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## INTRODUCTION

SHAIKH MOHAMMAD ABDULLAH, the main spirit behind the Kashmir freedom movement, was born in a merchant family of Srinagar in 1905. Educated in Lahore and at the Aligarh Muslim University, he first came into public life in 1931, when he joined the agitation launched to secure for Kashmiri Muslims' due representation in the civil administration and the army of the State. The ruler, who was averse to these proposals, declared Martial Law and ordered State troops to fire on demonstrators and got Shaikh Abdullah arrested and imprisoned with his followers. After his release in the following year, he founded the Muslim Conference to fight for the legitimate rights of the Muslims of the State who affectionately called him 'The Lion of Kashmir'. In 1939, however, he broke away from the Muslim Conference and founded the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, which still dominates the State's politics.

In 1946, Shaikh Abdullah was again sentenced to nine years' imprisonment for launching a "Quit Kashmir Campaign" against the Maharaja, but was released on October 26, 1947, and made "Head of Emergency Administration" in the State. In March, 1948, he became the State's Prime Minister, which office he held till August 1953, when on the initiative of Delhi, he was dismissed by his own Deputy, Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad, and imprisoned for five years without trial.

In January 1958, he was released only to be re-arrested after four months, because Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad, who had succeeded him as Prime Minister and the Government of India, were convinced that the 'Lion of Kashmir' could not be tamed.

It may be recalled that in the course of a statement in 1961 before the court during his so-called trial on a trumped-up charge of "conspiracy", Shaikh Abdullah had categorically demanded "the immediate implementation of the pledge of the plebiscite given to the people of Kashmir by India, Pakistan and the United Nations."

The Shaikh declared on that occasion: "The people of the State have not forgotten it and will never forget it."

Shaikh Abdullah had also subordinated his own personal fate to that of the destiny of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The following is a revealing excerpt from the Shaikh's statement in court:

"It is a small matter as to what happens to me. But it is no small matter that the people of Jammu and Kashmir suffer poverty, humiliation and degradation. It has been no small matter what they have endured for more than a decade and what they are enduring now.

"In fact, the State has become a vast prison camp where the people are governed by heinous laws and monstrous ordinances some of which entail death sentence while others provide imprisonment for ten years without making it incumbent on the executive authority even to apprise the victim of the charge, not to say of a judicial trial.

"Hundreds of Kashmiris have suffered incarceration for years since 9th August, 1953 under these lawless laws; many were shot by the Army and the police; hundreds were maimed and disabled for life; hundreds again were involved in fictitious criminal cases in order to silence their voice; and yet it is claimed that there is stability!

"Be that as it may, these very events have demonstrated the justice of the demand for the immediate implementation of the pledge of the plebiscite given to the people by India, Pakistan and the United Nations. The people of the State have not forgotten it and will never forget it.

"If my imprisonment serves the cause to which I have dedicated myself, then it will be well with me and I shall take pride in thus serving my people and the land of my forefathers.

"My voice may be stifled behind the prison walls, but it will

continue to echo and ring for all times to come. It can never be stopped. It is the voice of human conscience; it is the voice of the people. I am only a symbol of people's undeniable aspirations and rights. What I am saying now will be repeated time and again, and it will go down in history."

Shaikh Abdullah, thus, remained for another three years in jail after which he was recently released unconditionally on April 8, 1964.

## EXCERPTS FROM SHAIKH ABDULLAH'S RECENT STATEMENTS AS REPORTED BY INDIAN PRESS

*News Conference at Jammu on April 9, 1964, as reported by "Indian Express", Bombay, dated April 10, 1964.*

Plebiscite was a commitment to the people of the State, and "it is they who shall decide the future of Kashmir".

*News Conference at Jammu in the morning of April 9, 1964, and the speech at a public meeting on the same evening as reported by "Times of India", Bombay, dated April 10, 1964.*

He (Shaikh Abdullah) declared that he was neither a Pakistani nor an Indian agent, as some of his critics alleged—he worked only for the good of his own people.

Kashmir has become a constant irritant between the two nations, he said. It had gravely endangered the peace of the sub-continent and might well endanger the peace of Asia and the world.

"Elections have been held in the State, but all opposition parties, including the Jan Sang and Socialists had described them as fake".

"We must bury communal strife once for all. This is important if India is to live. It is also possible to settle the Kashmir issue when Mr. Nehru is amongst us".

"We have to win hearts, and if we fail in this regard, we cannot rule by force. Britishers ruled us with force. Because they failed to win our hearts, they had to depart from India. One can

rule by force for some time and not for all times’.

“We stand where we were on August 9, 1953 (when Shaikh Abdullah was dismissed as Premier and was arrested). Our disputes continue and our problems remain despite our declarations to the world to the contrary”.

*Speech at a post-prayer meeting in Jammu on April 10, 1964, as reported by “Times of India”, Bombay, dated April 11, 1964.*

Mr. Bhutto’s invitation to him to visit Pakistan seemed to be a ‘reasonable proposition’.

