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Kamaraj plan: a perspective from Kashmir

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The nature of politics in Jammu & Kashmir, post-1947, primarily draws its character from three key events. The dismissal of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1953 was the first one, and the launch of *Muslim Mutahida Mahaz*, an amalgamation of different pro-freedom factions in 1987 was the second. The third one, which forms the moot of this study, the failure of the Kamaraj Plan in 1963, had all it was needed to stimulate the shift in the movement of 'Self-determination'. It severely cut the movement from its hitherto structural apparatus and allowed new groups to lead the movement. Because of reasons contested, the first two events garnered substantial attention from scholars and political scientists; however the Kamaraj Plan, because it had to witness failure in its designs, had to suffer negligence. It is to fill this gap, the present study aims to probe into the socio-political history of Jammu and Kashmir, arguing that the crisis ignited by Hazratbal relic theft had strong roots in the failure of this plan, with codifying religion in the very bracket of the Kashmir imbroglio. The paper employs Historical institutionalism's concept of exogenous shocks and policy changes in the system and presents Kamaraj Plan as a 'Critical Juncture', which shifted the politics in Jammu and Kashmir in a particular direction.

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Introduction

In early 1962, bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir 'dispute' failed to bring any positive results. Soon the matter was brought to the table of the United Nations Security Council but Pakistan failed to gain anything substantial (*The Indian Express* (henceforth IE), India Will Not Be Hustled into Kashmir Debate, 1962; Nehru Rejects Arbitration on Kashmir; Direct Talks Favoured: Reply to Kennedy, 1962; U.S., U.K. Delegates Urge Direct Talks; Kashmir Debate in Security Council, 1962; *The Sunday Standard* (henceforth SS), June 24, 1962; UNSC, 1962, pp. 1–19). Concomitantly with these deliberations, a border skirmish between India and China turned into a full-fledged war on 20 October 1962. This war is largely considered a victory for China. The entire military reversal of this war fell on the shoulders of the Congress Remarkably in May 1963 parliamentary by-elections, Congress party lost many of its key seats bringing many hostile contenders to the Parliament including—Ram Manohar Lohia, Minoo Masani, and J. B. Kriplani (Guha, 2008, pp. 252–254). The post-war rise in the prices, drastic taxation, harsh economic measures and the party factionalism in Congress worsened the situation further. Nevertheless, this entire political fiasco led many of the Congress leaders to take some strong measures to come out of the crisis which eventually gave birth to what is known as the Kamaraj Plan (Narain, 1963; Mishra, 1963, pp. 15–14–17; Kochanek, 1968; Jaffrey, 1994, pp. 168–186; Vincent Kumaradoss, 2004; Narasimhan, 2007; Ram, 2010, pp. 195–216; Ananth, 2011, p. 60; EPW, 2013, 48(36), pp. 9–9).

Kamaraj Plan was primarily the brainchild of K. Kamaraj, Chief Minister of Madras, to curtail the growth of opposition parties, especially DMK.¹ Later, this was adopted by the 'All India Congress Committee' in its meeting in May 1963 at Hyderabad (Kochanek, 1966). According to B.N. Mullik, then Indian Intelligence Chief, 'What was needed was that the senior leaders, instead of sticking to office, should go into the country and work up for people's enthusiasm, whilst younger men should take charge of the reins of government'. This plan envisioned dissipating the temptation of power from the minds of the congressmen and cultivating in them the commitment towards the aims, objectives and programmes of the organisation. This arrangement was extended to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) as well and this essay argues that in the case of J&K, the reasons were entirely different. It is to be briefly stated here that while there is a larger narrative in the Indian academia that the Kamaraj scheme was a policy aimed at revitalising the Congress party after the Sino-Indian war, there are varying narratives of the event as well (Gupte, 2009, pp. 248–271) Significant among these is the non-official resolution presented in the All India Congress Committee's meeting in 1964 by Trikamlal Jamunadas Patel. The resolution read that;

There is a strong feeling among the people at large that Kamaraj Plan was evolved only to remove some unwanted senior members from power who otherwise were so powerful in the Congress organisation that they could not be removed from power under any cause whatsoever.... this Kamaraj Plan was like a mischievous baby who kicked out some giants from power. It was deliberately conceived.

He said that when these people were picked out from power for the Party, no organisational work was found for them.... He believed that this was a calculated, deliberate action to deprive some people of power. None of the persons who were remaining out had been given any organisational work. On the contrary, three ex-Presidents of the Congress were back in power. They were Shri

Sanjivayya, Shri Sanjiva Reddy and Smt. Indira Gandhi. He mentioned the name of Indiraji with a heavy heart, these people were the best suited for organisation. Why had they come into power? Therefore, he said that this Kamaraj Plan was evolved not to provide some work for these people, but because they were inclined to say one thing and do another. (Congress Bulletin, July–September, 1964, pp. 339–348).

