

THE **KASHMIR**

Can NYT Publish That
Holocaust Was Fake?

NYT Is Responsible
For What It Publishes



CONNECT

VOLUME 2

EDITION 16

19 MARCH, 2023

I Was Stone Pelter, OGW,
Sleeper Cell For Hizb

HOW
'MEDIA FREEDOM'

DESTROYED

KASHMIRI YOUTH

Ruined Their Life, Career



THE KASHMIR
CONNECT

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The Making Of The New Kashmir

Many people claim to speak in the name of Kashmiris. Some are those who hail from the valley but have lived in peaceful and prosperous Western nations for years, or were even born there. Some are those whose father went to Pakistan as part of the terror brigade and got settled there, marrying locally or taking their wife, parents, siblings etc to Pakistan. These people who continue to call themselves 'Kashmiris' are fattened on ISI payrolls. Their children are educated in medical and engineering colleges and living affluently. These people monitor the terror recruitment cells for Kashmiri youths. They ensure that more and more Kashmiri youths are pushed into terror dens while they make huge money. They also keep spreading anti-India propaganda on various platforms.

None of these categories can claim to speak for the Kashmiris. Only the Kashmiris who have lived in the valley and have suffered through the terror years can speak for themselves. It is the Kashmiris who are finally realizing that they were entrapped in a huge web of deceit spun by Pakistan. Now more and more Kashmiris are getting vocal about this. More and more Kashmiris are admitting in discussions across the Valley that their present and their future is happy and secure as bona fide citizens of our nation.

Residents of Pakistan-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir now want to be Indian citizens. They are tired of poor infrastructure, bad governance, terror networks in their midst and more. As its economy goes into a tailspin, Pakistan is realizing that karma strikes back.

GAYATRI MOHAN

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPUTY EDITOR

We Need To Take Collective Responsibility

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The recent killing of a young woman at Soigbugh in Budgam has shaken the entire Kashmir. I agree that killers, murderers – they are born in all societies. All regions across the world have their share of black sheep. But Kashmir is shocked by this most foul murder. Kashmir is the land of saints and Sufis. This is how we Kashmiris regard ourselves. We regard ourselves as the children of the land of reshis and pirs of the highest order.

That is why the horrific killing of the young woman has shaken the valley. All of us are reflecting upon the societal degradation, the moral degradation that

caused the man to commit this chilling murder.

Societies change for the better when the change springs from within. It is for all of us to collectively take responsibility for our society, and to show it direction. Moral values, noble thoughts, simple living and high thinking – these are the highest ethics that must drive us. And when we all take collective responsibility, we shall be able to take our society and our country in the direction of peace, progress, all-round harmony and development.

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STONE
PELTER,
OGW,
SLEEPER
CELL FOR
HIZB

HOW 'MEDIA FREEDOM' DESTROYED KASHMIRI YOUTH

Ruined Their Life, Career



SHEIKH MUDASIR
Consulting Editor,
The Kashmir Connect

The article in New York Times has created a lot of hungama and has claimed that Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi finished media freedom in Kashmir. The claim is false and baseless. It is absolutely contrary to what we Kashmiris suffered, and what we witnessed.

The Kashmir media was one of the strongest pillars of the terror ecosystem in Kashmir. If the UT Administration took comprehensive action to ensure that the media does not feed and nourish and sustain the terror ecosystem, what is wrong in it? This action should have been taken decades ago.

I know what I am talking about. Hatred towards the nation was drilled into innocent children by the separatists and their mouthpiece – the media of Kashmir. The result was that by the time we were in our early teens, about 80 per cent of the boys in our area had become stone pelters.

Violence even by children had been normalized. At the age of 16, when I was fond of studying and was nursing dreams to be a doctor, I was arrested for stone pelting and lodged in jail for about two months.

Violence, heightened aggression fed among children

Violence and heightened aggression among children was nothing new in our area. I hail from Old Town Baramulla, which was called Chhota Pakistan. About 80 per cent boys from the

From the recent write-up in NYT – it seems that these people don't like to see that Kashmiri youth are not getting into riots and violence, they are not getting killed. It seems that they don't like it that schools, colleges and universities in Kashmir function normally, markets remain open, people are able to get their bread and butter



area were into stone pelting and used to be in and out of jail.

