

Changing Contour of Indian Nation-space and Its Spatial Relation with Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Though nation and state are essentially two different units, both of them are shaped and realized by spatial processes and interactions. Spatial consciousness is quintessential to the realization of any modern nation-state. This paper is an attempt to enquire about the changing nature of Indian nation-space right from its Independence to the present day and how this change has significantly determined nation-state's dealing with Kashmir. The first section argues that the Nehruvian spatial strategy involved conceiving nation-space in the western model of secular modernity where the state comes not in opposition to spatial diversity rather as a successful manager of it. In this schema, the state of Jammu and Kashmir is spatially significant to uphold India's successful management of secular modernity as it is the only state where Muslims are in majority. It is the Kashmiri people who make Kashmir spatially integral to Nehruvian nation-imagination, not the land itself. The second part offers an account of how with *Hindutva* nation-imagination increasingly gaining momentum, people-centered nation-space is replaced by the idea of a hegemonically conceived sacred nation-space- the *Punjabhumi*, and Kashmir becomes integral to this sacred nation-imagination more for its mythological significance and territorial infallibility, rather than the people. The final section deals with the government's latest move – the abrogation of article 370 – and its spatial significance.

Key Words – Kashmir; Nation-space; Hindutva; Nationalism

Article Received: 16th October, 2020; Article Revised: 30th December, 2020; Article Accepted: 08th January, 2021

I. INTRODUCTION

Ideally speaking, nation and state are essentially two different units. Nations are primarily people-based as opposed to states which are primarily territorial in nature. State is the spatial extent of a political unit governed by a sovereign political body while nation is “a community of human beings” who are “bound together by a strong sentiment of unity and solidarity” (Symonowicz 1985, 221). That the primary aspect of nation is not territory is echoed by Anderson also when he defines nation as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991). Nevertheless, in their materializations, nations are heavily shaped and realized by spatial processes and interactions. The unique spatial configuration of each nation discerns it from others. This spatial configuration simultaneously shapes the unique identity of a nation and in turn molded by that identity itself. “Imagination” which Anderson identifies to be the “the binding force” of a nation is itself circumscribed by territory. As Anderson puts “... even the largest of them (nations) encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (1991, 7). Therefore, though the nation is fundamentally a self-perceived community, the very act of perceiving involves territory. George W. White in his book “Nationalism and Territory” has identified two major reasons for why territory is significant for a nation. Firstly, a particular territory contains various

natural resources within it that qualitatively “contribute to the particularities of human culture” (White 2000, 39). Natural resources Secondly, “nations express their identities in cultural landscapes of places and territories” (2000, 39). Since national identities are so heavily space-bound, nation consciousness inevitably engenders spatial awareness and urgency for the sovereign political control over that space. Modern nation-state evolves as a successful congruence of the spatial distribution of nation and that of a state whereby a nation achieves political realization of its perceived spatial consciousness through establishing a sovereign government over it. However, the territorial line of homeland is so arbitrarily perceived that its spatial configuration is potentially vulnerable. This vulnerability is more pungent where the nation is less a result of historical evolutions than a manufactured consciousness. To legitimize the existence of the nation-state, the nation and state both constantly involve in appropriating each other's spatial distribution. Thus, the territorial form which a nation-state finally takes is the result of various historically conditioned, mutually transmuted accentuations between the state and the land it inhabits.

Scholars from different disciplines have considerably drawn our attention to the various modes of the spatial articulations of state- power. Drawing upon Judith Butler's performativity proposition, Gregson and Rose argue that space also needs to be considered in terms of performativity because they