This essay focuses on the extension of the Kamaraj plan to J&K, rather than merely embedding it in the broad generalisations about Kashmir and its 'secessionist/nationalist' movement. It contextualises the plan in Kashmir politics by acknowledging the interplay in internal and external dynamics and also within the extensive scholarship available on Kashmir. The period in which this incident took place has been extensively studied by scholars and different perspectives of the era have been documented. While no one has extensively studied the plan, there are varying references here and there, which refer to the episode. Whitehead (2007) and Lamb (1991, 1994, 2002) both debate in detail about the origin and development of the Kashmir imbroglio and briefly refer to the extension of the Kamraj plan to Kashmir. Both have highlighted the role of the *Moi-i-Muqadas* theft in the political history of the region which had its roots in the implementation of the Kamraj scheme in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Wani (2019) and Kanjwal (2017) argue about governance in Jammu and Kashmir and have deliberated about the extension of the Kamaraj scheme to the state. While Kanjwal argues how Kamraj's plan brought an end to the Prime Ministership of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Wani argues how Kamraj's plans in Kashmir proved to be a catalytic event which stimulated the course of events in the region in a different direction. These two authors offer a theoretic outline aimed at understanding the subtleties of a state-centric governance model and its effects and also have an excellent discussion on the patronage government between 1953 and 1963 in which the extension of Kamraj's plan to J&K took place. The recent work of Kanth (2018) is the latest addition to the history of the incident. He focuses on the event of the theft of the holy relic from the shrine of Hazratbal (1963–64), which I argue, was the most significant consequence of the extension of Kamraj's plan to Jammu and Kashmir. However, none of these works presents a full-fledged history of the event.

How does this article, and the arguments presented in it, converge or diverge from the above scholarship? This article acknowledges that the Kashmir conflict is a complex issue with both internal and external dynamics and this essay only focuses on one event and the external dynamics which have had important implications and consequences. Based on the contemporary shreds of evidence, majorly newspapers and archival records, a few of the significant aspects of the Kamaraj plan in J&K are argued about. The paper employs the 'Historical institutionalism' concept of exogenous shocks and policy changes in the system and presents Kamaraj Plan as a 'Critical Juncture', which shifted the politics in the state in a particular direction. It argues that the Indo-China war and the Pakistan factor in Sub-continental politics had compelled some large-scale changes in the politics of the state. Further the developments within the state itself, like the misgovernance in the region, the growth of secessionist trends, and the demand for the release of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, had aggravated the situation. The paper argues that these factors, both within and outside the state, had necessitated some changes in the political setup of the state, and the relieving of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, the J&K Prime Minister, from the state's political scene had become a necessity, finally leading to the extension of the Kamaraj Plan to J&K state.

The article further argues that Kamaraj's plan was not a government of India undertaking, but a policy adopted by the Congress party of which Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was not a member. Why did Bakshi resign then? The paper argues about the necessities which made up the context for the resignation of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad. The paper argues that Bakshi was a New Delhi's 'imposition' in the region, who, unlike Sheikh Abdullah, was not a grounded leader. As and when leadership in New Delhi called for his resignation he couldn't refute it. Nevertheless, it is contended that when Bakshi's resignation was accepted, he tried to defeat the Kamaraj scheme in the region through a stratagem, by making his close aide, Shamsudin, the prime Minister of the state. The paper argues that this ploy of Bakshi proved detrimental in the political history of the region which brought forth a situation which led to the displacement of the holy relic from the shrine of Hazratbal. All these aspects, hitherto untouched by scholars on Kashmir's history and politics, are the central focus of the present study.

Indo-Pak relations and the Kashmir scene

Indo-China war of 1962 was such a significant reversal in the history of Jammu & Kashmir that it necessitated a shift in various issues both at national and international levels. This war shaped a kind of vexed situation in the sub-continent and brought Western powers closer to India in its defence against China and alienated Pakistan, creating rifts within South Asian politics. The free supply of war ammunition within a certain financial limit, a 'Joint Air Defence Exercise' between India, America and Britain, grants in aid, and the transfer of MIG fighter Jets was a huge dividend which India obtained in its defence against China (*The New York Times* (henceforth NYT); 'U.S. Rushing Arms to India', 1962; 'U.S. to send India Light Artillery in Turks Arsenal; American Planes will carry weapons for Frontier Troops Tomorrow', 1962; 'India Asks \$60,000,000 from U.S. for Atom Plant', 1962; 'Kennedy Assures India On Weapons', 1962; 'First MIG's due in India shortly; Soviet Copters and other planes also expected', 1963; 'Chavan outlines 5-year defence plan', 1964). As a result, it garnered a lot of suspicions and anger in the region ('Assembly meeting on India set by Ayub', 1962; 'U.S Urged to press India about Kashmir', 1962; 'Pakistan Aides Protest Western Arms for India', 1962). Pakistan was caught in a security dilemma wherein India, although in alignment with the policy of non-alignment during the 'Cold War' managed access to armaments which Pakistan was permitted only after joining Western military alliances like SEATO and CENTO (Schofield, 1967, p. 104). As fears whipped up, it paved the way for China and Pakistan to develop their relations amicably. Therefore, pressing for an agreeable solution for Kashmir seemed to be the safe route to de-escalate the tensions between the two countries. Nehru's biographer writes: "Reliant on US and UK for military support, India could not decline to enter into a dialogue with Pakistan" (Gopal, 1984, p. 256). It was in this context that six rounds of talks between India and Pakistan were held from December 1962 to May 1963 at Rawalpindi, Delhi, Karachi and Calcutta (Lamb, 1991, p. 78; Ishaq, 2014, p. 296; Gopal, 1984, p. 258). These talks, nevertheless, failed to yield the result, and thus the relations between the two countries turned worse and border clashes became a norm ('Sino-Pak pact to the fore at Kashmir talks', 1963; 'Kashmir talks back in the old rut', 1963; 'Tame end of Kashmir talks; next round in Karachi, 1963; 'Discord bedevils talks: Pak claims growing', 1963; 'Kashmir talks deadlocked', 1963). Both countries were at tenterhooks—in fact, at the brink of war. The failure of the dialogue process and the incessant pressure from Western powers made New Delhi bring some alterations regarding its policy towards Jammu and Kashmir ('Pakistan Said to Assure

New Delhi on Frontier; Ayub Concerned Over Arms', 1962; 'Ayub Said to Back a Neutral Stand', 1962; 'Harriman Seeks Ayub Aid on India', 1962). As the later developments reveal, Prime Minister Nehru choose to get the state rid of Bakshi's rule, release Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and use him as a bridge to solve the crisis in Kashmir. Meanwhile, some democratic procedures were brought into the state management through installation of a liberal government under Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq.

