

Interview with Lt Gen S.K. Sinha
Governor of Jammu and Kashmir

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Claude Arpi: Your Excellency, you can oversee the Kashmir issue from a very unique position. You actively participated in the 1947-48 operations; in 1949, you were the Secretary to the Cease-fire negotiating team in Karachi; since 2003, you are the Governor of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. I would like to begin with some questions about the first operations in Kashmir.

Lt. Gen. Sinha: Let me first tell you that there is a lot misconception or misinterpretations about Kashmir. There is propoganda started by Pakistan and lapped by the West, especially during the Cold War. They say that it was a premeditated aggression by India and an illegal act because India had sent her troops into Kashmir even before the Maharaja had acceded [to India].

Claude: Do you mean before October 26, 1947 [date of accession of Kashmir to India]

Lt. Gen. Sinha: Yes, they say that troops were already there. I want to give you my account of what actually happened. [At the time of Partition] a British Officer, Lt Gen (Sir) Dudley Russell had a skeleton headquarters (HQ) of territorial officers. I was on his headquarters with the rank of Major and I was the only Indian Officer in the HQ. Our task was to restore law and order in Punjab and Delhi.

It was known as East Punjab Command. We had to provide protection to millions of refugees moving from India to Pakistan and receive millions coming on the other side. The HQ was established on a rail. Mountbatten had given us this special train and we were fully self-contained. Living accommodation with attached toilets, operations rooms for officers, mess, [facilities] for clerical staff, signal staff, security [personel], even the vehicles were mounted on the train; we were thus moving on this command train in Delhi and Punjab.

On October 26, our train had come to the Delhi railway station yard. As soon as we reached in the afternoon, the Army Commander, Lt Gen Russel was sent for by the Prime Minister and given the task of going to Kashmir the next day. We were told at around 5-6 pm. We were all taken aback as we had to send troops the next day, early in the morning. I was given the task to write first an operation order to the units selected to go there (the Sikh I were the first) and to organize the airlift and logistic forward. The troops going to Kashmir had to be given warm clothing and ammunitions to go to war. They were [presently] only deployed on internal security duty. We worked around the clock and by 6 am the next morning [October 27], the first troops were airborne from Delhi to Srinagar.

Claude: By Dakotas?

Lt. Gen. Sinha: Yes, by Dakotas of the Indian Air Force, but only 6 Dakotas could be spared by the IAF on the first day: they made 2 sorties each. Later these Dakotas were withdrawn because they were used to bring refugees from West Pakistan. The Air Force had only 6 Dakotas and they could not be spared. Later we were told that all the civilian Dakotas in India could be made available to us from October

28 onwards. There were about 50 Dakotas in the country and they were placed at my disposal. Our problem was that winter was fast approaching: by November 15 Srinagar Airfield would not be usable. Srinagar only had a fair weather grass landing strip used by the Maharaja. During the monsoon or with snow, it was put out of commission. We had to fly whatever we needed [before the winter]: troops, stock for the winter, ammunition and this during the next 15 or 18 days. Our other problem was that the land route through the Pir Panjal range and the Banihal pass (and there was no tunnel at that time), the pass is at about 10,000 feet and it would get blocked by the snows by November 15. [Therefore] whatever had to be sent to Kashmir, whether by air or road, had to be sent in these 15 or 20 days. Time was the essence. It worked almost as a miracle. We flew 800 Dakota sorties in 15 days without a single mishap, even above the turbulent Pir Panjal range.

Mountbatten referred to this [operation] by saying: *"In my long experience of war, I have not come across a single instance of such a massive airlift executed at such short notice and so successful."*

This is the story of the airlift. Besides organizing the airlift, I was staff officer at the HQ at the time when the British Government decided that no British Officer, serving either with the Indian or the Pakistan Army will be allowed to visit the theater of operation in Kashmir. Being Indian, I was the only officer from the controlling headquarters who was going and coming to Srinagar whenever needed. I was thus intimately involved with the planning and conduct of the operations in Kashmir.

Som [Major Somnath Sharma] and I had served together in Burma, though we were posted in different sectors. When we returned from Burma to Delhi, Som used to come home quite often to see me. It is I

who dispatched Som to Srinagar on October 29, with his hand in a plaster. The following day, I was again in Srinagar, I had to go almost everyday. [That day] Som was most upset, he wanted to play a more active role. He felt that he was 'detained' to guard the airport. I tried to explain to him the importance of the airfield and it so happened that 48 hours later, the airport was attacked. He was sent to Bagdam [to stop the raiders] and the rest is history.