contend that like gender, space too is the product of “the material-discursive effect of performative practices”(Gregson and Rose 2000, 422). Spaces do not precede their performance rather follow it. Like many other spaces, nation-space too is performative in nature which involves considerable material-discursive effort. It too “needs to be thought of as brought into being through performances and performative articulation”(2000,434) Judith Butler categorically claims that the aura of performance is achieved through the “ritualized repetition of norms”(Butler 1993, ix). When the artificially created norms are continuously reiterated through various discourses, performativity is achieved which leads to its eventual normativization. Normativization of nation-space is achieved through various discourses, the most critical of them being ritualized repetition of cartographic practice. Henry Lefevre contends that the territory of any modern nation is ‘the product, the child’ of the spatial practice of the concerned state(Lefebvre 2009, 225). Nation-space as a visualized form helps imagine the national territory successfully as a whole. Hence, nation-space is primarily mapped through cartographic exercise. “Our conception of the nation with its finely demarcated body comes from nowhere else than the political map” observes Thongchai Winichakul (Thongchai 1994, 76). A political map offers the citizen-subject of a nation-state material means to “see” the territory where his nationhood lies and it helps them visualize its ‘geo-body’. (Remeswamy 2002, 153) The artificially demarcated map through various discursive repetitions brings into being the spatial existence of a nation with every part of it irrefutably indispensable. Given the inherent vulnerability of the configuration of “geo-body”, nation-state in most cases suffers from cartographic anxiety. The anxiety emanates from its concern for territorial sovereignty as counter-national consciousness can put into question the very integrity of its territory. To reduce this cartographic anxiety and to further solidify the nation-space, most often disenchanted cartographic visuals are replaced by enchanted somatic visual where the nation is no longer a geometrical landscape of cold non-human facts, an empty homogeneous space but a living human being whereby the citizen-subject not only sees where his nation lies but also is emotionally drawn towards it and feels an emotional imperative to sacrifice his life to protect it(Rameswamy 2002,154). The wide convention of visualizing the map of India as *Bharat Mata* can be cited as an example of the emotional imperative a somaticized nation-space can evoke.

This paper seeks to understand how with the changing contour of its nation-imagination, India’s nation-space imagination has also undergone substantial change, and its spatial policy towards Kashmir¹ also changes. Though Kashmir for ages has drawn considerable scholarly intervention from different

perspectives, it seems to lack enough spatial analysis. This paper is an attempt to fill this gap. The complete paper is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the creation of postcolonial Indian nation-space and the spatial significance of the integration of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir into Indian territorial fold. The second part focuses on the spatial underpinnings of *Hindutva* nationalism and the significance of Kashmir in the *Hindutva* nation-imagination. The third and final section concentrates on the abrogation of article 370 and its spatial significance. Thus the paper is an attempt to trace the overall spatial treatment of Indian nation-state towards Kashmir from its integration to recent times.

II. FORMATION OF POST-COLONIAL INDIAN NATION-SPACE AND KASHMIR

Most of the post-colonial nation-states are outcomes of long-drawn political and intellectual movements against their respective colonial masters. These movements were largely led by a broad spectrum of social elites to establish an independent nation-state with a distinct unified national identity. When nationalism emerged as a political force in these countries, a fixed territorial jurisdiction with all its formal institutions was already in existence. Unlike many western countries where the nation-consciousness was followed by territorial integrity, in colonized world territorial integrity was followed by nation-consciousness. The structuring and unification of territory not only “preceded the nation but also played a crucial role in creating and mobilizing it” (Rejaj and Elnole 1969, 143). On the abandoned skeletal structures which were mainly established by the European masters for smooth civil and legal services, edifices of post-colonial nation-states were erected. Rejaj and Enlore have argued that the post-colonial states are more the “state-nations” than the “nation-states” (Rejaj and Elnole 1969, 149). Because of this colonial territorial legacy, the first task these newly independent countries faced was regarding their spatial legitimization.

On the 15th of August, 1947, India formally commenced its journey towards the making of a new post-colonial sovereign republic. In the case of India, the colonially configured nation-space was further complicated by two facts: the Partition and the uncertain political status of princely states. Partition divided the entire subcontinent into two sovereign nation-states. Unlike Pakistan which came into being as a brand new country, India was left with acute territorial dissatisfaction. When India entered into colonial rule almost two hundred years back, it was without any sense of united nationhood and an integrated territory. Like other colonial countries, here also territorial integrity was done by the colonizers for their sheer administrative convenience. The territorial consciousness which the nationalist movement engendered was originally undivided India. The map of