However, such a scheme was not the outcome of Nehru's wit only or the result of Indo-Pak tensions, but a major plank was added by the then prevailing circumstances within the state itself. Prem Nath Bazaz's² observations in this context exemplify this account. After his 15 years 'of exile', Bazaz visited J&K in 1962 to study the socio-economic progress made by the state. Subsequently, meeting a cross-section of people he wrote a detailed report to Prime Minister Nehru through a series of letters. Writing about his 'certain happy and not-so-happy conclusions', he informed Nehru that even though the region had made a lot of economic progress³, what the state lacked was political freedom and liberalisation (Bazaz, 1967, pp. 188–198). Bazaz quoted the tales of corruption, nepotism, maladministration, and suppression of public opinion by the Ghulam Mohammad Bakshi led government and detailed the mounting socio-political tensions due to the policy failures of the government. The dangerous trend that Bazaz quoted to Nehru through his letter (dated June 29, 1962) was that even after much groundwork New Delhi had failed to earn the support of Kashmiris in favour of the state's accession to India.⁴ Bazaz corroborated his observations with the explanation that the 'frustration, demoralisation and the resentment' that the state had been witnessing due to the absence of democratic procedures, had turned people restive. Consequently, in a landscape stuffed with restlessness, the propaganda of Pakistan and the United Nations debates on Kashmir carried ample influence in the state.⁵ But what could have been the policy that the government in New Delhi could have followed in the state? Bazaz wrote to Nehru that, 'Sheikh Abdullah mattered most in the state and could prove of greater advantage to get the tensions in the region receded.⁶ "In my talks with hundreds of politically conscious workers, I have formed an impression that if an understanding is arrived at with Sheikh Abdullah much of the tension in the Valley will abate, the accession issue will cease to have the significance and importance it has at present. It is my considered view that so long as Sheikh Abdullah is behind bars, political conditions in Kashmir cannot return to normal, the Pakistan slogan will continue to have an appeal and the element of instability in life cannot be eliminated" (Bazaz, 1967, pp. 199–207). Whether these letters had any impact in shaping Nehru's Kashmir policy is hard to comment about, nevertheless, the later developments reveal that Nehru had decided to get the state administration changed, release Sheikh Abdullah and bring in liberal reforms in the government undertaking.

However, pertinent to comment here is that the policy change could have been possible anyhow, fully committed to the whims of New Delhi. Why then was the removal of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad inevitable, following a new regime being installed? It is to be argued that the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953 and the international significance that Kashmir had received after its entry into global forums had given a special advantage to the government of Bakshi (Wani; 138–98, Kanwal, 2017, pp. 205–249). His dealings in the state were turned a blind eye by New Delhi, and for Nehru, 'supporting Bakshi to face international gravities and Kashmiri secessionists, was a safer gamble than the vicissitudes of democracy in Kashmir' (Puri, 1993, p. 51). As a consequence when Balraj Puri bandied an argument with Nehru about Bakshi's corruption and oppression, Nehru advised him about being too principled and stated that national interest

was more important than democracy. “Bakshi used corrupt ways and means, but India’s case in Kashmir now revolved around him. Despite all its shortcomings the Bakshi government had to be strengthened. We have gambled at the international stage on Kashmir and we can’t afford to lose it. At this moment, we are at the point of the bayonet. Till things improve, democracy and morality can wait” (Puri, 1993, p. 51). However, by 1963, the situation had changed and New Delhi could no more afford misgovernance in the region, especially in the backdrop of the Sino-Indian war and when the region was at the epicentre of global attention.⁷ As an upshot to this, the pursuit for new ‘replacements’ or ‘substitutes’ began in the state. Significantly, New Delhi from the very beginning maintained its policy that “Only those who unequivocally agreed to follow the Indian state’s agenda in Kashmir could aspire to office, or indeed, play any sort of role in institutionally sanctioned politics.” (Bose, 2013, p. 67). Therefore, Bakshi was part of a scheme where “he would be allowed to run an unrepresentative, unaccountable government in Srinagar in return for facilitating state’s “integration” with India on New Delhi’s terms.” (Bose, 2013, p. 68). But by 1963, Bakshi under this formulae had breathed out his utility and relegated to dead wood because he was increasingly being regarded as an embarrassment.’ (Bose, p. 78). Furthermore, in the context of the Sino-Indian war, when assuming more and more control of the region was a political necessity, Bakshi could not have been a good choice (Mattu, 2002, p. 72; Puri, 1993, p. 128; Naqash and Shah, 1997, p. 114). Bakshi was an ‘Indian’ to whom Kashmir’s distinct identity mattered a lot.⁸ To him, Article 370 of the Indian Constitution gave legitimacy to the states ‘voluntary’ accession to the Union of India which was actually to control only three subjects as decided through the terms of accession. Therefore, all those who sought complete unification of the state into a Union, according to Bakshi, were “selling out Kashmir to India” (Kak, 1987, p. 67). Thus, the first step for reorganising Kashmir in the context of the post-Sino-Indian war was the overhauling of administration and Bakshi’s release turned out to be its first move. These were the conditions which both warranted and validated the extension of the Kamaraj Plan to Jammu and Kashmir.

