

# #KashmirCivilDisobedience

TRAUMA • RESISTANCE • RESILIENCE • TWO MONTHS ON

## A Citizens' Report



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Brinelle D'Souza  
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## The Big Picture or Why We Wrote This

Two months is a long time for people to be under siege. And there has been a lot that is very substantial and worthy written on what has been going on in Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 and 35 A of the Indian Constitution on 5th August 2019. However, we did find ourselves looking at the big picture differently from those that have gone in and written reports so far. The Indian government has spun the story that their clampdown on civil liberties in Kashmir with an increased military presence, summary arrests of all mainstream and separatist leaders and the communication blockade has made the unfolding of this new reality peaceful. But we found exactly the opposite. Kashmir is on edge - humiliated, angry, disturbed and `disrobed,' as a journalist who spoke to us described it. The fact that there has been no violence has to do with the resilience of the people. It is an active and collective choice being exercised each day, to observe a civil disobedience. In feeling rejected and betrayed by the Indian state, Kashmiris have chosen to respond back, through a largely non-violent protest.

Most people we met told us they were keeping their shops and offices closed not under any call by militants or separatists or political leaders but as an act of resistance against the Indian state. This is the big picture we have come away with and it is significant for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it points to an internalizing of the trauma caused after the abrogation of 370 in a radically new way from the previous instances of state versus people. In 2016, when there were large scale protests after the killing of the Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani, people were led into those protests by the separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani. This time, there is no leader and no call to protest from anyone. So the decision to keep shops and businesses shut is one that individuals have taken across Kashmir, largely on their own.

Secondly, this mode of protest sets these two months of lockdown apart from all others in the past. People in Kashmir are no longer interested in an interaction with the Indian state. That space is now dead. From those who have been hardliners to separatists demanding a union with Pakistan or azadi to those siding with India - they have all reacted to the current political situation as a big, abominable trauma. The collective shock, fear of reprisal has however turned

them into silent protestors. They say this may well be the lull before the storm or the making of molten mass that is bound to erupt; but regardless of what comes next, these 60 days need to be recorded as a phenomenon in its own right.

Finally, we have spoken to a spectrum of people from politicians (those that were not in jail), bureaucrats, homemakers, schoolteachers, traders, fruit-sellers, taxi unions, students, teachers, intellectuals, poets, writers, farmers, children, journalists, civil society workers, Pandits, Sikhs and Christians and even wedding caterers across five districts over eight days. From Srinagar to Baramulla to Anantnag to Badgam and even Jammu, all had one thing in common - every single interaction was an emotional outpouring. So we decided to write about what has gone amiss in the day to day lives of people and to present that as an emotional landscape. We felt that would be the truest way to tell the story of what we saw, heard and experienced in this very short trip.

To protect the people we met, we have withheld all names and identity markers. But we have reproduced large chunks of what they told us, unprocessed, so that this becomes open-source material for whoever finds it useful. Use this as you see fit and tag us, citing the report as, #KashmirCivilDisobedience - A Citizens' Report, when you do.



## Who We Are

We are a team of concerned citizens from different professional backgrounds who travelled to Kashmir between September 25-30 and Jammu between October 6 & 7 as part of a solidarity and fact finding mission to understand the impact of the abrogation of Article 370 and the subsequent security clampdown and communication blockade on the lives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Anirudh Kala is a psychiatrist and writer based in Ludhiana. He has written the very well received book called 'The Unsafe Asylum - Stories of Partition and Madness,' published in 2018. A novel set in the decade of Punjab terrorism and a non-fiction book on drug addiction in Punjab are in pipeline.

Brinelle Dsouza is an academic, activist and public health professional from Mumbai. She is also deeply engaged with issues of secularism, communal harmony, inter-religious dialogue and gender justice.

Revati Laul is a Delhi based journalist whose main body of work is in understanding violence. She is the author of 'The Anatomy of Hate,' a book about the Gujarat mobs of 2002.

Shabnam Hashmi has been working as a social activist for more than 35 years. She is the founding trustee of Anhad, an organisation that works on questions of democracy, secularism, gender rights, diversity and pluralism. Shabnam has extensively worked in Kashmir and Gujarat as well as at the national level.

These four people front this report but the main body of work was done by civil rights activists with decades of dedicated work in Jammu and Kashmir. They cannot be named in order for them to keep up the difficult long-term fight for truth in times of post truth.

We are deeply grateful to the people of Jammu and Kashmir who poured their hearts out to us and shared with us stories of betrayal, anger, loss, despair, hope, resilience, survival and resistance.

We also acknowledge the contribution of Leena Dabiru, Abuzar, Faizan and Supreeth Ravish who helped us with transcriptions and compilation of this material.



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# Civil Disobedience

*“Chon yezath myon yezath – 370, 370. Tre hath satath, tre hath satath”  
(Your dignity, my dignity -370, 370! Without it we are disrobed)*

As we sat with a large group of journalists at the Srinagar Press Club, this was one of the first things they said. They also explained to us what we would then hear ricochet across the Kashmir valley. That they are in a spontaneous, self-driven lock down and this is their silent resistance. It took a while to understand what this really meant.

After the initial shock of finding out that article 370 had been abrogated, 35 A done away with and statehood taken away; the Kashmiris decided they were not going to switch to their usual modes of protest. They did come out on the streets on the first few days. And there has also been the episodic stone-pelting after dark, especially in downtown Srinagar and large parts of South Kashmir. But that, the Kashmiris will tell you, is business as usual. What has happened alongside but not captured in the media, is a collective call taken entirely without any leadership, to keep shops and business establishments etc. shut.

Kashmir is riddled with fear that spiral binds itself in sharp concertina wire around the valley. There are stories of torture, arrests, even of young boys detained under the draconian Public Safety Act. Despite this fear, people defied the odds and chose to keep their shops closed. Were they motivated by militants? We only picked up two or three instances where people said they had seen notices pasted possibly by militants, on a masjid wall, warning people against opening their shops. We heard many more anecdotes about how the armed forces and para-military taken together were forcing people to keep their establishments open. These are people the Kashmiris are equally scared of. It is at their behest that people are being arrested. So the decision to defy them is significant and brazen. And yet, that is the choice most Kashmiris have made. To go against the diktat to open shop. And remain in this mode of civil disobedience for as long as they can.

**A journalist explained this phenomenon like this :**

“The Indian government at the centre has “turned the long-earned constituency of democratic resistance topsy turvy. Nobody will believe (them) now. Mehbooba

Mufti was right. Even if you hire some people to uphold the tricolour (today) it will not be out of will.”

“People had stakes in the system (the Indian state). Generally, what happens is that the system is derailed by rebels. Here the irony is that system has been derailed by the system. Kashmiris have seen suffering for generations and fighting a survival war. But (what) you see is a parallel resistance.”

“There are two kinds of resistance at work – opening shops for two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. And the silent resistance of not protesting.”

“There is no hope. People have got used to living without hope. People for 60 days don't (want to) allow themselves to be sold as symbol of normalcy by opening shops. Nobody will kill them, there is no militant call for strike, no separatists' leader has sponsored a strike. It's a voluntary strike and it is in the same manner from Kazigund to Uri for 100 km valley stretch. Everyone is voluntarily losing money. Rather than acknowledging people's resolve, rather than appreciating their non-violent attitude (now) we are asking questions.”

“Officers are asking why people are not coming out now. Do you want them to come out? Then you want to trigger a law and order situation and kill people? Government of India, governments across the globe should respond to this silence. They have not been responding to the shouts, to the slogans, to the cries, to the screams. But for the first time they have to respond to the silence (referring to the voluntary shut down of shops, business establishments). They have to acknowledge and understand the silence. Silence speaks something, you have to listen to it. You have to give words to this silence.”

“Is the shutdown based on fear? It could be number of things. But one plausible argument which I like is Kashmiris have employed number of ways to resist, to get themselves heard. They picked up guns, they picked up stones, they died on streets, they got picked up innocently, they disappeared in jails- all that is gone now. Nothing came from all this. Now whether by compulsion, whether out of fear but in the first three weeks they discovered something in the silence. I believe it's a conscious silence. Don't expect that something big will erupt. People have understood that it's a long battle and now that their existence is being questioned, earlier their political aspirations were being abused, it was being denied to them, now they are being told in subtle ways that their existence is a problem.”

At a street in an upscale neighbourhood in Srinagar, some shops were open even as late as 11am. These were essential goods – basic groceries, vegetables, meat, medicines. By noon, the shutters were down. An angry man in the neighborhood said, raising his pitch, “What of 51 days even if everything goes like this for 151 days this mission of Kashmiris will keep on (continue).” He added, “51 days is not a joke. Anywhere else - in Delhi, Maharashtra- no one can sustain for so long. Don't take video or photo, we will be put in jail if they see us.”

A butcher-shop owner said, “Mai dukaan pe aata hoon roz oxygen lene ke liye -I come to my shop for a breather everyday” He explained that sitting at home day after day is impossible. He ends up taking out all the pent-up anger and frustration on his children. Getting out for a few hours dissipates some of that.

An autorickshaw driver said he felt this is the worst that Kashmir has ever seen. “We have been let down by India - gaddari hai,” he added. And then underlined how he felt like this - “Issey achcha sabko bomb se uda dete - It would’ve been better if they had just bombed us out of existence”.

Despite the blockade, some semblance of a life does necessarily continue in Kashmir. Births, deaths and weddings. We went to a wedding in downtown Srinagar. Downtown is a catchphrase used by people in Kashmir to refer to a cluster of neighbourhoods that are very traditional and where the politics often leans towards that of separatist leaders like Mirwaiz Umar Farooq of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference. Stone pelting is common and operates piecemeal after dark! And this has continued for almost a decade.

The history of downtown is inextricably linked with Kashmir’s demand for autonomy more or less at inception, post 1947. A resident and activist from the area explained that this area consisted of people who were originally from Srinagar and it was known as Shehr-e-Khas or ‘The Main Town’. Fifty percent of the people here were supporters of Sheikh Abdullah, the founder of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference that later became the National Conference. The Sheikh, also known as the Lion of Kashmir fought against the Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh at the same time as the rest of India fought the Quit India movement. He had a massive following and became the second Prime Minister of Kashmir after the dominion acceded to India. In downtown Srinagar, until the 1990s, political support was split between supporters of Sheikh Abdullah and his party with a broadly left leaning socialist politics and that of more strident parties like the All Jammu and Kashmir Awami Action Committee. The assassination of its leader Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq on the 21st of May 1990 bent more people in downtown Srinagar in favour of separatists. Neighbourhoods in the rest of Srinagar city are less volatile because they are mixed neighbourhoods where people from all over Kashmir - from the north to the south came to stay.

The house where the wedding took place was packed with close and extended family. In a tent outside, the caterer and his team were bent over massive pots of traditional wazwan - a multi-course meat intensive meal. Rista, tabakmaaz, kebabs, paneer were being stirred in massive pots. The caterer said it’s all scaled down to the bare minimum.

“Two things are important in Kashmiri society - making a house and getting married,” the man said. “The wedding season started in May, then came Ramzan. In June, we had business for between 10 and 20 days. Then 370 happened. Earlier I worked 20-25 days a month, now only five days. The business of weddings has

gone down to one quarter of what it normally is. People ordered 6 or 7 quintals of meat are now down to 1 quintal as they are inviting family members only. Now at weddings, dulha khana hi nahi khata - the groom doesn't eat at all. Kahwa hi peeta hai - He just drinks some kahwa or Kashmiri tea." He added that he lived in downtown Srinagar and is a supporter of the separatist leader Mirwaiz and the Hurriyat Conference. So even if the bandh or blockade stops elsewhere, "downtown me bandh jaari rahega - in downtown the lock down will continue."

The significance of what the wedding caterer said and what the various traders and shopkeepers we met told us is this - that they were against the abrogation and they were saying this without the goading or provocation of any political leader. And yet, they were all saying the same thing.

At a meeting with about ten activists and political workers with different affiliations - from the Congress party to the PDP to former supporters of Prime Minister Modi, it was a varied group. The disappointment and dissonance with the Indian state as a whole came through sharply, as the reason for this consciously applied blockade.

One activist said, "Earlier the Prime Minister said that the Balakot camp in Pakistan is completely destroyed. Now they are saying there are 22 camps there. Why are they not going in there now? Because there is no election? This was not just abrogation of 370 but of Article 21 (the right to life)."

Another said, "This is another Palestine, another Intifada. And we are prepared for even worse when the abrogation of article 370 is implemented (after the 31st of October)."

An activist who said he had been a part admirer of the Prime Minister until recently, could not hide his sense of personal betrayal. "Now they have pitted us against Hindus," he said. "A common Kashmiri will resist this tooth and nail even if it costs him his life. We feel we are being robbed." He added that "people who were with the idea of India, we were its first victims." He said Prime Minister Modi and the government's actions in reading down article 370 and demoting Kashmir to a union territory has eventually proved the hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani right. "He said you can never trust India. Now everybody trusts Geelani by default. There is no other option. There is nothing to be explored anymore." Another political activist said, "the separatists have finally won!"

We met nearly forty people across different neighbourhoods in downtown Srinagar. We drove through Safa Kadal, Idgah, Soura, Nawa Kadal, Rajouri Kadal, Bohri Kadal, Nawa Bazaar, Khanyar, Khanka, Noor Bagh, Hawwal and Chattabal. The phrase downtown can be misleading and conjure up images of shanty-like establishments. This is not the case. Gullies are narrow but the people here are middle class to moderately wealthy. They are educated and many are owners of shops and businesses in Srinagar's Lal Chowk or Red Square.

When we drove through, we found all shops and commercial establishments were



shut. Every lane and by lane was flanked by security personnel. Significantly, they were deployed from 9am to 6pm. After dark, when the security cover is removed, stone-pelters are out sporadically and for the three nights some of us drove through these quarters, we had to zig-zag through lanes and quickly divert to alternate gullies when we saw pieces of red brick being hurled from the second and third storeys of apartments.

In Srinagar, there was still some sputtering of life around the time shops opened between 9 and 11am in the morning and 6 and 8 in the evening. There were traffic jams around medical shops which some sections of the government tried to use pliant media to project as a “return to normalcy.” Which made everyone in the city that we spoke to laugh with an undertone of despair.

As we drove 53 kilometers north-west, to the district of Baramulla, no shutters went up. The town was empty and desolate. Communication was down everywhere and we had no idea if the people we had decided to meet would be available or not. Some were, many were not.

Here is what a group of people we met in Baramulla said to us.

“Can you live without a phone for even an hour?”

“TV is all saffronized. (The) crap that they’re dishing out to the public.”

“What are Indians doing to Muslims?” How can a secular democracy like India permit mob-lynching?”

“India has forced us to turn into stone-pelters. We are essentially peace-loving.”

“If there is a nuclear war between India and Pakistan there will be complete devastation. Though India is a big country, it will not be spared!”

“When 370 was abrogated, the real face of Indian democracy came out”

“Article 370 was like a nikhanama! A sacred contract between Kashmir and India! They did away with it in one stroke.”

“My wife wanted to visit her sister who is a cancer patient, she couldn’t venture out. “

“I know of an incident where a Kashmiri man was dead in a hotel in Delhi for four days and no one in his family in Kashmir knew.”

“They can subjugate us physically, but mentally they can’t. “Yeh Hindutva kab tak chalega? Hamarey bachchon ka future kya hai? How long will this Hindutva last? What is the future for our children?”

“With one stroke they have been able to unite the people and the political class of Kashmir against the Indian state. Before August 5, there was a strong pro India sentiment despite the decades of conflict and all that transpired in the recent past”

“Today the dominant view is that if the Indian state can betray mainstream politicians who kept the idea of India alive in Kashmir despite decades of conflict and militancy, how will it act towards ordinary Kashmiris?”

“See what they have done to Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti and Sajjad Lone. It's not as if they were the best leaders we could have had. But they were all pro India. There could not be a more patriotic Kashmiri than Farooq Abdullah. He had chanted Bharat Mata ki Jai at a public event and had to pay a price for it! Farooq was a minister in the NDA government and three-time chief minister! The 81-year old leader is now under house arrest! Mehbooba Mufti was in alliance with the BJP a short-while ago. Sajjad Lone referred to Modi as his elder brother! All three are now under detention”

“There is a loss of trust, a feeling of deep betrayal, humiliation! There was a strong pro-India sentiment before August 5. We used to say Pakistan is not a democracy, there is no secularism there!”

“We could never imagine there would be mob lynchings in India and no action, perpetrators are celebrated, we feel insecure!”

“The middle ground has been lost forever! The pro Azadi and pro Pakistan sentiment was actually not substantial. But today people are talking about Azadi!

“I remember in my childhood, the Border Security Force or was it a Central Reserve Police Force man? He gave me toffees. They would do this and say that they also have children. Now they've also been saffronized.”

We had been conversing with a group of men. In a deeply traditional and parochial society like Kashmir the politics is entirely male – whether mainstream or separatist, state, centre or militant. So what often goes under the radar is the role women have played in participating in political processes both privately and publicly.

We also spoke with women living in an upmarket neighbourhood in Srinagar. One of them had this to say, “Dignity and freedoms are more important than food and shelter. You have even robbed us of our right to peaceful protests. My daughter who is studying in STD IX says that Greta Thunberg can speak and condemn world leaders for not doing enough on climate change but we are not in a position to express our feelings about what has happened. They have locked us inside and if we express our views openly there is the threat of arrest. The entire shut down that you see is our way of protesting”

Another woman said, “the people of Hong Kong have the right to protest. China is not a democracy. India is. And yet the people of Kashmir have not been given the right to peacefully protest. We protest by our silence. The shut-down will continue for a long, long time”

At Baramulla too the women were louder, angrier and more verbose than the men.