British India was key to realizing this spatial consciousness. Visualizing the map of British India as *Bharat Mata* was a popular convention during the freedom struggle. As Aurobindo Ghosh, one of the most celebrated nationalist ideologues during the freedom movement succinctly puts: “It is not a map, but the portrait of *Bharat-Mata* (Mother India): its cities and mountains, rivers and jungles form her physical body. All her children are her nerves, large and small. Concentrate on Bharat (India) as a living mother, worship her with the nine-fold *bhakti* (devotion)” (quoted in Ramaswamy 2010, 136). That body-image of the nation was the core of Indian freedom struggle. The personified manifestation of the country helped realize its spatial existence in a far better way and eventually could be placed before the countrymen to yield servitude and reverence by compelling them to sacrifice their life to protect the whole of the being. Ramaswamy has traced the gradual evolution of the visualizing practice of India right from the first appearance of the illustration of India in a publication called *The United States of India* in 1923 till India’s Independence. He has pointed out two modes of visualization — “a disenchanted geographic habit in which its territory is visualized as a geo-body, and an enchanted somatic entity in which India is the affect-laden body of *Bharat Mata*” (Ramaswamy 2002, 154). In both cases, the partition of the Indian subcontinent was virtually the worst spatial disintegration. A glimpse of its territorial dissatisfaction is apparent in Nehru’s account.

“All our communications were upset and broken. Telegraphs, telephones, postal services, and almost everything, as a matter of fact, was disrupted. Our services were broken up. Our army was broken up... But above all, what was broken up which was of the highest importance was something very vital and that was the body of India.” (Nehru 1956, 247).

If Partition was an act of spatial deduction, integration of princely states into the Indian territory was a feat of spatial addition. At the time of British withdrawal from the subcontinent, there were five hundred and sixty-five princely states in official existence. They were given the option of joining either of the two nation-states or remaining independent. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel initiated an effort to integrate those princely states which were situated inside the Indian territorial fold. Patel conceptualized India with a traditional nation-state outlook for whom more united the territory is, stronger the nation-state. The princely states situated at the heart of the territory formed a potential threat to India’s territorial integrity and Patel felt a structural imperative to merge them into India’s territorial fold. In other words, the integration was necessary for the spatial unification of the nation-space and the successful “teleological culmination of mainstream nationalism” (Bhagavan 2009, 429). Quite reasonably the princely

state of Jammu and Kashmir situated on the periphery initially did not seem to invoke enough imperative in Patel. Nevertheless, it was Nehru who showed unparalleled interest in Kashmir and almost singlehandedly dealt with the issue. Two primary reasons behind Nehru’s unparalleled interest I put forward here are: its undemocratic brutal governance by Maharaja which Nehru as a professed democratic socialist could not tolerate and its Muslim-majority populations. He envisioned “an independent, united, and modern nation-state of India” (Bhagavan 2009, 440). For Nehru, the princely states were “anachronism” for modern India, because Nehru thought “... some (princely states) are hopelessly backward. There are no civil liberties there” (Nehru 1966, 668). He hoped that the integration of princely states would end undemocratic feudal rules in these states and herald a new age of democratic enlightenment. He clarified his vision on 22 January 1947 in Constitutional assembly debate:

“Inevitably it will be necessary to bring about uniformity in the freedom of the various parts of India because it is inconceivable to me that certain parts of India should have democratic freedom and certain others should be denied it” (Nehru, 1947).

Here his reference to the state of Jammu and Kashmir is obvious. It was the worst example of undemocratic governance² and its comparative remoteness in terms of other princely states was compensated by Nehru’s friendship with Sheikh Abdullah who emerged as the most popular leader while mobilizing the people of Jammu and Kashmir against the autocrat Maharaja and dreamt of Jammu and Kashmir in the socialist democratic light which Nehru promised Indian to offer.

If ending undemocratic rule by Maharaja was one side of the coin the other side was more nuanced. Contrary to Pakistan’s theocratic nation-imagination, Nehru conceived India as a multi-ethnic secular nation-state, unity-in-diversity being its principal hallmark. Nationhood was reconfigured as ‘a mosaic of ethnocultural fragments’ (Roy 2007, 7). The Nehruvian spatial strategy involved conceiving nation-space in the western model of secular modernity where economic geography took precedence over physical geography. Roy argues that Nehruvian policy considered “state as the successful manager of diversity the legitimate institutional authority under whose helpful guidance individuals could enjoy security, groups could enjoy freedoms and recognition, and the nation as a whole could enjoy unity and stability” (Roy 2007, 7). Here state comes not in opposition to spatial diversity, but a successful manager of it. Rather than natural and organic, here nation-space is “state-facilitated and manufactured” (Roy, 19). Unlike other Indian states, in