In the early 1960’s D. P. Dhar, who was close to the Nehruvian circles in New Delhi, had got the “Democratic National Conference”⁹, to re-enter the National Conference on the plea that ‘Nehru would not like the Bakshi to continue as the Prime Minister of the state. Before this Nehru had suggested Bakshi to leave the state and enter the national politics and had even promised him the post of Union Home Minister (Butt, 1981, p. 77). Nehru, who had once chided Balraj Puri for thinking about permitting a political opposition in Kashmir against Bakshi, convinced Puri’s ‘Praja Socialist Party’ to field their candidates against Bakshi in 1962 (Bose, 2013, p. 78; Puri, 1993, p. 52). This points towards the fact that by 1962, in the post-Indo-China war context, Nehru had made up his mind for restructuring the politico-administrative structure in the valley. However, Bakshi played so shrewdly that all the tactics of New Delhi were brushed away easily. The Assembly elections of 1962 were rigged to such an extent that of a total of 42 assembly segments, 38 went to Bakshi’s kitty, unopposed (Gauhar, 2002, p. 65).

Kamaraj Plan in Kashmir and Bakshi’s counter-strategy. Soon after the culmination of the Indo-China war, in June–July 1963 Nehru was in the valley for a week-long visit. He held talks with many of the political stakeholders in the state (Ishaq, pp. 302–303). Revealing the nature of Nehru’s talks with the Jammu and Kashmir legislators, the then Chairman of the State

Legislature S.N. Fotedar told Sanaullah Butt, a prominent Kashmiri journalist, that:

It looks like the Government headed by Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad has completed its days because Nehru is adamant about seeing a change in the leadership for getting Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah released so that a fresh dialogue could be started with him (Butt, p. 78).

It was only days after this visit that Nehru invited Bakshi to New Delhi and informed him about the Kamaraj Plan. Remarkably, Bakshi, even though not a congressman, too resigned under this plan.¹⁰ Whether he opted to resign out of his own choice or fell prey to a trap of which he was caught off guard, or did he comply with it to uphold the prestige of Prime Minister, is a point of debate. According to Mullik, Bakshi was one of the imminent supporters of the Kamaraj Plan and was ‘insistent that it should be accepted and had canvassed his case for resignation with Indira Gandhi and Lal Bahadur Shastri’ (Mullik, 1972, p. 110).

The Kamaraj plan was not an undertaking of the government of India, but a policy adopted by the Congress party of which Bakshi was not a member. Then why did Bakshi choose to resign? Was it about enthusiasm, as many argue or was he coerced into this? (Mullik, 1972, pp. 107–115; Ishaq, 2014, p. 302; Jagmohan, (2006 edition), p. 203). This is again what problematizes the issue. Bakshi explains that “he felt that when attempts were made to discuss the image of India as reflected by Prime Minister Nehru, he should volunteer to resign demonstrating thus the latter’s authority, particularly to China and that a stop should be put to the tendentious propaganda that Muslims did not count in India. If among a dozen state Chief ministers there was a Muslim name, it meant much to give the lie to such propaganda” (‘Bakshi Plan for Public relations by Govt’s’, 1963). However, one can also argue that Bakshi resigned because there was no alternative left once Nehru requested him for his resignation. Sanaullah Butt comments that Bakshi was called to New Delhi and Nehru put forth the idea of Kamaraj Plan and suggested him that in order to enhance the image of the congress party and the government he too should support the programme. “You can also strengthen my hands by submitting your resignation. This would help me build a new political atmosphere”, Nehru told him (Butt, 1981, p. 81). As a result, Bakshi yielded to Nehru’s plea—gladly or grudgingly, as he could not refuse given his lack of legitimacy in the state. He was not popular as Sheikh Abdullah who could have expected people to stand for him. Therefore, when New Delhi pleaded for something from Bakshi, he could not dare to defy it. Defying meant the loss of position anyhow and accepting properly meant the same. Bakshi went for the latter with a show of enthusiasm.

Nevertheless, devoid of choice Bakshi showed much fervour in public circles about his resignation. The situation took a dramatic turn when the All India Congress Committee met in New Delhi on 23 August 1963 and delayed the announcement of the resignations as Nehru was supposedly in need of more time to finalise the list, but, Bakshi intervened fearing adverse effects of any delay, in the public domain. *The Statesman*, New43 Delhi, dated August 24, 1963, reports Bakshi’s speech as:

“Public reaction to such a postponement would be highly adverse and if definite action was not taken immediately the resignations might not have the impact that Kamaraj had visualised. Delays would also cause uncertainties and slackness in the administration. He is believed to have suggested that the committee continues its sitting till a decision was reached. If necessary, they could sit till the early hours of the morning.” (‘Nehru delays decision on resignations; Bakshi’s call for early action’, 1963).