By the time I was in my late teens, I was an Over Ground Worker (OGW) of Hizbul Mujahideen. A number of my friends had become militants. What else could be expected from children who had been raised on a steady diet of anti-state rants, talk of ghulami and azadi? Many of those who had become militants got killed, leaving their parents wailing and bereft.

Still in my late teens, I became part of the Hizb sleeper cell. Boys my age in the rest of India were studying, focusing on their career, looking forward to building a successful life. The boys of Kashmir were being led to militancy and terrorism by the separatists and by the media which was glorifying it all. This was the "media freedom" in Kashmir – the freedom to destroy the life of gullible youths.

I went to jail three times for my aggressive role in stone pelting, and for providing logistics support to Hizb men. My association with Hizb was so strong and also committed that people started calling me Chhota Geelani. The freedom enjoyed by Kashmir's media played a very big role in ruining the life of the youth

I Discovered The Big Fraud In Kashmir

But by about 2007, reality had started dawning upon me that this whole drama of freedom struggle was part of Pakistan's quasi war against India. By then, I had started asking questions.

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If the separatists were our freedom leaders, why were their children not part of the fight for freedom? All these notions got cleared after I was jailed for the third time and I went to Udhampur jail.

The separatists, Jamaat e Islami leaders, even many of our religious leaders were paid huge money to keep feeding this drama. And youths like me – the sons of poor men – were used and exploited so that the drama would look real nationally and internationally.

When I Saw The Whole Truth

When I was jailed for the third time in 2009 and taken to the District Jail at Udhampur, I was 26 years old. During the one and a half years in jail, I saw the whole truth with my own eyes. The eminent separatists who were lodged in jail at that time got VIP treatment while we were trash for them. Whether we lived or died, it did not matter to them.

When I came out of jail in 2011, I was a changed man. I completely gave up all the anti-national activities. I now stay engaged in nation-building.

I was grievously misled, and I paid a huge cost for it. I was a bright student and wanted to be a doctor. Those dreams were laid to dust. My father was so grief-stricken on seeing his son in and out of jail that he could not bear the trauma and died.

News reports and write-ups like the recent one in NYT deeply sadden me. Why are these lies being peddled that Kashmir media was absolutely free and that UT Administration has quashed their freedom now?

Kashmir is finally on the right track. Everybody can see it. Yes, a section of our population is still radicalized, because the terror system had deep roots here. It will take time to fully deal with the terror ecosystem. From the recent write-up in NYT – it seems that these people don't like to see that Kashmiri youth are not getting into riots and violence, they are not getting killed. It seems that they don't like it that schools, colleges and universities in Kashmir function normally, markets remain open, people are able to get their bread and butter.

How New York Times Defines 'MEDIA FREEDOM' IN KASHMIR

FRONT PAGE COVERAGE FOR JIHADI COMMANDERS, SEPARATISTS

Those who are crying that Modi ji finished media freedom in Kashmir – let me tell you about the freedom that the media exercised here. The newspapers used to have photographs and statements of Syed Ali Geelani, United Jihad Council chief Syed Salahuddin, Hafiz Sayeed, Masrat Alam and others on front page always. For everything that they said, all their hate against India – the media was the mouthpiece.

Bohot saare print media journalists Geelani ke pairon mein rehte thhe. They used to get big money to put the statements of separatists and jihadi commanders on the front pages. The result was that all these anti-state forces were given the biggest headlines, the maximum space.

Youth Needed Rs 1.50 Lakh For Pellet Injuries, Geelani Gave Rs 3000

The doctors had told Isaaq that Rs 1.50 lakh would be needed for his treatment. Geelani told his assistant to pay Rs 3000 to us. Geelani said that we get very limited funds, and we cannot help more. Finally Isaaq's mother sold her gold and also the gold that she had kept for her daughter's wedding for the treatment.

When Hurriyat or the other separatists organized any conference, the newspapers would give them huge coverage with lots of photographs. In the name of press freedom, the papers were full of what Pakistan's terror leaders, separatists and militants had to say. Newspaper editors would get huge funding from ISI for this purpose.

