A full-scale insurgency against Indian rule broke out in the Muslim-majority valley of Kashmir in 1990. Dissatisfaction with India had been building up over the previous decade, along with the desire for independence. In 1988 and 1989, armed young Muslim men began to attack government officials and Kashmiri Hindus; some of these young men even went over to neighboring Pakistan to ask for weapons and money. The custodial killings and torture by the Indian authorities of young Kashmiri men suspected of being insurgents made many more Kashmiri Muslims decide to seek military assistance from Pakistan, which had been hosting the decade-long CIA-sponsored jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

The unprovoked firings on unarmed demonstrators by the Indian police and army in the early months of 1990—a recurring, if little-reported, event in Kashmir over the next few years—alienated even pro-India Kashmiris. William Dalrymple, the English writer and journalist, who had managed to pass himself off as a tourist to Indian authorities—foreign journalists were then banned from visiting Kashmir—was walking with his wife behind a peaceful group of demonstrators in Srinagar, the capital, in May 1990 when bullets suddenly came flying from the military bunker in front. He managed to escape unhurt, but many didn't. He had met a Kashmiri survivor of a previous, much bigger massacre who had been thrown, half-dead, by Indian soldiers into a truck full of corpses, which was then driven around the city for an hour before being unloaded at a police station.

Such cruelties—coming after the corruption and arbitrariness of Indian rule in the previous four decades—created a vast number of humiliated men in Kashmir, for whom there was something attractive about the upsurge of nihilistic energy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. So intent were the Kashmiris upon arming themselves and fighting for independence that their cultural and political differences with the Pakistanis became relatively unimportant. The first men who went over to Pakistan were still thinking of an independent and secular Kashmir. But as the movement grew and the Pakistani
army's intelligence agency, the ISI, found more Kashmiris who were willing to fight for integration into Pakistan, the country stopped bankrolling the secular Kashmiri guerrillas who were seeking independence. They were betrayed to Indian intelligence agencies, and many of them also killed, by the more militant pro-Pakistan guerrillas. These new insurgents were seen as hard-line Islamic terrorists, especially after they kidnapped and killed Hindus and, later, European and American tourists in Kashmir. Among Kashmiri Muslims, who belong to the peaceable Sufi tradition of Islam, they came to be feared for their ultra-Islamic fanaticism, which often erupted into violence against women and other unprotected civilians.

Kashmiris, who had expected as much international support as had been given to the East Germans and the Czechs when they filled the streets in late 1989, were surprised by the cautious pro-India policies followed by the EU and America. But diplomats and policymakers in the West had their reasons to be worried. In 1994, as the Taliban achieved major victories in Afghanistan, the network of international terrorism began to spread. Islamic fundamentalist outfits in Pakistan became stronger; so did the ISI, which had come to play a large role in shaping Pakistan's domestic and foreign policies. As the Taliban began consolidating its position in Afghanistan, the ISI and the fundamentalists began to export jihad to Kashmir. The Kashmiri guerrilla groups were brought together by the ISI in an umbrella organization called the United Jihad Council. The guerrillas, who had come as raw young men from Kashmir, were trained in the use of light weapons in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and then sent back to Kashmir to wage war on India. The traffic across the border grew very busy. Almost every Muslim you meet in Kashmir has friends or acquaintances who went to Pakistan. The Pakistani involvement in Kashmir reached a new pitch when, in the summer of 1999, Kashmiri guerrillas along with Pakistani soldiers were discovered to have occupied strategic Himalayan heights in India-held Kargil. This almost caused a war.

There were other, larger reasons behind the insurgency in Kashmir, which lay in changes in India. Nehru's secular vision was undermined by his successors throughout the 1970s and 1980s; the democratic institutions he helped to create were enfeebled by the determination of his successors, notably Indira Gandhi, to concentrate absolute power in the central government and to deny federal autonomy to the many diverse regions and ethnic and linguistic minorities that constitute India. In the early 1990s India's nominally socialist, protectionist economy was opened up to foreign investment, giving rise to a new middle class of people in business and in the professions. As with most new middle classes its members were eager to hold on to what they had recently acquired; and their politics were on the whole conservative. As many of them saw it, India's stability had to be ensured by brute force, if necessary, in places like Kashmir and the northeastern states, since stability was good for business, both locally and internationally. It was an attitude most strongly articulated by the Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, which the new middle class helped elect to power in 1998.