There could, probably, have been two reasons for such kind of enthusiasm. Firstly, Bakshi was bereft of any other choice other than to follow Nehru's programme, so this pretentious display was the only route left, at least, to uphold his public image. Secondly, Bakshi did not expect that his resignation would be accepted by Nehru.¹¹ Thus, enthusiasm would have earned him extra brownie points—proving his patriotic credentials, and getting support to rule the State for a little more time. Eventually, when on August 24 1963 Nehru read out the accepted resignations, Bakshi was taken to surprise to witness the acceptance of his resignation (*The Hindustan Times* (henceforth HT), August 25, 1963; 'Surprise in Srinagar', 1963). Caught in the whirlpool, Bakshi diplomatically changed his expression. Speaking to a political gathering at his official residence in Srinagar, just after returning from Delhi, he tactfully transformed his individual decision of resignation into a party decision. He even put forward his desire to remain in the office under the garb of people's wish ('Abdul Rashid may succeed Bakshi', 1963). Though he had previously rejected the opinion of party men that he should not step down under the Kamaraj Scheme. Caught in a Catch-22 situation, Bakshi told the party workers and media persons:

My resignation is only a political decision and constitutional procedure will follow. I will now consult the working committee and the General Council of the National Conference. This is a big step and it must have the backing and the support of the ruling party and my colleagues. I am confident that I will get this support. ('Bakshi says resignation not yet final', 1963; 'Bakshi to consult Party men', 1963).

Slogans of 'Bakshi Saheb Phir Socho—Estefa Wapas Lo' [Bakshi Saheb review your decision—withdraw your resignation] reverberated in the state.¹² The campaign to persuade Bakshi to withdraw his resignation was gaining momentum. Students, politicians and the common people were on the roads forcing Bakshi to rethink his decision.¹³ However, a petition was filed in the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir in Srinagar by Mohammad Shafi Qureshi, an advocate and others which stated that Bakshi, in implementation of the Kamaraj Plan in the state, had forwarded his resignation to Jawaharlal Nehru and alleged that he did not expect that his resignation will be accepted. But when it was finally accepted he did not like to relinquish the premiership of the state and to undo the effect of his resignation he got several public meetings arranged wherein withdrawal of his resignation was urged. These, according to petitioners, were state-managed shows. Some of the NC workers, the petitioners alleged, forced un-willing shopkeepers to close their shops and coerced them to participate in manoeuvred demonstrations against Bakshi's resignation. The petitioners alleged that they were prohibited from organising, addressing or taking part in any public meeting, assembly or procession (Shafi Qureshi and others vs. The District Magistrate Srinagar & The State of J&K, 1963).

Let alone Bakshi's plans, it was now a matter of Nehru's prestige which Bakshi could not dare to defy. However, he vacated the chair only to be occupied by his close aide—Shamsudin.

The failure of the Kamaraj Plan and its aftermath. With the fall of Bakshi, there got started a protracted power struggle in the state. While Prime Minister Nehru supported G.M. Sadiq as the successor, Bakshi himself stood for many others in the National Conference (Delhi favours G. M. Sadiq, 1963; 'Abdul Rashid may succeed Bakshi', 1963). However, Shamsudin was nominated and elected as the Prime Minister in the forenoon of the 12th of October 1963, which makes sense only for an afterthought at the

eleventh hour (GO-J&K—Gazette, 1963a, 1963b). It was days after his accession that a handbill was found pasted in parts of the Kashmir valley accusing Bakshi of killing two birds with one stone—resigning under the Kamaraj Plan and continuing his rule through his protégé (GO-J&K—FCR, 15-10-1963, Mir, 2021). *The Indian Express*: New Delhi, dated October 13, 1963, explicated this scheme through its front-page cartoon captioned 'Majority Vote' 1963, that depicted Prime Minister Shamas-ud-Din dancing on the stage while party President Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad managing his cords from behind the scene. The poster and the cartoon both tried to depict that Shamsudin was merely a 'shadow' of Bakshi.

Nonetheless, Shamsudin's stint at power succumbed in its infancy only, as many were averse to his hold over the reins of power.¹⁴ "Balked, but not defeated in their plans to cut the Kashmir government to size, efforts continued to rid Kashmir of Shamsudin. This was, it seems, accomplished through a cloak and dagger fashion, through the scheme of the theft of the Holy Relic of Prophet Muhammad from the shrine of Hazratbal". (Gaub, 1973, p. 214).

On December 27, 1963, the holy relic was mysteriously lost from the shrine of Hazratbal in Srinagar. The news of the 'theft' sent ripples across the public domain ('New Processions of Kashmiris Mourn 'theft' of Venerated Hair: Relic, Traced to Mohammed, Fans Territorial Dispute—Marchers Carry Victim, 1963). Over time, processions turned mammoth. Some stretched to 20–25 miles despite the cold and severe weather. There were wanton vandalism and demonstrations, all-over. On the 8th day of mourning i.e., 4th of January, 1964 the mournful city burst into ecstatic joy as the news was announced that the missing relic had been found. But who had kept the relic back at its place was not known. Mullik, the intelligence chief, who headed the search operation, states that it was an "intelligence operation never to be disclosed" (Mullik, 1972, p. 142). The relic theft generated such enormous public indignation that it was for the first time that New Delhi felt Kashmir slipping out of its hands (Wani, 2019, p. 207). One can safely argue that the lifting of the holy relic from its place was more of a political conspiracy than a religious crime by those "who believed that without generating the anti-government religious movement they could not achieve their political objectives in Kashmir" (Lamb, 1993, p. 204). It was Bakshi who was made responsible for the loss of the relic and the agitation was given an anti-Bakshi tune, even though Union Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda emphatically put it in the parliament that the suspected culprits were not connected with the National Conference or any other Political party (Statesman, February 13, 1964). However, the grief of the people was very well metamorphosed into a rallying cry against Bakshi, sealing the fate of his political carrier into never-ceasing oblivion.

