
**SETTLING THE KASHMIR CONUNDRUM: A STRUCTURED
BREAKDOWN OF THE RELEVANT KASHMIRI HISTORY VIS-Á-VIS
HEGEL'S CONCEPT OF DIALECTIC**

Author: Owais Ashraf, V year of B.A.,LL.B.(Hons.) from Jamia Miliia Islamia

ABSTRACT

The following paper is attempted to discern whatever contemplations are associated when one hears of the name 'Kashmir'. Reckoning with the developments that have taken place in the last seventy years, this paper tries to appropriately pin them at their well-deserved place in Kashmir's natural socio-political string. Considering the digitization of Kashmir's history, the focus has more or less been only on these seventy years making way for a number of repetitive myopic narratives to cash in. These narratives are generally sympathetic or at complete odds with such developments depending upon whose side of the narrative is being consumed. So that the ones consuming such narratives don't base their opinions solely upon such readymade interpretations, this paper objectively elaborates upon Kashmir's relevant political and cultural history in order to argue for the motion that the situation in Kashmir is nothing but an inevitable phase in its own progress. And to elaborate upon the idea of this progress, this paper has solicited Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's philosophy concerning Human Progress. To my conviction there's a hand-in-glove relationship between Hegel's philosophy and the historical succession of events in Kashmir that renders it to become an ideal specimen for the philosophy to apply and through this application one can at least academically comprehend a probable optimistic future for Kashmir.

INTRODUCTION

The requisite montage of Kashmir that should ideally consist of imageries of clear skies, clean water, lush landscapes and apples as apples for some reason are a must; not to mention the ridiculously abundant flock of Kashmiris visiting doctors daily, cannot now be relied upon when describing the valley to a non-local. Considering the recent additions to this exhaustive list of adjectives which has through its course accommodated funny words like 'political turmoil', 'pogrom of civil liberties', 'militancy' and the juicy of them all 'Human Rights Violations', our

hypothetical non-local is more often than not gyrated towards the latter than he is willing to pretend to care for the former. Cutting our own non-local some slack here, given the human conditioning a majority of us would concede to the fact that the idea of blood spooling down a freshly macadamized thoroughfare is more titillating than watching birds on a sunny afternoon in a pasture spreading miles. To give structure to whatever I am about say I'd like to lend a gentleman's philosophy who goes by the name of Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Now Hegel being an esoteric that he was in his plush German had philosophized the idea of progress in the 1800's; to him progress could never ensue a linear trajectory, it had to be haphazard for it to be called as progress otherwise it was just a constant state of being. This philosophy came to be later given an academic structure known as the Dialectic¹.

THESIS

Imagine a bracket, two visibly black curves encompassing whatever brackets are meant to encompass, usually important stuff needing emphasis or special attention. The Dialectic is nothing but the name of such a bracket between the peripheries of which lies a process. The process consists of three components which according to Hegel denote human progress. Thesis being the name of the first of those three components denotes a deviation from inertia thereby becoming an altogether new action. This can be associated with almost anything that constitutes existence; a suddenly stumbling cyclist, the first war cry on the break of dawn, a person changing his mind seconds before shooting himself in the head, drafting of a law that prohibits laughing after 6:00 pm or in this context a sudden socio-political change in the predominantly Shaivite society that was Kashmir up until the 1300s with the advent of Islam. Now as far as the credibility of the historian Jonaraja goes, it is duly recorded in his life's work **DvitiyaRajatarangini** that the cultural transition that happened wasn't as smooth as the narrative goes. Kashmir's first encounter with political Islam was not a result of foreign invasions although ambitious efforts were made both by the Arabs and Turks in the past but in vain, in fact Islam at the political level started due to what many would consider 'an overreaction'. Rinchana an ambitious Ladakhi chief seized power in around 1320 A.D, he was eager to conflux his