Under the Hindu nationalists, India's economy was further globalized, creating a small new elite of business tycoons and reanimating the cultural and emotional links many affluent Indian-Americans had with their home country. The BJP attempted to give India, and this global Hindu middle class, a greater international presence by conducting nuclear tests and lobbying for a permanent seat in the Security
Council of the United Nations. The government's obsession with India's unity, and its deep suspicion of internal and external enemies, went beyond the nationalism of the Congress Party. As the party in power, the BJP has had more opportunity to enforce its nineteenth-century idea of nationhood—one people, one culture, one language—which now threatens to promote more conflict in a deeply pluralistic society.

The BJP had kept up a steady rhetoric on Kashmir throughout most of the Nineties, when they were out of power, even as a harsh crackdown in the state went on: India, they said, had become a "soft" state, easily bullied by its neighbors and secessionists; they spoke of a "pro-active" policy and "hot pursuit" of terrorists across the border into Pakistan. In 1999 the war with Pakistan-backed infiltrators in Kashmir broke out, the first in India to be fought before TV cameras, and suddenly many in the middle class adopted the BJP's extreme rhetoric about the "Kashmir problem."

During the long years of rule from Delhi, most middle-class Indians had been generally indifferent to local politics in Kashmir; for the more affluent, the valley itself was a vacation spot, cherished for sentimental reasons. Pakistan was now seen as an even more implacable enemy. Renewed patriotic sentiment and the televised demands for ruthlessness against the Pakistanis for their support of the guerrillas affected the Indian army: a friend back from the front told me of a Pakistani soldier in Kargil whose arms had been cut off and who, as he bled to death, kept pleading futilely to the indifferent Indian soldiers to take his money out of his pocket and send it to his children and aging mother in Pakistan.

As the Indian army announced one improbable victory after another, TV reporters and newspaper journalists emerged as cheerleaders, and then in July 1999 when, under American pressure on Pakistan, the infiltrators withdrew from the strategic heights, they led the country in celebrating what the Hindu nationalist government described as Pakistan's military and diplomatic defeat. The jingoism—encouraged by Bill Clinton's visit to India last spring, during which he seemed to endorse India's claim to superpower status and reprimanded Pakistan—got louder after the news of further violence in Kashmir, including the massacre of thirty-five Sikhs in Chitisinghpura in March and the killing of over a hundred Hindus in early August.1

1.

For much of the 1990s, when the Congress Party was still in power and Kashmir was ruled by a governor appointed by Delhi, Indian bureaucrats, often men of quality sympathetic to the Kashmiris, ran the state; they had made it possible for elections to be held in 1996 without fear of large-scale violence, and indeed with a larger turnout of voters. Since most of the popular political groups in Kashmir opposed to Indian rule boycotted the elections, Farooq Abdullah, the former leader of Kashmir's National Conference Party, who had been backed by India, returned as Kashmir's chief minister after many years of sitting idle. But in 1998, the BJP won the national election, promising, among other things, a "pro-active" policy in Kashmir. At a time when the tensions caused by nuclear testing by India and Pakistan in 1998 had barely lessened, the war in Kashmir began.
If the battles in Kashmir hardened public opinion in India, the well-reported arrests of Muslims, allegedly terrorist agents of the ISI, in various parts of India further fed Hindu suspicions about Muslims in general, and Kashmiri Muslims in particular. At Chitisinghpura, hours after the massacre of thirty-five Sikhs last March, I met a mid-level officer from the Border Security Force, one of the paramilitary organizations fighting the anti-India insurgency. He was a Kashmiri Hindu, a short, paunchy man. He wasn't worried about the prospect of large numbers of Sikhs fleeing Kashmir after the massacre in the way the Hindus had done after being targeted by Muslim separatists.

"Isolate the Muslims in Kashmir," he said, "and then we'll have a free hand to deal with them." He thought all pro-Pakistan guerrillas were traitors and Pakistan's henchmen deserved no mercy. He himself hadn't let go of any of the separatists he had captured in the six years he had spent in Kashmir. He had, he said, used torture to get information from them and then killed them.

This reflected popular Hindu sentiment about the Kashmir problem, where human rights violations by the military, instead of being punished, became the accepted means of reasserting Indian authority over the state. I heard the same view about isolating the Muslims from Pakistan and dealing severely with separatists when I visited the southern, Hindu-majority city of Jammu in the plains, in an interview with a leader of the BJP, Mr. Khajuria, one of the up-and-coming men within his party. Supplicants—job-seekers, men with big shiny boxes of sweets to offer Khajuria—thronged outside his flat, often spilling into the living room furnished with the regulation green carpet of government offices and sofas upholstered in dark blue velvet, with toy airplanes on display in the glass cabinet, just below large framed pictures of stern-looking BJP ideologues. Khajuria, a small round man with a big wart on the bridge of his nose, kept scolding gently as he pushed his way through into the room: "Can't you see I am doing an interview?"