Though with the help of the central intelligence department, the relic was brought back on January 4, 1963, and later authenticated by a team of clergymen, its impact on the socio-political history of the region was no less than a tectonic shift. First and foremost, the crisis spawned by the relic theft ended the government of Shamsudin to an abysmal death. Even though Bakshi tried all his political manoeuvrings to remain intact on the scene, as is manifest in his statement, New Delhi seemed more determined about his removal and Bakshi had to vacate the place. Sadiq was elected as the leader of the legislature on the 28th of February 1964. The change desired by New Delhi at the time of conception of the Kamaraj Plan was finally carried out in Jammu and Kashmir, but it proved to be too high a cost. A gradual process to dilute the special status of Jammu & Kashmir to bring it to par with other states of the Union got accelerated. This was to be done by bringing the state within the purview of all those Articles of the Constitution which would cease to have any

bearing hitherto ('Kashmir's Special Status May be Ended, Article 370 to be Examined—Sadiq', 1964. As for the valley, the resentment was unprecedented, the tremors of which were felt beyond India and Pakistan. The sub-continent experienced a *Deja-vu* of the horrors of partition as there was ferocious rioting recorded. 'In a sense, Muslims in India and Hindus in Pakistan were all hostages' (Mehta, 1968, pp. 41–42). Within Pakistan, the situation of Kashmir was described as a "major Islamic upheaval" and "an open rebellion against India" and a possibility of another tribal raid on Kashmir seemed around the corner, as it was made public that about three Lakh tribals were ready to move into Kashmir ('Tribals ready to move into Kashmir; Kashmir incidents shock tribesman', 1963; 'Declaration of Jihad Demanded', 1964; 'Tribesmen ready to resume Jihad, 1964; 'Resentment over persecution of Muslims; Tribesmen Restive', 1964; 'What their blood proclaims', 1964). It was over the remnants of this crisis that the conceptual body of "Operation Gibraltar"¹⁵ was formed in Pakistan; resulting in a war in 1965 between India and Pakistan (Musa, 2018; Khan, 1993; Gauhar, 1996; Bajwa, 2013). At the local level, the agitation bred grave consequences, with so potent an effect that history would hardly feature Bakshi or Shamsudin in a positive light. Their credibility faded. Bakshi, just like his predecessor Sheikh Abdullah, was soon arrested and declared a "threat to the security of the State".

The movement for 'self-determination' hitherto under the control of the 'Kashmir Political Conference'¹⁶ and 'Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front'¹⁷ observed a major shift. This mass upsurge could only find a parallel in 1939 when there was a great rift between the 'National Conference' led by Sheikh Abdullah and the 'Muslim Conference' represented by Chowdhary Abbas and Mirwaiz Yousef. (Para, 2018; Bazaz, 1954). This shaping "incident of the missing relic brought back the Mullah's, after five decades, to the centre stage of the politics in Kashmir" (Maheshwari, 2013, p. 4). The formation of 'The Awami Action Committee'¹⁸ under Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq and the resurgence of 'Jamaat-i-Islami'¹⁹ on the political scene of Kashmir was majorly the result of the failure of the Kamaraj scheme in the region ('New Party for Kashmir', 1964; 'New Kashmir Party pledged to Plebiscite', 1964; 'Farook's Objective Is Freedom', 1964; *GOJ&K—FCR*, 30-06-1964; Drieberg, 1968, pp. 8–9; Lockwood, 1969, pp. 382–396; Thapar, 1975, pp. 340–341). Both of these parties gave the movement for plebiscite a new direction (Farooq, 1968, Malhotra, 1969; Venkatesh, 1970; Fazili, 1988; Kashmiri, 1991; Qari, 2001; Geelani, 2012; Ansari, 2019).

It was in the aftermath of the failure of the Kamaraj plan that two significant shifts were witnessed in the political history of the state. First that Islam as a part of the political discourse entered into the 'territorial dispute' over the state, for which Jamaat-i-Islami was majorly responsible. Second that the Muslim clergy got the front seat as far as a movement for the right to self-determination was concerned. In the pre-Kamaraj scenario, the 'Kashmir Political Conference' and 'Plebiscite Front' had dominated the political scene in the region and were both secular in approach. Although both used religious institutions for the propagation of their ideas and used religious idioms and phraseology to reach the public sphere, their approach was always secular to the core. In the case of the KPC, even Hindus joined it and among many objectives set by the organisation, a set-up based on a secular and socialist basis was also aimed at (Bhan, 2016, 2018, 2019). On the other hand constitution of the Plebiscite Front laid out that every citizen of the state could be its member irrespective of any religious or racist bias. And further, a set-up based on democratic principles was among its core objectives (Constitution of the J&K Plebiscite Front, Article 3; Part A; Clause 1). Additionally, both these groups were in practice under the domination of one single leader—Sheikh Mohammad

Abdullah and Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Karra. It was their philosophy and their beliefs which shaped the programmes of these organisations. Abdullah and Karra were both secular nationalists and a cursory look at the history of these two leaders makes it clear that their viewpoints were much visible in their organisational activism (Gokhami, 2011, Mir, 2021). However, in the post-Kamaraj context, the 'Awami Action Committee' and 'Jamaat -Islami' emerged as the major stakeholders in the movement for the right to self-determination. The Awami Action Committee selected a green flag with a crescent as its symbol, symbolising Islam, contrary to the red flag of the National Conference which symbolised socialism, communism, Marxism, left-wing politics and anarchism. Its leader Mirwaiz Farooq was the chief religious cleric of the region. Since Abdullah and Karra soon entered the mainstream of the state, it was Muslim clergy, like Mirwaiz, who got the steering of the sepratist politics into their hands.