The news related to welfare measures initiated by the government were always pushed to the inside pages.

SENIOR NEWSPAPER EDITOR ACTED AS IF GEELANI WAS HIS MASTER

Once I had gone to Geelani's residence in Hyderpora. The year was 2009.

I was accompanying a youth named Isaaq. He was from Dewan Bagh in Baramulla and was about 22 years old. Isaaq was a stone pelter and he had received pellet injuries.

While we were waiting to speak to Geelani, the Editor of a local newspaper of Kashmir was present there. He said to Geelani, "Hum aap ki news ko front page par lete hain. Why does your office send the press releases to us late? You must tell your office to send us your press releases first of all." The man's voice was so submissive that it seemed that Geelani was his master.

MEDIA FREEDOM THAT NYT TALKS ABOUT

Kashmir's Newspapers Played Major Role In Priming Boys For Jihad

ISI is waging war against India in Kashmir. Why should ISI be allowed to determine what shall be given prominence in Kashmir's newspapers? Why should the government allow ISI to run the media policy here? Was this the media freedom that the report in NYT is talking about?

Media is the fourth pillar of democracy. If the youth have to be inspired for anything, to bring about inqilaab, a revolution, the media has a very important role to play. But in Kashmir, the media was always dancing to ISI tunes and setting wrong narratives here.

New York Times has made claims about "media freedom" in Kashmir. Thanks to this media freedom to print all kinds of highly inflammatory content, innocent, unaware children were taking to violence. Nobody told us this was not the right path to take.

Huge Craze For Newspapers In Kashmir

I remember that as a child, I used to see the people avidly reading the newspaper. In my school, after the newspaper was delivered, there used to be a sort of competition among teachers that who will read it first. I used to see the teachers telling each other – pehle mein padhta hoon, baad mein aap padh lena.

In common market areas, on the platforms in front of

shops, in homes, people would avidly read the newspapers. I used to wonder that what the newspaper carries that men, women, youngsters – all want to read it. I used to feel very surprised. Is mein aisa kya hai jo log itni dilchaspi se padhte hain, I used to think.

I started picking up the paper out of curiosity. I saw the photographs of Geelani, United Jihad Council chief Salahuddin, Hafiz Sayeed, Asiya Andrabi, Mirwaiz, Yasin Malik, Masrat Alam and others.

Welfare Projects By Govt Were Pushed Inside

Now when I look back, I remember that there used to be no photographs of the welfare projects undertaken by the government. Development ki koi baat nahin hoti thi. That was regarded as second grade news and was always relegated

At that time, the media in Kashmir would dance on ISI tunes. If such media is closed down, it is the best thing for Kashmir. Aisa media band hua to bohot achha hai

to the inside pages. All this can be verified if one examines the archives of the major newspapers in Kashmir.

Jihadi Commanders Were Made Our Heroes

Obviously when the photographs of Salahuddin, Geelani and other separatist leaders are on the front pages, the people will start idolizing them as the leaders. Especially the youth were deeply influenced.

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The print media created a pro-separatist, pro-militant, pro-azadi narrative in Kashmir. Through repetition of these patterns day after day, year after year, vo narrative hamare dimag mein baith gaya.

KASHMIR'S NEWSPAPERS WHEN MEDIA WAS SUPPOSEDLY 'FREE'

**Sample
The
Content**



Newspapers used to carry excerpts from the speeches of Pakistan-based terror leaders Hafiz Sayeed, Azhar Masood, or the local separatists. Full press releases of militant commanders would be used.

With separatists, jihadi commanders on the front pages, the content used to be highly inflammatory. I still remember the kind of sentences we would read daily. Here is a sample.

Hindustan hamare upar haavi hu gaya hai.

Hum Kashmiri ghulam hain.

Yahan par kathputli sarkar hai, ye Hindustan ke isharon par nachti hai

Ye jang jaari rahegi jab tak Kashmir azad hoga

Hum kisi bhi tanzeem ko, kisi bhi insaan ko Kashmir ke saath gaddari karne ka mauka nahin denge

Words like haq-e-khud iradiyat were commonly used, with the meaning given in English in brackets thereafter - (self determination).