He had been a leader of the student wing of the BJP at Jammu University, and still had the sweetly ingratiating manner of the ineffectual student politician. I could have predicted before the meeting most of what he said: India was facing "total war" with Pakistan which could only be ended by invading and conquering Pakistan; the ISI was now encouraging Indian Muslims to increase their population in India through hectic breeding; and Muslims were at best unreliable.

But I was still taken aback when—eager to make an impression, and bolder now in his remarks—he said that Kashmiri Muslims only understood the language of the danda, the policeman's baton. That was the lesson of the maharajah's rule. "Give the security forces a free hand," he said, "and the Kashmir problem would be solved in two weeks."

The Kashmiri Muslim politician Mirwaiz Omar Farooq observed when I met him this past spring in Srinagar that the Hindu nationalists were determined to hold on to the valley but had little interest in the Kashmiris, and knew very little about their long history and culture. Just twenty-seven years old, and slightly built, Farooq is the youngest of the leading separatist politicians in the Muslim-dominated
valley. Most of his colleagues were in prison in the western Indian state of Rajasthan when I saw him; he himself was under house arrest, and a small posse of policemen were outside asserting their presence by checking under all incoming cars for bombs. On the clean-cut lawns where the trimmed tall hedges looked, distractingly, like giant hand grenades, a small group of men waited for an audience. Though much older, they were reverential toward Farooq, who was also the religious head of old Srinagar, a position occupied by his father, an opponent of the pro-India chief minister Sheikh Abdullah, until his assassination in 1990.

At the age of eighteen, Farooq had become the leader of the coalition of parties fighting for liberation from Indian rule: the news, I remember, was greeted with derision in India, as a sign of Kashmir's political immaturity. But people grow up fast in adverse times, and Farooq spoke with the subtlety and skill of an older, more experienced politician.

He was among the majority of Kashmiris, he said, who thought the insurgency had failed, and not only that: it had also undermined an ancient and gentle culture by introducing it to the dangerous cult of the gun. There was now no alternative to a dialogue between India and Pakistan which would also involve representatives of Kashmir. Although he opposed Indian rule in Kashmir, and worried about the hardening of attitudes in India, he was also concerned about the rise of fundamentalist Islam in Kashmir. There was no alternative to a secular democratic state and rapid economic progress. It was Nehru's vision for India all over again. Ironically, in Kashmir, that vision had been dissolved by the same Indian state that was entrusted with the great power to realize it.

Still, the Kashmiris themselves are quick to embrace the modern world whenever the opportunity comes their way. You can see movement and growth even after ten years of damage. Education suffered the most in a decade of endless curfews and strikes, and yet even so, it is now one of the most popular small businesses in the valley: a little room and a graduate is all you need to set up a primary "English-medium" school or "coaching institute." You are assured of customers: parents who can't afford anything fancier but are anxious for their children to make their way into the larger world of jobs and professional careers, their anxiety so great and widespread that even madrassas—the schools run by the fundamentalist Jamaat-I-Islami—have had to secularize their syllabus.

At the time when political activity had been restricted by the insurgency, Omar Farooq had been accumulating degrees in computer science and political science and was now taking courses to get an M. Phil. degree in Islamic studies. I went to the market in Pattan, a town a few miles north of Srinagar, which is regularly destroyed and rebuilt after each battle between the police and guerrillas, and found two "computer institutes" there: tiny rooms really, with a computer in each, full of restless young men—restless because there was no power and they paid by the hour to learn Windows 95. At Kashmir University in Srinagar—its vast green campus bordering a lake and monitored by snow-capped mountains—the lines of students for enrollment in the new semester are very long. Students with guns ruled the campus not so long ago; many of them went to Pakistan and were killed by Indian security forces on their return to the valley. There had been encounters and raids on the campus. The university,
set up in 1948 and already in 1988 known as one of the best universities in India, effectively ceased to function in the Nineties. Most of the Kashmiri Hindus on the faculty left. The anomie and corruption elsewhere had infected the university: there was mass cheating on exams and the percentages of students passing their exams reached an unusually high 90.5 percent. The lowest point was reached in 1992, when the university awarded degrees without holding examinations.

But the India-backed drive to restore peace to the state after the elections in 1996 benefited those in education; the university quickly reformed itself during the brief respite it was allowed. The faculty was restaffed: more Kashmiri Muslims now occupied senior teaching positions. Seminars and conferences were held again; the students were serious. The percentage of students passing their exams was back to normal. Some of the Muslim students who went to colleges and universities in India came back after being continually harassed by the police; the university had set up new departments of biotechnology and geology for them.