The other group which entered the political scene in the state after the relic theft episode was Jamaat-i-Islami. The goal of Jamaat was to bring up and train a group that could eventually create an Islamised society paving the way for the revival of Islam. A state based on the tenants of Islam was their basic aim, which they called the *Iqamat-i-Deen* (Majid, 2020, 2022; Sikand, 2004). At the ideological level, it believed religion and politics to be inseparable, which had a direct bearing on the way it handled the Kashmir problem. An example, in this case, can be Jamaat's walkout from the convention of 1968, organised by Sheikh Abdullah to find a way out. Qari Saif-ud-Din, Jamaat's representative in the convention, opposed the use of the word "Secular" while laying down the objectives of the convention.²⁰ (Qari, 2001; Kashmiri, 1991; Geelani, 2012).

It was these two groups which challenged the politics of Sheikh Abdullah between 1965, when the roots of reconciliation between Sheikh and New Delhi started cementing roots, till 1975 when finally an accord was signed (Puri, 1968; Bhat, 1971; Farooqi, 1973; Gokhami, 2011; Ankit, 2018; Para, 2018). Within four years of Sheikh's demise, these groups brought the situation in the region to such a pass that a powerful group called '*Muslim Mutahida Mahaz*' (Muslim United Front), a polyglot coalition of various 'Pro-Plebiscite', groups contested for the state assembly elections, posing a direct challenge to the government. Their participation inspired a new phase of insurgent movement in the state which continues unabated till day. (Varshney, 1991; Bose, 2013; Sten, 2014; Hussain, 2016; Donthi, 2016).

Conclusion

The period from 1962 to 1964 was a period of great political upheavals. The era reflected much of the strain in the political history of the state and brought forward a Kashmir with highly variable topology and dynamism. The era demonstrated religious sensitivities and political vulnerabilities. It was detrimental too in deriving fodder from the political sensibilities of the past and drawing new lines for the political future of the state. It generated new stakeholders, modified nomenclatures and reflected the changing connotations of Centre-state relationships. It is the period during which Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad slid towards the end of his political career, from being the critical factor in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Sino-Indian war had led to a catastrophe within the country. The Western support to India during and after the war had manufactured a vexed situation in South-Asian politics and New Delhi was obliged to bring some long-term changes to its policy in Jammu and Kashmir, which in turn paved the way for the extension of the Kamaraj Plan in the state. The plan to remove Bakshi and install a new regime viable to the new policy

implementation, however, failed due to Bakshi's counter-strategy. Bakshi's counter plan on the one hand and compulsions on the part of New Delhi on the other, brought up in the state what can be termed as the pre-history for the violent turn of events which bloomed to its full in the late eighties of the last century. A new generation, disenchanted and disillusioned with the paradox between the Indian democratic thesis and its implementation on the ground in the state, brought up new heroes in the region. It carved a new phase in the history of the state which was violent enough to be handled. Therefore, the mishandling of the state of affairs in the region by New Delhi to meet its national interests saw its beginning with the dismissal of Abdullah in 1953 and its pinnacle was the mass rigging in the state assembly elections of 1987. Nevertheless, the Kamaraj Plan of 1963 and its failure in the state, acted as a major link between these two.

Data availability

The datasets (Images) analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to their availability in the print edition only but are available from the author on reasonable request.

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Notes

- 1 Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) is a political party found in 1949 by Annadurai.
- 2 Bazaz was a Kashmiri politician, scholar, and author and founder of 'Kashmir Socialist Party' and 'Kisan Mazdoor Conference'.
- 3 By the end of the rule of the Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad in 1963, Kashmir's total income had risen by 40% and per capita incomes by 26%. Significantly, between 1950 and 1970, almost ninety per cent of the states 'Five Year Plans' were funded by the centre.
- 4 Bazaz's version is corroborated by Jaya Prakash Narayan. He also views the dearth of democracy and government suppression as the causes of anti-India sentiment in Kashmir (Narayan, 1964, p. 408).
- 5 British Historian Alaster Lamb corroborates Bazaz's opinion. He writes "by the end of 1963 the majority of foreign observers of the Kashmir scene had little doubt that a plebiscite would lead to a clear call for the transfer of the entire State from India to Pakistan" (Lamb, 1967, p. 78).
- 6 Sheikh's significance in the politics of the region was not only the conclusion of Bazaz, but also of others. In a survey conducted by Balraj Puri, when citizens from Jammu and Kashmir were asked about their views regarding the growing alienation of the State after Sheikh Abdullah's dismissal in 1953, 89.18 per cent of the respondents from the Muslim communities of the state and 80.30 per cent respondents of the Hindus of the state responded in affirmative and were of the view that the alienation in the state was primarily due to dismissal and detention of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1953 (Puri, 1982, pp. 132–133).
- 7 For details of the governance under Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and problems in it see, Kanwal (2017) and Wani (2019).
- 8 Basically Bakshi was never clear about the special status of Kashmir. When Sadiq and other 'Democratic National Conference' leaders demanded in the state Assembly in September 1958 that the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the Election Commission should be extended to Kashmir, Bakshi shouted at them in anger that "you want to sell Kashmir". But later in February 1959, Bakshi himself declared in the State Assembly that "ours is not a static approach; it is dynamic and I am not wedded to a special status for the state for all time". He said that he was never opposed to owning or adopting the useful provisions of the Indian Constitution. In fact, on the eve of his retirement he declared in the Legislative Council that in future the Sadr-i-Riyasat and Prime Minister would be designated as Governor and Chief Minister respectively. But confronted by his party men, whom he had assured previously that the state would continue to enjoy the special status even after his retirement under the Kamaraj Plan, he resisted publically saying that Article 370 was an Article of faith for him and it could be abrogated "only over the dead bodies of Kashmiris" (Jammu and Kashmir and Article 370, 1963i).
- 9 A splinter group of the National Conference formed by Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq in 1957.