the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Muslims were in majority. According to the census of 1941, the state of Jammu and Kashmir comprised of a population of 4,021,616; of which 77.11 percent were Muslim and only about 16 percent was Hindu, 16 percent was Sikh, the rest comprised of Buddhist and other religious Indian faiths (Das 1950, 264). Hence, for Nehru, successful integration of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian Nation state as the only Muslim majority state would offer Indian to prove before the world her commitment towards secularism and diversity and also to prove before her guilty conscience the tenacity of her long-standing syncretic tradition which was marred by Jinnah's two-nation theory. Rejecting International commentators' observation that India's acceptance of Partition was her implied acceptance of the two-nation theory, Nehru said, "This is a surprising argument. At no time in India have we accepted the two-nation theory, nor will we accept it" (Quoted in Das 1950, 278). India's success in Jammu and Kashmir, for Nehru, became synonymous with India's secularism and the determination of her leadership to rise above communalism in matters of state policy. That the spatial significance of Kashmir as a pointer to India's secular national identity was articulated well when he wrote to M.C. Chagla, the then High Commissioner in London: "Any acceptance of the two-nation theory (in terms of Jammu and Kashmir) will have the most disastrous consequences in the whole of India. Not only will our secularism end, but India will tend to break up" (SGopal 1984, 216).

It is interesting to note that the spatial significance of Kashmir for Nehru lays primarily in its virtue of being a container: container of Kashmiri people. Principally, it was people who constituted paramount importance for Nehru. He was even opposed to the wide convention of spatial sacralization of the nation-space as *Bharat Mata*. Nehru in his *The Discovery of India* recounted an incident. When he was welcomed in a gathering by the chanting of *Bharat Mata Ki Jai* (Victory to Mother India) which was a conventional anti-colonial practice, he asked them what *Bharat Mata* was and subsequently explained to them:

"... The mountains and the rivers of India, and the forests and the broad fields, which gave us food, were all dear to us, but what counted ultimately were the people of India, people like them and me who were spread out all over this vast land." (Nehru, 2008, 80)

Land acquires significance only when it harbors people over it. Here Nehru's spatial understanding comes in direct contrast with those for whom land itself has intrinsic strategic and symbolic value. The nation-space which Nehru imagined India to be was a melting pot for diverse groups with their varied cultural and political consciousness.

Two seeming controversial steps—promising a plebiscite on the integration of the state of Jammu and Kashmir in the United Nations and granting special status through article 370 of the Indian Constitution—testify to the kind of spatial significance the state of Jammu and Kashmir played in Nehruvian nation imagination. Though the integration of Jammu and Kashmir was legally valid as it was done through signing the *Instrument of Accession*,³ Nehru made India's stand clear by agreeing to the plebiscite because to him, integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India would serve no purpose if it was done against the will of its people. In a conference held at Srinagar on September 24, 1949, Nehru clarified this point. Here he emphasized that "the government of India's acceptance of a plebiscite was not an offer to Pakistan or any organization, but it was to the people of Kashmir, although the Kashmir government's accession to the government of India was indisputably correct from legal and constitutional points of view" (Quoted in Das 1950, 277). He also said, "Long before the raiders came we said Kashmir should decide her own future. We might have explained to them the advantages of joining India, but we could not think of any pressure being put to force the issue in our favor" (Quoted in Das 1950, 277). Acceptance of people at the center of nation-space was the hallmark of Nehruvian nation-imagination. The incorporation of article 370 in the Indian constitution was a part of this project. We will discuss in detail the spatial underpinning of its abrogation by the present Indian government in the third section of the paper. However, like many of Nehru's national policies, his Kashmir policy also suffered from inconsistency and indecisiveness. Nehru was soon disillusioned by the UN's reaction to the Kashmir issue and he refused to act as per the UN's advice. Deployment of suppressive state apparatus in the Valley also initiated in the Nehruvian era itself. But this in no way undoes the spatial significance Nehru initially attributed to Kashmir.