¹ Philosophy Now: A Magazine of ideas, https://philosophynow.org/issues/129/Hegel_on_History (last visited Nov, 16, 2021)

spiritual necessities with that of Hinduism but as per Mohibbul Hassan's Kashmir under the Sultans² couldn't secure convincing replies to his queries. (Though Jonaraja refutes this chronicle and presents it to be of a fact that Rinchana was disallowed from pursuing Shaivism owing to him being born in a cast that wasn't preferable among the Shaivite customs for a conversion to take place. Considering the fact that Rinchana at this point was King and there aren't many examples present of Kings swallowing rejection peacefully, it can be deduced that Jonaraja's version has some blurred lines to be accurately followed). Nonetheless as Mohibbul Hassan romantically records³, in a fit of spiritual unrest Rinchana decided to adopt the religion of the first person he sees in the morning; Bulbul Shah a Turkish Sufi who had migrated with his disciples to Kashmir sometime back being the first person Rinchana encountered that morning thus resulted in him adopting Islam and changing his name to Sultan Sadru'd-Din from Rinchana. Though the actual context of the events recorded can never be accurately replicated as along the course of History a lot many biases and academic glorifications have shaped certain narratives but this for sure can be stated that the Shaivite inertia in Kashmir duly deviated in Rinchana or Sultan Sadr'd-din's reign thereby giving Kashmir its first taste of Hegelian thesis.

ANTI-THESIS

Second comes Anti-thesis, more like the name suggests it is a total reaction to whatever thesis constituted; a cyclist seconds after his fall cursing himself the day he decided to become one, the act of retaliation as soon as the other end hears a distant war cry, the emotional breakdown of a person after he realizes that he wouldn't be alive crying if he had carried on with the deed, a social outcry against a law that prohibits laughing after 6:00 pm or in this context a displaced Shaivite community exhibiting a sentiment to reclaim by gradually realizing the historical developments that had led them to migrate from Kashmir several times due to an extensive timeline of the Muslim dominion. For several centuries after Rinchana's reign the Muslim foothold in Kashmir only grew. Shah Mir a Turkish adventurer who had come to Kashmir prior to Rinchana's reign subsequently grew in power firstly by assisting Rinchana in his affairs and then his wife Kota Rani. After Rinchana's death he mutinied against Kota Rani and finally

²Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans* 39 (1959)

³Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans* 47 (1959)

ascended the throne in 1339 thereby establishing the Shah Mir dynasty in Kashmir which ruled for over two hundred years. Subsequently after the Shah Mir dynasty, the Chaks who were also of foreign origin grew up the social ladder by forming diplomatic as well as matrimonial alliances with principal landowning families⁴thereby forming a formidable leverage as well as an empire that ruled Kashmir for almost three decades before Akbar took over. After the Chaks the Mughal rule in Kashmir starting from Akbar and dwindling by the end of Aurangzeb's reign lasted a pretty one sixty-five years from 1586 to 1751. After the Mughals, the Afghan Durrani Empire extended its imperial aspirations to Kashmir. With Ahmad Shah Abdali maintaining a stronghold in Punjab in 1752, it was during this time that Addul Khan Ishaq became the first Afghan governor of Kashmir thereby laying the foundation of an empire that lasted a good sixty years before the Sikhs seized power in 1819. After the culmination of the first Anglo-Sikh war in 1846, the whole of Jammu and Kashmir was sold to the Dogras who had paid allegiance to the British East India Company in their offensive against the Sikhs ruling Kashmir at that time. The Sikh loss resulted in Jammu and Kashmir becoming a princely state in a subsidiary alliance with the British Raj. Gulab Singh the Dogra Raja of Jammu being the one to whom the whole of J&K was sold to became the first Maharaja of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir thereby founding the Dogra dynasty which ruled for over hundred years until its abolition in 1952.

There's no doubt in that Kashmir underwent a dynamic power struggle stretching between the extremities of the early 12th and later 18th centuries but what remains of it is that culturally as well as socio-politically the whole of Kashmir was exposed to a single system of credence, i.e., Islam and this exposure constituted all variations of moderation and radicalism depending upon the person occupying the throne. Seeing the developments that took place along the course of Kashmir's Muslim dominion, it is clear that the assertive intent of all such invasions and usurpations was supremely imperial in the first place. Although this fact cannot be rebutted that historically the religion of Islam has relied on open confrontation as it has relied on proselytization for the means of social absorption, therefore despite the fact that the primary monarchical motive wasn't religious but after accomplishing the first, i.e., astute territorial expansion the former diffused as do other aspects of a ruler's own culture when one rules a place