Two were teachers in their thirties. One was a seventy-two-year old grandmother. She was unequivocal in her condemnation of what the Indian state has done by abrogating article 370.

“Kya hum Hindustani nahi they? Were we not Indians?”, she asked, rhetorically.

“Aaj aisa kadam uthaya jo ek gunda hi utha sakta hai. Today what they have done is what only hoodlums can do!” she continued. And added – “Jo mazdoor tabqey ka hai, woh kya karein? Sabke saath stock nahi hai store karne ke liye. What will daily wage workers do? Not everyone had the ability to stock up on essentials for six months.”

The women spoke in turn, until they emptied themselves emotionally and the next one took over.

“We are living in lapsed time with no communication. We have moved 30 years back.”

“Bachchon ki education baith gayi. Our children’s education has come to a standstill”

“Children studying in private schools get study materials but the ones going to public schools are the worst off.”

“Humey Pakistan ya Hindustan nahi chahiye, chaar din ki khushi chahiye! We don’t want Pakistan or Hindustan, we just want a few days of happiness.”

“I am in my 30s so I have never seen normalcy,” said this woman who is also a teacher. She said the education of children in her own family is suffering and she consulted an older person for advice. The stakes of a continued blockade are high, especially for the two kids who are preparing for their medical entrance exams – the NEET or the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test. They’ve paid up for expensive coaching classes - one lakh rupees and with the total shutdown, all that money is down the tube. They cannot attend classes. Despite all of this, she said she is in favour of this total shutdown, in the interest of not succumbing to what she sees in a complete negation of the Kashmiri people by the centre. For the sake of changing the long-term politics of Kashmir, this short-term sacrifice is essential.

“Even if we have to keep up the bandh for a year or two, we will do so for the sake of changing this state of affairs for the future of our kids.”

A senior journalist in Baramulla told us that this civil disobedience could well be the lull before a storm. But people don’t want to act piecemeal any longer and that is perhaps their singular driving force.

“Everyone is speaking in one voice a lot more. There will be a mass coming together. There will be mass protests.”

As we drove back from Baramulla into Srinagar city, we met a group of

businessmen and traders. One was a former leader from the Congress party.

Over endless cups of tea and biscuits, one of them started the conversation with what was by now a familiar but telling opening line.

“Now – civil disobedience movement has started. Trade associations, schools are all shut. No one is going anywhere. Jab tak 370 wapas nahi lenge hum business nahi kholenge. – Until the changes to article 370 are not reversed, we will not be open for business.”

The others echoed this man’s sentiments.

“This is the Doval doctrine (He was referring to India’s National Security Advisor Ajit Doval) This will give a boost to the freedom struggle.”

“Everything being shut is a civil disobedience movement.”

“I was Indian. My father was also assassinated by militants in 2006. Now I also feel unsafe here.”

“Don’t call us a UT or a union territory, we are an OT – occupied territory.”

“We want autonomy – the pre 1953 conditions. (This was when the separate constitution that the state of Jammu and Kashmir was guaranteed as part of the instrument of accession they signed on to join India, was in force, before amendments started to be made and before the arrest of the popularly elected Sheikh Abdullah in 1953).

“In the Pulwama attack period (when a suicide bomber rammed his car into a convoy of Central Reserve Police Force personnel on 14th February 2019, killing forty of them), I lost almost 60 lakh rupees in the resort I run. What is the point of this?”

“Kashmiris have decided to die. We will not succumb to the Modi government.”

# Trauma

To see how much of a breach with the past, the abrogation of article 370 and bifurcation of the state into two union territories has been, we spoke to a range of people across four districts of the Kashmir valley and also went to Jammu. These are their stories of trauma.

## Everyday trauma

A couple that both work with the state government told us how devastated they were when on August 5th, the announcement was made on the floor of the upper house of the Indian Parliament by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The couple grew up in Kashmir in the 1980s. They had lived through the years when militancy was on the rise after the much written about rigging of the state election in 1987 followed by an influx of militants from Pakistan, a call to jihad and a communal bloodbath resulting in the fleeing of Hindus – Kashmiri pandits from the valley in droves. Even with this background, both individuals said that while people around them began to lose faith in the Indian state, they did not. They worked for it. So the announcement came as a shock that both found unbearable.

“The day it happened, we both cried – me and my wife. We cried. We had tears streaming down. *Bebasi lagi ki hamarey paas kuch bhi nahi hai*. We felt that now we are left with absolutely nothing. We saw how one day earlier, satellite phones were being given out. Curfew orders were being issued. I started calling close family and friends and telling them – stock up on goods and keep your stocks secret. I thought it would be a war like situation where there may be people foraging for food like in the movies. *Phir yeh ho gaya* – Then this happened. If I had a fan following, I would go out and speak. But in these conditions if I speak, I will be arrested. Right now I am for war. There should be war. Because I am '82 born. I have lived with turmoil throughout. People older than me may have seen some good years. My age group knows how they have given up their dreams. I believe *jang honi chahiye*. I believe there should be war. You cannot treat an infected tooth every time. *Kabhi toh nikalna hi hai*. At some point, you have to take that tooth out.”

Another person who also works with the government said that he saw a notice put up in the local masjid, probably by militants; instructing people not to keep

their businesses open. “Two contractors have put up posters in the masjid – stop work or else.” But as a quick caveat, he added, “Also there is anger, people don’t want to work.”

Over several plates of pakoras, a journalist likened the day of the announcement to Kashmir being raped. “For the first fifteen days, people were in a state of shock. They were not able to speak. Even we (journalists) were not able to speak for ten days. I was so agitated and so frustrated and then some journalist came to me on 8th August and started asking me questions and asked for my analysis and all. I said have you not read the ethics of reporting? Can anyone ask questions from a rape victim within 72 hours? “

A young law student had a very sophisticated expression of her angst. She said the anger and frustration of her entire generation is not knowing where to take it all. That this time more than ever, she is at a complete loss. Beyond the dramatic outpourings she says, people like her experience an emptiness.

“When this abrogation began, those initial days were the most stressful. People were rushing to ATMs, stocking up on petrol. Like we are living in a cave. We didn’t know what was happening. I picked up the paper the next day and found 370 was abrogated and am trying to cope with the trauma since then.

Going out of your house – that basic freedom isn’t there. Okay, don’t go out but you can’t even breathe. The air is full of tear gas. We have to close the windows in many areas.

I am very depressed. Every Friday, we expect something to erupt after namaz so we can’t even step out. In these two months, for a 22- year old to sit at home, can’t go out, and there’s no internet. So, I’ve been reading a lot. Arundhati Roy, also crime fiction like John Grisham. But how much can you distract yourself from the ground reality? Watching TV is horrible, it makes you want to rip your clothes off. Academically I am at a loss. In the days of normalcy, we have to make up for lost time and rush through our syllabus. We don’t have an academic calendar, we have a political calendar.

In 2016, everything was shut for 4 months. And now again. If I add it all up, one full academic year is wasted. Can’t expect this to go on for more than four months. Businesses can’t stay shut longer than that.

I wanted to go out of the state to study in 2016. Then the bandh happened so I had to take admission in Kashmir. After the Burhan Wani killing there was another shut down, I missed a semester. Now I will be a year behind.

Azaadi (freedom) is a farce. I don’t think it’s possible. As Arundhati Roy said in ‘The Ministry of Utmost Happiness’ – “lock five Kashmiris in a room and they will kill each other.” I don’t see it happening. I don’t support Burhan Wani or the Hurriyat or the National Conference and I don’t know the PDP (properly). Ideologically we are very divided.

There are 120 students in our batch at the university and we are not allowed to discuss the conflict openly. So, I don't know Kashmiri politics, I am not allowed the space to study it or understand it. I trust what my parents tell me. They've been through the 90s. The army would come home, ask to see people's family albums, ask - who is X? Where is X? So people burnt family albums. Amongst my classmates, emotions run so high. If you tell them India is right, they will kill you.

I feel a very strong urge to do something but I don't know which way to channelize it.

The government says there will be development and the arrival of industry now. I don't want the environment here to pay the price for it. We don't want the climate of Gulmarg and Pahalgam to be disturbed. We want sustainable development.

We have no leaders. No leaders are better than bad leaders. My generation is disoriented, ideologically. So we won't even have a leader emerge I think. I don't believe in guns. It doesn't resolve anything. We are told to study instead but that also doesn't resolve anything. So it is the ultimate dilemma of my generation. Of the 60 students that were in my batch in school, 40 are studying in other states. They are not here to rise up politically. It's a choked life.

We all know that mothers have lost their sons but we have to stop romanticizing things. We do that all the time. We don't need drawings of pellet guns. We see it every day.

I want to stay here. This is where my roots lie, even if it's hell."

Of all the stories of everyday trauma, this student's stands out because of the predicament she outlines of the next generation. Devoid of a political space to be and wise enough to see through the political promises of both the mainstream politicians and the separatists. The long simmering discontent of these young people has suddenly shot up stratospherically.

Another way of seeing what the abrogation has done to people is to sit in on conversations across generations. An old man and his son spoke to us about the way in which both generations experienced the same trauma. The old man spoke wistfully about the hopes and dreams built up over a lifetime and how they all came crashing down. The only way he could articulate this was to start with the past.

"The militancy started in 1990. Today it's a different situation. At that time, us waqt the elected government that should have been in power could not be." He was referring to the popularity of Sheikh Abdullah and his subsequent arrest by Jawaharlal Nehru led Congress party. "Then the MUF or the Muslim United Front came into being. The MUF had connections with other countries and agencies. Militancy was born. That was a terrible time - us waqt ka period bahut kharaab tha. I was in Sopore. I was studying there. And a Kashmiri trader said to a militant - just show me your gun, just once - ek baar sirf humey gun dikhao, I will pay you 20,000

rupees. People thought militants aa jayenge aur hum azaad ho jayenge – People thought that militants will enter the fray and Kashmir will be set free.” He said this last line with a great deal of irony. He believed in the Indian establishment, the Indian state.

“Back in the day, when Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was in power (he was the Prime Minister of Kashmir at the time the state had its own functioning constitution and PM – from 1953 to 1964); Bakshi sahib had asked a journalist to tell him who the Kashmiri people are with. Whose side they are on. The journalist replied – 40 lakh (the population of the Kashmir valley at the time) are with Sheikh sahib, 40 lakhs are with you Bakshi sahib, 40 lakhs are with India and 40 lakhs are with Pakistan.” Everyone listening to this anecdote had moist eyes. They explained what it meant. The people of Kashmir were such simpletons that they never chose sides. They were gullible and believed in everyone and in all possibilities.

The old man continued his story. “Now BJP ki sarkar hai, the BJP is now in power and they have a different ideology. From the time of their leader Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the abrogation of 370 was on the BJP’s agenda. But it’s also true that historically, Indians never trusted Kashmiris. And India hollowed out 370 gradually. Now – schools are shut, transport is stopped, businesses are closed. All our leaders are in jail. The bandh (the lockdown) is a manifestation of everyone’s pain and anger.”

The son, himself in his early forties had a few despondent notes to add.

“I know this can’t go on forever. There is a sense of desperation.”

There was a brief pause. Then one of the others listening, as dinner was being served, shared his trauma. “For me, I was opposed to 35A,” he said, knowing full well that even in the room he sat in, he was a dissenting voice. This man was not in favour of the special status of Kashmir, enshrined in article 370 being taken down. But he was in favour of the cancellation of special property rights where only Kashmiris could buy and sell property in the state. The BJP said this provision discriminated against women in particular who may marry a non-Kashmiri and then lose the right to land.

Imagine the predicament of such a man, who went further than most in supporting the government. Only to find that the government had gone much further than he could take. “I wanted it to go for the sake of equal rights for women. Before Modi came, I was taunted for being pro India. All of a sudden, I am no longer pro India. I see Modi as anti-Muslim. That gives me second thoughts about being in India although I realize that he comes with only 30% of votes polled.”

A fruit seller from the district of Shopian in south Kashmir had his story to add.

“Four days ago, we were travelling from Shopian to Srinagar. We were cruising

along on the highway quite happily when we were stopped by the army. They did their routine check and let us go. We had gone on for another one or two kilometers at a speed of about 70 or 80 kilometers per hour, when they stopped us again. They said – “You bastards, why are you driving so fast? And then they took out their guns and placed them on top of our car. We had to apologize profusely before they let us go.”

A couple listening in to this dinner conversation said they are also at a complete loss.

The wife said, “This is the first time since my childhood that I remember there being restrictions on moving out during Eid. Our kids don’t want to settle here. When we go out on a holiday, they don’t want to come back home.”

As a team, we decided to focus more on these everyday traumas, since the pellet gun injuries and cases of torture are already covered extensively by other teams going in to Jammu and Kashmir. We found the everyday to be equally if not more instructive of the big picture of humiliation, anger, loss and overall shock people found themselves in that was palpable even two months on.

A trader was one amongst many who told us how Kashmiris aren't sleeping well ever since D day – August 5th. “I am pained. I sleep only once in two nights. That too because it’s a physical requirement. Your father dies and you continue to eat the next day.”

A journalist said he wasn’t just devastated, he was emptied out and bitter. This is why.

“Last week, my mother died. Mai family ke teen members ko inform nahi kar saka – I couldn’t inform my family members of her death because of my ‘great Modi’ in ‘Great India.’ My sister could not attend the funeral of my mother.”

### **Pellet gun injuries and a long history of trauma**

But we could not leave out the continuing trauma of countless people who have protested in the early days of the abrogation of article 370, those who pelted stones and those who happened to get caught in the wrong place at the wrong time and in a conflict zone like Kashmir, ended up losing an eye to a pellet gun injury.

The reason we are writing about this extreme form of trauma after taking you through the everyday is that there is a continuity in this part of the story with the past. And without that context, the politics surrounding it can seem skewed.

The use of pellet guns dates back to the 2010 cycle of violence in Jammu and Kashmir, when the Omar Abdullah led National Conference was in power in the state and the Manmohan Singh led Congress party coalition was in power at the centre. Over a hundred deaths and several thousand pellet gun injuries were reported in that phase. There was a sudden spike in the use of the pellet gun to



disperse angry mobs once again in 2016, when Kashmir was in a state of lockdown after the Hizbul Mujahideen commander Burhan Wani was killed in an encounter with security forces on July 8th 2016.

According to the data journalism website India Spend, that collated data from the SMHS or Shri Maharaja Hari Singh hospital , and SKIMS or the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences in Srinagar and Home Ministry data; the statistics for use of pellet guns are disturbing and predate the present use. The report, published in the Business Standard on August 2nd 2019 found that:

- Tear-gas shells killed 5 between January 2010 and May 2019, and injured 176 between July 2016 and February 2019
- Chilli-filled shells killed one and caused respiratory problems in 51 of 294 respondents (non-combatants) surveyed for a medical study in downtown Srinagar. Of them, 97% developed cough and irritation within few seconds of breathing the gas
- Metal pellets killed 18, blinded 139, injured 2,942 and caused eye injuries to 1,459 between July 2016 and February 2019.

This time, there are no statistics since the hospitals we visited and medical professionals we spoke to told us that since there is a complete communication blockade, most people aren't coming to hospitals to have injuries shown. In one instance we were also told that medical staff in outlying districts were told not to send forward patients to Srinagar for fear that it may add to the statistics of those injured which takes away from the 'return to normalcy' narrative the centre is trying to project. However, we had no way of confirming if what this medical professional said is true. What we can say for certain is that until mobile phones and the internet is restored across Jammu and Kashmir, it will be hard if not impossible to get figures of injuries.

What we have here is an account of a young journalist who was shot in the eye and all over his body with 400 pellets in 2016. He tells his story of trauma to us. But equally significantly, is now back at work, taking photographs of Kashmir in its present lockdown to tell the present story of trauma through the point of view of his busted eye. He wants people to experience what Kashmir using his injury is now a metaphor.

Xuhaib Maqbool Humzah lost his eye while shooting the 2016 protests. When we first heard his story, he talked about how he was hit waist up with 400 pellets. That he spends each morning having to convince himself to live. That he had to ride with 19 stitches in his eye, on his bike. That his father could not stand to see what had happened to his eye. And finally, he played back a 5 second audio clip of the actual moment when his eye was hit. It was recorded accidentally on his phone. First you hear the gunshots, then you hear him scream that his eyeball has burst.

Xuhaib began his interview with a quote from the poet Muhammad Iqbal.

“Kyun kin aakar banoon, sood farhamosh rahoon? Hamnawa mai bhi koi gul hoon ke khamosh rahoon? Jurrat amoz meri taab-e-sukaan hai mujhko, Shikhwa allah se hai toh kyon na farhamosh rahoon? I am not a flower. I haven't done anything wrong so why should I be silent.”

### **Here is the interview**

“Speaking is kind of a super power so it should be utilized. I am not shy when I speak about myself because I still walk tall.

I was having a conversation with a guy who lost his eye in the conflict. We were at Zadibal. (in Srinagar). When I saw him he was a bit hunched, he was a bit low. Broken. He came to me and said – I believe you were hit with pellets. I said yes. He said – same with me, I too lost my eye. Then he started observing my eye. He said – no (unlike yours where the eyeball is visible) I lost it completely. The eyeball has gone white. And I was like – bro, yeh sirf frame dikhta hai. This is only the frame that's visible. Andar ka yeh saamaan sab uda hua hai. The inside is all busted.