For more than a century after 1846, when the British ceded Kashmir to a petty Hindu chieftain for 7.5 million rupees, the Kashmiri Hindus had dominated the Muslim-majority population of the valley. Then the land reforms of Sheikh Abdullah, introduced during his time as the India-backed leader of Kashmir from 1948 to 1953, and the spread of free primary education had created a new class of ambitious Kashmiri Muslims. But no new institutions had been provided to accommodate these Muslims; and the older ones were monopolized by the minority of Hindus who ran the schools and colleges and had a disproportionate presence in the bureaucracy.

At first, the abrupt departure of the Hindus from the valley after the insurgency began in 1990 was felt as a blow. But the space vacated by them had been gradually filled. In the last ten years, alongside the insurgency and the bloodletting, a new generation of Kashmiri Muslims had grown to take their positions in the bureaucracy, the universities, and the media; and it was hard not to be impressed by this new middle-class intelligentsia, by the journalists, academics, and politicians you saw in the valley—people like Abbas, my Muslim guide in Kashmir, Dr. Khan, the thoughtful scholar whom I had met in Srinagar, and Omar Farooq himself. They made it possible to believe that there had come to Kashmir, along with immeasurable suffering and pain, a new political and intellectual life; that as once in India, the struggle for greater liberty had turned out to be a rite of passage, an awakening that owed as much to modern education as to the still-strong Sufi Islamic traditions of tolerance and civility.

Pakistan—busy exporting jihad everywhere even as it slowly imploded—couldn't have been expected to be responsive to that awakening; the section in northwest Kashmir which it continued to hold was the most underdeveloped part of Pakistan, and it had done little for it. India was the bigger, economically stronger, more democratic country that could have accommodated Kashmir, made it part of its growth. But the gap between India and Kashmir has grown even wider in the last ten years. Middle-class India has developed fast after the liberalization of the economy, while Kashmir, despite recent revivals in education, has remained imprisoned within a basic economy built around horticulture and handicrafts.
The government keeps inviting the separatists to renounce violence and engage in dialogue; army and police officers speak routinely of "winning back the hearts and minds of the Kashmiris." But this isn't going to be achieved simply by sending Kashmiri schoolchildren on tours of India—one of the Indian government's populist measures, which, as one army officer told me, would not only appease the new generation of Kashmiris but would make them realize what a big and powerful country India is. That is a message that has already been conveyed by close to half a million Indian troops in Kashmir—the various army and paramilitary groups, some of whose more protected members, ten long years after the insurgency began, have done well for themselves in Kashmir.

In Srinagar, I met Mehbooba Mufti, the daughter of a senior pro-India Kashmiri politician from the state who now mainly lives in Delhi, like many other pro-India Kashmiri politicians. She has acquired a reputation for being one of the brave people who travel around the valley exposing and investigating the excesses of both the security forces and the guerrillas. When I saw her she had just returned from visiting the border with Pakistan near the distant north of the valley. The area was known for timber smuggling; and recently three timber smugglers, who had been caught while murdering some villagers, had fingered the commanding officer of the local army unit as their protector. That wasn't all. The fabled beauty of the women in the area—who struck Ms. Mufti as being of a Central Asian race—invited trouble from the Indian soldiers stationed there. There had been stories of prostitution and rape in the past. Most recently the commanding officer had wanted to marry one of the seven daughters of a peasant. The woman was already married; and so was the army officer. The peasant father, who refused, was taken away, and pieces of his body were returned in a sack to the village. The army said that the man knew about a guerrilla hideout and was leading an army patrol to it when he stepped on a mine.

There were similar stories everywhere left unreported, similar rumors too dangerous to investigate, since what was at stake was the "national interest"—it was the excuse the India-backed chief minister of Kashmir, Farooq Abdullah, himself had used in 1999 in the state legislature when asked by Yusuf Tarigami, the lone Communist legislator, to reveal the killers of fifteen Muslim villagers in Jammu, the southern, Hindu-majority region of the state. It was why, Mr. Tarigami told me, there was going to be no independent investigation into the killing of the Sikhs at Chitisinghpura, despite repeated requests by human rights organizations.

One of these organizations, Amnesty International, has put Indian intelligence agents and "renegade militants," whose patrons are the Indian army, along with armed opposition groups on its list of those likely to be responsible for the killings. These "renegade militants," so-called after the army began to recruit captured or "reformed" guerrillas for special operations in which the costs in human lives and the army's reputation were likely to be too great, are now the most dreaded people in the valley, more than the Jihadi guerrillas, more than the army and police officials in remote areas or the jumpy soldiers in their bunkers.
In the early years of the conflict, 1994 to 1996, the renegades had come in very handy: they had helped the army rebuild its intelligence network in the valley; they had helped track down and kill hundreds of guerrillas trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan. They had proved less effective against the Fidayeen, the new "suicidal" guerrillas, often Pakistani citizens, who had started coming to the valley in larger numbers after the battles of 1999; and a lot of the renegades had been murdered by the Fidayeen. They still threatened, and sometimes killed, the families of guerrillas living in the valley; or those journalists and human rights activists who were seen as too eager to report the excesses committed by the army. In return, the army and the civil administration looked the other way when the renegades kidnapped and killed for money.

