

Letter To New York Times

In Response To The Article

“Where Violence Has Silenced Verse”

(Nov. 22, 1992)

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Letter to The Editor

Magazine

The N.Y.Times

229 W, 43 St.

New York, N.Y. 10036

Dear Sirs:

An article on a problem facing a few million people, where a lot of them have been killed and continue to be killed, and where uncertainty hangs heavily on their future, deserves an exposition of the causes of the problem. An impressionistic presentation, orchestrated with interviews, and tapestered with on-the-site photographs, does not go beyond window-dressing for the readers for whom the article has been written, general Americans, who are unfamiliar with not only the complex history of Kashmir problem but, also, with its present tangled situation.

In 1947, Kashmiri Muslims, along with their greatest leader, Sheikh Abdullah, acceded to India: popularly, willfully, and legally through their Constituent Assembly. They rejected unequivocally their choice of joining the other side, Pakistan. Becoming an independent nation was not viable then and is not so now. Their cool-headed decision was based on the long shared history with India, its fervent secularistic principles, the quality of its leadership, and on the religious statehood of Pakistan. This reasoned decision was richly rewarded by the four decades of their immense prosperity and control over the Valley's commercial, political, and cultural spheres that followed. Indian government was an outsider, incessantly trying to please the local government, to the extent of latter's exploitation of the former. The Muslims on the other side of the border, in Pakistan, lived in perennial economic jaundice coupled with chronic political instability. Sheikh Abdullah was once asked why he chose India over Pakistan for Kashmir to join with. He answered that he opted for the side which offered his people the better economic and political security.

The present turbulence in Kashmir has been masterminded by Pakistan, which

has forever lusted for Kashmir, for symbolic and political reasons. The latter has been to divert the attention of its people from the inexorable political abyss it has always been in. It is also due to the echo of the world-wide Islamic fundamentalist movement, which got its greatest impetus from the Iranian revolution.

The upheaval gripping Kashmir does not represent a revolution like the one we had in Iran or the Kurdish movement in force in Iraq. It is a grand scale mischief perpetrated by Pakistan and, above all,, it is a manifestation of ineptitude of the Indian government and the weakness of its leaders.

Maharaj Kaul