III. HINDUTVA NATION-SPACE AND FETTERIZATION OF KASHMIR

As nation-imagination changes so does the nation-space. The 1980s was a crucial decade in Indian polity and the production of post-Independence popular nationalist sentiments. *Hindutva* nationalism which had always been a dominant force since the colonial era went backstage soon after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, a diehard *Hindutva* nationalist. *Hindutva* nationalism as an ideology suffered both political and social ostracization after that. RSS was immediately banned and a popular perception could manage to form that the Father of the Nation was killed by the Hindu nationalists (Asutosh 1993, 232). However, from the 1970s onward, *Hindutva* nationalism showed a steady rise and started playing an

influential role in the political arena thanks to the gradual erosion of Nehruvian developmental ideals, India's humiliating defeat to China, and ruthless authoritarianism of Indira Gandhi. By the 1980s, it managed to gather its strength to challenge the existing political and intellectual establishment. To understand the spatial aspects of *Hindutva*, we have to understand first what the term *Hindutva* means. The term got its currency from a pamphlet called *Essentials of Hindutva* (1923) written by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a member of *Hindu Mahasabha*. Here Savarkar categorically redefines Hindu: "A Hindu means a person who regards this land... from the Indus to the Seas as his fatherland (*Pitrabhoomi*) as well as his Holyland (*Punyabhumi*)" (Savarkar 1923, 46-48). Professor Ashutosh Varshney has rightly pointed out that the definition is simultaneously "territorial, genealogical and religious." (Varshney, 1993, 232) For Savarkar, *Hindutva* is far from being a sectarian term, signifying the followers of Hindu religion only, which Hinduism refers to. It encompasses even the non-Hindus who satisfy these three criteria. *Pitribhumi* and *punyabhumi* play the most crucial role in defining the *Hindutva* nation-space. Nation-space, being the *pitribhumi* offers legitimate claim over it, and being *punyabhumi* attributes sacredness to it which renders nation-space infallible and beyond question. Deshpande argues that Savarkar's test for *Hindutva* nationalist is based sufficiently on "the claims to sacred geography" (Deshpande 1995, 3222). This very criterion excludes Christians and Muslims of India from being a nationalist despite India being their *pitribhumi*. Treating geographical space as sacred has been traditionally attached to Hindu culture long before Savarkar gave the idea of *punyabhumi*. Daniel Eck in her "*India: A Sacred Geography*" (2011) examines how spatial sacredness is integral to Indian culture. She traces the concept of sacredness back in Indian mythology where the physical world transcends into the world of divine rendering every entity of the physical world part of the divine. However, the politicization of the sacred was a new phenomenon initiated by Savarkar and carried forward by his ideological inheritors. Deshpande thinks that this politicization of the sacred was carefully done to exercise the politics of exclusion. In the words of Deshpande:

"This (the claim that the nation is and ought to be formed in the shape of a *punyabhumi*) serves to invest a geographical space- the actual physical extent of the Indian nation- with a religious essence (the unanalysable relation of sacredness) that "outsiders" can never experience or comprehend, and which forever and completely defines 'insiders'" (Deshpande 1995, 3222).

Convention of transforming nation-space into a psychosomatic being- *Bharat Mata*- is already

discussed. *Hindutva* nationalists infest sacredness into her being and elevate her into the realm of the divine. The intertwining of history and divinity with that of physical space continues to be the crucial trope of *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation). With time, the trope has become more vividly solidified and contextualized. H.V. Seshaddri, member of the RSS in 1997 wrote:

"Every single mountain and river, big or small, named or unnamed covering the body of *Bharat Mata*, has the imprint of divinity and history. Boundless myths and historical events, woven around one of them have become the woofs and warps of our one unifying national consciousness." (Quoted in Jaffrelot 2017, 157)

The body of *Bharat Mata* what Seshaddri is talking about is the body of *Akhand Bharat* (United India) which stretches from the "Himalayas to the seas." For *Hindutva* nationalists, Partition was "the cursed vivisection of India" (Godse 1989, 58). This expression should not be confused with Nehru's lament that "what was broken up (during the partition) which was of the highest importance was something very vital and that was the body of India" (Nehru 1956, 247). By "the *body of India*" unlike *Hindutva* nationalists, Nehru means a purely geographical expression of undivided India. To him, the nation as an effect-laden body is not only absurd but also illogical. But, for a *Hindutva* nationalist, the successful establishment of *Hindu Rashtra* can be accomplished only when the partition is undone and the vivisectioned part of *Bharat Mata* is reunited.

