



SERVICES OF SYED ALI SHAH GEELANI IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF KASHMIR

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Abstract

One of the few figures from Kashmir who has written extensively on the conflict there is Syed Ali Shah Geelani. He has written over a dozen books, all of them in Urdu, that cover different facets of the issue. His range of news releases, communication with the Pakistani and Indian prime ministers, and other notable figures (many composed during his protracted incarceration in India), interviews with Kashmiri and Pakistani journalists, and public addresses are compiled in his work titled "Kashmir: Voice of Freedom" (Nava-e Hurriyat). This book explores several facets of the Kashmir problem from Geelani's point of view. on the causes of the crisis in Kashmir, his disapproval of Indian governance, his support for Pakistan's inclusion of Kashmir, and his rejection of Jammu and Kashmir's independence. His ideas on nationalism, jihad, and intercommunity interactions within what he considers the normative Islamic paradigm, as well as his understanding of the link between Islam, politics, and the state, are all crucial to the current struggle in and over Jammu and Kashmir.

Keywords: Syed Ali Geelani, Kashmir, India, Pakistan, Freedom Movement.



In Kashmir's "War of Liberation, Syed Ali Shah Geelani is a key figurehead. Geelani's life is full of inspiration, curiosity, and provocation. In September 1929, he was born and grew up in the Bandipora area of northern Kashmir. He has been known in Kashmir as "The Leader of the Resistance" for his lengthy and unwavering support of the liberation movement in the region. Geelani dedicated more than sixty years of his life to actively participating in Kashmiri politics. He started his political journey by championing the cause of Kashmiris and their fundamental right to self-determination. Geelani has given up his freedom for the Kashmiri people out of protest of the Indian military service and for his people's liberation, even in the face of his declining health. Geelani has been arrested for almost ten years of his life, and for more than ten years, the Indian legitimacy has restricted his freedom of movement and kept him confined to his Hyderpora, Srinagar, "home turned into a detention center (sub-jail)." Since October 10, 2009, Geelani has remained imprisoned in "house jail," and hasn't had a free two weeks of air outside his "home" since. A police vehicle outside Geelani's home is permanently stationed and has been modified into an officer's temporary resting place. Geelani tirelessly advocated on global platforms, attempting to raise awareness of the violations of human rights occurring in the area and secure support for the Kashmiri cause. In June 2020, Geelani resigned from the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, expressing concerns about the group's activities and alleged lack of accountability. On September 1st, 2021, Geelani departed.

ACTIVISM IN POLITICS

Geelani spent more than 60 years actively participating in Kashmiri politics. He began his political career by supporting Kashmiris' rights, particularly their right to self-determination. In 1971, Geelani became the first candidate from Baramulla to be nominated for the parliamentary election. He would have won even with all the widespread rigging. In the state assembly election that followed in 1972, Geelani defeated the Congress candidate with a wide majority of votes. On the first day of the assembly, Geelani organized a walkout with other Jama'at members. They objected to the governor's decision to forbid Geelani from giving his speech in the official language of Urdu. "We have always rejected the proposals that have been made to legalize alcohol. He was removed from the Assembly by force several times." In the 1977 elections, Geelani successfully defended his seat in the state assembly. However, he was defeated by the National Conference candidate in the 1983 national assembly election. Later on, Geelani was named Jama'at's Chief of Parliamentary Affairs.

For Kashmiris, Geelani's nomination to the World Muslim League's (WML) Makkah-based Executive Council is a momentous occasion. His election in 2000 gave morale a massive boost. As the third Asian Muslim to acquire this distinguished title, Geelani now stands beside the founders of Jama'at, Maulana Abul A'la Mawdudi and Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi of Nadwat al-Ulama. Geelani now has a wider audience and a more expansive platform thanks to this job, although one that is not political in character. The WML is a worldwide Islamic nongovernmental organization that was founded in 1962. It has consultative status at the Economic and Social



Council, observer status at the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and Grade-A observer status at the UN. The WML also has memberships in the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The 62-member World Muslim League (WML) is made up of delegates from almost every country with a sizable Muslim population. The eight-member Executive Council is the highest policymaking body and is tasked with upholding Islamic principles and safeguarding Muslim interests. Fundamentalist parties and Jamaat's Pakistani equivalent aggressively backed Geelani's candidacy, as reported by the Hindustan Times on March 13, 2001. The League gave him this distinction as a token of the Muslim world's support for the cause of Kashmir and in acknowledgment of his role in the conflict (Hensman, 2011).

JAMMAT-E-ISLAMI HURRIYAT CONFERENCE

Maulana Masood's profound knowledge and modest lifestyle left a lasting impression on Geelani. Geelani considered him a mentor, and many activists from Jama'at who visited Mujahid Manzil had the opportunity to meet Geelani. However, some members of the National Conference (NC) expressed their concerns to Maulana Masood, claiming that Mujahid Manzil had turned into a gathering place for Pakistanis.

