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ASTOUNDING BELWETHERSHIP OF SHEIKH MOHAMMAD ABDULLAH: A SEARCH ON TRAITS

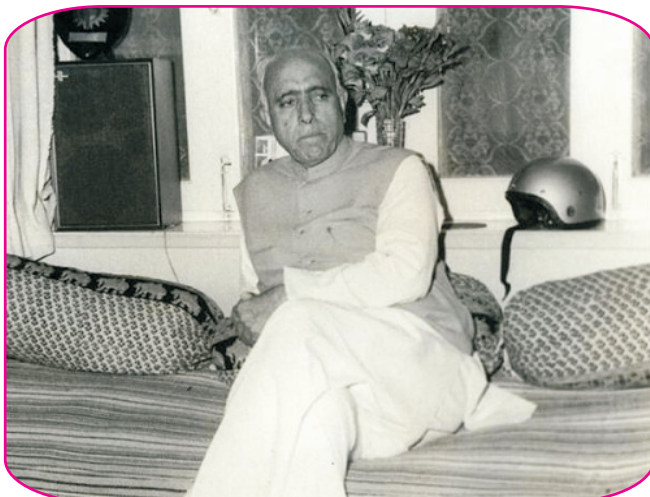
Arsheed Ahmad Ganie¹ and Dr. M. Deivam²

¹Ph.D Research Scholar , Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Annamalai University.

²Assistant Professor , Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Annamalai University.

ABSTRACT

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was, without question, the dominant figure in Kashmir from 1930s until his death in 1982. He was the most enigmatic and complex political leader of Kashmir. He had a meteoric rise to the top slot of Kashmir politics and continued to dominate the political scene for more than 50 years with enduring impact. He held an unrivaled place in the history of Kashmir and in the historic transition from tradition to modernity. He left an indelible impact on the political landscape of Kashmir. He came at a time in history when he was needed by his people and began the mission which he himself said is for others to carry on. This article is attempted to focus on the secular ideas of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and people's acuity about the Abdullah.



KEYWORDS: Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Leader, Kashmir, enigmatic, secular.

INTRODUCTION :

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah held an unrivaled place in the history of Kashmir and in the historic transition from tradition to modernity. He left an indelible impact on the political landscape of Kashmir. His oratorical skill was remarkable; he single-handedly directed the course of freedom struggle through the force of his oratory.

He was an undisputed secularist. Early in his struggle against the Dogra tyranny, he became disillusioned with the religious fanaticism and took a historic decision to convert Muslim conference into National conference. In 1947, when communal riots flared up on a large scale in both India and Pakistan, it was only Kashmir, which under the secular leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, became a beacon light in the benighted sub-continent.

Besides being a charismatic leader, he was also a reformist. His policy of "Land to the tiller" signaled new era of peasant emancipation. 'The Big Landed Estates Abolition act legalized the radical land reform, which was the last nail to the coffin of feudal system. He was an ardent supporter of women emancipation. He valued the involvement of women, who were confined to their domestic homes and restrained from being actively involved in social life, in every field and strove to achieve their true emancipation and equality with men. He was stubborn idealist, who was reluctant to compromise on his principles and the plans he had envisaged for the welfare of his people.

OBJECTIVES:

- + To identify the Secular Ideas of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah
- + To know the people's perception about the Leadership and Personality of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah

METHODOLOGY

The nature of this study is exploratory and descriptive because both primary and secondary data have been used. The Primary Data has been collected from 75 respondents from the District Anantnag of Jammu and Kashmir. Men and Women were chosen on the basis of simple random sampling method. The researcher confines with 75 respondents. Questionnaire has been utilized for drawing precise inferences. The inferences were tabulated systematically for, in order to do analysis by simple percentage analysis. Secondary data is collected from journals, books, newspapers, published and unpublished work and websites.

Disciple of Secularism: From Muslim Conference to National Conference

We have repeatedly declared that the Kashmir movement is not communal; it is a platform to address the grievances of every section of people. We shall always be prepared to help our compatriots, Hindus and Sikhs. No progress is possible unless we learn to live in amity. For that, mutual respect for each other's legitimate rights is a pre-condition. I repeat, the Kashmir movement is not communal movement.

—Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah

Sheikh Abdullah became the symbol and guardian of secularism. His unique achievement of transforming the Muslim Conference, a party based on appealing to the religious sentiment of the vast majority of Kashmiris, into the National Conference that reached out to all religions in the struggle for azaadi, was recalled. He was able partly to lessen the resentment, bred by discrimination against Muslims by the Dogra rulers, against the miniscule Hindu Pandit community. The National Conference organized the defense of Srinagar even before the Indian Army arrived; Maharaja Hari Singh and his administration had fled the capital. The National Conference had committed itself to secularism a decade earlier. It had also adopted the wide-ranging 'Naya Kashmir' (New Kashmir) programme promising revolutionary political and socio-economic change.

Right from its inception the programme of the Muslim Conference was secular and progressive. True, the leaders of Muslim Conference came forward in the Muslim name but their programme and manifesto was as broad as that of any progressive political Party of India. They fought against exploitation, regardless of the religion of the exploiter. This attitude of Muslim leadership certainly began to influence and impress even the staunch Hindu communalists. Besides, the fact that the demands of Muslim Conference were purely secular in nature, it is also worth mentioning that the Conference made persistent efforts to ensure a joint Hindu-Muslim struggle. It did not even miss the smallest opportunity to strive for it. In all of its sessions and Presidential addresses the Conference stressed on forging Hindu-Muslim unity and co-operation.

On 28th February, 1939 Sheikh Abdullah was released and in order to prepare the ground for final transformation of Muslim Conference into National Conference, he made a country-wide tour. In a statement, he said, "Communal politics does not suit the temperament of the people of this state. It cannot help us in removing the evils of poverty, hunger, illiteracy and above all our slavery." Under the Presidentship of Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, a special session of Muslim Conference was convened at Pathar Majid on 10th June, 1939, to reconsider the decision on the resolution of working committee, passed on 28th June 1938, regarding the name and constitution of the party. According to Prem Nath Bazaz, 176 delegates and hundreds of workers participated in the session. G.M. Sadiq inaugurated the session, he said:

"Any responsible government cannot be the Government of any particular class or party or religious group but, on the other hand, every individual comprising the forty lakh inhabitants of the state will be a component part of the same and will have the same share in running it"

So National Conference came into being. Some Non-Muslims were included into the working committee

as members; prominent among them were Sardar Budh Sing, Jia Lal Kilam, Prem Nath Bazaz and Kashyap bandhu. The party also adopted a new flag having a white plough on red back-ground. It was designed by Pandit Prem Nath Dhar. The Flag depicts the influence of socialistic ideology. In fact, the leaders, who worked and voted in favour of the change, were deeply influenced by progressive movements of Russia; Naya Kashmir was another manifestation of their progressive ideology.

The conversion of Muslim conference into National conference was executed not only to provide a political platform to Non – Muslims, but Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was not feeling comfortable with communal politics and he wanted to get rid of it. His belief in secularism was unshakable and was not confined in changing the name only. He provided his secular stance throughout his life. In 1947 when the whole sub continent was engulfed into communal holocaust, it was only Kashmir, which stood aloof because of Sheikh Abdullah’s unwavering belief in secularism.

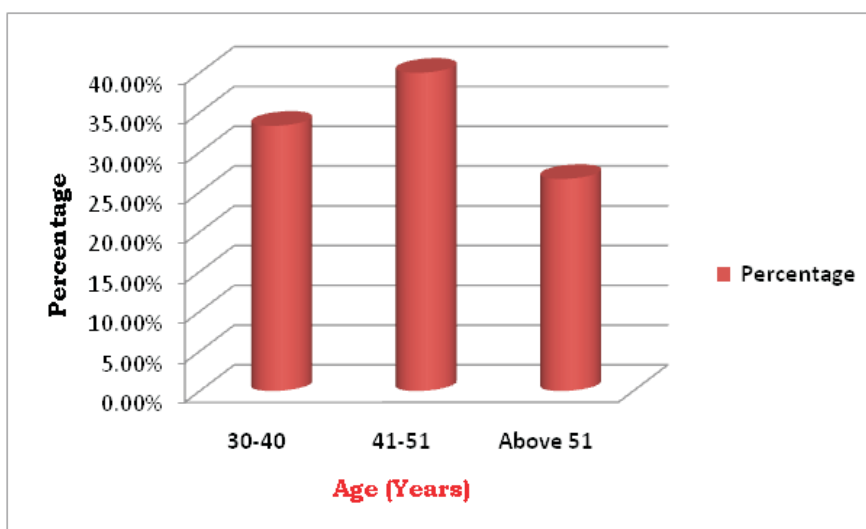
Let us rise above petty communal bickerings and work jointly for the welfare of the masses. I appeal to my Hindu brethren not to entertain imaginary fears and doubts. Let us assure them that their rights shall not be jeopardized if they join hands with the Musalmans.

—Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

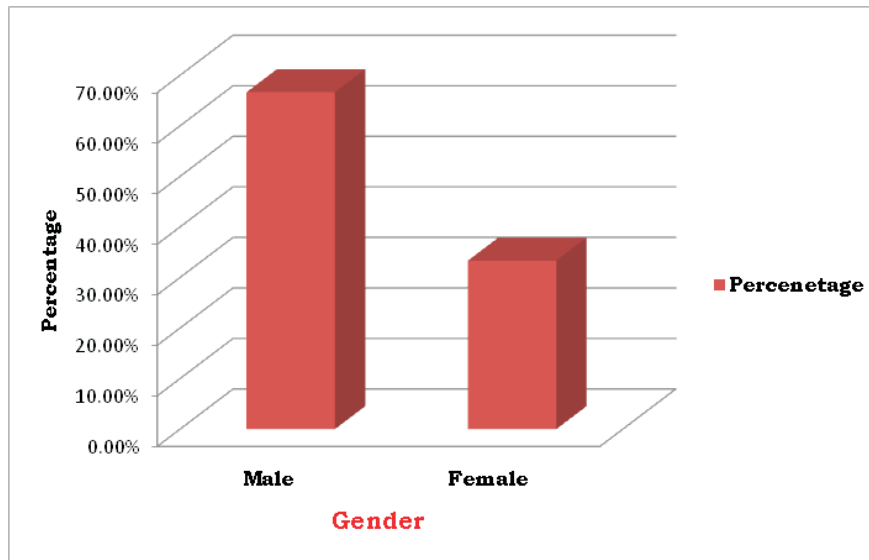
This part analyzed is on the basis of empirical method adopted to draw perceptions and opinions from the respondents in District Anantnag of Jammu and Kashmir. Random sampling was adopted in order to choose respondents. There are two variables adopted i.e., Age and Gender. On the basis of variables, questionnaire/ Schedule was administered which involve questions related with Leadership of Abdullah ,Organizing capacity, Coordination, Convincing skill, Mass movement and Public opinion

Sl. No	Age	Frequency	Percentage	Total
01	30-40	25	33.33	25
02	41-51	30	40	30
03	Above 51	20	26.66	20
	Total	75	100	75



The table 1 shows the age-wise distribution of the total 75 respondents. (25) respondents i.e., 33.33 percentage of the respondents belong to the age group of (30-40) years. (30) respondents i.e., 40 percentage belong to the age group of (41-51) years. (20) respondents i.e., 31.11 percentage of the respondents belong to the age group of above (51 years). It is found that the majority of respondents belong to the age group of (41-51) years.

SI	Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Total
01.	Male	50	66.66	60
02.	Female	25	33.33	15
	Total	75	100	75



The table 2 shows the gender-wise distribution of the total 75 respondents. 66.66 percentage respondents belong to the gender group of male. 33.33 percentage respondents belong to the gender group of Female. It is found that the majority of respondents belong to the Gender group of Male.