Claude: What would have happened if the airport had not been saved at that time?

Lt. Gen. Sinha: There is a lot of imponderable.

If you look at the history, the Pakistanis started the operations on October 22 and they reached Baramulla on October 25th. They wasted 48 hours looted Baramulla. Suppose they had not done this, they would have reached Srinagar the same day. If they had come straight, the question would have been decided even before the Indian Army arrived.

Then on October 27, the Sikh I was the first unit to go [to stop the raiders] under the command of Diwan Ranjit Rai. They made contact [with the Pakistani raiders] at the outskirts of Baramulla itself. At that time, Diwan Ranjit Rai had only 300 men and 100 had been left to protect the airport. He had only 200 men with him while the raiders were 6,000 or 7,000. When the raiders saw the Indian troops and tried to outflank them; in the operation Diwan Ranjit Rai was killed. By October 29, the Indian Army had fallen back and taken position in a place called Patan, half way between Baramulla and Srinagar. They were holding the enemy, but it was found that we were too weak on the ground, we could easily be by-passed and the [raiders] could

easily make it to Srinagar. So, the decision was taken to form a close defense of Srinagar and fall back on a place called Shalatang, which was then at the outskirts of the city (today in part of the city). It was at that time that the raiders decided to attack the airfield, leaving Shalatang and by-passing by the left (if you look at a map). These are some of the imponderables.

If the raiders had acted differently to what they did, they would have got in Srinagar and later the airfield and we would not have been able to build our strength.

In fact we later went on a counter-offensive, but it was only on November 7, that we could build the strength to do so. The situation had been critical at that time.

Claude: Briefly I would like you to narrate an anecdote mentioned in your book "Operation Rescue" when you were 'stuck' near Sialkot in Pakistan with General Cariappa.

Lt. Gen. Sinha: You have to understand that this war was a peculiar war. India and Pakistan were fighting a war in Jammu and Kashmir, while the border elsewhere was absolutely peaceful. So much so that in January 1948, General Russell had left for England and Cariappa had become the Army Commander. One day the Pakistan General Iftekar Ahmed in Lahore invited Cariappa to attend a horse show at Lahore and Cariappa went there, attended the show and returned. In those days, you could drive from Amritsar to Lahore in one hour. There was no restriction, Pakistan was just in existence. No question of passport, of visa, of check posts, you just drove. I remember that in February 1948, we were stuck in Jammu and we wanted to go to Delhi. The weather was very bad; it was raining, and raining. We were

keen to be in Delhi soon. At that time the road between Jammu and Pathankot was a bad road and there was no bridge on the Ravi and other rivers. Due to the bad weather there was no possibility to fly from Jammu to Delhi. So Cariappa asked me, "please check up with Iftekar if we can drive from Jammu to Sialkot [in Pakistan] and there to Lahore and Delhi". We did not get a flat 'No' [from the Pakistani General], but he made some type of excuse. Ultimately we had to wait for 3 or 4 days that the weather improved to go to Delhi.

Claude: Does this incident show that there was still no bitterness between officers who had served together or went to military school together?

Lt. Gen. Sinha: Yes and no.

Till the end of 1946, beginning of 1947, the undivided Indian Army, Indian and those who later became Pakistani Officers were very friendly. In the Army, we used to say that whatever happened on the political scene, this was the concern of the politicians and we had nothing to do with it.

I remember for example in 1946, I was a Captain then and Yahya Khan who later became the President of Pakistan, was a major. For one year Yahya and I worked in the same room in South Block. We knew each other well and were quite friendly. Nobody thought at that time that Pakistan would come into existence.

Even General Niazi who surrendered in Dacca [in 1971] and I were Captains together; we served in Indonesia. At that time, we had no idea of what was going to happen. When Niazi surrendered [after the Bangladesh War], we had 90,000 prisoners of war on our hands and I was made overall in charge of all the prisoners. I put Niazi in a

camp in Jabalpur. When I went there, we sat together in quite a friendly manner, we had a drink together, and we talked the entire day. Niazi told me something very interesting at that time. *He was very bitter against the Bengalis. He used Army language: "These bastards stabbed me in the back in Bangladesh. Mark my words, they will stab you in the back too."* This is what Niazi told me in 1972.