Geelani's journey during this phase was of the utmost significance, as it provided him with valuable exposure. He would often deliver speeches in the mosque, addressing congregations. He read a great deal of Jama'at-i-Islami literature during this time, and he carefully imparted its lessons to his pupils in lectures. He was sent to Dangerpora High School after six years. By taking part in a variety of social and cultural endeavors, including the founding of schools and religious organizations, the Jama'at progressively increased its influence throughout this time. Over time, violence spread throughout the state, especially in the apple-growing districts of Sopur and downtown Srinagar, as Joshi noted in *The Last Rebellion: Kashmir in the Nineties* (1999, 11). Geelani became a basic member of Jama'at in 1952 after finding great inspiration in its ideas and tenets.

Geelani, who used to arrive in Sopor from Dangerpora to address the Friday congregation, faced disapproval from the late Abdul Gani Malik, the local MLA of Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, who was the Chief Minister of J&K. The MLA took issue with Geelani's statements on Islam and Kashmir's resolve. The MLA quietly persuaded Geelani to join his party in order to become a minister. But Geelani turned down the invitation. He was consequently sent to Nadihal Bandipora, but he declined to accept the position. Rather, Geelani decided to devote himself entirely to politics, taking a protracted leave of absence until resigning in 1959. After fully integrating into the group, he was designated as the Area Head of the Jama'at in Sopor. He then rose to the position of district chief for Baramulla and Kupwara. On August 28, 1962, Geelani was initially arrested



and held for 13 months because he had been involved in bringing up the Kashmir issue. He was designated Jammat's general secretary in 1964. (Hafez & Sajjad 2010) From 1969 to 1987, the Kashmiri Jama'at actively participated in the elections of the Panchayat, demonstrating their engagement in local council affairs. Additionally, they fervently participated in every election conducted for the two national and state assemblies, showcasing their commitment to democratic processes. (Majid, 2018).

OPPOSITION TO INDIAN RULES

On December 2, 2007, Geelani delivered a talk at a seminar entitled "Cultural Aggression and its Countermeasures," which was organized by the Dukhtaran-i Millat (Daughters of the Nation). In his speech, he charged that the NC, which was then in opposition, had removed Islamic lessons from Kashmir's school curriculum. Geelani called on educators and students to unite against the cultural onslaught initiated by the governments of J&K and New Delhi. When the NC took over in 1947, he held them responsible for removing Islamic instruction from Kashmiri schools.

As though the common citizens of Kashmir carried out their daily tasks, Geelani and the Jama'at vigilantly observed the increasingly ominous implications of the evolving political landscape in their relationship with India. Nelson Mandela once observed that imprisonment significantly impedes the fight for freedom, but Geelani's resolve was unaffected by such worries. In 1962, he was first incarcerated for his active involvement in advocating for freedom of expression. The Jama'at named him General Secretary once he was freed. He was captured again in 1965 and imprisoned for twenty-two months. He has spent a large amount of his life in jails in Kashmir and India since then. The only reason these detentions were carried out was because he supported the execution of many decisions by the UN Security Council over Kashmir (Chowdhary, 2017).

Geelani's ideological views have faced significant criticism in the Indian media. In the same vein, a smear effort has also been directed at the Jama'at's advocacy for violence. However, it is important to note that the Jama'at actively speaks up against oppression and injustice. Geelani said in his book "Oppressed Nation" (2001, 14) that the quest for truth and justice is what motivates Jamaat-e-Islami's support for the Kashmir cause rather than nationalism, race, language, or regionalism.

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ARREST AND DETENTIONS

Syed Ali Shah Geelani encountered multiple arrests, detentions, and periods of house arrest during his extensive political career as a result of his separatist endeavors and outspoken opposition to Indian governance in Kashmir. Here are a few noteworthy occurrences. Geelani was arrested in 1993. In accordance with the Public Safety Act (PSA), a law that allows for a maximum of two years of incarceration without charge or trial, This happened while separatist leaders were being targeted in retaliation for the large demonstrations in Kashmir. The terrifying incidents included assaults with rockets, grenades, and bombs intended at Geelani's residence (which has sustained severe damage multiple times) and attempts to intimidate him with prolonged gunfire. Between October 1995 and June 2000, Indian security forces and/or the armed and backed renegade force actively targeted Geelani and his family. It is crucial to keep in mind that these kinds of attacks have also targeted other officials of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) (Bhat, 2022).