I motivated him to live. I didn't say anything. I just made him understand that why we have two eyes. One is damaged but that's not the end. There is never the end. After we finished the conversation, I just spanked his bottom and said – kabhi milna. Ladki wagaira patayenge. Let's catch up sometime and go flirt with some women. And he was walking with his chest out.

Waking up every day is a struggle. But the first struggle is going to sleep. I don't think there will be any fool in the world who will keep his music on with a loud noise so he can sleep. I can't let any moment go empty. I have to keep my brain busy. So I usually sleep on the floor, watching TV. Sometimes I don't sleep for 5-6 days. So the struggle starts with going to bed. Then waking up. If I have to be up at 8 then there is no point sleeping because I sleep at 6am. So I often skip my sleep.

The first I thing I do when I open my eyes, I look for my medicine because I can't open my left eye without it. Every time you go to bed, you have to tell yourself not to hate yourself, not think about what happened on 4th September or you won't be able to sleep.

For the last three years I haven't been working as a journalist. Before my injury when I went to shoot a pellet victim, I was asking him to look at me so I could click a single picture. The light was low in the hospital, so when I was pressing my shutter button, the illuminator was illuminating. The yellow light was falling on his face and he was shutting his eyes back. Then, after my injury, when I lost an eye; I was sitting at home. I had a bruised camera body. That was still working somewhat so I tried that on myself. I did a low camera setting and I just pressed the shutter. The illuminator came on and I felt a sledgehammer on my face. It was so intense that I dropped my camera. And I realized what that guy was going through when I was asking him to please look at my so I could take a picture.

After this 370 thing happened, I went to the hospital to shoot pellet victims. I saw

a pellet victim. He was not ready to shoot. I said, 'bro I have been through this and I can tell you exactly what you will go through next.' So, he opened his good eye and saw me. He said - 'how are you.' I said, 'I'm fine.' He said - 'are you okay now?' I said - 'the doctors have not given up yet.' He said - 'okay then,' and he was ready to shoot with me.

I have seen hell with this left eye during my surgery in the operation theatre. I was able to see the yellow image and the blood. They injected some medicines (while operating) so it would go numb. While they were operating, I was able to see in yellow, the image of those black tools they were using to operate on my eye. I could see minor shades with that eye. They couldn't give me general anesthesia because the rapid eye movement would still be there. When they inserted the laser, my heart started beating so fast. Because something was stuck in there. Maybe a piece of glass from my spectacles. They were discussing it with one another, "if we raise the count of the laser beam, he will collapse. And when they did it, I was able to see and feel that red dot in my eye."

And a sardarji - he was an assistant in the hospital said to me - "why do you pelt stones? See what happens afterwards". And a young, beautiful lady doctor said he is not a stone pelter. He is a journalist. I follow him on Instagram and Facebook. It was so pleasing to hear that.

So when I met this guy (the pellet gun victim post abrogation, nothing happened. I just took his pictures. I thought to myself - I know what's going to happen. But I didn't say that to him of course. I didn't want to break his illusion.

I have got the pictures I needed of him. Now I am planning to shoot some other pellet victims. In 2016, I was a photographer, now photographer is personal to me.

When I told my family that I wanted to go back and shoot, post the abrogation of 370, my brother in law said - if you ever shoot the conflict again don't ever talk to me. So he is abroad right now and I haven't given him a call because if we talk, he will ask me. And I can't lie to him.

When something is snatched from you, you start loving it more. For me, it was like more like my love was snatched. As a photographer, I used to play with colours and light. And then for a year, the colours and light were playing with me. Why I came again to shoot the conflict is because this time it's about my land. It's about my land where I live, where I was raised. It's about my country and family. That made me come out again.

I want to show the world how pellet victims see. I am trying to give back what the Indian government and agencies and police forces have given to me. So, I'll shoot this agitation and process it and manipulate it in the way I see with my left eye that's bruised and broken. So that the world will ask - what the fuck is this? There will be text and titles to go with it to say - that what you are seeing is a bench actually, it's a tree, it's an army officer. What you are looking at is a protestor actually."

## The trauma of Pandits, Sikhs and Christians

### Pandits

At a time when Kashmiri Muslims that make up more than 80% of the erstwhile state's population have been traumatized and speaking about it continually, minorities in the state have also reacted variously to the abrogation of article 370.

We met a group of Kashmiri Pandits who live in a resettlement colony or what passes for it, in the middle of precisely nowhere in the district of Baramulla. The colony consisted of rows of single bedroom houses with the washing drying out in front and small children playing in the street. There are 150 families living in 130 homes and the math doesn't quite make sense because the pandits also said that in most cases, two families share one home. So that one family lives in the bedroom and the other in the drawing room. These are all families that had to flee after the communal bloodbath or what is often called a genocide against the pandits in 1989, with the arrival of Islamic militants into Kashmir from across the Pakistan border. The pandits fled overnight, leaving behind massive homes and large estates. Many still live in different parts of the country. This colony was established by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in the year 2010, when the Congress led UPA coalition was in power. A Prime Minister's relief package was set up and allowed for the setting up of colonies like the one we visited. About 4,000 pandits are employed, paid and housed under this scheme across Kashmir. However, the condition of this particular colony left much to be desired. The residents said they had to walk a kilometer just to fetch drinking water. And the drainage is perennially choked.

Despite these adverse conditions, the reactions of the Pandits here to the taking away of Kashmir's special status was mixed.

One resident who spoke at length said that to begin with, they had no idea what article 370 was and they mixed it up with 35 A, which gives Kashmiris exclusive rights to own and rent property in the state. He also said that 370 was neither beneficial nor good. "We aren't affected by the change of status of state to a union territory because we are working under the PM's special package. The state does not finance us, the centre does."

However, he added that "if by the removal of 370 militancy is crushed then it is good. Politicians and separatists shelter militants. Even ordinary Muslims I think would want militancy to end." And that brought him to the point where he needed to talk of the longstanding trauma of the pandits, as yet unresolved. "Hum 'aam chiputz' hain - mehmaan. Guests in our own land." But he qualified this by adding that the Pandits do associate with Muslims and that most of them are good people. It's just 10% that in his opinion, were problematic.

On the other hand, the fear of being attacked again by Muslims has not gone away and it prevents most of these residents from stepping out of their colony and going to their native places that they had to flee.

This resident also said that he liked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh - that he was the only PM who visited this migrant colony where “he literally cried.” On the other hand, while he said that PM Modi had not done anything for the pandits, he “has controlled things well (post abrogation). If there wasn’t a clampdown in the Kashmir valley, there would be turmoil.

Another Pandit added, “What has happened isn’t the fault of the Kashmiris but of the politics of the Indian state.”

There were other reactions that criss-crossed the secular-religious divide constantly.

“We are a Hindu country. This country was founded on the divisions between Hindus and Muslims. The word secularism was introduced into the constitution much later, by the Congress party.”

“We have to make the Kashmiri Muslims feel less insecure. When the centre creates a National Registry of Citizens in Assam and other such moves, it only makes Muslims feel insecure.”

“There isn’t actually much difference between the Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims. We get married the same way, except we have pheras and they have the nikah. We all drink the same salty tea - noon chai.”

We also visited the association that administers the last leg of the Hindu holy pilgrim’s progress to the Amarnath shrine in Kashmir. At the end of the Amarnath yatra, devotees of Lord Shiva and scores of Hindus from across India make the last part of the pilgrimage from the monastic sect called the Dashnami Akhara in Srinagar to Amarnath. Here scores of Hindus return the holy mace or the Chadi Mubarak that they are carrying to the holy shrine at Amarnath. This year, after the clampdown across Kashmir, the Chadi Mubarak puja or ritual pilgrimage had to be carried out symbolically by the head of the trust being flown in a helicopter from Srinagar to Amarnath. So we decided to meet the members of the trust to ask what they thought of the reading down of article 370.

They were unequivocal in their response. “We are very happy with the revocation of 370. The trauma we faced in last 30 years is the worst thing in human history. We were made to flee because we chanted pro India slogans like Hindustan zindabad. We are very happy because no one else for all these years has taken a step as bold as Prime Minister Modi. Not since Indira Gandhi.”

## **Sikhs**

In the course of our research and conversations with people in the Kashmir valley, we heard plenty about a great affinity between the Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Sikhs that has played out in the otherwise religiously polarized space. So we decided to ask Sikhs what they felt. We met a group in Baramulla who said two things. Firstly, they said that their main concern was to be able to acquire a

permanent resident certificate to be able to buy land in Kashmir. As a minority but Kashmiri Sikhs, they are eligible to apply for this but the process is ridden with corruption. Therefore, they explained, that purely for instrumental reasons, the turning of Kashmir into a union territory, under the direct supervision of the centre, seemed like a good idea. "Earlier, getting the certificate involved many bribes. Now that 370 is struck down, we can get the certificates easily and buy a house, buy land."

However, they also had a second point to make. The total shutdown of businesses and communication has hurt their businesses badly. And further, they feel an affinity with their Muslim brothers. "The Muslims and us are the same, when they are troubled, we are troubled. We are with the Muslims. But the J & K government discriminates against us. Write that down."

### **Christians**

This is a community that is left out of the Kashmir narrative altogether, perhaps because they only make up 0.3% of it. However, the best schools across Jammu and Kashmir are still run by various Christian denominations and the barometer for politics can often be measured more accurately by looking at how some of its smallest constituents view the most significant change caused to the state in perhaps its entire history.

According to the 2011 census, Islam is practised by about 68.3% of the state population of Jammu and Kashmir. Among the minorities, 28.4% are Hindus, followed by Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.9%) and Christians (0.3%). In Kashmir valley, about 96.4% are Muslims, followed by Hindus (2.45%), Sikhs (0.98%) and others (0.17%) The Catholic Community in J&K is very small - a population of just 7000. There are three Catholic churches in Kashmir - one each in Gulmarg, Baramulla and Srinagar. In Srinagar, the Catholic Community is really tiny - just 30 families of which 5 are native Kashmiris. A sizeable chunk are Punjabis who are artisans involved in carpentry, etc whereas the rest are migrants from tribal belts in India who are mostly involved in unskilled work in church institutions. Christian missionaries run schools and hospitals and are also been engaged in relief and rehabilitation work in the state since the time of the earthquake through CARITAS, India.

We went with a local volunteer to meet some representatives of the local Christian community. He spoke to us about the pain and anger of the people of Kashmir at the way in which their special status was taken away. He said most of the staff in missionary schools were local Kashmiris and that almost 95 percent of the teachers were Kashmiris. Their pain and anguish about what transpired was evident from their conversations at school. He said there is a lot of suppressed anger.

He also said that for Christian missionaries, Kashmir was a safer place than many states in northern India. He alluded to the targeting of Christian missionaries and



their institutions in northern India. He said that the Kashmiri people were basically a peace-loving people and that the violence one reads about has to do with the political conflict. With regards to Muslim – Christian relations in the state he said that they have been for the most part harmonious except for a couple of incidents. He said that the Christianity has more than a hundred-year old history in Kashmir. The Holy Family Church itself was around 125 years old. He said he could recall only two anti-Christian incidents – an arson attack against the church – in 1967 by protestors demonstrating against the Arab-Israeli war and in 2011. The church was subsequently rebuilt and in 2017 a new church bell, which was donated by a Kashmiri Indian Christian family was installed at the church. This occurred in an interfaith service, in which Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh clergymen assembled “to jointly ring the new bell for the first time in 50 years. The same person also spoke of how Muslims offer ‘Namaz’ in the church lawns during Friday prayers and Eid – a wonderful example of dialogue and amity. He said that Sufism was an integral part of Kashmiri devotional culture and Kashmiriyat emphasizing tolerance and peaceful co-existence and that Kashmir was an alcove of Sufism as evident from the numerous mausoleums of Sufi saints that one will see all over the valley.

The parish priest said that education was one of the most serious casualties of the decades old conflict. This time around too schools have been shut for almost two months. He said that the schools under the J& K Archdiocese had completed around 70 percent of their syllabus when August 5th happened. Video lessons and other assignments were being given to students to make up for the loss but this happened only in private schools. In public schools the situation would be different. While clampdowns, unrest, blockades and shutdowns affect all students, the consequences for students accessing public schools are severe.

The parish priest said that missionary schools are private schools and their only source of revenue are school fees. Referring to catholic schools, he said they haven't been able to collect fees from parents. But teachers still need to be paid salaries every month. He said that the blockade and restrictions have severely impacted small and petty businesses and many parents have told school authorities that due to the economic losses they are not in a position to pay fees. Given this reality, school managements are not in a position to demand fees. Children whose parents are in government service have no problem in paying fees as they get their salaries regularly.

The priest said that period since August 5 has been the toughest in Kashmir's conflict-ridden history in a manner of speaking. He said that in 2008, 2010 and 2016 too there were severe disruptions and schools/colleges were shut down for many months. This time things were really hard because of the complete blockade on communication. In 2008, 2010 and 2016, broad band connections were working and people could connect with the external world and know what was happening.



He shared two anecdotes. An 85-year old former teacher of a reputed Catholic School in Srinagar where she had taught for almost 45 years died at 4.00am on September 27 on her way to hospital. She is survived by her only son who is head of Radio Imaging at a public hospital. The teacher was much respected and loved by the thousands of students who knew her. The parish priest said that in normal times her funeral service would have been attended by 100s of alumni but because of the communication blockade, her son unable to inform people. They had managed to put a small notification in the local newspaper. So only about 50% of her former students came to pay their last respects- yet the church was packed. The priest also recounted the problems the family had in arranging her funeral. It was so difficult to get someone to dig the grave due to the communication blockade. A shroud could not be arranged easily- as it was Friday, shops were closed and restrictions enhanced. Secondly, the family had brought the body at 10am to the church for people to pay their respects while the funeral service at 2.00pm. Normally the body would have been brought from the morgue just an hour before the funeral service. The body started to decompose on account of the heat and began to emanate a powerful stench. So the coffin was sealed before the funeral service. Those who had come for the funeral service did not get a last glimpse of her. Farooq Abdullah's wife and daughter too had come to pay her respects. He said that 98% of the people at the funeral were Muslims and Sikhs.

The priest's aunt had died in Pala, in the Kottayam district of Kerala. He got to know only four days later as his family was unable to get in touch with him.

**Visit to a Christian family in Baramulla** - We met a Christian family from an economically weak socio-economic background in Baramulla. The father was a former employee of a school run by missionaries. The son - an only child was undertaking painting assignments to support his family. The mother suffers from kidney failure and requires dialysis at least thrice a week. He was the only earning member in the family. Before August 5 he used to work in a cement factory in Baramulla but has since been unemployed. Due to the political crisis, the factory has temporarily shut down and workers are not getting their salaries. They had migrated from Sialkot (now in Pakistan) to Kashmir even before independence.

The son spoke about how the Christian community was the most invisible and least talked about community in Kashmir. He said that if the abrogation of Article 370 meant that Christians as a minority would be able to get jobs, he welcomed it, otherwise he was indifferent to it. It was not an emotional issue for him.

### **The untold story of Jammu and its trauma**

When 370 was struck down, the picture painted across much of the national media was that Jammu was celebrating. However, our initial research suggested that this was a completely untrue or at best a distorted picture. Either way, we decided to spend a day and half in Jammu to find out. We met students at Jammu university, political leaders, transporters, traders, fruit sellers, journalists, educationists, students at vocational training centres and members of the

chamber of commerce. In all, we met about fifty people and the big picture emerging from Jammu, is one of confusion, disorientation and in many cases, far greater fear than in the Kashmir valley. People were so scared of giving their opinion even anonymously that about half the people we contacted refused outright to meet with us. This in itself was telling.

Unlike the Kashmir valley, Jammu was not in a lockdown. There was no civil disobedience. Landlines, mobile networks and Wifi connections were working. The internet was an abominably slow speed. Files that took three minutes to transfer once we were back in Delhi, were buffering all night in Jammu. But unlike in Kashmir, here it still existed. Shops were open. You could connect with people by and large. Restaurants were open until 11pm so you could get food when you needed. Malls were open. Tourists were of course absent. We were the only occupants at our hotel – the Ashok, which has 45 rooms, most are booked out at this time of the year, the staff informed us.

The security forces that were omnipresent in Kashmir, were much fewer and far between by the day. After dark, the picture changed and cars were stopped and checked regularly.

However, with shops open, communication more or less in place and restaurants and commercial establishments open for business, what could possibly be the trauma, if any, for the people of Jammu?

Quite a lot, we discovered in no time. A transporter summed it up for us when he said, post the abrogation of 370, “Kashmir has had one eye taken out, Jammu has had both eyes removed.”

A contingent of transporters and traders that we met could not stop talking about their all-around distress. They told us that transport is a 35,000-crore business in Jammu. Its modus operandi is trucks carry mainly government items – from the Food Corporation of India. Those are the big contracts that is the backbone of the truck business. However, it is a mafia ridden and very precariously run business. A few big contractors have a stranglehold on the unions and freight rates and they say one thing but constantly undercut their charges and pay less than the officially agreed upon rates to transporters because they can. A market already squeezed to the maximum had no capacity to absorb further shocks when suddenly, the abrogation of 370 hit them.

First, this hit the frequency of trains carrying goods in from the food corporation. “If there were 500 vehicles at the railway station every day, they take goods from the trains to nearby towns within a 50 km radius. Earlier these 500 trucks would have a trip a day which got them 800-1000 rupees. Post abrogation, that has come down to one trip in four days,” a transporter explained. That’s business cut down to a quarter already.