The Impact Of Kashmir's 'Free Media' On The Mindset Of The Youth

Talks with my friends, my classmates revealed that we all had developed the same mindset. We used to see Salahuddin, other leaders' images and statements in the newspaper. Hamare dil mein un ke liye izzat aur mohabbat ke ehsaas paida ho gaye. We started regarding the jihadi commanders in great respect.

At that time I was in Class 7 or 8. Every two or three days, the press note of United Jihad Council would be published on the front page.

When you read something daily, then it imprints your mind. It shapes your mindset. Even if it is wrong, you start liking it. You start trusting it.

How Kashmir's Media Made Sure We Hate The Nation

All of us friends used to discuss what we had seen in the paper, and we used to be filled with anger. Daily our front pages shouted at us – India is ruling over Kashmir. We are slaves. Steadily, we all hated India.

What impact did Kashmir's 'free media' have upon us? We started looking upon all jihadi leaders, all separatist leaders with love and respect. When we used to see their photographs, read their statements, we used to feel relief that they are working for Kashmir's azadi.

The media made jihadi leaders our role models. Becoming militants, becoming

Over Ground Workers and stone pelters became natural for us.

Why Wasn't Our Media Neutral?

If the media had stayed neutral at that time, if the media had carried on with its duties objectively, things would not have got spoiled so much. But they favoured only the separatists and the terrorists.

Imagine how the media will mold the youth when it writes for militants – Itne Mujahid shaheed huye.

If you are giving front page to United Jihad Council, it means that you are giving acceptance to the entire tanzeem. You are accepting their version.

The media incharge of Hizb, Lashkar, Jaish etc used to issue huge press notes. When you are publishing the press note, whatever they say gets published verbatim. I still remember the kind of sentences we would read. "Till the time a single youth of Kashmir is alive, we will keep on doing jihad. We will keep on giving kurbani." This kind of inflammatory content was always there.

When Hurriyat used to have seminars anywhere, it was given full coverage in the paper the next day. What did Geelani say, what did Masrat Alam say – all this was given in full detail. Sometimes we used to get the feeling that people are buying the paper only to see what Geelani, Hafiz Sayeed etc are saying.

The newspapers made huge money with this business, but our youth got devastated. This was the media freedom that New York Times is crying for.

MEDIA PLAYED VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN BARBADI OF KASHMIR YOUTH

Media enjoys the trust of people. It is regarded as authentic. But if the media is used for wrong purpose, it will destroy generations.

Mainstream news channels like Zee News etc used to carry news that ISI is using Kashmir youth, exploiting them. If the national media was saying this, the local media should have given it at least 50 pc space. But Kashmir's media was part of the terror eco-system.

Also, we had been indoctrinated so much that we were not interested in any talk against Pakistan, or against the separatists, the militants.

What does NYT want? That Pakistan narrative should prevail here again? NYT wants that Hafiz Sayeed and Salahuddin should determine the narratives for Kashmir?

People Are Realizing The Truth Now

Now, I can hear people commonly discussing – Pakistan ne humen barbad kiya. Now governance is better. Corruption has significantly reduced. Mainstream politicians ne hamara beda garak kiya thha. Earlier there was too much corruption and nepotism.

Now the people of Kashmir are mentally prepared to be part of the Indian mainstream. The anti-India narrative has got weakened. People want to stay with India. But they are afraid of tough policies. They feel they are better off with India, but they also feel that government policies should not be tough. They should be conducive till the time people are healed of the trauma that they lived through.

Why I think Some Media Portals Should Be Restrained

The poisoning that was done by Kashmir's media has largely been dealt with. But sometimes I wish that the kind of reporting done by some Delhi-based news portals and media houses should be restrained. Vo hawa mein baat karte hain. They carry baseless reports which serve to provoke the youth.

Their reporting is not balanced. Whenever they come to Kashmir, yahan koi shosha utha ke chale jaate hain. Recently Ms Arfa Khanum Sherwani of The Wire was here. She claimed that the halaat are very bad here. She claimed that people don't have freedom.