⁴Mohibbul Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans* 159 (1959)

with a very disparate cultural setting. Also, along the courses of these reigns Islam being the primary source of culture grew and solidified; although people who paid their due allegiance to the culture also did suffer but the other lot suffered and massively felt a cultural disconnect which led them not once but several times resort to exoduses⁵. The veracity of this statement can be tested by the claim that the general Muslim population in Kashmir has little to no idea about the actual historical progression prior to 1947 whereas the displaced Pandit communities exhibit a collective sense of their roots dating way back. Though there is no actual study or statistics to attest this claim but I being an equal resident of both Jammu and Kashmir from past twenty-three years and having made acquaintances from a very diverse spectrum of Muslim as well as Pandit communities can only offer my personal testimony in an attempt to corroborate this claim. Now in my opinion the idea of remembering one's history stems from a collective as well as evolutionary realization of either collaborative suffering or ancestral glory, in this case a majority of Muslim populace in Kashmir have perceived whatever happened prior to 1947 as a necessary progression for today's generation to be born as Muslims whereas the Shaivite section of the community who have been exposed to a gradually ascending five hundred yearlong cultural dissociation have identified this period as an era of torment and misery which made them succumb to mass migrations all along the course of this period⁶.

Although the first inklings of an upcoming Anti-thesis appeared during the Sikh incumbency, as Zutshi mentions⁷, with instances like banning of Azaan (Muslim call to prayer) or holding out death sentences for cow slaughter but it was during the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh, the last Dogra Monarch of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir that a conspicuous bridge widened between the Hindu and Muslim sections of Kashmir. On July the 13th, 1931 a young Sheikh Abdullah spearheaded a public meeting in Srinagar that was attended by the prominent Muslim clique irrespective of sects and economic differences. The congregation was arranged to vocalize the alleged maltreatment of the Muslim community by the Hindu Maharaja that had apparently resulted in an economic plunge within the community. Several addresses were

⁵Professor K.L Bhan, *Paradise Lost: Seven Exoduses of Kashmiri Pandits* 1-3 (1st ed. April 2003) (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bv18HzFMC7deXaxLeeONvieQsEEYuMpu/view?usp=sharing>)

⁶Professor K.L Bhan, *Paradise Lost: Seven Exoduses of Kashmiri Pandits* 1-3 (1st ed. April 2003) (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bv18HzFMC7deXaxLeeONvieQsEEYuMpu/view?usp=sharing>)

⁷Zutshi, Chitrlekha, *Language of belonging: Islam, regional identity, and the making of Kashmir* 39-41 (2003)

delivered with the exception of one such by a non-local Muslim Pathan named Abdul Qadeer in which he had asked his Muslim brethren to fight the autocratic Dogra rule with sticks and stones. This speech resulted in Abdul Qadeer's arrest on grounds of sedition and the incident led to a charged demonstration held before the Central Jail demanding Qadeer's immediate release. In the altercation that followed between the protesters and the police, a small police barrack was set on fire by the mob and in retaliation a few rounds were shot by the police which is said to have resulted in close to twenty-two casualties among the predominantly Muslim protesters. Meanwhile as Veer Wangoo and Rahul Razdaan have mentioned in their paper⁸ another mob seeing that most of the police force being present in and around the premises of the Central Jail diverted towards the areas with a predominant Hindu habitancy where they are said to have looted, raided and vandalized Hindu owned business and residences. The spontaneity of this event has been questioned time and again as many have alleged it to be a denouement of a pre-designed chain of events compared to a sporadic mob outburst. Veer Ji Wangoo and Rahul Razdaan have also explored this narrative in their paper⁹ by summarizing some contents of an article published in 1965 called 'Blitz' and of H.L. Saxena's book 'The tragedy in Kashmir' wherein it has been asserted that the nature of the communal riots that ensued on the 13th of July, 1931 were of one peddled by the machineries of the British and executed by their on-field agents such as Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah which as said can be substantiated by the Letters Sheikh wrote to B.J. Glancy, Col. C.W. Colvin and Lt Col. L.E. Lang. The geo-political situation of the subcontinent being such that an eminent intimidation from the Russian advances through the Northern frontiers may have catalyzed the British contemplation of a communal disharmony in the state, owing to the fact that such a contemplation was already in works seeing that the Maharaja had previously shown signs of patriotic fervor by speaking in support of the idea of Indian independence in the Chamber of Princes in London. Therefore, such assertions beget a perfect motive for the British to envisage such an upheaval for their cahoots to play out well.