Some transporters also said there is a deepening rift between transporters in Kashmir and Jammu. “Now Kashmiris are saying they won’t load goods on trucks

coming in from Jammu. Because Jammu is largely in favour of abrogation and things are near normal so the Kashmiris don't like it. So, there's an unwritten rule now that any vehicle coming from Jammu should not be entertained."

Whether or not there is an animosity, business as usual is thoroughly disrupted because half or more of Jammu's clients, buyers and linkages are dependent on Kashmir

"The symbiotic trade between Kashmir and Jammu is disrupted post 370," one businessman told us.

The voices of discontent soon began to cascade.

"We are in the Dussehra season. The wholesale market - the mandi is normally so crowded there's no place to stand. Now it's desolate. Empty."

"The President of the Commerce and Trade Federation of Jammu did a press conference a month ago asking for the restoration of communication in Kashmir and safe passage for transporters. But no one heard us."

"This is the apple season in Srinagar. Last year, in this season, 7,000 crores worth of business was done. This time the government is saying they will buy fruit worth 8600 crores from Srinagar. But the thing is, how will this fruit get to the mandi? When individuals aren't being able to go and pluck fruit from their orchards because of the overall climate of fear? "

"When in the past there have been threats from militants, there was a partial shut-down. This time, when the government issued a circular asking Amarnath yatis to go back, citing security concerns, it's led to a complete shut-down."

"Under article 370, what was left of it after all these years? Protection for domiciles from outsiders being able to buy land. Now the BJP is saying they will restore that so why did they revoke it in the first place?"

"The biggest fallout of 370 is in Jammu. The taxi business has failed, hotel - failed, transport - failed, tourist - failed."

"We had 25-30 tourist buses going every day to Kashmir. Now there's no one to take tours. Not one bus is going out."

"I have a garments business. It's at zero right now. I have three months' worth of payments pending from Kashmir. That's not happening. 50% of my business is with Kashmir. Then tourists come to the Pir Panjal ranges to buy stuff. That's also stopped."

"Initially we were very happy with the abrogation because we had no idea how it was going to affect us. Then a curfew was imposed. Now there is no clarity about anything. I've had to sack most of my workers."

"The next set of people to commit suicide will be transporters."



But the stories of trauma that were the most disturbing came from students of various minorities studying at Jammu University. They told us they have resigned themselves to being second class citizens. They said they fear for their lives. They are being called terrorists on campus for being Muslim and live in the constant fear of being lynched. Here is a deeply distressing outpouring, reproduced as is.

“We have our local identities here,” said one student. “We are Gujjar, Bakerwal, Pahadi, Dogra. But we are increasingly being termed only as Kashmiris and looked upon as if we are all terrorists and Pakistan supporters. There is no one amongst us who has not voted or who didn’t believe in the Indian democracy. We were firm believers in the constitution of India. But from August 5th it seems as if a particular community is being targeted across India.”

Another student spoke of the saffronization of the campus and the climate of hate that peaked after the striking down of article 370. “We had good student-teacher relations on campus. Now that has changed, they have started looking at us in terms of Hindus and Muslims.”

“We had friends who were both boys and girls. There were many girls in our friends’ circle. Now we are labelled as ‘love jihadis’ if we talk to them. We are labelled as sympathizers of terrorists and terror apologists. I don’t know from where these ideas are coming. They are telling us these days that lynchings are common, that it can happen here too. If you write something, your life can become hell. You don’t know what the guide will do tomorrow, your degree can be stopped.”

“We never faced this earlier. When 370 was abrogated, all those who were from far flung areas went home, we could sense the situation was not normal so many had gone home, we were here. When 370 was abrogated a few of us were here, so we went to the TV room in our hostel. There was the normal level of celebration of the 370 abrogation, but when they saw us the celebrations became louder.”

“What was said to us in online trolls is now being said face to face. The same abusive language.”

“We used to share desks now we are referred to as ‘aap log’ - the othering has started. We are being marginalized. We are unable to discuss anything. They send guards after us if they see some people sitting across us like you are today and chatting with us.”

“Dissent is being killed. And meanwhile the establishment is trying to paint a rosy picture. They have maligned our image. The national media has tried to frame a narrative where the Gujjars and Bakerwals are happy with the abrogation. They claim we will get benefits. I can tell you we are not happy. We already have reservations, there is nothing which we will get. Only those Gujjars and Bakerwals who were stooges in the party from earlier are appearing on TV. They don’t represent the community and they have no base in the community. We will not get any benefits. We want statehood.”

“Yes, it’s true that some Gujjar community people have become government stooges because they are helpless. If we look at Kathua district, there is 0.01% of Gujjar community, if they have to survive then they have to listen to the right-wing.”

“There is a narrative created on national TV that Gujjars didn’t have any rights pre-August 5th. And now they will benefit from reservations under various schemes. Even earlier, we had 10-12 representatives or MLAs under the scheduled tribe reservations. Without political reservation if we have leaders in the state assembly, then we don’t think there is a need for any reservation otherwise the rift between us and Pahadis or Kashmiris will widen. We will be called collaborators in a long run. There are Kashmiris who are in BJP, but the way the national media is projecting us, we will have to face a lot in the coming days. Kashmiris will call us collaborators, and the Jammu don’t consider us one of them, so we will be stranded.”

“I live in fear of lynching. 2-3 boys said I am a militant, they told others too pointing at me. They are close to the administration.”

“There is a Muslim shop owner in the vicinity who is being demonized.”

“Jammu university is hub of the RSS.” (the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh – the apex ideological body of the Hindu right)

“After August 5th, the RSS is organizing programmes openly within the university campus. About 20-25 professors are part of the RSS and they organize shakhas or the RSS group meetings on campus and play these out on loudspeakers. Some 4-5 professors have RSS programme posters in their rooms.”

“We are under pressure not to write anything against the government, otherwise we fear being sent to jail somewhere in Agra or some other place. (like so many people have post the abrogation). Now, there is no one to back us. We can’t write on Twitter and Facebook. I had stopped posting a year back. Even the twitter comes under scan, they start questioning the uploads. If its democracy then we should have the voice of dissent. It is not necessary that if we are anti-government then we are anti-nationals or if we are anti-RSS then we are declared anti-nationals. We allow their views their space so ours should have space too. Why are our voices suppressed?”

“A man who calls himself an activist is instigating people here. He is the same person who said that demography of Jammu is disturbed because of Rohingyas who settled here. They are temporary people who have settled and this is a threat to demography of Jammu.”

“The Jammu University’s student union president is a boy from the RSS, who speaks against Kashmiris and Muslims. Soon after the Pulwama incident where 40 CRPF soldier were killed by a suicide bomber) what this so-called activist did was to throw stones at the Indian Army. At the time I asked him - where is your

nationalism now? He said - this is how it works. They were throwing stone at the army because the army was protecting the Muslims from getting killed in the post Pulwama communal clashes here.”

“At the time of the Pulwama incident, meetings were held inside Jammu University, in a room behind the auditorium (Zorawar Singh auditorium), people were planning what places were to be attacked the next day in Gujjar Nagar and Bhatindi. They decided that if people from these areas were not going to cooperate with the bandh call, then they would go there and forcibly shut down their shops. These are Muslim dominated areas.”

“Recently when I went to Jeeval area where there are Kashmiri Muslim run restaurants and hotels. They were all closed. When I asked why, they said it's because of the Hindu festival of Navratri. That for the fifteen days of the navratras until Dussehra, these restaurants will remain closed.”

“If we have to live in India, we will have to live as a second-class-citizens. Otherwise there is no survival. In areas like Bhatindi, not a single day goes by where there is no patrolling. In the night, 2-3 battalions patrol that area.”

“We have accepted we are second class citizens. We have prepared ourselves. The narrative has changed so much, that they are seeing things here only in terms of Hindu-Muslim or India- Pakistan. In one of the discussions, we said - its okay, you take away our rights, even the right to vote. But at least discuss some important issues. The economy has derailed, at least talk about it. People are not getting jobs, they are suffering. Don't go to such an extent to demonize us that India suffers.”

“The government constantly says the abrogation of 370 has been done to develop Jammu and Kashmir. As compared with other states, J&K was always well developed. There are people from Bihar and other states who come here to work. Why would they if they didn't make money? J&K is considered the Gulf for many. They should do some development in the cow-belt. And they should be candid enough to tell us that their real motive is to convert a Muslim-majority state to a Hindu majority state. Why aren't they open about it?”



# Radicalization, Extremism and the loss of a middle ground

“Now there is only room for either completely pro India or pro Pakistan people. The middle ground is gone.” This is what a middle-aged journalist said to us when we were trying to make sense of what shape and form the experience of trauma might take. There is a cautionary tale here that must be put out right up front. What people have said to us is very clearly an emotional outpouring and must be understood as precisely and only that. There is often the risk with putting out the extreme end of an emotional graph in print. That it will either be distorted or used maliciously to paint an even more polarized picture than what is really out there in the firmament. So we are telling these stories as part of a long continuum of responsible storytelling where we find it imperative to show how deep the sense of hurt and anguish is in Jammu and Kashmir. And also know that sometimes, an outpouring has the effect of changing the space. In saying, in speaking out, in letting out all the unbridled emotion, the long withheld anger, it doesn't stay where it is. At the same time, the anger is indicative of the political space and toxicity that is now in the mix, even more so after the abrogation of article 370.

The voice of journalist who took an extreme position quivered as he spoke to us. He wanted us to experience his pain and trusted us with it.

“60% of the people in India have declared they are anti Muslim. Had Pakistan not been there, we would have been massacred,” this man continued.

His friend – a doctor and activist was part of our discussion group. He added, “We have been forced to become extremists. Liberals like me thought that Kashmir's accession to India was the right thing. Now we think that maybe it was wrong. Perhaps the two- nation theory (once advocated by Pakistan at the time of the partition) has proved to be right. What do you expect from a PM who tells people - I am going to address the nation - THE NATION, and then tells a bundle of lies?”

The journalist listened and added to the conversation. “I used to smoke one packet of cigarettes a day, now I smoke 3. And even my wife asks me if she can have a drag.” He continued. “I wanted my daughter to study in Hindustan. Now I do not. Hindustan is not safe for her with all the lynchings and targeting of Kashmiris.”



A moderate, tempering voice intervened.

“Perhaps this push to the extreme is precisely what Modi wants.” He added that Islamic extremism feeds Hindu extremism and this was a cycle that needed to be broken.

The context for these conversations is an overall atmosphere of rumours, misinformation, half told truths, long standing fear, mistrust and finally, the present stories of alleged torture. We didn't meet victims of torture but we did have a long conversation with a human rights activist who has been documenting cases of human rights abuse since the striking down of 370.

We could not confirm whether the story he told us was real. But we are reproducing it here merely to draw attention to the landscape of stories within which people's conversations and political positions have now moved firmly to the extreme.

“I went to the Shampora village near the Dal lake. I was told that security forces raid the village often. One night, people there said that they raided it at 2am, allegedly to pick up some boys. But the village resisted so the forces went back. We went back to the same village and saw that the village had made some boys keep vigil. Another night, 60 people were injured by pellets. Some were hit by tear gas cannisters. Now all homes are covered by ply board and tin sheets. Women said the forces also made off with cash, jewellery, even mutton and butter. 14 boys were detained, allegedly kept in a lock-up, tortured and then released. Some showed me live bullets. In another instance, I met a boy in Shopian - the army took his mobile phone. And he was asked to report to the army camp. He went there the next day with his father. He was beaten unconscious, the body was thrown outside. The father was asked to organize a vehicle to go pick up his body.”

“A former Jamaat-e-Islami guy who left them 10 years ago to join Shah Faesal's party was apparently picked up and jailed, I heard.”

“I also heard that an imam was picked up for switching on the mike during curfew when the use of loudspeakers was forbidden.”

The push towards an extreme position politically also comes at a time when the political mainstream is silenced, in jail or found wanting in their ability to be the repositories of people's anger and anguish. A young Congress party leader explained his own frustration in being unable to hold onto people he had once recruited.

“I got 13,000 young people inducted into the Youth Congress in 2012. But the party did nothing with it. Eventually, 70% of those people went to the PDP.”

While we were speaking to people, Prime Minister Modi and the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan made their speeches at the UN General assembly. Kashmir was on edge. Everyone on every street corner from Srinagar to Anantnag in south

Kashmir said they were waiting to hear what the leaders would say. More accurately, Kashmir post 370 wasn't holding out any hope from Modi's speech. They had all universally put their faith in Imran Khan. Including the Congress leader we spoke to. He said, people looked at Imran Khan's speech as an Eid like celebration. At least someone was speaking on behalf of Kashmir, was the general sentiment echoed across Srinagar, wherever we went.

A butcher in an upmarket part of Srinagar said, "I hope Allah makes Imran Khan reach greater and greater heights, masha'llah. Let him be the harbinger of peace. We have Allah up in the heavens and Imran Khan on our side here on earth."

A senior journalist explained, "Imran Khan is the only leader right now because all the others are jailed. The abrogation of 370 has united various people."

Another journalist added that there is a difference between militancy, extremism and radicalization. Militancy came in historically on the back of a failed or rigged election in Kashmir and was sponsored by Pakistan. But in recent years, political extremism, the journalists explained is home grown. And bound to spiral due to an overall sense of alienation and disenchantment with India. Radicalization where religious fundamentalism is in the mix, according to one journalist, is largely a false bogey. In his opinion, "that is a narrative created by Delhi." Many in the Kashmir valley felt that the nuance needed to be underlined. That political extremism, siding with Pakistan and looking to Imran Khan to voice the concerns of the people of Kashmir is purely political. And born of a sense of abandonment and loss. People who felt closest to the idea of India have swung away from it like jilted lovers, wanting to rid themselves of their unbearable pain and the death of their dreams.

One journalist put it like this - "If you take away people's ID cards and tell them to report to the army camp the next morning, what do you expect?"

In Baramulla in the north, a senior journalist told us why he had also shifted to the extreme, politically. "They have pushed us to think of Hindu India and Muslim Kashmir. I see Imran Khan as my leader. Who has pushed me to it? Am I radicalized? I don't go to any Imam, I didn't offer Friday prayers yesterday. But I see people being tortured in Shopian etc. The establishment is floating these fake bogeys of us being indoctrinated by Al Qaeda etc. There is no such thing. But communication is zero in this day and age. I couldn't communicate with my mother. For a week she couldn't get her medicines. She watched TV and believed the governor when addressed us on TV to say that that nothing will happen, nothing will change. It's all fake. She couldn't get her medicines. After 55 years, Kashmir is on the UNSC agenda. What have we done? We have undone everything. Trump for the 6th time is saying - resolve this. Have we achieved anything or have we gone back to 1965?" (He was referring here to the end of the Indo-Pak war of 1965 with a UN mediated ceasefire).

The journalist added a line about the strange political irony of the present regime,

broadly believed to be supervised by India's national security advisor – Ajit Doval. In Doval's regime, the journalist pointed out, the separatist leader Bilal Lone is free and while his younger brother - Sajjad Lone, who was a minister in the BJP-PDP alliance government until recently in Kashmir was placed under arrest after August 5th.

What should Kashmiris make of this topsy-turvy politics? Where a separatist whose ideas the Indian government is ostensibly fighting is not seen as a threat but a member of the BJP's own government is. What is official and what is unofficial in this case? Who is supporting whom? And where is there room for anything but the most cynical opinion, burned into the psyche of Kashmiris in all they see and experience around them. The duplicity, the lies and now the recent trauma.

A journalist we spoke with said he would not be surprised if there is some truth in the rumours and the official and semi-official narrative being floated about the increase in number of militants. However, two months is too early to say for certain, "the abrogation could have pushed people into accepting them in their homes more readily than in the past." If this is at all true, then 370 instead of securing India is only making the country much more insecure than is possible to fathom.

A businessman from Srinagar said he was also a newly converted fan of Imran Khan.

An official working with the government remarked about the present political climate to say, "If given an option of a referendum, people would opt for Pakistan." And added as a qualifier, layering his statement quite substantially, "We also have no faith in the Hurriyat."

The Imran Khan fan club discussion became a talking point amongst a taxi driver and a social worker. "I was sitting with my neighbour, and he had palpitations of the heart midway through talking. We told him, Imran Khan will sort it all out." They laughed.

And then the laugh went out of them. "I keep a glass down and then forget where I put it. I remember two minutes later. The doctor says this is the result of the depression I suffer from, and for which I am on medication."

"Some people are saying let's all just get nuked. Finish us all. Bahut thak gaye log. We are all just so tired."

In the northernmost part of Baramulla, in a small block called Boniyar, it was early evening and we walked into a common maidan where some young boys were playing cricket. We ended up disrupting their match but they were very warm and enthusiastic when we said we wanted to chat with them about how they felt post 370.

“We are not sleeping,” was their immediate response.

They said when they heard propaganda in the mainstream media about plans afoot to construct 50,000 temples in Kashmir it put them in a state of collective shock and disbelief.

“Where are our fundamental rights?” they remarked in unison. “Even in Hong Kong, people are out protesting and their rights aren’t taken away. The right to assemble, the right to education, the right to information, where is all of that?”

A hotel owner in Srinagar who was also a relative of the separatist leader i, told us how he is deeply concerned about the anger, humiliation and alienation Kashmiris were feeling in these last two months. He said that the scrapping of the special status and downsizing of Jammu and Kashmir to a union territory were political misadventures that would have irrevocable consequences for India. That they have reinforced people’s mistrust of India and could create a permanent divide between the people of Kashmir and rest of India. He said that there would be a dangerous rise of militancy and violence would once again rock the valley as in the 1990s. Instead of the much-projected force of integration, this could turn out to unite disparate voices against India. This is the reason for so many in the valley to place their hope in Imran Khan. That it blotted out Pakistan’s own murky track record of atrocities and political violence in a much more dramatic way than it has done in the past. He was not alone in explaining to us that until the abrogation of 370, separatists had a very limited influence in the valley, as did Pakistan. In the last two months, all of that has changed. Today the dominant view as quoted above is that if the Indian state can betray mainstream politicians – those who believed in India and stood with the country throughout this prolonged conflict, it will be even more vindictive will with ordinary Kashmiris.