Shaikh Abdullah said, his incarceration had not weakened his resolve to secure the right of self-determination for the people of the State.

He (Shaikh Abdullah) denied that the State’s accession to India had been settled by the Kashmir Constituent Assembly. Accession, he added, was brought about by putting him in jail and buying and intimidating members of the Constituent Assembly.

*Speech at a Citizens’ Reception at Jammu on April 10, 1964, as reported by “Times of India”, Bombay, dated April 11, 1964.*

Kashmir could play a major role in bringing about good relations and deep understanding between India and Pakistan. While in the rest of the world the trend was towards unity, the two countries of the sub-continent were drifting apart.

Kashmir Muslims did not want to be integrated (with India). Even the Indian Army could not force them to do so. Nothing could be done in the State which was unacceptable to the majority.

*Speech at Udhampur on April 11, 1964, as reported by “Times of India”, Bombay, dated April 12, 1964.*

“Kashmir’s political future was still to be determined”.

“If there are solutions other than through a plebiscite, then let us know what they are and we will consider them”.

“But advocating an amicable solution is not rebellion. People have the right to choose their destiny”.

Some "propagandists" had been shouting for the last several years that the dispute over Kashmir had been solved and Kashmir's accession to India was irrevocable and everlasting as the snow on the mountain tops. This "propaganda" had not done any good to India.

*Speech at a meeting at Batote on the night of April 11, 1964, as reported by "Times of India", Bombay, dated April 13, 1964.*

"Hindus or Muslims need not be afraid of a plebiscite. The decisions of Hindus and Muslims expressed through a plebiscite should not be different. It should be the same".

He said, "crores of rupees had been spent by India in Kashmir but had India succeeded in securing a solution"?

He added, India had also "failed to settle the dispute by putting him in jail for 11 years. Any solution which did not have the backing of the people would not be lasting".

He said, "Kashmir continued to be a dispute between India and Pakistan and evidence of this was in the frequent Security Council debates and the presence of the U.N., observers in the State.

*Speeches of Shaikh Abdullah/Mirza Afzal Beg during a brief stopover en route to Srinagar, as reported by the "Times of India", Bombay, dated April 12, 1964.*

"Earlier Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg also demanded that the people of Kashmir should be given the right of self-determination".

"Both Shaikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg lashed out at the Shamsuddin and Bakhshi Ministries, which they alleged were corrupt".

"Mirza Afzal Beg said that the day of judgement had come for those who had fattened on the peoples' miseries . . . ."

"Shaikh Abdullah maintained that there had been no real progress in the State during the previous regimes etc."

*The same as reported by the "Indian Express", Bombay, dated April 13, 1964.*

"... plebiscite does not mean that the wishes of only Muslims will be ascertained. The Hindus and the Sikhs also will be able to exercise their right of "self-determination".

For 17 years, India and Pakistan had remained unmindful of the Kashmiris' fate of uncertainty. "This uncertainty could not be permitted to linger".

*Speech at a public meeting at Bhadarwah on April 13, 1964, as reported by "Times of India", Bombay, dated April 14, 1964.*

".... he (Shaikh Abdullah) had disputed since 1953 (when he was dismissed and jailed) that Kashmir's accession was final. He had been agitating for settling the dispute. If today, after his release, he was asked not to talk on the future of the State and communal harmony, what else was he to say?"

*Speech at a public meeting at Kishtwar on April 14, 1964, as reported by "Indian Express", Bombay, dated April 15, 1964.*

Kashmir's accession to India was "provisional" in as much as the State had "temporarily" surrendered defence, foreign affairs and communications to the Centre .... Kashmir had not surrendered residuary powers to India and the accession on the three surrendered subjects was also subject to confirmation. That was why Article 370 was a temporary Clause.

*Speech at Batote on April 15, 1964 as reported by the "Times of India, Bombay, dated April 16, 1964.*

Shaikh Abdullah remarked that it was unfair to condemn him for "positions" he had not taken. Mr. Krishna Memon, for instance, had quoted a statement made by him 15 years ago against an independent Kashmir and suggested that he had retracted from that stand.

He declared, "I still stand by every word of that statement and, in fact, by all my commitments. It is the Government of India, I feel, that has gone back on its commitments."

## INDIAN PRESS COMMENTS

The *Times of India*, Bombay, in its issue of April 8, 1964, published an article by Nandan B. Kagal entitled "IN PERSPECTIVE"—*An Act of Faith?* Analyzing the reasons behind the release of Shaikh Abdullah, the writer observed, "If the Nehru's Government is given the benefit of the doubt and the possibility that it is engaged in a deliberate deception is ruled out, one must conclude that it is acting on the assumption that once Shaikh Abdullah is set at liberty, he can be prevailed upon to accept New Delhi's declared policy of completing Kashmir's integration with India through the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. But in politics there can be no *a priori* assumptions; they must necessarily be based on some observable evidence. But one looks in vain for such evidence in the Abdullah affair."