He was arrested in 2002 for allegedly making seditious words under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). In 2008, shortly after calling for protests against the land transfer to the Amarnath Shrine Board, Geelani was put under house arrest, which sparked large-scale riots and instability in the area. He was placed under house arrest once more in 2010 during the era of widespread protests and instances of stone-pelting in Kashmir as authorities attempted to put an end to the unrest (Hoenig, 2014).

Since October 10, 2009, Geelani has been under house arrest; hence, he has never had the chance to spend two weeks away from home. A police vehicle that has been converted into a makeshift sleeping area for the cops is always keeping an eye on Geelani's home. The leader, who was in his nineties, filed multiple writ petitions with the High Court to challenge his illegal detention. Regarding petition no. 79/09, the Court rendered an order directing the respondent state to free Geelani in exchange for a Rs 20,000 bail bond. Chief Justice Gosh further stressed that if Geelani, who is eighty years old and afflicted with several diseases, was held in detention, his health would be more severely damaged. On October 9, 2009, the Chief Justice issued orders, but the state authority refused to release Geelani. With the help of his advocates, Geelani filed a contempt petition (388) in opposition to the court order as a result of this. In relation to an earlier case from 1985, Geelani was taken into custody once more. Through petition 516-A filed with the High Court under the Criminal Procedure, this arrest was contested. Geelani's health deteriorated in 2010, and he was in dire need of medical care. But the state turned down his requests to be sent to a hospital. Rather, a physician was tasked with doing examinations at his home. The fact that Geelani was kept under house arrest for the whole of 2010 caused serious health issues (Qadri, 2020).

Because of his popularity among the populace, Geelani always expected to be detained again by Indian authorities in 2013, even after he was granted a week of temporary freedom of movement. His worries were realized the very following day when he was put under house arrest once more. In 2014, when the state was nearing the end of the Omar Abdullah-led administration and election



preparations were at their height, Geelani was given permission to engage in a few days of unfettered operations. In an effort to plan a protest in Tral, a town in South Kashmir, to demonstrate support for the victims of a grenade assault, Geelani was arrested in 2014. Following his murder in 2016, Indian authorities placed Hizbul Mujahideen militant Burhan Wani is under house arrest, sparking widespread protests and turmoil in Kashmir. Following the granting of special status under Article 370 to Jammu and Kashmir, Geelani was placed under house arrest once more in 2019. Tensions in the area increased as a result of this move by the Indian government. He was under house arrest and had his movements restricted throughout the entirety of 2020, especially after he resigned from the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (Rid, 2018).

INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Syed Ali Shah Geelani actively participated in promoting the Kashmiri cause on global platforms, with the objective of highlighting the human rights situation and garnering backing for the region's right to self-determination. Below are notable occurrences and instances where Geelani was involved in international advocacy for Kashmir (Jamwal, 2010).

In reaction to the current upsurge in state-sponsored violence committed by the Indian military forces in Jammu and Kashmir, Syed Ali Shah Geelani has made an appeal to the leaders of the United Nations as well as a number of Western and Muslim countries for aid. Geelani wrote the letter to draw attention from everyone across the world. According to Geelani, India has been committing acts of violence in Jammu and Kashmir on a regular basis and making sure that no military troops responsible for serious war crimes are brought to justice by its own legal system. Therefore, we fervently implore the global community to enable an international inquiry headed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of the United Nations," reads the letter. The Indian Army is charged with initiating a new wave of terror that killed several unarmed protestors and seriously injured hundreds more by deploying deadly pellet guns and bullets meant to kill and maim.

He highlights that powerful nations have a unique obligation to challenge the activities of the Indian state and stop this wave of violence, including members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), European Union (EU), and United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The UN expressed concern for the injuries and fatalities sustained during the fighting in Kashmir. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed optimism that all issues would be resolved peacefully and encouraged all sides to show the utmost moderation in order to stop more bloodshed. In addition, to find a settlement to the situation in the Valley, the US has advocated for talks between Pakistan, India, and Kashmir. In light of this, Geelani calls on the international community to act to foster mutual trust among the occupied people of Jammu and Kashmir and to establish a favorable atmosphere for the settlement of the conflict. He highlights how crucial it is to uphold the right to self-determination, which is protected by a number of UN resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.



Additionally, Geelani has stated that he wants India to allow UN Special Reporters and any other foreign human rights and humanitarian groups to conduct business in the region. He highlights how crucial it is to have an open political atmosphere for all parties, particularly those who support the right to self-determination. Geelani has written to the heads of the United Nations Security Council (US, UK, China, France, and Russia), the European Union, the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association of Regional Countries (SAARC), and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). He has also communicated with the Saudi Arabian King, the presidents of China and Iran, and the prime ministers of Pakistan and Turkey. Nafees Zakaria, the spokesperson for Pakistan's foreign office, also stated that they had informed the international community about the "human rights violations in Kashmir." Additionally, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called on India to fulfill its human rights obligations and commitments under UN Security Council resolutions. In response, the Indian government swiftly reacted. Vikas Swarup, the spokesperson for the external affairs ministry, advised Pakistan to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of its neighboring countries. Islamabad has persistently advocated for a plebiscite in Kashmir and believes that the UN should play a role in resolving the issue. However, India maintains that Jammu and Kashmir has a democratically elected government in place and firmly rejects the possibility of UN or international intervention in resolving the Kashmir dispute (Hindustan Times, 2016).