If spatial sacredness is one part of *Hindutva* nationalism, then the spatial rejection of the Muslims dubbing them as "other" is the other part of it. *Hindutva* nationalist discourse presents Muslims as extra-territorial by origin and loyalty. Thomas Blom Hansen links Žižek's proposition that national identity is the result of the dialectical entanglement between the 'Subject' and the 'Other' with *Hindutva* nationalism's *othering* of the Muslims. Slavoj Žižek argues that the nation is a "thing" which is exclusively "ours", but realized through the identification of "them" as it is something which cannot be understood by "them" yet is persistently menaced by 'them' (Žižek 1990, 52). The realization of the presence of the dangerous "other" necessitates unity within the community-imagined community. The unity is retained, Žižek argues, through organizations of community 'enjoyments' where people simultaneously celebrate the 'myths', woven around the greatness of their community (nation) and show their impending fear for the 'other' who can potentially "steal their enjoyment" (Žižek, 1990, 53). In *Hindutva* nationalist imagination, the threat of the 'other' comes not only from outside the territory but from within. Hansen argues that in *Hindutva* nationalist discourse, Muslims are identified as Žižekian 'other'. The ostensible coherence and unity usually associated with

Muslims are often perceived as “excessive” which poses a serious threat to the enjoyment of the national community. Hence, Muslims with their excesses not only fail to fit into the spatial sacredness of the nation-space but also pose a serious contamination threat to the nation-space.

Hindutva nationalism’s treating nation-space as a sacred entity and Muslims as the profane *other* contributes profoundly to its policy towards Kashmir. According to Hindu mythology, Kashmir is a divine citadel. In *Naga Purana*, there are enumerative details of the sacredness of the valley. It starts with equating the valley with *Uma* or *Parvati*. ‘Paradise on earth’, an epithet which Kashmir is commonly associated with, is the central trope of *Naga Purna*. It has a beauty equal to that of the abode of God. The landscape of the Valley is ‘auspicious’ (*punya*) because everything on it is part of the Hindu pilgrimage:

“Auspicious Kashmiramandala, foe-taming, is all crossings. There are auspicious springs of the Nagas and, there are auspicious mountains; there are auspicious rivers and auspicious lakes as well. These have (near them) very auspicious temples and hermitages...It (Kashmir) is replete with regular festivals (*nityotsava*), the sounds of the *Veda* and the twangs of bows. It is crowded with people who spend most of their time in amusements and is filled with wise men eternally pleased. It abounds in gardens and pleasure groves and is made to resound with the strains of the lyre and the beating of the drums. ... It is furnished with flowers and fruits of various kinds and resplendent with many sorts of trees and creepers. It is packed with herds of game and frequented by ascetic adepts (*siddha*) and minstrels (*carana*)” (NP 21-23, Inden 2008, 532).

This surreally described Kashmir in *Nila Purana* is a model example of the *Hindutva*’s claims to the lost glory of Hindu civilization. It succinctly epitomizes its glorious heydays. It is indeed the spatial incarnation of the *Hindutva* sacredness and no wonder that Kashmir occupies a vital spot in the *Hindutva*-imagination of nation-space. But the irony is there is hardly any place in *Hindutva* nation-space where past sacredness and present profanity are so bitterly juxtaposed. The juxtaposition is as intense as is the contrast between the above-mentioned description of Kashmir and the following one describing the present-day Kashmir:

“In Srinagar, you can still find a small Hindu temple on the banks of the river Jhelum, lost amongst the hundred and one mosques of Srinagar. Its entrance is always heavily guarded by BSF forces and it is protected by sandbags on all sides, as it has been hit a few years ago by a rocket fired by Muslim militants. Inside, a handful of Kashmiri Pandits is still trying to preserve this sacred place, where a natural lingam is

said to have emerged 3000 years ago and where their forefathers have worshipped for twenty generations” (Gautier 2003, 97).