But even in the midst of this near complete decimation of the middle-ground, there are some sane voices. Some amount of complexity and nuance. We found one person who is a civil rights activist and political worker who embodied all of this. He grew up in south Kashmir at the time when it was in the grip of militancy. His father was assassinated by militants for refusing to acquiesce to them. He has, despite all of that, been a believer in Indian mainstream politics. Like many of the people we interviewed. But this man continues to hold out a sliver of hope. He asked of himself and of all of us – as long as we are alive and we eat and live and love, we have got to hold on to that. To the everyday. And build on it.

### **Here are excerpts from a long interview**

“I belong to a farmer’s family. I want to become a good farmer. My father was a good farmer. We grew various grains and all kinds of fruit – pears, peaches, apricots, cherries. You learn so much from being closely connected with the earth. You learn that what you grow isn’t just for your personal consumption. The best fruits are sent to the community, the mulk. To those who have nothing. That was my primary experience growing up. The other which was seminal, was the period

of militancy in 1991. School was shut for six months and we spent our days playing cricket. There was chaos all around. Some said that the state election were rigged and that is what made things take a sudden turn. People started to demand azaadi – freedom from India. One of my cousins who was a teenager also left home to become a militant and receive training in Pakistan. 4-5 boys had crossed over for training from our village. In fact, there were boys going across from every village. Some of them came back and in those days, they were given a lot of respect that they are mujahideen. People used to go to their houses to see them and look at their guns. People used to go in large numbers to attend public rallies and programs. There were very big and organized protests during that time. I remember that the militants or rather organisations such as JKLF used to come and ask for funds. Some people used to give more and some less.

In 1992, the Babri Masjid was also demolished, so things got aggravated.

Our school atmosphere was disrupted. Schools were also burnt down, the wooden bridges were also burnt down. And in that time, there was also the mass exodus of Kashmiri pandits. Within 2-3 months, majority of the Hindu community left from here.

During winter, I used to go to Jammu, I saw that the pandits were living in tents. They were not given any warm welcome there. I didn't understand why they left their houses. I heard there were many threats to them, slogans were raised against them.

My parents put pressure on me to study and focus on my education. At the same time, security forces had begun to crack down on militancy and come to our homes for random interrogations. There was boy who was picked up and beaten up badly. My parents felt that I might get influenced negatively, so they sent me outside Kashmir to study. I was suddenly thrown into an entirely different world.

There was an incident near our house, where around 5-6 militants were shot down. There was a crackdown, and we were all asked to assemble in the open ground. Suddenly there was sound of grenades being lobbed. So around 200 people shut themselves inside a house to protect themselves from grenades. For 3 days, all 200 people stayed in the same house without food and only lived on water. And all three days, the encounter continued. Young boys were asked to step out of their homes to become human shields. But I did not join them. I stayed indoors. After three days, I went to a nearby house to look for some food. I had just helped myself to some rice when a man standing behind me said his children were starving. I abandoned my plate and saw there were around 14 -15 children sitting in a line with folded hands as they were hungry. I felt really bad and did not go inside the house. I did not go anywhere and I saw the man who said his kids are hungry, was made human shield and he died during cross fire. I felt so bad after seeing the houses broken, blood spilled everywhere. This was there in my mind for a long time and learnt a lot from that incident. There was a lot of confusion during

that time, that whether we have been made pawns, or should I join militancy, what is right and what is wrong.

Then when I returned to college, I ended up meeting a group of civil society activists. For the first time, I was exposed to people who made it their business to care about people they had never met. I started interacting with more and went on a cross-country tour with them. At the time, I was still very shy and withdrawn. But there was curiosity, which took me to various places and I met so many people. I got thrown into a vast spectrum of experiences from which I learned a lot.

I came back to Kashmir and started working with the family business. But I came back with open eyes, a window had opened up for me. I was imbued with faith and hope. If there is no hope then life has no meaning. I saw that so many people care about our predicament - people I didn't know. There are people who speak about rights and about humanity. Earlier I was confined to a Muslim society. That was all I knew. Now I was exposed to people who didn't believe in hierarchy and some who don't even believe in religion. I had hope that there are people who care for others, who don't discriminate, they believe in things which our surroundings never gave us. After associating with this sort of work, I believed in myself and in the possibility of things changing. I felt that anything is possible.

And then, in 2004, my father was killed by militants. He was killed for not being influenced by them. I was doing a job in Delhi at the time and I abruptly left all of that and came back to Kashmir. I was in a trauma. I could not decide what to do. I was confused. And almost immediately at the time, there was a massive earthquake in Kashmir. The civil rights group decided to start work here. My cousin and I started the Kashmir chapter. It took me in a completely different zone. I saw many more people, more sufferings, more misery. It was difficult. Earlier I saw myself as a victim of conflict but I realized everyone was a victim. I saw graveyards full of people. They were given different names and labels. Somebody was a martyr, somebody was not a martyr. But all of them were dead and we were giving them names. And everyone was a victim. I kept thinking we are here to fill the graveyard and no one is thinking about resolving the conflict.

When you are connected with the ground and are meeting people directly, those who have suffered, you get a completely different picture. You see the contradictions, layers, it prevents you from believing just one thing. It took me within my circle to discuss why shouldn't we involve ourselves directly with these issues? Maybe we can bring in a new discourse and new ideas. I encouraged people to participate directly in the elections of 2014. I got at least 10-12 people in. I contested as an independent. We were a small group but I felt we had to contest. This is not a time to keep quiet.

It was my first time going to the people for votes. Since I had been an activist, people asked why I was getting into politics, that it was dirty. I felt we need to be in



or it will stay dirty. But I had very meagre resources. I came third. After losing an election it happens - you wonder what to do next.

You become an activist again was another struggle. I was approached by various political parties but I tried to keep my distance from all of them. I was under pressure of all kinds but I chose to integrate with India and with mainstream politics. I had and have friends across the spectrum. I felt that despite all that - when I had all options available - to be with the mainstream or separatists and I chose to be with the mainstream.

Now, after abrogation, everyone who chose that side was turned into a separatist by Modi overnight. For me, right now; survival is a priority. We are hit by a crisis and our response should be emergency relief. I am in that mode. Later we can think strategically about what to do.

We are living, breathing, eating. But there is this trauma underneath all of that But my hope lies in the everyday. I am so there is hope. What we will do with it we have to still formulate. Bigger than the abrogation of 370 is the conflict itself. How to work towards ending that. That's far more important.



# Fear

3:30am on the morning of August 5th, a station house officer or policeman in charge of the station in a village somewhere in Kashmir (location withheld to protect the identity of the people who spoke to us); jumped over the wall of a political activist's house along with four other people. He called out the name of the activist's father. And when the old man appeared, they asked for his son. They informed them that they were taking him into preventive detention to the police station; because article 370 was being abrogated in the morning. The officer then instructed his men to provide fresh bedding to the man now being taken into custody. Two days later, he was shifted to a prison. The police told the family they had "instructions from above."

This was how fear was built into the system the morning that Jammu and Kashmir had its special status and statehood taken away. The man in question had not made incendiary speeches. He had not incited violence. He had not said anything about article 370 because he had no idea it was about to be revoked. He was arrested under sections 151 and 107 of the Indian Penal code.

Section 151 is summarised as follows :

Arrest to prevent the commission of cognizable offences.

- (1) A police officer knowing of a design to commit any cognizable offence may arrest, without orders from a Magistrate and without a warrant, the person so designing, if it appears to such officer that the commission of the offence cannot be otherwise prevented.
- (2) No person arrested under sub- section (1) shall be detained in custody for a period exceeding twenty- four hours from the time of his arrest unless his further detention is required or authorised under any other provisions of this Code or of any other law for the time being in force.

Section 107 is this:

Security for keeping the peace in other cases.

- (1) When an Executive Magistrate receives information that any person is likely to commit a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquillity or to

do any wrongful act that may probably occasion a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquillity and is of opinion that there is sufficient ground for proceeding, he may, in the manner hereinafter provided, require such person to show cause why he should not be ordered to execute a bond, 1 with or without sureties,] for keeping the peace for such period, not exceeding one year, as the Magistrate thinks fit.

- (2) Proceedings under this section may be taken before any Executive Magistrate when either the place where the breach of the peace or disturbance is apprehended is within his local jurisdiction or there is within such jurisdiction a person who is likely to commit a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquillity or to do any wrongful act as aforesaid beyond such jurisdiction.

Initially, his wife and daughter had trouble getting permission to meet him but this was relaxed after a few days. However, no one knows when he will be released. His wife is depressed and his children are constantly worried about their father. At one point, the wife's stress got the better of her and she shouted at the police officer in whose care her husband was. "When will you let him go?"

His father told us - "She is an educated woman. She knew the answer. But this was the level of frustration within."

Fear isn't about torture or being beaten. Fear is about uncertainty. Not knowing when you may be arrested or why. Or if and when you will be released. What will provoke action from the state and who you can trust. This is what the members of the arrested man's family said to us. He was eating his meals. The other prisoners with him were all eating together and offering their prayers together. But no one knows how long her will be detained for. His mother can't bear to visit him in prison so she has not gone so far. The father said that when he visited him last, the prisoner in question's morale was very low. He broke down when he saw his father. He expanded to talk about the general atmosphere of uncertainty stemming from summary arrests like that of his son. "It's like we've been throttled. Gala dabaya gaya hai," he said.

2:30 am, August 4th, a pattern emerges. Midnight arrests, not entering the gate or ringing the doorbell but scaling the wall. Fear has a pattern. The deputy superintendent of police and the station house officer in another town in Kashmir jumped over the wall of the house of a youth leader from a political party. The leader's father described what happened.

"We thought militants had come because on September 2, 1999 militants had entered our home in the middle of the night and killed my father. DSP called out to me, so we opened the door. They came in and said this was a pre-emptive arrest. As they came in with chappals, the family thought they were militants. After a few minutes realized that it was the police. We thought it was for our protection. But

they took my son away. We went to the police station in the morning. They said they got a 'message from above.' ”

The father continued. “Whatever space we (mainstream parties) had created, all is lost. They have shown their true face – they’ve broken the relationship we had with India. 'Rishta tod diya!' There used to be a joke in the valley – that by the end of Modi’s first term PDP and NC would definitely come together. Abrogation of 370 has succeeded in uniting all political factions and ideologies in Kashmir. There is a strong anti-India sentiment. There is no political space now for mainstream parties. With what face do we go to the common people. The middle path has been ceded. It’s a victory for separatists. They have been vindicated. Modi has proved them right. They have always been asking for a referendum.”

“We are allowed to meet my son once a week. We can talk only from across the jaali – the grill. He has not been well.”

In the last two months, fear wore many faces in Kashmir. A curious one that we encountered was our meeting with a senior political leader whose circumstances were so indecipherable that we are still not quite sure what to make of it. On paper, that is legally speaking, we were told he is not in detention. He is not under house arrest. But on approaching his house, we were encountered by security at the gate – both uniformed and plainclothes. A quasi-security person came up to our car and advised us to leave a note and move the car out of sight for 'security reasons.' We had no idea what that meant. Two days later, a note was sent to us, 'clearing our visit.' The lack of clarity, the smokescreens within smokescreens were the setting for this meeting.

The leader told us that on one hand, the Supreme court told him to “approach the local administration if there are any curbs on his movement in Kashmir.” And then on the other hand, he said, “he has been under house arrest after returning to Kashmir from a visit to Delhi.”

His party told us that “he is not under detention but cannot leave his home and no outsiders are allowed to meet him.”

When we did meet him, the leader described the unofficial diktat that operated in contravention of official policy. The gap between the two was the sum of all fear.

“Differences of opinion with the government have become a crime,” he said. “If you praise the government’s action it’s fine, if you raise a question it’s a crime. There is no law which doesn’t allow us to raise questions, so on what basis are political leaders being stopped and arrested? Is it martial law or emergency?”

He continued. “The BJP is allowed to be active, accuse, abuse the entire state, there is no other political activity except that of the BJP. Political processes are suspended.”

And the next point he made was key to understanding what has happened to the state.

“There is no formal announcement of curfew but in effect it is worse than curfew. In a formal curfew there are guidelines, you can get a curfew pass, now there is no curfew pass, no rule of law, jungle raj is there. Now you can be stopped anywhere without giving any reason.”

The absence of reason, it appeared to us; was perhaps the pivot around which the post abrogation politics now swivels. The arrested but not arrested leader said that the present circumstances are a massive test of the will of the people to continue their civil disobedience in the face of such extraordinary uncertainty. “We have to see how much capacity we have to resist. Compulsion will tire out people. Kashmir is like a big jail now.”

A senior political leader and journalist separately spoke about how the centre has been sending agencies, The National Investigation Agency to political leaders over the last 6 months asking them from where they got the money to buy or construct a house, etc. They were also threatened with cases of corruption! “People are searched, followed by intelligence agencies etc.,” said another journalist.

Fear in Kashmir is also the dark ink splattered across the state’s information highway. The shutting down of the internet and mobile services and for the longest time, even landlines has forced people to live on rumours and cascading cycles of fear and also made life impossible for journalists. Who have had to deal with the double intimidation of not knowing if what they say is verifiable and also - the fear of arrest, being charged with sedition in a state where those fears have had a long and terrifying history.

He then added a line that was very telling. “Now it is apparently less violent but more scary. In the protests and lockdown in 2008 onwards, they, they’d stop you and beat you. It happened to me in 2010. They issued white slips to us, then yellow, then pink slips.” This time, the journalist explained, the Indian establishment has not officially stopped the press. So the fear is actually greater. It’s the ‘you never know’ syndrome.

The journalist continued. “There is also a suspicion amongst journalists but now it is beyond that. There is a breakdown of the system. There is no system. There is only the constant fear of big brother watching you. If Chidambaram is not spared, who are we?”

The outpouring turned into a lament. The Press Club of Kashmir is only four months old, the journalist told us. But Kashmir has had a great and glorious history of journalism. In 1896, the Kashmiri journalist Abdul Salam Rafiqi was deeply critical of autocratic rule. “Now there is such a disconnect,” the journalist explained, “we can’t even think of writing petitions. We are literally in a black hole. The one hope is that we have seen worse times in our history which we hear from one generation to the next. Somewhere we are still living in 1953 or 1947. We are still dealing with that uncertainty, that existentialist crisis.”

The fear ricocheting through the Kashmir valley was writ large across the landscape. What we were not prepared for was Jammu. This part of the state was meant to be universal in its acceptance of the striking down of article 370. They were out celebrating. But those that weren't, we found; were riddled with such abominably high levels of fear that it overtook all of the outpourings were heard from the valley.

More than half the people we contacted in Jammu froze when they heard we wanted to meet them. They refused outright to meet us or even engage with us on the phone, even when we made it clear we were not going to mention any names. The centre of this terror is located in Jammu's commerce - its business community. People in whose name the centre took the drastic steps that it did.

After the initial euphoria, businessmen realized that their main artery - located in the symbiotic relationship with Kashmir; had been cut off. In the grip of this coma, the head of the chamber of commerce, we were told; called for a blockade to be held on the 16th of September. The announcement for the bandh or blockade was made on the 14th morning. But by the same evening, the head of the chamber of commerce had called off the bandh. He told the press that the government had given him an assurance that business would not be hit. An insider to this process told us that the story doing the rounds was that he was scared of being sent to prison. We don't know if this was true, but the perception is everything. Fear is built on precisely this.

The anecdote made sense when we met another businessman who was on various committees that made policy decisions on trade and commerce in Jammu. He spoke in riddles for a long time. He shifted uncomfortably in his seat. His face was the picture of fear. Tight and trying to hide all traces of expression. He tested the waters before opening up. This was an elliptical line he threw at us at the start.

"Mostly people take whatever is provided to them in the country. There's a movie is going on and people like to see the film that's being screened. We need to understand who is the director, who is producing it, who is the script writer."

And then he came out with what he really meant to say.

"The apex body is the Parliament and whoever holds power there. We are hostage to the system. The abrogation of 370 has been unilaterally imposed on us. It's widened the rift between people. Trade is hampered, work is not happening. Banks are not functioning. 60% of Jammu's trade is with Kashmir, so that is affected. There is simmering discontent. And it can lead to problems. The system is shying away from dialogue and we are being oppressed instead. Later when people realize what's happening, it will be too late for the dialogue. The discontent should be resolved as soon as possible. When you leave problems alone, over time they become more complex. There is an overall fear psychosis and oppression."

If political leaders in Kashmir were being confined to their homes or placed under preventive detention, the same was true of Jammu – where “everything was ostensibly normal.”

A politician we met described what was meted out to him.

“On 4th August, I left Srinagar to go to Delhi, as we had a program in Delhi. The Jammu police went to my house in Srinagar and the security guard informed him that I had left for Delhi. So they intimidated him to tell me that when I got back, I will be placed under house arrest. On 11th August, I returned to Jammu. On 12th was Bakra Eid, and people from the intelligence agencies came and told me that I did not intimate the police that I was back.