Geelani embarked on journeys to numerous nations, interacting with decision-makers, politicians, and human rights groups in order to secure backing for the Kashmiri cause. Through these visits, he aimed to shed light on the hardships faced by Kashmiris and their ongoing fight for self-determination.

AGITATION AND PROTEST

Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who is 82 years old, is highly regarded by his people for his unrelenting support of azadi, or the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir from Indian sovereignty. Notwithstanding the divergent viewpoints, Geelani's impact is evident, especially among the brave young Kashmiris who walk to the streets to confront the might of the Indian government with stones. Geelani has once again assumed a central role in Kashmiri politics, as seen by the resounding reaction to his demands for strikes and rallies against the Indian military forces' killing of young people, which have shook the Kashmir Valley for many weeks (SIKAND, 2010).

As one of the few Kashmiri leaders who has written extensively about the struggle in Kashmir, Geelani stands out. He has written more than a dozen books, all in Urdu, that examine different facets of the problem. And public addresses are compiled in his work titled "Kashmir: Voice of Freedom" (Nava-e Hurriyat). This book delves into different aspects of the Kashmir issue as perceived by Geelani. The background of the Kashmir conflict, Geelani's critique of Indian rule, his support for Kashmir's inclusion into Pakistan, his opposition to Jammu and Kashmir's



independence, his perception of the interplay between Islam, politics, and the state, and his opinions on jihad and nationalism.

Syed Ali Shah Geelani, a prominent leader, dedicated his life to advocating for Pakistan. The creation of Pakistan was a result of the two-nation theory championed by Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Geelani, a staunch believer in this ideology, played a crucial role in safeguarding Pakistan's interests. Geelani never wavered in his support for Pakistan and the two-nation idea, even while Jammu and Kashmir was under Indian occupation and was outside of Pakistan's current borders. His unwavering commitment to these principles made him a statesman of unparalleled stature, even surpassing those found within Pakistan itself.

He was the individual who bestowed this slogan upon the perplexed and disoriented Kashmiri youth. He articulated this slogan as a resounding call to action. With unwavering conviction, he proclaimed, "hum Pakistani hain, Pakistan humara hai" (Pakistan is our country, and we are its people.). This declaration echoed throughout the mountains, valleys, townships, and villages of Kashmir, leaving an indelible impact. I perused the reviews penned by Indians, who hailed him as the father of the Kashmiri nation yet simultaneously referred to him as the 'hartal man.' They labeled him a 'demonstration man' due to his ability to mobilize the entire Kashmir region into a shutdown, even while he himself was imprisoned. Such was his influential prowess. (Wani, 2022) Geelani was constantly sorry about Pakistan's shortcomings as a Muslim country. The previous 53 years of experience demonstrate how Pakistan has suffered immensely as a result of Western nations' policies that impede the Islamic revolution in the country and favor the US in particular. This same strategy caused Pakistan to be divided into two parts. Prejudices based on province, language, and area were maintained and encouraged by the same policy across the nation. Despite having a fair and legitimate stance, Pakistan was unable to act appropriately with J&K due to the same policy (Hakeem, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Syed Ali Shah Geelani's tireless commitment and unwavering advocacy for the Kashmiri freedom movement have left an indelible mark. Throughout his six-decade-long journey, Geelani actively spearheaded initiatives to challenge Indian rule, effectively voicing the grievances of Kashmiris both on the international stage and within India itself. His leadership roles within Jamaat-e-Islami and the Hurriyat Conference exemplified his unwavering dedication to the cause of Kashmir's independence. Despite facing numerous detentions, house arrests, and opposition, Geelani successfully mobilized protests, campaigned globally, and staunchly opposed any dialogue that failed to recognize Kashmiri autonomy. His legacy embodies a steadfast pursuit of Kashmiri rights, serving as a constant reminder of the ongoing struggle for self-determination in the region. In order to prevent further casualties and human rights violations, it is imperative that we actively work towards peace in Kashmir. Central to any resolution efforts should be the prioritization of the voices and perspectives of the Kashmiri people. Whether through discussions, dialogues, or



resolutions, their aspirations should remain at the forefront. Let us join forces and strive together to achieve the cherished goal of Azaadi (freedom) that Geelani Sahib dedicated his entire life to.

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