The imagery of spatial desecration by the profane *other* is recurrently invoked in *Hindutva* historiography. Mosques often symbolize this spatial desecration as they are depicted as constructed on destroyed Hindu temples. *Babri Masjid* at Ayodhya serves nation-wide as an archetype of spatial profanity. The image of a small Hindu temple’s struggle for existence amidst the hundred and one mosques on the bank of Jhelum is a pointer to nation spaces’ struggle against vicious encroachment by the illegitimate Muslim *other*. A handful of Kashmiri Pandits inside and BSF forces outside the temple can be seen as a continuation of the *Veda* reciting *Brahmans* and valiant *Kshatriyas* respectively of *Naga Purana*. Hence, the sacred Kashmir valley only with the Kashmiri Pandits as its rightful inhabitants and military forces as their protectors find their place in *Hindutva* nation-space, not the Kashmiri Muslims. To *Hindutva* ideologues, this incident was the latest addition to the series of attacks by the profane *other* on the sacred Hindu space. Deshpande opines that socio-spatial dimensions of *Hindutva* “involve an effort to re-sacralize the nation-space” (Deshpande, 1995, 3224). This involvement is predesigned on a zero-sum strategy: the re-sacralization is to be achieved at the cost of the destruction of the existing profane. *Hindutva*’s demand for the destruction of *Babri Masjid* for the construction of Ram Mandir, Dasgupta cites as its prime example. In the case of Kashmir, the sacralization of the Valley is achieved through the disavowal of the existence of the Kashmiri Muslims, if not the extinction of them. Accordingly, in *Hindutva* politics- BJP being its chief proponent- the land acquires paramount importance; Kashmiri Muslims are either non-existent or referred to only in the context of spatial desecration. Their link to Pakistan and the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits are repeatedly invoked. They are portrayed with all the contrapuntal symbols of terrorist violence, subversions, illegitimate and excessive religious impulses. This is further complicated by Pakistan’s claim over the land. In Nehruvian nation-space Kashmir was treated special not for its spatial importance but because of the people living on it. Prosperous existence of a Muslim-majority state within the nation-space was thought to be essential to uphold its inclusive and secular nature before the world. But in *Hindutva* nation-imagination, retaining the land acquires paramount importance because the Valley is intrinsic to the sacred image of nation-space and also a victory symbol against the profanity. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is the only state where Muslims are in majority compounded with its link to secessionist movements. If Kashmir valley is the spatial manifestation of Hindu sacredness, Kashmiri Muslims are the corporeal incarnation of *Hindutva* profanity. In

short, Kashmiri Muslims are archetypal 'anti-nationals' displaying all those characteristics which an internal "Other" is supposed to have and therefore poses the gravest threat to national unity and integrity.

IV. REVOCATION OF ARTICLE 370 AND ITS SPATIAL IMPLICATION

On 5 August 2019, the Government of India led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to revoke the special status granted to the State of Jammu and Kashmir under article 370 of the Indian Constitution. The step was preceded and followed by heavy military deployment, suspensions of all sorts of communications, and arrest of mainstream political leaders. The entire Valley in a sense was cut off from the rest of the world. Though the suddenness of the move created a shock in many, BJP's opposition to article 370 was known to all. *Hindutva* forces were opposed to the article 370 right from its incorporation on the ground that this would create an artificial gap between the people of Kashmir and the rest of the country. As already discussed, Kashmir to him was an asset for secular India. He was ready to go the extra mile to incorporate it within India. But for *Hindutva* forces, it was a dangerous compromise on India's integrity. As Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, the then President of The Bharatiya Jana Sangh wrote to Abdullah,

"There cannot be a republic within a republic... Consciously or unconsciously, you are creating new sovereignty for Jammu & Kashmir... India has been torn into two by the two-nation theory. You are now developing a three-nation theory, the third being the Kashmiri nation. These are dangerous symptoms." (Quoted in Qasim, 1993, 208)