About the motives behind Shaikh Abdullah's earlier arrests in 1953 and 1958, the writer says. "He was arrested and kept in jail for more than ten years because the Union Government was convinced that he was working towards the creation of an independent Kashmir, and because it was feared that if he was allowed to remain at liberty, the situation would get out of control in Kashmir."

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Commenting editorially on the release of Shaikh Abdullah, the *Times of India* in its issue of April 11, 1964 observed, "The Government cannot hope to maintain its claim that the State is an integral part of India and at the same time allow men with a martyr's halo around their heads to carry on a campaign rejecting this claim."

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As reported in the *Times of India* in its issue of April 11, 1964, Mr. V. G. Deshpande, President of the All India Hindu Mahasaba said, "Those who had faith in the Shaikh being a powerful champion of Kashmir's integration with India, will now be disillusioned."

He added, "Shaikh Abdullah's release and his first pronouncements in the Press Conference" would have serious repercussions on "Indo-Pakistani relations and our position in the U.N., and can mean even a threat to India's integrity and security."

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Talking to pressmen in New Delhi on April 10, 1964, Mr. M. C. Chagla, India's Minister for Education, said that Shaikh Abdullah should be made to realize that from the point of view of Kashmir itself it would be better for it to be part of a larger India than for it to be an "unimportant independent country", which would not be economically viable.

Referring to Shaikh Abdullah's statement that the people of Kashmir had not been given a chance for self-determination and that the three general elections in Kashmir were rigged, Mr. Chagla said that the National Conference under the Shaikh's leadership had "unequivocally decided" that Kashmir should be part of India.

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Addressing a public meeting in New Delhi on April 10, 1964, Mr. Deendayal Upadhyaya, General Secretary of the Bharatiya Jan Sang said, "instead of stabilising the political situation in the State, Shaikh Abdullah has tried to unsettle every issue."

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Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri, India's Minister without Portfolio, intervening in the Lok Sabha Debate on April 11, 1964 said, "There is, of course, complete freedom in this country. But there can be no freedom for preaching some kind of independence or secession (from the Indian Union)."

He added, "I must admit that I am surprised that he (Shaikh Abdullah) should have made such categorical statements on various matters."

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Commenting editorially on the recent declarations of Shaikh Abdullah, the *Indian Express* in its issue of April 13, 1964 observed, "Whatever be the grandiose delusions or dreams Abdullah now nourishes, New Delhi must leave him and his supporters in no doubt that accession is an accomplished fact and that only some of the processes of integration remain to be completed. On accession there can be no question or argument."

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Addressing a news conference at Patna on April 13, 1964, Mr. M. C. Chagla, India's Education Minister, declared that the law "will take its own course" if Shaikh Abdullah preached secession of Kashmir. He added, "The fact that a man has been set free, does not give him the right to talk against the law of the land."

About Shaikh Abdullah's visit to Pakistan, Mr. Chagla said, the Shaikh was "free" to visit Pakistan and discuss the Kashmir question with President Ayub Khan "if it is within the context of Kashmir being an integral part of India."

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Talking to newsmen at Allahabad on April 13, 1964, Mr. N. C. Chatterjee, M.P., described the release of Shaikh Abdullah as an act against the rule of law. He said, "when an Indian citizen charged with high treason and under trial for five or six years is released without giving any cogent reason in Parliament or any court of law, where stands the rule of law?"

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Addressing the students of a local college at Allahabad on April 13, 1964, Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon said that the release of

Shaikh Abdullah could not alter the basic position of India on Kashmir. That position was that the accession of the State to India was "full, final and complete."

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Speaking in the Lok Sabha on April 13, 1964, on the demands for grants of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr. H. C. Mathur (Congress) said, "Let Shaikh Abdullah answer whether he is an Indian or not. Let him tell us whether or not he recognised the accession of Kashmir and asked for assistance from India when there was aggression from Pakistan."

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Commenting editorially on the release of Shaikh Abdullah the '*Statesman*', New Delhi, in its issue of April 15, 1964, observed, "It was clear at the time and is clearer still in retrospect that lack of an alternative rather than any expectation that he had changed his views, was responsible for the decision to release the Shaikh."

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Commenting editorially on the recent pronouncements of Shaikh Abdullah, the *Times of India*, Bombay, in its issue of April 16, 1964 observed, "Shaikh Abdullah is now a demagogue at large, and he is plainly engaged in secessionist political activity. Mr. Shastri and Mr. Chagla have done well to warn Shaikh Abdullah on behalf of the Government of India that if he continues to challenge the validity of the accession, he will be dealt with under the law of the land like any other citizen of this country. If he chooses to ignore the warning—and he has already described it as a threat which he will not submit to—and continues to adopt a secessionist posture, the Government of India must not hesitate to arrest him again."

Describing the recent public speeches of Shaikh Abdullah as a challenge not merely at Mr. Nehru's Government but also at the Indian Union, the paper remarked, "That challenge must be met firmly and swiftly. It cannot be met by vague talk about 'fresh thinking on Kashmir' and by indulging in mushy sentimentality"