But now, and increasingly, as the talk of restoring order and normalcy to the state continues, the renegades have begun to be seen by the government of Farooq Abdullah as a liability. One of them has become a member of the state legislature, but there are still 1,500 of these young men with guns on the government's payroll. A senior government official spoke of them to me as Frankenstein's monsters; the renegades were, he said, the most visible and hated symbol of Indian rule over the valley, and it wasn't going to be easy to tame them.

At Anantnag, a town thirty-five miles south of Srinagar, where the renegades were considered unassailable, I tried to see their local "commander." But he was away in Delhi—an unexpected sign of his status with the Indian government; the renegades had recently helped set up the BJP office in Anantnag. A polite policeman directed me to the house of another commander in the same protected compound. Parts of the house looked relatively old, and the rest was under construction, the money for it coming, it seemed, in installments. When finished it was going to be a very large house, its size and the high walls topped with glass shards making it look like something from an affluent Delhi suburb.

A young, good-looking man in kurta pajamas came out after much apprehensive peeking through the holes in the heavy iron gate. It was the brother of the commander, Rashid; Rashid himself was at his headquarters a couple of miles away, and the young man drove me there.

The headquarters was a large building that had been vacated by a Kashmiri Hindu family. It had been built into a mini-fortress, with boarded-up windows and a tall, corrugated iron gate, behind which, in the large courtyard, young men stood dramatically poised with light machine guns to repulse any attack. There were good reasons for their defensiveness: one of the commanders of the renegades had been shot dead a week before in a crowded bazaar, and some months ago the improvised explosive device hidden in an auto rickshaw and intended for the renegades had turned the house ten meters away into a huge mound of rubble.

Rashid was waiting outside the gate, and to see his bodyguards, teenage boys with oversized guns, was to feel the fear and uncertainty their presence brought to the neighborhood, to the tense men in the little meat shops and bakeries lining the alley. His lean, wiry frame, sharp features and thick moustache, his
thick gold ring and blue jeans gave him a Bombay movie-star glamour and an impression of brute power until the moment he spoke. Then the quivering jaw and broken syllables betrayed his jitteriness: the jitteriness, I thought, of the doomed man; it made him an attentive host and keen talker. He saw me as taking back an important message to the Indian government conveying his sense of India's disregard for the renegades, the poverty and isolation to which they had been reduced, the temptation they felt to go back to Pakistan; and he shouted at the bodyguards when they showed up with lukewarm tea.

It was hard to get him to talk about the things I was interested in, which he mentioned indifferently when pressed: the bachelor's degree in science from the local college, the lack of work, the journey, out of no clear motivation, to Pakistan with twenty-eight other men, the training in light weapons in Pakistan and Afghanistan for eleven months, then the return to the valley as a guerrilla, the sudden disillusionment with the armed movement for independence, and the recruitment by the army. He was frankly puzzled when I asked him to expand on little details in his narrative—about the camp commander in Pakistan named after Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal emperor and persecutor of Hindus; the deception in Pakistan where he had to present himself as a fundamentalist pro-Pakistan Muslim in order to receive his training and small salary. But he went on at some length about his local patron, a brigadier in the Indian army. The brigadier had asked him to lead an anti-guerrilla operation very recently, and he had obliged by killing the two guerrillas who had infiltrated an army camp. He pointed at the thin, unshaven, middle-aged man in grimy kurta pajamas I had thought of as a supplicant awaiting his turn: he was the one who had covered Rashid as he went, guns blazing, into the little room where the guerrillas had holed up, and then had shot one of the dying men as he attempted to reach for a hand grenade. This thin, unshaven man, Rashid said, had been rewarded by having a police report lodged against him for "asking" a rich merchant in the town for some money. What, after all, could he do with the little money he was given by the government?

It was at this moment that something hit the high corrugated iron roof sloping into the courtyard, a deep, heavy sound, and everyone—Rashid, I, the three boys with guns—froze for an agonizing second. It was several minutes after the scruffy cork cricket ball had pattered off the roof into the open drain around the courtyard that I heard my heart pounding wildly.

