiris', and the tantrum of that sort has been blown out. Few days ago more than 40,000 students took the 12 class examination peacefully. Boys and girls are heading towards their schools, and the market is brisk. Public transport has resumed. Interestingly, now that everybody is out freely on the roads and markets, people ask one another what they had got out of 4 months of strike.

The biggest casualty of 4-month long siege of Kashmir will be those sources wherefrom instructions for strike and hartals came out regularly. It will take some time for the youth and others to pinpoint the leadership that makes them dance to its tune and for nothing but pain, sufferings, and hardships. A popular Jammu English daily newspaper *Daily Excelsior* of 20 November 2016 carried the banner news as this: 'Life Returns to Normal After 133 days.'

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Epilogue

LEVEL A

Now is the time for the people of the Valley to put some searching questions to the

Now is the time for the people of the Valley to put some searching questions to the leaders of sedition and champions of calls for strikes. What is the achievement of 133 days of strike? What for nearly 80 Kashmiris were made to pay with their lives to keep unrest going on? What will be the fate of strike calls if given again at any time in future? On what basis do the seditionists and traitors ask the people to secede from India and accede to Pakistan? And finally, how long will Kashmiris invite foreigners to come and rule over them but not reinforce their democratic institutions that make them master of their destiny?

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The seditionists and traitors have lost the game. Demonetizing of big currency notes has drilled the last nail in the coffin of sedition. For next half a century, ordinary and honest Kashmiris will live in peace minus the hartal syndrome just because PM Modi has bravely met the challenge of black money—a manifestation of

terrorism—thrown by those who, while in power, had kept embracing it for seven long decades to preserve their vote banks at the cost of national interests.

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