Territorial anxiety is integral to *Hindutva*'s nationalism rhetoric. Mookerjee's words are also replete with this. Territorial integrity acquires paramount importance in the *Hindutva* policy. Mookerjee and other *Hindutva* ideologues considered article 370 to be the deadliest roadblock in accomplishing this. Over the years, this perception has grown into a popular national sentiment thanks to the facts like the intensification of successionist movements in the Valley, India's growing hostility with its neighbors, Pakistan's ostensible support to Kashmiri movements and of course the communalization of the national politics. Euphoric celebration across India after the revocation of article 370 testifies to this popular sentiment. Narendra Modi government has also successfully taken capitalism onboard. The abolition of Article 370 is the result of the alliance between

capitalism, state, and *Hindutva*. They imagine space-Lefebvrian *represented space* - in a similar fashion. Henry Lefebvre in his magnum opus *The production of Space* (1991) has argued that capitalism conceives space in mere abstraction whereby the absolute lived spaces of everyday life- the social spaces- are reduced to empty and homogenized abstract spaces. The modern state also conceives nation-space in capitalist fashion as the homogenized national territory with the rationality of identical and repetitive. It helps the easy and smooth operation of disciplinary practices allowing "the state to introduce its presence, control, and surveillance in the most isolated corners." (Lefebvre, 1977/2003, p. 86) The key rationale provided by the Government in favor of the revocation of the law is that it would throw open the flood gate of industrial development. Kashmir is "an economic powerhouse waiting to be unleashed" (*Government's Rational*, 2019). In the capitalist mode of production, space ceases to be "sacred and inalienable as a patrimonial and collective good and becomes a commodity just as any other" (Lefebvre 2009, 214). The commodification of the Valley space is all-pervasive here. Article 370 worked as an obstacle to this spatial commodification since it worked as "an impediment in restricting private or global investment into the state" (*Government's Rational*, 2019). The scrapping of the law would lead to- as the government would like to believe- unbridled industrialization in the Valley which in turn would enable the production of a homogeneous national territory. For the *Hindutva* forces, the abrogation of article 370 is an act of spatial emancipation- rescuing the sacred crown of *Bharat Mata* from the persistent diabolic clutches of profane others- the Kashmiri Muslims- and thereby accomplishing the dream of a united and strong nation-space.

V. CONCLUSION

It is greatly ironic that the very state of Jammu and Kashmir which Nehru initially thought could be a signifier of India's secular and democratic principles has increasingly turned to amplify its undemocratic way of ruling and acquit minority dissatisfaction. This is the consequence of Indian nation-state's change in overall spatial policy- an increasing refusal of the existing absolute spaces within the territory. Abstractification of the absolute spaces serves both the purpose of modern state and capitalism. As Lefebvre has put, "It serves those forces which make a *tabularasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them- in short, of differences" (Lefebvre 1991, 285). However, the over-

importance of the territorial value of a particular state in international geopolitics is also largely responsible for this. Treating the totalizing power of the territorial state as a primal force has made territory sacrosanct even for the most benign nation-state. John Agnew has famously termed this phenomenon as a “territorial trap” (Agnew, 1994). It is increasingly becoming difficult for the states to come out of this trap. Jawaharlal Nehru’s change in approach towards Kashmir in the later part also signifies his falling prey to this trap. This territorial trap forces the state to ignore different historical and cultural consciousness lurking beneath the politically-made homogeneous territory. In the case of India, this territorial trap is further compounded by the all-pervasive *Hindutva* trap. But the continuous rejection of the lived spaces of Kashmiri people by the Indian-nation state has also entailed manifold spatial resistance from the people of Kashmir. In their spatial imagination, India is often placed as a brutal occupying force, not only foreign to the land but an inimical other. This spatial alternative is increasingly gaining ground among the common Kashmiri people and drawing emotional support in its favor which is most often garnering into violent protests against Indian administration. As Lefebvre has very prophetically suggested, space is not a static object, it evolves with time through various dialectical engagements (Lefebvre 1991, 10). Therefore, it will be logical enough to predict that the dialectical engagement between the current spatial imagination of the Indian state and the alternative spatiality forged by the people of Kashmir will entail an altogether different spatiality in near future.

NOTES

1. In this paper, Kashmir refers to the Indian administered Kashmir valley which is part of Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir.
2. Dogra dynasty in Kashmir was infamous for its misgovernance over the Muslim subjects. Sumantra Bose’s *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Path to Peace*. (2003)

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