Age (Years)	30-40		41-51		Above 51		Total
	L	H	L	H	L	H	
Leadership of Abdullah	5 (6.66%)	20 (26.66%)	4 (5.33%)	26 (34.66%)	5 (6.66%)	15 (20%)	75 100%
Organizing capacity	8 (10.66%)	17 (22.66%)	12 (16%)	18 (24%)	6 (8%)	14 (18.66%)	75 100%
Coordination	10 (13.33%)	15 (20%)	14 (18.66%)	16 (21.33%)	7 (9.33%)	13 (17.33%)	75 100%
Convincing skill	5 (6.66%)	20 (26.66%)	10 (13.33%)	20 (26.66%)	4 (5.33%)	16 (21.33%)	75 100%
Mass movement	7 (9.33%)	18 (24%)	11 (14.66%)	19 (25.33%)	8 (10.66%)	12 (16%)	75 100%
Public opinion	6 (8%)	19 (25.33%)	12 (16%)	18 (24%)	4 (5.33%)	16 (21.33%)	75 100%
Total	25 (33.33%)		30 (40%)		20 (26.66%)		75 100%

The table 4 shows the analysis of the data from 75 respondents. 75 respondents belong to the age group of 18-48, 41-51 and (above 51). These respondent included in low level and high level.

In the age group of (18-28), related with the question of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's trait of leadership, 5.66% of the respondents opined for low level, whereas 26.66% of them approached at high level of Abdullah's trait of leadership. With the query of Abdullah's trait of leadership in the age group of (41-51), 5.33% of the respondents articulated for low level of trait of leadership, whereas 34.66% of the respondents approached for high level. In the age group of (above 51), for the question of Abdullah's trait of leadership, 6.66% of them opined for low level, whereas 20% of them opted for high level.

On the basis of ideology related with the organizing capacity of Abdullah, in the age group of (18-28), 10.66 percentage of the respondents opined for low level, whereas 22.66 percentage of the respondents approached for high level of organizing capacity of Abdullah. In the age category of (41-51), 16 percentage of the respondents approached for low level and 24 percentage of them opined at high level of Abdullah organizing capacity. Under the age category of (above 51), 8 percentage of them opined for low level, whereas 18.66 percentage of the respondents approached for high level of Abdullah's organizing capacity.

For the question of coordination efforts of Abdullah compared with leader in Kashmir, in age category of (30-40), 13.33% of them articulated low level, whereas 20% of them opined for high level of coordination efforts of Abdullah. In the age category of (41-51), 18.66% of the respondents opined at low level, whereas 21.33% of them opted at high level of coordination efforts of Abdullah. In the age category of (above 51), 9.33% of them expressed for low level and 17.33% of them articulated for high level of coordination efforts of Abdullah

For the query of convincing skill of Abdullah related with peace his ideas and policies, in the age category of (30-40), 6.66% of them expressed low level, whereas 26.66% of them opined for high level of convincing skill of Abdullah. In the age category of (41-51), 13.33% of the respondents opined at low level, whereas 26.66% of them opted for high level of convincing skill of Abdullah. In the age group of (above 51), 5.33% of them approached at low level and 21.33% of them articulated for high level

Related with the question of capacity of organizing people's movement, in the age group of (30-40), 9.33% of them approached low level, whereas 24% of them opined for high level of capacity of organizing people's movement. In the age category of (41-51), 14.66% of the respondents opted at low level, whereas 25.33% of them opted for high level of capacity of organizing people's movement. In the age category of (above 51), 10.66% of them approached at low level and 16% of them articulated for high level of capacity of organizing people's movement

Related with the question of Peoples opinion about Abdullah, in the age group of (30-40), 8% of them expressed low level, whereas 25.33% of them opined for high level of opinion about Abdullah. In the age category of (41-51), 16% of the respondents opined at low level, whereas 24% of them opted for high level of opinion about Abdullah. In the age category of (above 51), 5.33% of them approached at low level and 21.33% of them articulated for high level of opinion about Abdullah

Table 4: Gender wise - Respondents opinion

Gender	Male		Female		Total
	L	H	L	H	
Leadership of Abdullah	10 (13.33%)	40 (53.33%)	6 (8%)	19 (25.33%)	75 100%
Organizing capacity	11 (14.66%)	39 (52%)	8 (10.66%)	17 (22.66%)	75 100%
Coordination	15 (20%)	35 (46.66%)	7 (9.33%)	18 (24%)	75 100%
Convincing skill	20 (26.66%)	30 (40%)	12 (16%)	13 (17.33%)	75 100%
Mass movement	15 (20%)	35 (46.66%)	8 (10.66%)	17 (22.66%)	75 100%
Public opinion	10 (13.33%)	40 (53.33%)	6 (8%)	19 (25.33%)	75 100%
Total	50 (66.66%)		25 (33.33%)		75 100%

The table 4 shows the analysis of the data from 75 respondents. 75 respondents belong to the gender group of male and female. These respondent included in low level and high level.