On 16th August, we kept a press conference, to give an official statement. My spokesman, four general secretaries reached the venue and I was to join them, when I got a call from a friend who informed me that I was about to be arrested. The superintendent of police for Jammu south, the station house officer, the bet constable all came home and said they knew I wasn't the kind of leader to cause trouble but they had 'orders from above.' That familiar phrase. My personal security officer's numbers were taken. He was called and told that he would have to inform the police of every detail about who came and went and even who said what. They also placed a group of Central Reserve Police Force personnel outside my place round the clock. From then till 30th September, I have not moved out of this gate. On 22nd I gave them intimation that my house given by the government in Srinagar has been withdrawn. As ex-party president and former cabinet minister, I was given a house in Srinagar, which was a rented two-bedroom place, by the government. They were asked to remove the luggage. I was worried, when I came to know about this because being under house arrest, I was not in a position to clear that house of my belongings. So I called the estate officer. He told me that the state has withdrawn the service and also de-hired the house. I then called a friend and asked him to help me contact the owner of the house. I requested the owner to let me keep the house and the rent given by the government will be given by me, till the time I don't make an alternate arrangement. The owner was a decent man and he agreed to let me stay.

Recently, I asked the senior superintendent of police if I could travel for one day to Srinagar to re-hire the house and give the owner rent and if after that I could go to Delhi as my Hb1ac was very high, and I was being treated for it at Delhi's Ganga Ram Hospital. After 8 days the SSP told me that I would not be allowed to go to Srinagar but was being given permission to go to Delhi. The officer had taken the personal responsibility in allowing me to travel.”

The fear in Kashmir was obvious, expected and spoken of. The fear in Jammu was hidden, macabre, even mocking. Students and teachers that met us privately confirmed this to us.

“More than half the people don't know what 370 is. Then they abrogated 370. All



the leaders are arrested. They say there is no 144 or curfew in place but every 100 meters when you move out of the city you find central reserve police force persons. This has never happened in Jammu before. You can say 370 has been removed and 'BJP ki jai.' But you can't say govt has done wrong. The moment you say that you will be picked up. There is an atmosphere of fear. People call me and tell me - 'You are speaking like this - you know how unsafe it is. The police is under the control of the forces. They are now using police against us for spreading fear. They can put any charge even PSA.' Now a lot of people are understanding and they are abusing and saying we did a mistake by voting for them."

All the celebration that you see on Tv are in BJP office only. People are not celebrating."

"After the govt collapsed we saw the symptoms that 370 could be illegally removed. They stopped mobile phones and internet services. The armed forces were brought in. I am not saying that they've tortured anyone but in a democracy every citizen has the right to freedom of expression, to speak against oppression, ration raat mobile, internet band, forces laga di, 144 laga di, just try and imagine that state. Think about medical emergencies, how do people call ambulance service or access doctors and hospitals. There was a total atmosphere of fear - deshshat ka mahaul. Our generation never saw so many forces in Jammu ever. After every 100 metres there were armed forces. Many students and young people are against the government's steps but they are not speaking out. When all the big leaders are arrested, if we speak, where will we stand? Students are also concerned that if they speak out it will affect their career. The freedom of expression has been snatched in Jammu."

We also caught up with a family that has been in politics in Jammu for two generations. The father defended Sheikh Abdullah in court. The son is currently a politician. And they both shared their stories of fear and despondency.

The old man was emotional about the politics of the state. It's what he has spent a lifetime on. "In the 1950s when the Sheikh was arrested, in Jammu every advocate refused to represent the case. I was approached by somebody, I said why not? I am here as a lawyer and it's my duty to represent him. I was taken to translate every document from Urdu to English, that's how I got associated with him and remained with him till he came to power in 1975.

My views were different from the local Hindus as I believed we have to carry the Kashmiris with us. To carry them along, help them, whenever needed. Jammu had to be on the right side of the Kashmiri people. To understand that Kashmir is with you for all purposes. It would not be correct to take them for granted. In every situation, where to send their children out, getting them admitted and so on. My role was there.

Now the situation is very grim. What was article 370 anyway? It had nothing left in it. And what in any case was stopping the BJP from recruiting boys from here even

if 370 was in place? Its abrogation was nothing but sadistic pleasure. It stopped nothing. People were still finding ways to buy land. Now people are saying we won't sell our land. We will die we will not sell our land."

The son said how he now operates in a political environment that is so thoroughly polarized that most people from Jammu even amongst his circle of friends do not interact with Kashmiris. And traders, businessmen and people in Jammu are upset, terrified and deeply divided.

"At the end of the day what is happening now is that people in Jammu have very divergent views. Unlike in Kashmir where 99% of the people are Muslims, Jammu has Rajputs, Gujjars, Pahadis, Brahmins, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and they all think differently. Economically speaking, the Bakarwals are at the lowest rung. Pahadis and Gujjars have their differences. Gujjars are 100% Muslim, Pahadis have Muslims and Hindus both. When it comes to fighting Kashmiris however, the Gujjar Muslims and Hindu Pahadis come together. Otherwise, they will never vote for each other."

The son went on to talk of the confusion and economic disarray. He said that he fact that the BJP and RSS leader Ram Madhav was in Jammu telling people they will get their domicile status and protection of jobs is indicative of the fact that the opposite is what's playing on people's minds. He added that in Jammu, the fear of reprisal for speaking their minds is so acute that even mainstream parties like Congress were actually prevented from holding a press conference. The station house officer apparently came and told a party worker not to speak about article 370. Which begs the obvious question - what on earth is the police being made to do?

"They did not allow the Panthers Party or the National Conference to speak to the media. They don't want the international community to know that there are people in Jammu who are opposing the abrogation of 370. In fact, our official spokesperson was holding a press briefing and he was picked up from his office. We have pictures and video clippings of it. That is how things are."

# Disunion

When the complete shutdown of communication took place on the eve of 5th August, it was as if the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir was disgorged from the body of India. People said that it felt like a sealing off, a severance that even at the end of two months, was the biggest part of their trauma. It had numerous practical implications. Most have been listed - from the non-availability of ambulances, essential drugs, cancer drugs, dialysis visits; the inability of people to attend funerals or even communicate the death of a family member to their immediate circles. The inability of the press to print newspapers and traders, farmers, shopkeepers and businessmen to function. Schools and colleges have been shut ever since and admissions are in jeopardy. Some of the nuances of these everyday trauma do need elaborating here. But there is one part of the rupture that has barely been discussed if at all. It came to our notice when we met a former bureaucrat. The disunion of Jammu and Kashmir caused by the striking down of Article 370 has very significant consequences for the laws and acts that are going to remain from the erstwhile state and those that are being re-written in the Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019.

Many central acts that did not apply to the state will now apply to the newly created union territory once the abrogation of 370 comes into effect on 31st October, 2019. And many state acts will be replaced by their national avatars. According to the bureaucrat we spoke with, “no thought has gone into the re-organization of Jammu and Kashmir. It has been done with a vengeance.” He explained what he meant.

“In the proposed re-organization of the state, the Jammu and Kashmir Sri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Act, 1988 is retained and the Jammu and Kashmir Right to Information Act, 2009 will be done away with as the RTI Act, 2005 will now become applicable.” The state RTI act, he told us, had some strong provisions. “Ours is time bound disposal of cases. Each case must be disposed of within 90 days, inclusive of the appeals process.” He explained that this may not be practical at the national level because of the sheer volume of RTI queries to be dealt with. But in Jammu and Kashmir, there isn’t such an overload so it made sense to have a time-bound delivery of information for queries coming in.

Similarly, the bureaucrat said that the state waqf act will be replaced by the central one which gives too much power to shrine administrators.

The universal complaint across both Jammu and Kashmir was the collapse of education from the primary to the university level. An educationist explained how the shutting down of the internet affected university admissions. His university offers a number of online courses which have been dead for the two months long lockdown. Admissions for the next academic session were in their fourth round when 370 was struck down and the internet switched off. He had to go to Delhi to download admission related emails and reply to them.

The most insurmountable practical fallout of the communication shutdown after 5th August is in the medical sphere. We spoke with a senior gynaecologist in Srinagar. She told us that for the first few days she could not be called for emergencies by junior doctors because no phones were working and her address was not updated on the hospital files since, in a digital era, those were seldom in use. In these last two months, when there has been a medical emergency at night, it has not been possible to call an ambulance. So people are asking for their neighbour's cars. Neighbours do lend their cars but out of fear refuse to accompany the patient and family to the hospital.

A senior staff of National Health Mission(NHM) in Baramulla said that health facilities are not getting medicines on time. She spoke about two deaths due to snake bites that were reported to the NHM office at the district level. She said the deaths occurred because the anti-venom drug couldn't be got in though they were available in stock. The store keepers weren't there and there was no way of communicating with them. "Public healthcare programmes are implemented through ASHA worker at the village level. Their supply of drugs was coming to an end and we were about to replenish them when the communication blackout happened", she said. The ASHA is the only point of contact in remote villages, when someone has a fever or is in need of life saving drugs or a vaccine or first aid or even help with the delivering of babies.

The senior health professional further told us that ante-natal and post-natal care of both mother and children has greatly suffered in this period. In the absence of such care, ante-partum and post-partum haemorrhages cannot be treated in time and women have a high risk of becoming anaemic. The treatment of all non-communicable disease like hypertension, diabetes and chronic mental illness in remote parts of the district have also suffered badly and acute incidents, relapses and complications have increased several fold, because of interrupted treatment in the absence of phones and public transport.

In the district of Budgam, 26 kilometres to the south of Srinagar, we met the owners of a private hospital and college. They told us that the college has been closed since the 4th of August. The hospital staff has been unable to get to work so no investigations or laboratory tests were possible. Most doctors were also

unable to come. The intake and purchase of medicines has gone down and people are only buying essential drugs.

Amongst the most beleaguered in Kashmir are women whose husbands have disappeared into the conflict or arrested by security forces or killed in clashes with the armed forces. They are suddenly left without a means to earn and since there is no certainty to the husband's disappearance, they spend years and sometimes decades waiting for them to return and cannot start a life with someone else. A woman who helps run one of the best-known organizations that works with such women, described what the communication shutdown did to these women - known across Kashmir as 'half-widows.'

"We work with 300 women that come to our weekly protests. Since August 5th, we've only been able to be in touch with one of them. Her sons disappeared into the conflict. When we managed to establish contact, we found out that she needed an eye operation but was unable to go because of the information blockade, so she was in a very bad way. We got in touch with her after nearly 2 months. Another half widow came by but our office was closed. So she left a note in the lock, saying she wanted to meet. She needed money. She works as a daily wage worker in people's homes.

A big concern in Kashmir is the effect of the conflict on people's mental health. Various studies in Kashmir have revealed a high incidence of mental health issues in the valley due to the decades long conflict. A 2016 study by Médecins Sans Frontier (MSF) reported that as much as 45 percent of Kashmir's population "was experiencing symptoms of mental distress, with 41 percent exhibiting probable depression." We met two psychiatrists who spoke to us about the centrally sponsored mental health programme meant to improve access to diagnostic and treatment services called the DMHP programme. They said that officially, the programme runs in the following 6 districts: Srinagar, Baramulla and Sopore, Bandipora and Pulwama. However, the doctors claimed that for all practical purposes, it only worked properly in two of these districts - Baramulla and Pulwama. Even before the abrogation of 370 and ensuing communication blackout, there had been an acute shortage of psychiatrists across Kashmir. Community outreach is poor and people in deep distress often turn to faith healers, religious leaders and local practitioners for counselling, care and treatment.

A consultant who works in the mental health space in Kashmir said that the uncertainty in the last two months is causing stress and anxiety in people. The crackdown by the establishment along with the communication and transport blockade were also limiting access to mental healthcare services. People are not able to access services. He said prior to 5th August, an average of 200 patients would visit the OPD he works at every day. The number has since dropped to 70-80. Srinagar has more restrictions on movement than other areas, which has led to a fall in the number of patients. He said the reason for the drop was that

patients come from far flung areas and public transport was not functioning. Patients may find it easier to reach district hospitals, such as the one in Baramulla. On Fridays, the hospital wears a deserted look on account of enhanced restrictions or curfew.

The conflict especially in the last two months have created structural reasons for depression, anxiety and a whole host of mental health problems. The consultant said, “ The economy of Kashmir is predominantly dependant on agriculture and other related activities. Almost 90% of the workforce is linked to the apple economy in some way or the other. With the latter taking a big hit on account of the blockade and threats from 'certain corners', apply orchardists are deeply worried whether they would be able to sell their produce.”.

The inability to communicate and the threat of communication are added factors of distress. Earlier people used to call before going somewhere but now they have to go personally or send someone. This becomes especially difficult during medical and other emergencies and the death of a loved one or a family member. There is also the threat of communication – people are essentially afraid to speak because of fear and mistrust –people are afraid that if they air their views on their political situation they will be put behind bars. There is a high vigilance with regards to communication – patients are wary of articulating their views on the political situation even with their doctors. Parents with young boys are deeply anxious about them being detained or arrested especially if they have been involved in stone pelting. There have been reports of young boys going missing from villages.

Dr Anirudh Kala, a well- known psychiatrist and team member have made the following observations on the overall impact on mental health post 5th August. They are as follows:-

1. Most severe mental illnesses need continuous follow up and treatment often for years. All these follow up visits were disrupted because of absence of public transport resulting in discontinuation of medication. Even as late as end of September follow up rates at Institute of Mental Health were 30-40% of the average before 5th August. It is understandable that there would have been a proportionate increase in relapses. New patients are often uncooperative and sometimes are even more difficult to bring for treatment in the best of times and in the absence of public transport it is impossible. Plus, families are apprehensive that the security forces would be suspicious of someone with erratic behaviour. In normal times ASHA workers help the families in such situations but here even they have not been coming for work because of absence of public transport.
2. Many people we met during our trip reported heightened anxiety and sleep disturbance. Parents whose grown up sons got delayed in reaching home had frank anxiety symptoms because there was no way to assuage their



worst fears in the absence of mobile phones. Most families did not have any landlines either.

3. Several people we met reported they were smoking much more. A journalist said his wife who used to chide him for smoking now herself wants to smoke once in a while.
4. Kashmir already had high rates of PTSD or post-traumatic stress disorder, quoted in various studies over the recent years (in spite of better physical health parameters than rest of country) conducted by local psychiatrists and by Doctors Without Borders.

It is too early to say with certainty if these rates have further increased because typically patients of PTSD reach psychiatrists about 3 months after onset because they first contact the nearest GPs. However, PTSD occurs after stressful events which are outside the gamut of usual stresses of routine life and Kashmir at present fits that bill and it will be highly surprising if a few months from now we do not find extraordinarily high rates of PTSD.

5. As of now what is clearly visible are the predominant emotions and these are of having been betrayed, humiliated, of anger and defiance. As a young woman professional put it, “Hum kathputli thorhe hi hain ki vo nachayenge aur hum naachte jayenge. We are not marionettes that we will be played any which way and we will acquiesce.” Another woman teacher said, “The government should not push the youth to a 'nothing to lose position.'”

# Love and Resilience

It may seem ridiculous to some to be speaking of love or resilience in the face of a disaster of such catastrophic proportions. We weren't looking for it necessarily, but it was there. The mundane all-important tasks of getting married and the not so mundane adventure of love, courtship. The rootedness and impossibility of parenting. And the all-consuming Kashmiri occupation or rather obsession with eating. These we were told brought some sanity. And the details just had to be put down.

We were invited to a moderate sized gathering of people who said they needed to see each other, read poetry together, play the rabab and to do all this purposefully to get past the every and seemingly insurmountable odds.

## **The host began the session like this :**

“The idea of holding this seminar is based on the fact that all our spaces for reflection, for articulation have been curbed, we have been strangulated, we don't have the liberty to speak our hearts out. We cannot vent out our frustrations, so we can't speak what we are feeling. In such situations it is very important to have these safe spaces where you feel free to articulate what you are feeling and not feel curbed. So the idea behind arranging this setting at home was for everybody to feel safe. So we don't have the fear of being picked up by police or be raided. It is better that we do this in the safety of our homes so that all of you feel safe and confident in sharing whatever you want to.”

The moderator for the session took over with beautiful elegiac prose.

“I will give you an example to explain the importance of this meeting. When during winters we sit quietly in our homes, when the winter god starts believing that he now rules us and we are in his firm grip, then suddenly from the inner dark corners of the dry trees we hear the crackling sounds, then they become louder. We hear them and the hope for spring season awakens within us. We come to know from these voices, sounds that the god of oppression, of fascism, is losing its hold. These voices are very important for giving us hope, that life is returning.”

The moderator continued and he had everyone's attention.

“Oppression wants us to die but our reaction is to stay alive at all costs.”

“A Persian poet wrote open your wounds sometimes and see them, it will make you feel alive.

And I remember a line of a poet saying that -

“जब ज़बांंदी के एहकाम दिए जाते है  
तब इन्हीं अशकों से पैगाम दिए जाते है”

When instructions are given to keep quiet

Then messages are communicated through these tears.

This wailing, this storytelling, is not a minor thing, when freedom of speech is throttled, speaking is banned, when you are afraid of the Public Safety Act and fear of various kinds exist, then tears communicate the messages. Tears rolling down silently register the protest against the oppressor, and the oppressed ones realize that they are alive.”

It was indeed a morning of catharsis and crying. Two photographers exhibited their pictures of the conflict. A man engulfed in smoke. Only the hands of women - now in hope, now in despair.