Halaat were bad at that time when four to five civilians were killed in a month. Haalat are not kharab now. Boys don't go to jail now. Are the halaat good or bad?

At that time daily there would be strikes. Schools were closed. Children's education used to suffer. Now everything functions smoothly. Is it good or bad?

The Constitution is supreme now. The law is supreme now.

I remember the time when government vehicles, government schools and officers were burnt. Such misleading journalists should tell us clearly – the situation was good earlier or now? Internally everybody knows the truth.

Such biased journos go to areas like Nowhatta in Srinagar, which is a highly radicalized area. Such journalists must visit all kinds of places.

They don't how Pakistan uses negative coverage against India on its platforms. Whatever one does, one must be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

JOURNALISTS ARRESTED RECENTLY WERE PART OF TERROR ECOSYSTEM

The journalists who have been arrested after abrogation of Article 370 were actually part of the terror ecosystem. Some of them were Over Ground Workers for terror groups. Some were arrested with arms and ammunition. Some used their pen to practice the Single Story Syndrome – where only one side of the story is presented. They used to get money for their involvement in subversive activities.

But the youth who read such biased, inflammatory content would get provoked. A section of those youths would pick up arms against the state. In this way, many of my friends became militants and got killed. Who is responsible for the death of those young men?

NYT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT IT PUBLISHES

CAN NYT PUBLISH THAT HOLOCAUST WAS FAKE?



Mr Iqball Ahmad

Mr Iqball Ahmad is the Executive Editor of Heaven Mail, an English daily published from Srinagar

The debate over “freedom of media” in Kashmir raised by New York Times is hilarious. One is surprised to watch that NYT, which is regarded as such a titan in the media world, is going so wrong where Kashmir and our nation are concerned.

NYT cannot distance itself from the essay published by it on the ground that it is an opinion piece. Someone may claim in an opinion article that the genocide of European Jews in Germany was fake and concocted. Someone may claim that the forced exodus of Kashmiri Pandits was fake and concocted. Will NYT publish it and claim that that newspaper has no responsibility for the content because the write-up is an opinion article?

A newspaper has responsibility towards what it publishes in the opinion pages. If something wrong gets published in those pages and the newspaper gets aware of

it, the newspaper must own up the error that wrong content was published. NYT has not done that. NYT has made the preposterous and baseless claim that Prime Minister Modi has finished media freedom in Kashmir.

Now when the government is taking corrective action and putting things on track, NYT is giving it the colours of oppression and repression. Oppression was what we suffered during the terror years, at the hands of the Pakistan-sponsored militant groups operating here.

During Terror Years, Bizarre Was Normalized

NYT must know that it is talking of the terror years in Kashmir when the bizarre was normalized. Everything wrong was justified in the name of the conflict. It must be noted that the conflict wasn't empowering the people. Militant groups steadily decimated all

our freedom. Not just of the Kashmiri Pandits, but of the Kashmiri Muslims too.

Our human rights were finished. Our freedom to speech and expression was finished. Only that was allowed for Kashmiris which Pakistan wanted. Pakistan is always waging war on India, and it has made Kashmir a battleground for that war.

It has been over 40 years since Pakistan has waged this war in Kashmir. Pakistan exploited our commonality of religion and indoctrinated large sections of our society to give this war the façade of an indigenous conflict.

Now the Kashmiris are saying out more and more that Pakistan *ne hamare saath dhokha kiya. Humein gumrah kiya* (Pakistan cheated us, misled us). The power of this collective realization rising in Kashmir shall expose the lies of the agenda-driven, ISI-fed lobbies in the West that support the Pakistan narrative.

KUCHH URDU NEWSPAPERS BANDOOK SE KAM NAHIN THHE

How A Youth Used A Pro- Militant Weekly To Cheat In Exam

by Iqball Ahmad

I have been watching Kashmir media for decades. I hail from Trahpoo village in Achabal block, Anantnag district. All the newspapers, whether in Urdu or English, used to follow the separatist narrative. The nation was projected as an oppressive force.