Rashid's face had gone white; and the shame of that confession of fear was what made him grow wild when I asked him about the Fidayeen. He and his men were the true Fidayeen, he shouted—people who were being martyred for being faithful to India. Then he added that he was ready to take on the Fidayeen any time. All he needed was a "free hand."

A "free hand": you heard the words very often in the valley, and it spoke, as nothing else did, of the breakdown of communications, the end of dialogue, and the unthinking preference for violence and terror. Rashid had been puzzled when I asked him to explain what he meant by a "free hand," because he had already done so indirectly: he had made it clear, without saying so explicitly, that the government, and busybodies from the press and human rights groups, should turn the other way while the harassment of the families of the guerrillas, and the torture of suspected informers, and the mistreatment of civilians went on.
3.

The idea of a "free hand" wasn't very different from what government officials themselves meant. The words were part of the official vocabulary, more potent than the previous talk of "pro-active policy," which really meant the pursuit of guerrillas across the border into the training camps, easy to fantasize about in Delhi but impossible to achieve without starting, as almost happened in 1990, a war with Pakistan. The borrowed phrase "ethnic cleansing" was even less effective. After each killing of Hindus, it was said that the guerrillas were engaged in "ethnic cleansing"; but, ethnically, the Sikhs and Hindus were no different from the Muslims of the valley. In the end, the few attempts at subtle rhetoric always collapsed into crudely aggressive demands for a "free hand."

The use of a "free hand" means that the cycle of retribution will go on for a much longer time. In Pattan, outside Srinagar, just a few days after I left, the local police station was attacked with grenades and rockets. This time, the frustrated policemen looted and burned down the entire market. I didn't go back; I didn't feel I could face the helpless shopkeepers I had met on my previous visit. I went instead to Jammu, the city of the plains, where, far away from the new mansions of the politicians and bureaucrats, thousands of Hindu refugees from Kashmir now live.

It was in early 1990, during Jagmohan's few months as India's appointed governor—and with, some say, his active encouragement—that most of the 140,000-strong community of Kashmiri Hindus left the valley. Jagmohan had originally been made governor of Kashmir in 1984 by Mrs. Gandhi in order to dismiss Kashmir's elected government; he had served for five turbulent years during which his aggressively pro-Hindu policies further alienated Muslims in the valley from India. His limited comprehension of the insurgency—as simply a limited law-and-order problem which could be contained fast—is apparent in his memoir about his time as governor of Kashmir. Many Kashmiris believe that he wanted the Hindus safely out of the way while he dealt with the Muslim guerrillas.

The Hindus had formed a kind of elite in the valley; they had a large presence in the bureaucracy, both in the valley and in Delhi, where government policy on Kashmir often came to be dictated by the fears and concerns of this tiny minority. Their connections with India, and their relative affluence, made them highly visible targets during the first few months of the insurgency in 1990; several government officials were assassinated by pro-Pakistan Muslim guerrillas who also committed random atrocities against Hindu civilians: rapes, murders, kidnappings.

Few of the approximately 130,000 Kashmiri Hindus who left the valley in less than two months after the insurgency began have been able to return. The ordeal of displacement was less difficult to bear for the professional elite of doctors, engineers, and academics, who, on leaving the valley, could renew their links with the outside world: they now form a distinct diaspora within India and in the UK and America, where large numbers of them have settled. It was the less well-off Hindus in the countryside who suffered the most.
A few miles out of the city of Jammu, on a stony, treeless plain, you suddenly come across hundreds of one-room tenements where thousands of Kashmiri Hindus have been living for the last ten years, waiting, without much hope, for things to improve. It was early spring in the valley and still cold when I visited the camps, but around Jammu the temperatures had begun to rise, and the sun felt more severe on the rocky exposed ground. The tar that held together the thermocoal roof of the igloo-shaped tenements had already begun to melt, and more tar was hard to find: you had to bribe the roadworks laborers for a little bit of it.

It wasn't the only thing that worried Gautam, the Hindu I met in one of the camps. He had left his apple orchards near Baramulla in the north of the valley in 1990 with sixty-five rupees in his pocket to come here. There had been no water for eight days and the plastic buckets used for storage had begun to run dry.

Gautam sat behind a window with iron bars, half-slumped on the single wooden cot in his half-sleeved vest and pajamas. The smell of burned onion came out of the tiny room where all five members of his family slept. The walls were bare except for a calendar with pictures of Rama and Sita; there were a few steel utensils on the wooden shelf over a rusty gas cylinder; a small television sat on a rickety stool. Outside, in the cramped little courtyard edged with an open stagnant drain, a mangy dog slumbered in the shade of the overburdened clothesline, and the tin doors of the public latrines were cut so low that you could see the blank face of the person squatting over the hole in the floor.