A film maker screened a ten-minute film about two boys floating in abandoned shikaras on the Dal lake. One has plucked a basket-full of lilies and the other boy has found a few abandoned duck eggs. The boy with the lilies asks if can exchange all the lilies for duck eggs. He then rides his shikara through the pale green morning light on the lake and then takes the eggs and walks with them along a railway track. He drops the eggs back in the nest with the mother hen and continues to walk down the railway track, his back to the audience. We can hear the sound of a train approaching the track, getting louder. The film ends. Most eyes were moist at the end of the film. Most felt like they were that boy on screen. That they were all Kashmir in that instant. All of Kashmir and everything it felt like.

In another part of Srinagar, a young man was using the lockdown to hold small and intimate meetings with like-minded people in his home. His traditional home with solid oakwood beams across the roof and fruit trees of every description in his front lawn.

“We need spaces to talk and to be. To walk on foot and a good dastarkhwan,” he said. He was right. We were treated to the thinnest, crispest kebab and roti breakfast that Kashmir could possibly offer.

“I created this space for a few like-minded people to meet. I created it during the 2016 blockade and am doing it again now. I know Persian. So, there are boys and girls that come here and meet to learn Persian. We hear, we share, our batteries are re-charged. You can't be immune from the conflict but these spaces energize you. For us in Kashmir it's like the Karbala all over again - 1400 years ago. And we don't have Hussain, there is nobody to speak for us.”

He added with more than a touch of poignancy, “The clampdown is like what happens to a diabetic. First you do a 180-degree turn, you change everything. After a while, the abnormal becomes normal. You know how to manage the disease.”

So in these times of sickness, there was still dating. A young journalist who was part of our Dastarkhwan revealed the places where young people meet.

“In normal times, Pratap Park, Jhelum band ke benches are dating places. And of course, restaurants etc. Now shrines are dating places. The Hazratbal dargah is a dating place.”

Sometimes, even romance can cause unbelievable stress because of the communication lockdown. We were told three stories.

“During the earlier lockdown, my brother’s friend was dating my friend and they couldn’t communicate. So he came to me and said, `Can you do me a favour. I can’t communicate with her, can you give her this letter? How soon are you going to her place? Go today please and ask her to write me a reply.”

The second story comes with a statutory warning. It’s dark.

“When the army tortures men, they torture their private parts. And that is the end of their sex life. A guy in Shopian was tortured shortly after abrogation. After he was released, a journalist did an interview with him. He had been married only recently. So the girl’s brother turned up for the interview, took the journalist aside and said to him – If he has been tortured, please let me know, my sister is very young. We will get her married elsewhere.”

And the third in this short series of love in the time of conflict could potentially be called funny. A video journalist was driving past his girlfriend’s house when he saw that the lane outside was covered in lime powder or chuna. There are two occasions on which people pour this stark white powder all along the road outside their house. When there is a wedding in the offing or someone has died. The boy had his heart in his mouth. Had his girlfriend ditched him in the lockdown? Was she getting married? Later he found out that there had been a death in her family.

At a dinner discussion about politics and article 370, the air was heavy and claustrophobic. We didn’t want to ask the usual question about hope. Before we could say anything, a very wise man decided to ask us what we thought. “What is left after everything is taken away, people keep telling us it’s Kashmiriyat, it’s Kashmiriyat, what is Kashmiriyat?” We didn’t take long to answer. “Food.” That was our unanimous reply.

They agreed.

“We Kashmiris are crazy people. We have a big feast even when someone dies, to celebrate their life. Someone is dead and we cook a seven-course meal.”

“In that case,” said one of us, “please point me to the next funeral.”

Everyone laughed.

And it was re-iterated to us. In the end, the trauma is in the everyday and the relief and resilience is also in the everyday. The humdrum, the ordinary. In finding ways to live.

# Recommendations

As we moved from place to place and people to people, lists became a `thing.' We asked people to tell us what they would like to have changed and they asked us the same. The end result is this long bullet-pointed wish-list. We feel it's a call to action.

## For the Government of India

1. Immediate restoration of Articles 370 and 35A and statehood
2. Restore landlines, mobile, internet, broadband services with immediate effect
3. Release all political leaders, social activists, youth, and children, withdraw all cases
4. Withdraw army and paramilitary forces
5. Remove restrictions on movement of people
6. Immediate steps to restore people's faith in democracy
7. Government of India must work with all stakeholders to bring about peace and normalcy in the state and ensure that decisions regarding the political future of J& K are made through a process of dialogue and consultation and after ascertaining the will of the people
8. Restore tourism and all other livelihood activities
9. Provide mental health services in every district with immediate effect as mandated as mandated under the Mental Health Care Act, 2017
10. Digitize records - land records, hospital records, jail records
11. Postpone block level elections until all political prisoners are released
12. Put in place confidence building and safety measures so that children and young people can go back to school and colleges without fear. Make every effort to mitigate the psychosocial consequences of the conflict on children.
13. Provide compensation to families of those who died because they weren't able to access timely medical support due to the communication blockade and security clampdown
14. Undertake an assessment of the economic losses faced by orchardists,



businesses, and traders due to communication and transport blockade and provide appropriate compensation and relief

15. To look into allegations of excesses by the army and paramilitary forces and undertake time-bound inquiries
16. Lift restrictions on movement of journalists so that there can be genuine on ground reporting. Refrain from monitoring, surveillance and intimidation of journalists

### **For the Judiciary**

1. Give an urgent patient hearing to the representations and restore the constitutional safeguards

### **For Civil Society**

1. Engage with people of Jammu & Kashmir, start people to people exchanges and explore possibility of working on the ground to build bridges and restore faith in the democratic process
2. Invite people of Jammu & Kashmir to as many states in India as possible and organize interactions for people to know the reality of Jammu & Kashmir
3. To find ways of engagement to counter humiliation and betrayal felt by people of J & K
4. Go in and document goings on more frequently
5. Download the best video, internet and print stories on J&K and show these on your next trip in, they don't know what's out there that is good

### **Media**

1. Invite journalists from J & K and organize interactions. Explore possibility of forming a network of media professionals to support J & K journalists.
2. Build solidarity with each other and with International media in order withstand the pressure from the state.

### **Human Rights Organizations national / International**

1. Send teams to J & K to assess the ground situation
2. Undertake an independent assessment of those killed and injured and deaths due to negligence and not being able to access medical services
3. Undertake an independent assessment of the mental health impact of the current crisis on various groups/constituencies especially those who are most vulnerable
- 4) Facilitate greater dialogue and engagement among human rights and civil liberties groups in J& K and other parts of the country.

### **J & K Civil Society**

1. Actively engage with democratic networks in within and outside India

## Residents outside J & K

We have tried to represent the situation on the ground in Jammu and Kashmir in the main report. However, we also feel it is important to understand the issues, concerns and challenges faced by residents of Jammu & Kashmir living in other parts of the country post abrogation of Article 370.

People spoke about feeling shock and despair in the first fifteen days. Many of them said that it was a matter of great humiliation that a fundamental decision such as the abrogation of 370 was taken unilaterally without any discussion or engagement with those who mattered most - - the people of J&K and their elected representatives. Then came other realities - the inability to talk with families, the economic hardship faced by with students as they ran out of money; their inability to pay fees, rent or buy food and take care of other survival needs. Those who were at home for vacation missed deadlines for filling forms because of the communication blockade and thus could not secure admissions to colleges/universities. Many young people felt high levels of stress and anxiety and not everyone had a counsellor or someone to talk to. The most difficult things was experiences of 'othering' by fellow students, colleagues, the indifference of fellow Indians and the fear of being labelled or taunted a terrorist or an anti-national. The most common refrain from those we spoke to was the feeling of being let down or betrayed by the Indian government and the indifference of friends and colleagues to what had happened.

We bring to you people's experiences in their own words -

"I have always stood with the idea of India, a Gandhian India. I was not in a position to talk to my family for 15 days. People around me, however, were totally apathetic! They said it does not matter - (these) things happen! The insensitivity was unimaginable! The reactions were, "are baat nahi ho rahi to kya ho gaya, internet band ho gaya to kya ho gaya? So what if you can't speak to the family, so what if internet is not working?" We became terrorists overnight; people like me who were liberals were tagged as anti-nationals. My father asked me to leave; my brother is going back to Kashmir. My father is becoming paranoid. My parents are telling me not to speak out. Every Kashmiri living in various cities in India are at risk."

“We had taken open stance against (militancy) in the 1990s. Those who called us sane voices from Kashmir are now questioning us. Abrogation of 370 is totally undemocratic. It is an attack on federal structure. This is a unilateral decision, without the consent of the Assembly”.

“We were harassed earlier for criticizing the violence in Kashmir, now we have been put in the same bracket - all of us! I was very vocal, now I have restricted my speaking on Kashmir. My former professors in DU they told me it's normal. It pains when educated people are so insensitive. Every Kashmiri is in a state of shock. It took everyone 10-15 days to realize what was happening. We feel humiliated and betrayed.”

“I criticized Imran Khan's tweets because to me it is making ground for return of violence in Kashmir. The government has helped in alienating all those who were with the idea of India. The government wants violence to erupt in Kashmir because they want to vilify Muslims in India. Why is BJP allowed to campaign while others are in jail? “

“They have redefined nationalism. The National Conference lost 10,000 of its workers to militants. Now Farooq Abdulla is in Jail under PSA. “

A young Delhi University student, who hails from rural Baramulla shared his anguish. He said, “Communication is blocked - suppose there is an emergency what will we do? We are lucky the earthquake did not destroy anything this time. I haven't spoken to them (parents) for 6-7 days. In the initial period we were not in touch for a month. The police station is 10 kms away from my village. There is no transport and so my parents cannot talk to me. I went to Kashmir to meet them. One day I went to my uncle's house and there was so much panic! They (parents) thought I have been picked up; they were going to the police station to file an FIR!”

“There is deep sadness; they did not ask us, they did not take the assembly into confidence before abrogating 370. There were two parties in the agreement like in a nikah. On one hand Modi abolished triple talaq as it was one sided but they have done the same - one sided talaq. It was an agreement between two sovereign states. It was not khairat!”

“There are students, who have financial problems. Money is not arriving. Parents who were doing small businesses have no money, also no way to send it too. I arranged from my sources fee, rent and money to eat for many students.”

“Kashmiri students who had internet in Delhi were traumatized to see the news coming from various sources. Many students who came late were denied admission in Jamia, then we had to agitate, finally they got admission.”

“One of my teachers told others about me that I look like a stone-pelter. He is like cancer for our department. We have to continuously face insults and humiliation. 370 is used like a propaganda. This is the first time that political leaders were sent

back from the airport. This is a warning signal for India. It will be replicated all over”

“Supreme Court is our only hope. This has taken us back by 40 years. This is absolutely tyrannical and humiliating. We have hope from the Supreme Court!”

“What Pakistanis and militants couldn’t do that BJP has done, it has made even pro Indian Kashmiris anti India. It is difficult to recover what we have lost but Supreme Court can at least restore faith in India.”

A PhD student from Kargil spoke to us very passionately. He said, “We are called traitors now as we are not supporting the abrogation of 370. It was the people of Kargil who informed the army about Pakistani intrusion. Kargil stood by India during Kargil war. In 1999, my paternal grandfather helped the Indian army as did a lot of other civilians. Our house is 2 kms away from the army camp. Pakistan had captured the whole area, civilians stood by the Indian army. They celebrate Kargil day and tell us we are anti-national? People from Dras helped in getting the Tiger Hill”

“80% people in Kargil are unhappy. They have broken our will! Hamara zameer toot gaya!.

It is like dictatorship. 20% are with BJP. Kargil is 200kms from Srinagar and 300kms from Ladhakh. We do not accept UT status with Ladhakh. Dras did not celebrate the abrogation.”

“Kashmir is like Gujarat - an experimentation ground. They are testing here what will be implemented across India. Since they have come to power they are spreading conflict across India - fasad phaila rahe hain!. They are thinking of war. Let them come to the border. My maternal grandfather died in the war. Come & see the meaning of war. Aakar dekhiye jung ka matlab! Resources and people perish in war and it leads to major climate change, ecological imbalance with bombs and the heat that is generated. “

A young girl who is preparing for competitive exams and hails from Baramulla told us that one of her friend was trolled after Khattar’s statement of getting Kashmiri brides. She said “they are provoking us, so that we speak and then they label us. Many Kashmiri girls were trolled after the highly objectionable and patriarchal statement by BJP leaders.”

A young student preparing for UPSC said, “On 5 August, when the Government of India imprisoned the Kashmiris on the strength of the army and guns, removing Article 370 from the State of Jammu and Kashmir and dividing the state into two union territories, I was in Delhi. I was sick in a hospital and I had no contact with my home till 20 August. On 21 August, Abba called from a government office in Kashmir. It was a 40 seconds long call. There are many Kashmiri students in Delhi who were preparing for UPSC. May have left gone back and those who have not gone, they are unable to concentrate properly in studies due to mental stress. “

Another Student said, "Today we Kashmiris are not feeling safe anywhere even in Muslim areas in India. We have to hide our identity- that we are Kashmiri. Many of the new Kashmiri students who were just admitted to a central university did not even get hostel accommodation and despite being a Muslim dominated area - houses, flats, rooms were also refused to us. Those who are renting out have increased the rent by 40 to 50 percent. A flat which could be rented for Rs.10,000 is now Rs.15,000. Students who reported late were denied admission. It was after a lot of struggle that they were admitted. "

"Kashmiris consider Article 370 as their identity which is a matter of pride for us, our identity has been taken away and what has happened is an attack on our identity. "

"There are many Kashmiri students of Delhi University (North Campus) who had to sell their mobile phones to pay the rent. There are also many Kashmiri students who do not come from strong financial backgrounds; they are facing acute financial problems. Some do not have any money even to buy study material. Kashmiris are helping out each other even financially. "

"India brought Kashmir to Stone Age and back during the period between 1985-90, now militancy will also increase."

A clinical psychologist sent this narrative to us :

The tragic case of twin exile

"When a man is incarcerated for his crimes, we believe that the time away from luxuries, freedoms and the comfort of being around loved ones will teach him a lesson and will act as a deterrent and enable him to correct or reclaim his morality. The logic of imprisonment carries twin intentions of correction as well as of protection of others from the harm of criminal act.

When a whole community is locked in, does the same logic applies. Are we correcting them or protecting ourselves from them? I think we are falling miserably both (if at all that were the intentions in the first place).

For a Kashmiri being under siege and complete shut down of means of communication establishes ominously perfect conditions for what I call "twin exile". Kashmiris are locked in as well as locked out. Those who are locked in are experiencing the trauma of being exiled from their own land (by taking away their freedom to claim normal life) and those who are locked out are anyways going through the trauma of being cut out from their homeland. In words of Mahmoud Darwish, "Exile is more than a geographical concept. You can be an exile in your own homeland, in your own house, in a room.

Any community under siege for a prolonged period experiences two major psychological effects (among other innumerable adverse effects) -loss of trust of other communities (especially those who put them under siege) and

disorientation and inability to live meaningfully happy life. No wonder I can already hear the words of mistrust, anger, resentment, helplessness and the ever growing pain of the insensible/insensitive betrayal. What does it mean to lose one's political identity by force? What doesn't it mean to lose the meaning of seven decades of political struggle? Only those among you who have lived through colonial rule would understand the pain of Kashmiris right now but unfortunately most of them have passed away and replaced by those who only understand the language of power. Indian state has forced exile on the people of Kashmir and they are homeless in their own homes.”

The most difficult thing for most Kashmiris especially the younger students were to be away from home on Eid. In Delhi, Kashmiri students and Delhi civil society gathered to observe Eid at Jantar Mantar. One of the co-organizers of the program had this to say,

“When humans are subjected to witnessing a continuous torture, it is normalised to them. In the same way, the Indian public, after more than two months of the Kashmir lockdown, have become desensitized to the issue. It is only the Kashmiris living outside of their land that have relentlessly been sharing every piece of information that manages to come out of the otherwise censored valley. Even if there is a group of supporters, the numbers are marginally less. Shameful, almost!

But back to the initial days, it would be wrong to say that Eid was celebrated by Kashmiris outside of the valley. Rather, it was observed as the grim reminder of the tyranny that the present government inflicted on the Kashmiris, and the blatant disregard of the Constitution. In utter seclusion from their dear ones, the Kashmiris studying or working in Delhi, gathered at Jantar Mantar to share their collective grief over being denied the right to be human.

What was observed within the police barracks on the streets of the designated protest spot was a multi-generational loss of freedom. And yet, true to their spirit, the brotherhood of the Kashmiri awaam (people) came through when all of them came together to either lend a shoulder for help, or to cry on.”

Some of us were there and we witnessed the resilience of the Kashmiri people, they shared their collected grief through their poetry and songs. Some of them spoke, all of us wept. There is nothing more important than sharing of pain and grief and we must continue to do that, while continuing our struggle for justice.

#### **From a PhD scholar in Mumbai**

“In order to help out such Kashmiris, we Kashmiris in different parts of the country joined hands and created a group “Family” and another group for Kashmiris in Mumbai. We came to know about a 22 -23 year old young woman whose mother was undergoing treatment at a cancer hospital in Mumbai. The family had travelled all the way from Kashmir to Mumbai for treatment in July. On August 4, the father went back home to Kashmir to sell off some land to raise more money



for treatment and other necessities. On August 5, Article 370 was abrogated and communication blockade imposed in J&K. A couple of days later, the girl's mother turned serious and had to be admitted to the ICU. On August 8, we (Kashmiri students) got to know about this case through social media. A couple of us immediately rushed to the hospital to see in what ways we could support the girl and her family. The girl broke down and said she cannot get in touch with her family and more than monetary support she needed emotional and logistical support. Her brother although there with was also exhausted from the stress and tension of both the mother's deteriorating condition (she was on life support) and his inability to get in touch with the father.