Related with the question of Abdullah's trait of leadership among male respondents, 13.33% of the respondents approached for low level, whereas 53.33% of them opined for high level of Abdullah's trait of leadership. Among female respondents, 8% of the female respondents opted for low level and 25.33% opined for high level of Abdullah's trait of leadership.

Among Male respondents, On the basis of ideology related with the organizing capacity of Abdullah, 14.44 % of them opined for low level whereas majority of the respondents approached for high level of organizing capacity of Abdullah. Among female respondents, 10.665 of them opted for low level, whereas 22.22% of them opined for high level of organizing capacity of Abdullah.

For the query of coordination efforts of Abdullah compared with leader in Kashmir among male respondents, 20% of the respondents suggested for low level, whereas 46.66 % of them expressed high level of coordination efforts of Abdullah. Among female respondents, 9.33% of them opined low level and 24% of the respondents suggested for high level of coordination efforts of Abdullah.

Related with the query of convincing skill of Abdullah related with peace his ideas and policies among male respondents, 26.66% of them expressed at low level of convincing skill of Abdullah, whereas 40% of them opined for high level. Among female respondents, 16% of them suggested low level and 17.33% of them opined for high level.

Related with the question of capacity of organizing people's movement among male respondents, 20% of them expressed at low level, whereas 46.66% of them opined for high level of capacity of organizing people's movement. Among female respondents, 10.66% of them approached for low level, whereas 22.66% of them opined for high level of organizing capacity of Abdullah.

For the question of Peoples opinion about Abdullah among male respondents, 13.33% of them expressed at low level, whereas majority of the respondents expressed for high level opinion. Among female respondents, 8% of them articulated for low level, whereas 22.66% of them opined for high level of opinion.

FINDINGS

- + Majority of the respondents invariable of age expressed at high level of high level of Abdullah's trait of leadership.
- + Majority of the respondents in all age groups expressed high level of coordination efforts of Abdullah

- + With regard the question of convincing skill of Abdullah majority of the respondents among the all age groups articulated for high level
- + With regard the question of Abdullah's trait of leadership, both Male, Female respondents expressed similar high level opinion.
- + Regarding the coordination efforts of Abdullah, both male and female respondents approached for high level.
- + Majority of the male respondents expressed high level of Abdullah's capacity of organizing people's movement

CONCLUSION

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah held a matchless place in the history of Kashmir and in the historic transition from tradition to modernity. His stubborn impact on the political landscape of Kashmir. He had a marvelous mind, set up and furnished to wield influence upon the individual or upon multitude's; to charm, to persuade, to command. His appeal was that he could touch the deepest emotional chords of his audience. He was stubborn idealist, who was reluctant to compromise on his principles and the plans he had envisaged for the welfare of his people. He realized from the beginning that women had to be emancipated and awareness must be created in them so that they could play a role as wives and mothers in nation-building and for this they must be brought out of their dark and dingy houses.

During the long period over which he rendered service to the State, he contributed much to its stability and development. His achievements included termination of the Jagirdari system, abolition of large landed estates, fixation of land ceiling, liquidation of debt and transfer of land to landless peasants. During his tenure, the hereditary rule of the royal family was replaced by the system of electing the head of the government. He also recognized the education system. He introduced the concept of decentralization of power by constituting the District Development Boards, where the Cabinet takes on the spot decisions. After the 1975 Indira-Abdullah Accord he laid a new foundation for overall development of State. This land-mark ushered in an era of much needed peace and political stability in the state. His eventful life came to an end on 8th September, 1982.

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Arshad Ahmad Gani

Ph.D Research Scholar , Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Annamalai University.

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