Whatever be the nature of these events, an overwhelming communal bridge was definitely etched on this day in Kashmir. This day is commemorated by both the Muslim as well as the Hindu confraternities individually to mark the divide that sprung between the two sections on this day,

⁸ Veer Ji Wangoo & Rahul Razdaan, *Politics of Balance or an appeasement of false hope*, IBTL, 2013 (September, 13, 2021, 9:34 pm) (<https://www.ibtl.in/column/1383/research-paper-on-1931-kashmir-riots>)

⁹ Veer Ji Wangoo & Rahul Razdaan, *Politics of Balance or an appeasement of false hope*, IBTL, 2013 (September, 13, 2021, 11:13 pm) (<https://www.ibtl.in/column/1383/research-paper-on-1931-kashmir-riots>)

Yoam-e-Shohada (Martyr's Day), that is the Muslim manifestation to commemorate the lives of all the people lost during the riots and Black Day being the Hindu manifestation marks the apparent spurge of hate unleashed upon the Hindu dwellings and businesses.

SYNTHESIS

The final step in this process is known as Synthesis i.e., the result begotten out of the conflict between Thesis and Anti-thesis. This step in progress according to Hegel is more plausible than it is reactionary, unlike Anti-thesis that mostly works along the lines of a Knee-Jerk mechanism; Synthesis is a balanced outcome resulting out of a collision between the former components of progress with all the viable additions and subtractions. A cyclist's epiphany to overcome a fall after cursing himself to take up cycling in the first place, a gradual realization regarding the futility of war given that the only winner is death, a person deciding to educate others about the psychology of suicide after having a near run with it on his own, a law that somewhere in the past prohibited laughing after 6:00 pm itself becoming a laughing stock when thought about retrospectively or in this context the current unrealized socio-political metamorphosis happening in Kashmir.

Even though Kashmir is still manifesting a staunch semblance of a passive Anti-thesis but it surely will not be an overstatement to mention that the blossoms of an impending Synthesis are already apparent. With the majority populace exhibiting a collective indifference towards the socio-political scenario and a prevalent gyration of the masses towards ensuring a daily living wherein matters of breakfast, Lunch and dinner have been prioritized over looming family discussions regarding Kashmir's political future provide a considerable impression of an undercurrent shift from a collective mutinous yearning to strong individual as well as material predilections. The local follow up of a major constitutional dilution of a provision legally known as 'Article 370' that took place on the 5th of August in 2019 provides a substantial insight regarding this shift in the social mood concerning Kashmiri politics. The said article that was supposedly providing the residents of Jammu and Kashmir with a special status in the matters of property, administration as well as employment was abrogated by the Union government in 2019, moreover 'Jammu & Kashmir' that donned the reputation of a fully-fledged state from the

inception of an independent India was reduced to two bifurcated Union territories namely 'The union Territory of Ladakh' and 'The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir'. A lot many brows were raised nationally as well as locally regarding the morality of such a precipitous move by the Central Government and some even accused the Government of working on the lines of a Hindutva propaganda to change the cultural dynamics of the so-called state. Irrespective of the fact whether the Central Government made this move based on the alleged intent or was it a genuine attempt at inclusivity as the Government asserts, the thing to be noted here shouldn't be to declare one side as the wailing Hero and the other a smirking villain but to observe the following social reaction to this situation considering which many had assumed the consequences to be of the gravest in nature. With an internet gag for more than a year and incessant restrictions on public locomotion and businesses, it can be very prudently established that the Government was excessive in its measures to control the perceived aftermath because none of the previous hullabaloo constituting stone pelting, calls for strikes or civil altercation with the security forces took place. Many had attributed this change in the social attitude to the Government's no-nonsense policy but there's something else that too deserves to be noticed other than the Government's administrative strategies in Kashmir, that being the slow evaporation of a collective socio-religious diktat which until recently played an important role in shaping an average Kashmiri's outlook towards everything. There seems to have perforated a material as well as individual prioritization among the masses and 'The Cause' (leaving the moral aspect of it aside) to which every new born Kashmiri was once sternly expected to abet seems to have taken a cultural back seat. That being said, this subdued shift may probably pave the way for Kashmiris to make a space of their own, first individually which should then on its own disseminate culturally and not succumb to the ever-present readymade meaning they have been attributing to their lives till now but nothing's for sure as the inklings of an imminent Synthesis can go either way.