The young woman hailed from a well to do family. However, the cost of treatment was rising exponentially. The family had to shell out more than Rs.20,000 Rupees per day. They were new to Mumbai and the entire experience was turning out to be extremely overwhelming. They had to find replacement blood donors. They didn't have a place to stay. They were sleeping since July on the floor of a hospital. The Kashmiri students in Mumbai soon helped the girl and her brother find a place to stay. Through friends and other networks blood was arranged.

The mother's condition continued to deteriorate. The young woman and her brother could not establish contact with their father and other family members because of the communication blockade and curfew. The hospital bills were also rising as the mother continued to remain on life support. She also expressed desire to go back to Kashmir and spend her last days there. The young woman and her brother were in a dilemma because they were not sure if they would be able to access health care given the situation back home. By then the father had also returned. He was unable to sell his land because of the situation back home. Finally against medical advice the family returned back to Srinagar in car ambulance. 22 days later we (students) received a call from the son and husband from an Army Cantonment to say the mother has passed away. On going back to Srinagar, the mother was in SKIMS but the hospital couldn't procure medicines which come from Delhi or Mumbai. The family also had to face major problems on reaching Kashmir. They were stopped at 10 different places.

## Voices from Kargil

We could not go to Kargil but we spoke to a number of people on telephone. We are reproducing some of the conversations here.

A senior political leader from Kargil said, "without taking any one in confidence even the prominent political parties, abruptly 370 and 35 (a) have been scrapped, dividing Ladakh from Kashmir. We have been opposing this. Article 370, 35 (A) should be restored. They have arrested political leaders of all mainstream parties, communication is shut down, internet is shut down. People are suffering; the government should restore the statehood with its full powers".

A student from Kargil

"This decision taken by the Indian Government is undemocratic. Rights provided to the citizens of J&K through the Constitution have been taken away from us. Without taking people into confidence, two people in the parliament have taken this decision. This is an attack on federalism and secularism. India is a big democratic nation, since childhood we have been reading in NCERT books about Indian democracy. Is this democracy? They have strangled democracy.

Another political leader from Kargil said, "It is a black day for India since Independence. This undemocratic step of removing Article 370, 35 (A) and reorganization of J&K state was unfortunately passed by the parliament. This is a black day for India, for J&K, and also for Ladakh. This step is unacceptable by secular people of India, people of J&K and Ladakh. People of Kargil are against the decision of division of State. In the name of development and opportunities, people voices have been suppressed, internet and phones are suspended, leaders have been arrested. This is not acceptable at all. "

A member of a local school committee, "The identity of J&K has been destroyed. The people of J&K are not happy and are protesting. In Kargil there have been many protests. The government should have taken people into confidence. "

A businessman, "The recent bill which the government of India was passed, has disturbed the people in Ladakh. Before this bill was brought to the table, our consent was not taken. They have created two Union territories. People have been arrested so that there are no protests, it is a complete black out. The way they

have tabled this bill is nothing but murder of democracy and murder of Constitution. According to the Constitution Article 3, which says that in case you want the state should be reorganized, the state Legislative Assembly should pass the bill. Unfortunately, they converted the consent of the governor as consent of the State legislative assembly. We are against this decision.”

Local activist,” This is murder of Indian Constitution. The people of India should understand. This is the beginning they can do the same with other states. If the fascist powers are not removed, it will destroy many. The people of Kargil have decided that there should not be any bifurcation or trifurcation, on the basis of religion, region or language. We have been together for centuries. One lifeline of Kargil which is called Jozula pass, it runs through Kashmir. We have been removed from the silk road, now we don't want more divisions. People of Kargil have been humiliated.”



Government of Jammu & Kashmir  
**OFFICE OF THE SUB-DIVISIONAL MAGISTRATE KARNAH**  
 (Phone No. & Fax No: 01958-245302 Email Id: sdmkarnah1@gmail.com)

**ORDER**

As a precautionary measure & keeping in view the prevailing situation of Cross LOC shelling/firing, all the educational institutions including Degree college of Karnah Sub-division shall remain closed on 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2019. All the concerned are asked to have immediate compliance.

By Order/-

*[Signature]*  
 Dr Alyaz Ahmad (KAS)  
 Sub-Divisional Magistrate  
 Karnah

Dated: 30/07/2019.

No:-SDMK/NI 451-60

**Karnah update**

Copy to:

1. Deputy Commissioner, Kupwara for information.
2. Sr. Superintendent of Police, Kupwara for information.
3. I/C Principal Degree College Karnah for information and compliance..
4. Tehsildar Karnah for information.
5. Principal Hr. Sec. School..... for compliance.
6. ZEO Tangdar/Chankote for information and compliance.
7. Headmaster High School .....
8. I/C Information Deptt. Karnah for information and wide publicity.
9. SHO P/S Karnah for information and needful.
10. Office Record.



GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR,  
 OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
 LADAKH AUTONOMOUS HILL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL,  
 KARGIL

**ORDER**

All District Officers, Sub-Divisional Magistrates, Tehsilders and other Sectoral Officers are hereby directed not to leave their respective stations under any circumstances without prior approval of the District Magistrate/Deputy Commissioner, Kargil. No officer shall keep his/her Mobile Phone on switched off mode.



Sd/-  
 (Baser-ul-Haq Choudhary) IAS  
 District Magistrate/Deputy Commissioner,  
 Kargil

No. Estt-I/Circular/SP/2019

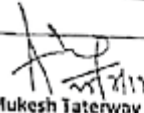
Dated 03.08.2019

FROM : MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, NEW DELHI  
 TO : CHIEF SECRETARY, GOVERNMENT OF J&K, SRINAGAR.  
 : HOME SECRETARY, GOVERNMENT OF J&K, SRINAGAR.  
 : DIRECTOR GENERAL POLICE, J&K, SRINAGAR.  
 NO. : III - 11018/1/2019-G /P-II DATED: 25.07.2019  
 SUBJECT: DEPLOYMENT OF ADDITIONAL CAPFs IN J&K(.)

In order to strengthen the CI grid as well as for maintaining law & order situations in J&K, deployment of additional 100 Coys of CAPFs as per details mentioned below are ordered, as per following details :-

S.No.	Forces	Date of Induction With Immediate effect	Remarks
1.	CRPF	50	Out of 50 Coys of CRPF, 09 Coys of CRPF deployed in Delhi (for Parliament duty + Kanwarla) shall be replaced by deploying 09 Coys of BSF.
2.	BSF	30	
3.	SSB	30	
4.	ITBP	10	
<b>G. Total-</b>		<b>100</b>	

Regards (.)

  
 (Mukesh Taterway)  
 Second-In-Command (G)  
 ☎: 2309 2343

**Copy to:**

1. IG (Ops), CRPF, BSF, ITBP & SSB, New Delhi : For further necessary follow-up action.
- ✓ Joint Commissioner of Police (Ops), Delhi Police HQ., I.P. Estate, New Delhi-02 : For Information please.
- ✓ Director (TT & Coaching), Railway Board, Rail Bhawan, New Delhi : For allotting special train / bogies & coaches as per the requirement of the CAPFs for deployment in the State on top priority.

**Float Copy to:**

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF SECRETARY, GOVERNMENT OF J&K / IS (P.I/II) MHA

GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU & KASHMIR  
 Medical Superintendent CD Hospital  
 Srinagar

The District Magistrate,  
 Srinagar.

No. CAP/MS/2019  
 Subject: Issuance of Curfew Passes

**VNS**

Dated: 01-08-2019

Sir,

Kindly issue the curfew pass for all the employees of our hospital. The list of employee is enclosed.

  
 Medical Superintendent  
 Chest Diseases Hospital  
 Srinagar

**Confidential**

صدر دفتر ضلع پولیس سرینگر  
**DISTRICT POLICE HEADQUARTERS SRINAGAR**  
 Sherghari, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir 190009  
 E-mail: [doosrinagar@jkpolice.gov.in](mailto:doosrinagar@jkpolice.gov.in) Tele: 2311324 Fax: 2311322

No.: CS/23-19 241136-40  
 Dated:- 28.7.2019.

SP City South Zone Srinagar.  
 SP City Hazratbal Zone Srinagar.  
 SP City North Zone Srinagar.  
 SP City East Zone Srinagar.  
 SP City West Zone Srinagar.

Subject:- Providing of details of Mosques etc.

Please provide details of Mosques and their managements falling within your respective jurisdictions as per enclosed proforma to this office immediately for onward submission to higher authorities.

Senior Superintendent of Police  
 District Srinagar J&K  
 28/07/19

Encl.:- 01 leaf.

**SIGNAL**


TO: SR.DSC/RPF/SINA (THROUGH I/C GRP POST BUDGAM)

INF: ADGP GRP J&K JAMMU/IGP KASHMIR

FROM: SSP RAILWAYS KASHMIR (THROUGH GRP CONTROL ROOM)

LOG NO. 02/GRPCR-KMR/19 DATED.28-07-2019

==== A LETTER BEARING NO C-12/RPF/SA/BDGM/2019 DATED 27-07-2019 FROM YOUR OFFICE ARE MAKING ROUNDS IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA FROM EARLY MORNING TODAY THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED INPUTS FROM SSP RAILWAYS KASHMIR REGARDING LAW AND ORDER PROBLEM IN KASHMIR VALLEY IN THE COMING DAYS (.) THIS IS VERY ASTONISHING THAT UNDER SIGNED HAVE NOT SHARED ANY SUCH INFORMATION WITH YOU OR ANY OTHER AGENCY IN WRITING OR THROUGH TELEPHONIC CONVERSATION IT IS MATTER OF GRAVE CONCERN AS SUCH YOU ARE REQUIRED TO DESIST FROM SUCH ACT IN FUTURE ALSO

  
 ORIGINATOR SIGNATURE  
 SSP RAILWAY KASHMIR,  
 (T/PCR RAILWAY KASHMIR)

T.O.O



**NOTICE DATED: 02.08.2019**

This is for information of all the students of the Institute that the class work for all courses stands suspended till further orders.

The above notice stands issued in accordance with the instructions received from the District Administration Srinagar.

By order.

*02.08.2019*  
Registrar

No.NIT/R/19/19  
Dt. 02.08.2019

Copy for information to:

1. Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, Government of India, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi. The notice has been issued in accordance with the directives received from the District Administration.
2. Additional Director General (NITs), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, Government of India, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi.
3. All Deans.
4. All Heads of the Departments.
5. Faculty Incharge Security, NIT Srinagar. The District Administration has arranged transport facilities for the students. The buses shall reach the Campus by 6.30 a.m. The students of all the Hostels be advised to be ready by 6.30 a.m. for departure from the Institute Campus at 7 a.m.
6. All Notice Boards (Boys/Girls).
7. I/C Website. The notice be uploaded on the website of the Institute.
8. File concerned.



Government of Jammu & Kashmir

**Office of the Chief Medical Officer, Kupwara**

Phone: 01955-252278; fax: 01955252278; email: cmokupwara23@gmail.com

**MOST URGENT**

**CIRCULAR**

Medical Superintendent District Hospital Handwara, Deputy Chief Medical officer Kupwara, District Tuberculosis officer Kupwara and Block Medical officers \_\_All are hereby directed to remain stationed and don't leave the station without the consent of undersigned and also direct the officers/officials that comes under your jurisdiction to remain stationed and don't approve the leave of any officer/official without the consent of undersigned till further orders.

No: CMOK/ 3532-46  
Date: 01-08-2019

*Kanwal*  
Chief Medical Officer  
Kupwara

Copy to:

1. District Development Commissioner Kupwara for information.
2. Director Health Services Kashmir for information.
3. Medical Superintendent District Hospital Handwara for information and n/a.
4. Deputy Chief Medical officer Kupwara for information and n/a.
5. District Tuberculosis officer Kupwara for information and n/a.
6. Block Medical officer Kupwara/Sogam/Zochaldara/ Handwara/Tangdar/Langate/ Kalaroose/Trehgam/Kralpora and Villgam for information and necessary action.



Phone No: 0194-231014/2310560  
 Fax: 0194-2310144

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, KASHMIR GOVT. POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE

Gogji Bagh, Srinagar- 190008  
<http://www.kgpolytechnic.org>  
 email: kgpolyssg@rediffmail.com

## NOTICE

It is notified for the information of all students who are residing in the college hostel to vacate from the hostel immediately and no student will be provided hostel facility till further orders.

Principal  
 Kashmir Govt. Polytechnic College,  
 Srinagar

No: KGP/2019/1113-1115

Dated: 03/08/2019

Copy to the :

- 1 All HOD's/l/c Depts for information and n/action.
- 2 Hostel Supdt. for information and with the direction to ensure the vacate of hostellers from the hostel.
- 3 College Notice Board.
- 4 Record Keeper.

11/12/19-05  
 92 - 1/20

SIGNAL/FAX

TO:- ALL ZONAL SP's OF DISTRICT SRINAGAR

FROM:- DISPOL SRINAGAR THROUGH PCR SRINAGAR

LOG NO:- 22/PCR5

DATED:- 28-07-2019

KINDLY PROVIDE DETAILS OF MOSQUES AND THEIR MANagements FALLING WITH YOUR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTION AS PER PROFOMA TO THIS OFFICE IMMEDIATELY FOR ONWARD SUBMISSION TO HIGHER AUTHORITIES. AS PER FORMAT THE REQUISITE INFORMATION SHOULD REACH DPO SRINAGAR TOMORROW ON 29-07-2019 AT 1000HRS SHARP WITH SOFT COPY MM URGENT.

DISTRICT	PCPP JURISDICTION	NAME OF MOSQUE	TELEPHONE NO.	LOCATION OF MOSQUE	NAME OF IMAM	ADDRESS	MOB NO.	NAME OF CHAIRMAN OF INTAJAMA	ADDRESS

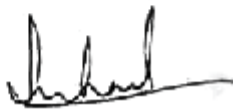
101  
 9/30/20

IN CHARGE  
 PCR DISTRICT SRINAGAR.

## ORDER

In view of the prevailing situations it is impressed upon all the employees of this hospital that no employee should leave the station without written permission of the competent authority. Any dereliction in this regard will be dealt strictly under rules. All the incharges of this hospital are hereby directed to ensure the implementation of this direction in letter n spirit.

No. B&JH/MC/2366-69  
Dated: 03-8-2019

  
Medical Superintendent  
3/8/19

Copy to:

1. Dy. Medical Superintendent B & J Hospital for information.
- ✓ All section incharges with direction get it noted and implemented by the all employees in their respected sections.
3. Office file.

### Wireless Message

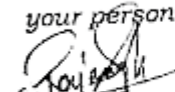
To :- All COs JKAP / IRP Bns. of Jammu Zone  
Principals STC Talwara/ PTTI Vijaypur/ PTS Kathua } **By Name**

Inf. :- ADGP Armed J&K Srinagar  
IGsP Armed/ IR Jammu Zone  
DisG Armed / IR Jammu Range

From :- SSP APCR Jammu  
No. APCRJ/2019/1667-75

Dated: - 27-07-2019

As desired by worthy ADGP Armed J&K Srinagar, 100 Coys by mixing the manpower of your respective units/ training centres have been framed for special law and order duties under your command and control as & when required (.) You are requested to communicate the shortfall of Riot Control Equipments / Gas Gun, TSMs etc (if any) to this today by or before 1400 hours positively for onward submission to higher ups (.) Matter Most Urgent and needs your personal attention please (.) Ends

  
Yours Signature  
SSP APCR Jammu

T.O.O

Crash

**NOTICE DATED: 02.08.2019**

This is for information of all the students of the Institute that the class work for all courses stands suspended till further orders.

The above notice stands issued in accordance with the instructions received from the District Administration Srinagar.

By order.

  
21/8/19  
Registrar

No.NIT/R/19/19  
Dt. 02.08.2019

Copy for information to:

1. Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, Government of India, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi. The notice has been issued in accordance with the directives received from the District Administration.
2. Additional Director General (NITs), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, Government of India, Shastri Bhawan, New - Delhi.
3. All Deans.
4. All Heads of the Departments.
5. Faculty Incharge Security, NIT Srinagar. The District Administration has arranged transport facilities for the students. The buses shall reach the Campus by 6.30 a.m. The students of all the Hostels be advised to be ready by 6.30 a.m. for departure from the Institute Campus at 7 a.m.
6. All Notice Boards (Boys/Girls).
7. I/C Website. The notice be uploaded on the website of the Institute.
8. File concerned.

Government of Jammu and Kashmir  
Civil Secretariat Home Department  
-:O:-

Subject: Security Advisory

**Government Order No. Home -881 of 2019**  
Dated: 02.08.2019

Keeping in view the latest intelligence inputs of terror threats, with specific targeting of the Amarnath Yatra, and given the prevailing security situation in the Kashmir Valley, in the interest of safety and security of the tourists and Amarnath Yatri, it is advised that they may curtail their stay in the valley immediately and take necessary measures to return as soon as possible.

By Order of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.

  
(Shaleen Kabra) IAS  
Principal Secretary to Government  
Home Department

No. Home/ISA/2019/155/Yatra

Dated: 02.08.2019

Copy to:

1. Financial Commissioner to Hon'ble Governor, J&K.
2. Director General of Police, J&K, Srinagar.
3. Principal Secretary to Government, Tourism Department.
4. Commissioner & Secretary to Government, Information Department for giving wide publicity.
5. Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir.
6. Divisional Commissioner, Jammu.
- 7-11 OSDs to the Hon'ble Advisors.
12. Special Secretary to Chief Secretary.
13. Government Order file w.g.s.c.