Let me tell you how a young man from our area used a weekly newspaper, to cheat in

the exams. It was around 1990. The youngster had to appear in the examination for Class 10. This particular newspaper always used to promote militants.

That time, ye weekly ek bandook se kam nahin thha (This weekly was like a gun at that time). We used to have only two or three newspapers. This weekly used to print thousands of copies and it would reach everywhere. People used to read this weely but they also used to fear it. This weekly played a major role in shaping the pro-Pakistan, anti-India narrative in Kashmir.

This weekly was associated with Jamaatis or with militants, who used to wield huge power at that time. A young man from our area placed this weekly on his table and casually continued to cheat from the book to write in his answer sheet. No teacher dared to stop him from cheating, fearing death.

Romanticizing Militancy And Jihad

All these newspapers carried rosy stories of militancy. They romanticized jihad. The front pages of these newspapers carried huge photographs of terrorist commanders and of jihad.

On the front page, huge photographs of Syed Salahudin, of Azam Inqalabi and others were carried with their statements. At that time, Azam Inqalabi was regarded as the leader of the resistance movement in Kashmir.

The entire Kashmir media was subservient to separatists

All these newspapers carried rosy stories of militancy. They romanticized jihad. The front pages and inside pages of these newspapers carried huge photographs of terrorist commanders and of jihad

and militants. Many did it by choice. Many others fell in line because those who tried to maintain even a shade of neutrality were killed by the militants.

Newspapers Used To Apologize To Terror Groups

I remember that a local newspaper once published on the front page:

Today we have not been able to take all press notes of militant brothers due to shortage of space. The rest of the press notes shall be published tomorrow.

This was the situation. The media was the mouthpiece of the militants.

Militants were roaming everywhere. They were the ones who held the power. Separatists used to say that our state government was a puppet in the hands of New Delhi. The fact was that through those decades, the state government was a puppet in the hands of the militants and the separatists.

Constant Attempt To Provoke Anti-State Action

We know that the newspapers

used to glorify militancy and vilify India. Even then, many times we would feel that the exaggerations were so high, itna jooth ki hazam nahin ho raha. (Many times the lies were so dense that one could not digest them.) Even the most minor incidents would be blown out of proportion to keep provoking the people, provoking the youth to make them angry.

I started realizing that we were being fed lies and more lies when I reached college. There I saw mainstream newspapers from Delhi. Later Internet was introduced and our closed world started opening up. Then some among us realized how the Pakistan narrative had been spood-fed to us.

These newspapers had a very major role in radicalizing Kashmir. Whichever state government came or went, things remained the same. In the name of the democratic space and freedom, the newspapers printed whatever they wanted.

All this has been checked to some extent after the abrogation of Article 370. But still there are too many grey areas in the media. The UT Administration must check them on priority basis.

A NEWSPAPER NAMED MUZAFFARABAD TIMES STARTED PUBLICATION IN KASHMIR

The audacity displayed by the militants can be ascertained from this example. Someone got a newspaper registered with the Jammu and Kashmir Information Department called Muzaffarabad Times. Muzaffarabad is the capital and the largest city of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir.

Indoctrinated and radicalized youngsters would shout in the streets – Kashmir Banega Pakistan. We were all fed with the notion that tomorrow, day after tomorrow, Kashmir will officially be part of Pakistan.

For some months, Muzaffarabad Times was also published from Kashmir. Everybody had the same content those years. It was 100 per cent pro militancy. All the newspapers were part of this anti-India factory.

MILITANT COMMANDER HAD COLUMNS IN MAJOR URDU NEWSPAPERS

I remember that a columnist in a major English newspaper always questioned India's democratic system and demonized it. Another columnist wrote only about jihad, only about the Pakistan narrative for Kashmir.

Commander Masood, an active terrorist at a top position in Hizb ul Mujahideen, was a towering figure at that time. He was part of the dialogue series with the Centre. It is said that the talks of the Centre with the separatists and the militants failed because Hizb had a very rigid attitude.

Commander Masood used to have a weekly column in two popular Urdu weeklies. It is not that the weekly published what he said. The militant commander had his own column to keep brainwashing the youth to take to militancy and fight the nation.



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