- 10 Bakshi's own explanation was that Kamaraj Plan was applicable to the National Conference "as it is an affiliated unit of the Congress" ("Kashmir leaders to meet Nehru", *The Statesman* (henceforth Statesman); August 28, 1963).
- 11 In my opinion, based on the study of the era, Bakshi was not expecting the acceptance of his resignation for the reason that there were least alternatives before New Delhi to replace him as the Prime Minister. Sheikh Abdullah was in jail and was not acceptable to New Delhi for his political opinions then. Bakshi Abdul Rashid—the Party General Secretary, was lesser known face and was not that much popular in the region. He lacked any administrative experience. Support for him would have created a suspicion of attempting to perpetuate the "Bakshi lineage" in the state administration. Sadiq could not have earned the support of legislators which can be explained by the fact that although he and his 'group' had re-joined the NC in 1959 after having dissolved the DNC (which they had founded in 1957), he had not been able to influence the party ranks by what he described as his "progressive outlook". Another failure of Sadiq and his associates was that they lacked the tact, characteristic of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, to get close with the lowest cadre of the organisation. To suggest that Sadiq had a disconnect with the party cadre, it used to be said that Sadiq did not know the names of more than 10 members of the legislature party, the working committee or the General Council. In the light of these facts I consider that Bakshi expected not that his resignation would be accepted. Kashmir was a volatile region and needed a leader who had tact. A state where most popular leader—Abdullah, stood at the other side of the fence, leadership mattered most and Bakshi was always a good choice.
- 12 Explaining the philosophy of protests that erupted in Srinagar and Jammu after the acceptance of Bakshi's resignation by Nehru, Krishan Bhatia wrote an opinion piece in *The Statesman*: New Delhi opining that "the National Conference should be opposed to the leaders exit is not unexpected. Wherever a leader has ruled so long and with such unrestricted authority as Bakshi there is bound to be a sizeable political faction which, having enjoyed for long special favours and privileges, is perturbed at the prospectus of their sudden end. Such a faction may be vocal, but it may not necessarily represent the sentiments of public. In fact, more often than not its interests will lie in opposite direction" (Krishnan, 1963).
- 13 On 27 August 1963 protests were held at Kulgam, wherein Bakshi was requested to withdraw his resignation. On 25 August 1963, NC workers protested at Pulwama and declared that AICC had no jurisdiction over the state. On 25 August 1963 resolution against resignation was passed by the Anantnag branch of NC. Similar resolution was adopted in the Dooru area in south Kashmir. On 1 September Labour Union Kulgam expressed concern over the resignation of Bakshi. However, it was in the Srinagar district that large-scale protests were held and spontaneous processions were taken out. Srinagar District observed hartal for several days. On the 25th of August, 400–500 men protested outside the residence of Bakshi and demanded the withdrawal of his resignation. On the 26th of August, a general strike was held in Srinagar and about 400–500 students protested against the acceptance of the resignation. On September 4 1963 a procession of 200–300 employees of the Transport Department demanded withdrawal of the resignation. On 27 August 1963, protest was held at Rajouri. Protests were also held at Nawshehra, Poonch and other places in the Jammu division. Scores of telegrams both from Ladakh and Kargil were sent to various quarters including PM Nehru. (Government of Jammu and Kashmir —Fortnightly Confidential Report (henceforth GOJK—FCR), 15-09-1963, 1963a, 1963b, 1963c, 1963d, 1963e, 1963f, 1963g, 1963h).
- 14 Praja Parishad in Jammu gave protest call against the appointment of Shamas-ud-Din as Prime Minister of the state. A call for general strike was given by this organisation on 11 November 1963 in Jammu and the slogans of "Shamas Sarkar ko Tod Dou" (Do away with the Shams din's government) were raised. Similarly, in Kashmir, "National Congress" under Mohammad Shafi Qureshi, too protested by distributing a booklet titled "*Bakshi Sahib ki Lagayee Hui Aag ko hum Bhujayen Gay*" (we shall extinguish the fire set by Bakshi Sahib). (GOJK—FCR, 01-15-1963).
- 15 This operation was launched in August 1965 by Pakistan and was premeditated to infiltrate several thousand trained armed personal into the valley of Kashmir. What was intended was to engage India in a guerrilla kind of war, as had been in the case of Vietnam.
- 16 Political conference was one of the earliest organised 'secessionist' groups that emerged in the state of Jammu and Kashmir to counter the narrative of Kashmir's accession to India. Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Karra, a former associate of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, formed this group in June 1953.
- 17 Formed in 1955, and patronised by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah himself, this group aimed at holding a UNO moderated Plebiscite in the state to decide the region's political future.
- 18 Formed in 1964, under the leadership of Mirwaiz Molvi Farooq, this group demanded the right of self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. It made Kashmir's case in favour of accession to Pakistan.
- 19 Actually formed in 1941 in undivided Punjab and its branch was established in Jammu and Kashmir in 1945. The basic goal of Jamaat-i-Islami was to bring up and train a group that could eventually create an Islamised society, paving the way for the revival of Islam. In Jammu and Kashmir, since 1947 stood for the self-determination of the people of the region and made states' case in favour of accession to Pakistan.
- 20 *The Weekly Azan*, Srinagar, June 19, 1970.

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