I wasn't invited in. Gautam, when he relaxed more with me, said bitterly, "We are like a zoo, people come to watch and then go away." He felt betrayed by Jagmohan and the other politicians, especially the Hindu nationalists, who had held up the community as victims of Muslim guerrillas in order to get more Hindu votes, and had then done very little to resettle them, find jobs for the adults and schools for the young. He had been back to the valley just once: he had been persuaded to do so by his Muslim neighbor who personally came to the refugee camp to escort him back to his village. The warmth between the Hindu and Muslim communities of the valley—so alike in many ways for the outsider, so hard to tell apart—had remained intact, and had acquired a kind of poignancy after such a long separation.

But when he returned, he found his house had been plundered; children were playing cricket in his apple orchard where the trees had been cut down for firewood. Then he was kept awake by fear on his first night, by the sound of gunfire, a sound his Muslim neighbors had gotten used to. In the morning he had heard the news of the deaths of five Indian soldiers in the gun battle with guerrillas. Enraged soldiers were expected any minute to launch a "crackdown." Gautam followed the young men of the village and took the first bus out.

He hadn't been back; he didn't know if he could. His son, fourteen years old now, had very few memories of Kashmir, had grown up in a different world, with a sense of injustice and the rage of the
young. Gautam often had to stop him from denouncing Muslims and Islam.

I didn't see the boy: he was at school. There was a picture of him in a small plastic frame; with large serious eyes in his pale Kashmiri face, he reminded me of the Muslim boy I had met some days before at a graveyard in Srinagar.

It had been my first day in Srinagar. A famous guerrilla had been killed by the army the day before but there had been no public mourning. At the Idgah graveyard for "martyrs"—placed at the edge of a vast, bald field scarred with muddy puddles, and full of signboards with exhortations: "Lest you forget that they gave their today for our tomorrow"—there was one fresh grave but no mourners. The grave was of a young man who had been taken away by the police from his home for interrogation. A very old man sat on one of the other graves with a teenage boy in large thick-framed glasses, both hunched in the cold over a kangri—the little pot with charcoal embers they carried under their cloak-like pherans. The boy, Jamal, took me around, stepping agilely across the graves, his dark eyes somber behind his glasses.

The earliest graves in that Srinagar graveyard had claimed the most reverence and space: they were set in large plots, with bead necklaces and plastic garlands on them. But then the numbers had begun to rise, and the graves had been set closer together; the headstone engravings acquired a uniformity of message and style: the green-painted word "martyr" occurred in all of them. The boy pointed out the new grave to me: the earth still moist under the wrinkled plastic sheet; it had no headstone yet, but a narrow, freshly dug bed of yellow irises ran around the grave. Irises were, Jamal said, the flowers used to honor the Muslim dead in Kashmir.

He couldn't have been more than five years old when the insurgency began but he knew the names of all the "martyrs." There were some in his own family: his elder brother, who had been killed two years ago, soon after he returned from Pakistan; his father, who had died of burn injuries after being tortured with hot iron rods. He had dropped out of school, and now came to sit in the graveyard each evening. I asked him why, and he said, his large eyes earnest, that he wanted to be close to the martyrs; they had died a holy death in the cause of jihad, and were now in paradise. Later, he said that his mother was worried about these visits to the graveyard; she had been going to various shrines and making him wear amulets to prevent him from becoming a "militant" like his brother.

He wanted to know what Indians in India thought of their army killing the Kashmiris, and it was the guilt brought on by this question that made me stay longer at the graveyard. Windows opened in the rain-dampened houses overlooking the graveyard, and curious faces appeared in them, watching me talk to Jamal. The day, already gray, began to quickly die. The taxi driver grew nervous: the area was the stronghold of the pro-Pakistan guerrillas.
When I left, the image I carried with me was of the young boy and the old man sitting against the dirty overcast sky and the mist-hazy mountains and the flat, puddle-stained field; and it added to the desolation of those first few days in Srinagar, which—although the terrible scenes of the massacre were yet to come—had begun to contaminate my early memories of Kashmir, of the landscape that had once been a revelation of beauty.

On one of my last days in Srinagar—one of the many days of protest strikes, enforced by the guerrillas, the city surreally deserted in the middle of the long, sunny afternoon—I went back to the graveyard. There were more graves; and, with spring finally resurgent in the valley after many cold days, the irises were in full bloom.

But Jamal was gone. The old man sat all alone in the middle of the graveyard, and he didn't know where Jamal was. He hadn't been to the graveyard in several days, but his mother had come looking for him.

