



Manohar Nath Tickoo

Professor Manohar Nath Tickoo, 74, was a college teacher and head of the department of Education at the Government College Islamabad. He lived in Haire Mohalla, Janglat Mandi in Anantnag before he left Kashmir at the peak of insurgency in 1990. For the last two decades, he is living at the scorching locale of Bohdi in Jammu.

Q1) what prompted your migration?

I left with my family on Friday, 31st May 1990 with the first light in the dawn and reached Jammu same day in the early afternoon. I still remember that fateful day when I was forced by none other than my own wife and daughters to leave. All my *Muslim neighbors* came to my home bidding my family a fond farewell with tearful eyes. I and my neighbors never wanted my family to leave Kashmir but there was definitely a massive psychological fear created by unknown agencies against the Kashmiri Pandits which forced us to leave. Although the fact remains that not a single Muslim forced us to leave

Q2) So, Do you nurture any dreams of coming back?

A: - Well, I do believe that Pundits will get back to their home land but I can't predict a time for it. However, I don't believe the Central [Indian] or [local] State government claims that the Pandit will be rehabilitated in their original homes. This is a blatant lie, as there hasn't been any strategy for our rehabilitation since we have left the Valley. The past governments did build some residential houses at places like Tulmul, Budgam and

Mattan, but I believe this was for electoral politics.

Q3) there are many examples of Pandit returning back. Could you perhaps follow the suit?

A: - No I am sorry. I don't hesitate to tell u a stark fact that I would feel *emotionally insulted* if I return back to my home this time because we left our mother land *without any force from our fellow people*. I believe that Kashmiri Pundits should have remained in the Valley *and* they must have *fought the freedom struggle* with *their fellow Muslim citizens*. Even we should have sacrificed in the similar fashion our Muslim brothers did for the *Kashmir cause*, but unfortunately we did not do that. Even I wouldn't mind if hundred thousand Kashmir Pundits would have been martyred for freedom struggle because Kashmir cause has no less a meaning for Kashmiri Pundits. It is bizarre when we "Kashmir Pundits" vociferously beat the drums, searching for "Panun Kashmir", ironically outside the Kashmir, therefore it has literally lost its spirit and meaning...

Q4) How do you view the Kashmir problem?

A: - Kashmir is a very old issue which has mutated into a monster now. But it can be solved by sincere and honest leadership in India, Pakistan and Kashmir. Gimmicks like holding elections cannot be used to fade the reality of Kashmir being an unresolved issue. Holding election in the presence of half a million troop's shows the level of legitimacy and the feigned democratic nature in Kashmir.

My personal opinion is that Kashmir issue is the issue of those who speak Kashmiri language. It should not be hyphenated or related to the other parts like Jammu and Ladakh; they have never been a relative part of Kashmir and had never any cultural, ethnic or communication links with Kashmir. Kashmir has its own history and it should be recognized as an independent state. *It had never been a part of India or British India.*

Q5) so, would the Kashmiri Pandits accept independent Kashmir?

A: - well, not necessarily. I am expressing my opinion without any bias and duality. The opinions are never same even on a common issue. Let me tell you that majority of Pandits did not support Sheikh Abdullah but the Ahrar Party of Moulvi Yousuf Shah. Well known Pandit activists Prem Nath Bazaz and Prem Nath

Yash were in favour of Kashmir's accession with Pakistan. I still remember that time when people were asked to opt between India and Pakistan. My late father Sarvan and Tickoo who was the Post Master at Anantnag at that time and we used to live inside the Post Office, signed on the document favouring accession with Pakistan and his four colleagues including Ghulam Muhammad Shah of Bijbehra and Jagan Nath Rayess. My late father unfurled the Pakistani flag on the top of the Post Office but the goons of National Conference which include Abdul Ahad Tak of Anantnag town made an assault on my father and his colleagues, beat them to pulp and put down the Pakistani flag. They also tried to set the Post Office on fire.

Q6) Many Kashmiris often refer to Sheikh Abdullah as 'Gaddar' or traitor. How do you view him?

A: - well, It is easy to be wise after the event. Sheikh Abdullah should have not done the "Ilhaq" or accession with India. He did a very serious blunder for the reason that Kashmiri people are suffering a lot. Sadly Sheikh Abdullah had no political vision. Prem Nath Bazaz observed that Sheikh Abdullah had no sense of history and he had never read any history on Kashmir. So, one can understand the level of political maturity and sincerity of Sheikh Abdullah.

Q7) the Pandit argument is that Kashmir has always been part of India?

Kashmir has never been part of India and has no cultural, traditional, ethical and religious semblance with India. Even we Kashmiri Pundits have totally different religious ceremonial and ritual days than of the Indian Hindus and we practice a different mythology. We have no religious attachment with river Ganga; we used to put the ashes of the dead into the "Naraan Nag Gangbal" near Sonamarg. We never celebrate Diwali but "Hearath". We celebrate a religious day which is called "Sheshar Shenkraat" which is celebrated in the winters in order to avoid demonic influence in winters and there is no example of celebrating such a day in the Indian Hindu mythology. Moreover, Kashmiri Pundits celebrate "Shiv Raatri" differently than Indian Hindus; we prepare a lot of non vegetarian food to break the fast, contrary to Hindus who abstain from meat on the day.

Similarly Kashmiri Muslims have a different culture with no relevance with that of Indian culture. Politically, the UN resolutions stand witness to the Kashmir dispute and promise the right to self determination. Had Kashmir not been a disputed state then why Kashmir has its own constitution and flag. And why Pandit Jawaharlal Lal Nehru took the Kashmir issue to the United Nations. It was only because of Indian political

prejudice and insincerity that autonomy of Kashmir was eroded.

Q 8) how would you see the contours of its resolution?

A: - Well, Kashmir is a much political issue than a religious one. Kashmir has suffered because of a historical political mistake so the key to its resolution is strong political struggle which is possible only when we have strong political institutions with sincere leaders having unanimity on the common Kashmir cause.

So far we have failed on diplomatic and international level only because of the poor and corrupt leadership. It is imperative to coordinate the political groups and bring them under one banner and one single leader. I would suggest Sayed Ali Shah Geelani who has shown strength and resilience while others change their cloaks often. But there has to be inclusion of Pandit in the political leadership.

Q10) how would you place Article 370 in this jigsaw puzzle?

A: - The Article 370 has no future unless it does not get a permanent place in the Indian Constitution. Since the Article 370 is a temporary Article, it can be abrogated any time by the parliament of India and BJP has included the abrogation of Article 370 in its election manifesto. I think we Kashmiris should have fought vigorously for the permanence of the Article 370. Since the Article 370 is followed with the word "Temporary" has no meaning unless it does not get divorce from it. Moreover, the Indian leadership has always failed to give the due share to the Kashmiris in their democratic doctrines as established in 1950.

Q12) how do you see the future of Kashmir?

A: - We must pin hope against hope on the fourth generation after 1947 who can give respite to Kashmiris if they succeed to apply their brains properly.

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