It was many days after I left Kashmir that I read in the papers news of a teenage boy who had driven a car full of explosives into the army cantonment in Srinagar, and blown himself up: it was the first suicide bombing in the valley. The boy went to a local school, and neither of his parents had known about his connections with the Jihadi outfits. He couldn't have been Jamal, who had only one parent, but it was while reading about him that I thought of Jamal again; I remembered the wide serious eyes; I remembered his talk of martyrdom and paradise and death.

4.

The cycle of violence and destruction has been so swift and severe in Kashmir; the insurgency has poisoned and destroyed so many lives. Yet the insurgents' political cause remains as lonely and hopeless as before. Independence, which a majority of Kashmiris seem to want, or integration with Pakistan, which for many Kashmiris is the second-best option after independence, are not possibilities that any Indian government can ever consider without immediately losing the support of the Hindu middle classes. The European Union and the US are unlikely to risk antagonizing India, with its lucrative markets and resources and the trappings of a democracy, by taking up the Kashmiri cause.

All Kashmiris can hope for at present is a change in Indian attitudes, a bit more breathing space, a bit less heavy-handedness. But any change in Indian attitudes is unlikely as long as jihad-minded guerrillas based in Pakistan continue to wage war against India in Kashmir; as long as the chaos and anarchy of Pakistan make it difficult even for its army, which is currently ruling the country, to rein in the guerrillas or their Islamic fundamentalist sponsors.

The elected legislature of Kashmir recently asked the BJP-dominated central government to fulfill the promises of autonomy that Nehru had offered to Kashmiri leaders while trying to persuade them to help integrate the state with India in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Limited autonomy for Kashmir within a genuinely federal India might be a more practical solution than the one that proposes the creation of an independent Kashmir with open borders, whose sovereignty would be guaranteed by both India and
Pakistan. The idea of autonomy, if sincerely pursued, might eventually find some support among Kashmiris, and help diminish the influence of Islamic fundamentalists in the region. But the BJP fears, with good reason, that the slightest concession it makes in Kashmir would encourage many more of India's disaffected constituent states to present their own case for greater federalism. This would bring to nothing the Hindu nationalists' longstanding efforts to redefine India's many religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities as "Hindu," and to turn India into a proud and united superpower.

The demand for autonomy was rejected by the BJP, with a speed and vehemence that, together with the repeated failure of India and Pakistan to even reach the negotiating table on Kashmir, indicate that there is going to be little respite for Kashmiris, trapped between, and within, the crude nationalisms and fundamentalisms of their neighbors. The tens of thousands of Kashmiri victims of the decade-long violence will have to wait much longer for even some partial justice.

But then you can't hope for much justice in the subcontinent, where fulfillment comes to very few among the needy and restless millions, and where aspiration itself can feel like a luxury. In Kashmir, isolated and oppressed for so long, and then dragged into the larger world of competing men and nations and murderous ideologies, more people have been confronted with this awareness in the last ten years than in all of its tormented modern history.

The number of young men like Jamal who attempt to dissolve the pain of that awareness in the nihilism of jihadi martyrdom is growing. At the same time, there are many more Kashmiris who wish to make their own peace with that pain, who are wearied by the bloodletting and resigned to their lack of options, and who now want the relative stability of the time before the insurgency to return, even if it involves living with the humiliation of continued Indian rule over the valley: the private, uneasy accommodations with the world which keep the deprived millions elsewhere in the subcontinent from exploding into rage and destruction, and which are being increasingly made by Kashmiris, even as, cruelly, the suffering of their first great war goes on.

—This is the last of three articles.
How does the Kashmir separatist movement challenge the integrity of the Indian state and threaten the stability of a region of tremendous strategic importance? Victoria Schofield’s book examines the Kashmir question, from the period when the valley was an independent kingdom to its current status as a Kashmir in Conflict. Pakistan and India square up for what may become a major regional conflict, Victoria Schofield’s book offers a highly readable, carefully documented account of the origins, development and implications of this contentious issue. Beginning with the early history of the independent kingdom of Kashmir, Victoria Schofield traces the origins of the modern state in the nineteenth century, including the controversial “sale” by the British of predominantly Muslim Kashmir to a Hindu ruler. She examines the implications for the people when in 1947 the Maharaja chose secular, yet majority Hindu, India over Muslim Pakistan and shows why the neighbouring countries continue to argue over the location of India and Pakistan with both nations claiming it as their own and fighting wars over it, Kashmir has become a source of an unending conflict between these two powers. These hostilities are further compounded by the nuclear status of both nations, making the Kashmir conflict a source of alarm for the world community. Victoria Schofield’s book comes at a time when the Kashmir issue has started to get international attention. Therefore it is very timely to learn about the origins of the conflict, the rise of militancy and the voices of the common people of this region.