The relationship was there, but the minute the Partition was announced, you could see a total change amongst staff officers. Their outlook to India, their political commitment, etc... But friendly personal relationships continued, even in Karachi [in July 1949] when I was the Secretary of the Indian Delegation to the Cease-fire Conference. There were two Pakistani Generals, one was General Sher Khan. I had bought his car, a second hand model when he was leaving for Pakistan. When we met the first question he asked me was, "how is my car?" The other gentleman was Brig Nazeer Ahmed, commanding the Pakistani 9th Division based at Muzaffarabad. On our side, we had General Timayya, commanding a Division at Baramulla, they were opposing each other. Both Nazeer and Timayya were in the same batch at Sandhurst [Military Academy]. They were cadets together. In the evening after the Conference, we went to a sort of nightclub together. Personal relationships were alright, but when it came to official matters between India and Pakistan, it is different story.

Claude: In your book, you mention the briefing you received before leaving Delhi from Sir GS Bajpai, the Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs. It seems to me that it brings some clarity to the Siachen issue.

Lt. Gen. Sinha: There is a background to it. Let me explain in details. Our contention has been that Kashmir's accession to India was legal and in accordance with the Independence Act passed by the British Parliament. This act makes a distinction between the provinces directly ruled by the British, called British India and the princely States which were under Maharajas or Nawabs which had entered into an agreement with the British recognizing their paramountcy. Ceding Defense and Foreign Affairs to the British, they retained autonomy on all other subjects. That was the legal position and the British knew that once the paramount power would have left the subcontinent, the paramountcy was gone. It was left to the princely rulers to decide about the future of their State. Interestingly enough Jinnah supported this while the Congress wanted the people of the States to decide their future, because it was more democratic. Jinnah had a special reason for supporting [the British's scheme]: because he wanted Hyderabad to accede to Pakistan. It was the largest State in India, the size of France, with its own resources; its population was 10% Muslim or even less, maybe 92 or 93% were Hindus. Jinnah thought that by applying this rule [the princes decide], the Nizam will opt for Pakistan and Hyderabad will become Pakistan Territory. As far as Kashmir is concerned, Jinnah was also sure that it would fall like a ripe plum in his hands, because geography was in his favour. It is a different story that he got neither.

At the time of Partition, he went to the extent to ask the Maharajas of Jodhpur and Jasailmer to accede to Pakistan. He offered them anything that they wanted, but these 'chaps' did not take the bait and did not sign. That was the [legal] situation.

Given these conditions, when Hari Singh acceded to India in October 26 1947, the legality of the Accession could not be questioned. To get

around it, Pakistan started the propaganda that Hari Singh had not acceded and that it was only after the Army went there on October 27 that he was forced to accede.

[During our briefing in 1949] Sir Bajpai said the Cease-fire Line is being drawn on the basis of "as is, where is". The position of the opposing Armies on the day of the Cease-fire (January 1, 1949) should be allowed to remain undisturbed and the Cease-fire Line (CFL) be drawn in between [the two armies] at that basis. Of course [in Karachi during the negotiations] there was a lot of controversy and it took us 7 days to sort them out. But Bajpai gave us an interesting argument. In areas of no man's land, where neither side has been in occupation, we should say that these no man's lands should be inclusive of India because legally Kashmir is India territory. This was accepted by the UN Commission [for India and Pakistan] after we presented our arguments.

Now in the case of Tillai Valley (200 sq miles, east of Guraiz), it was a complete no man's land, no Indian Army, no Pakistan Army. As the result of the Cease-fire Agreement and on the basis of this principle, Tillai was given to us. Today, it is part of Indian territory. We delineated the CFL on 700 km till the Point 9842. Neither side visualized at that time that there could be some operations at those heights. In any case, the CFL was visualized as a temporary arrangement till the case is decided. From Point 9842, we just wrote "and thence north to the glaciers" without defining the line. The Pakistan contention today is that they want a straight line from Point 9842 to the Karakoram Pass.

Claude: But a line from Point 9842 to the Karakoram is not straight, it goes to eastwards

Lt. Gen. Sinha: I mean a direct line to the Karakoram Pass. Our view is that it has to follow the contour of the mountains, and if one follows this concept the Siachen is with us.

Claude: What about the principle of Bajpai?

Lt. Gen. Sinha: Yes, you can extend this principle [to the Siachen]. The West likes to say that Kashmir is disputed, that the matter is under dispute between India and Pakistan, but if you read the August 13th 1948 Resolution on which the Cease-fire is based, there is a recognition of the fact that Kashmir has legally acceded to India. Otherwise why would Part II (about the truce) of the [1948] Resolution have said that during the period of truce all Pakistani forces should withdraw from Kashmir, while the Indian forces could remain in Kashmir. The Resolution did say that and Pakistan accepted it only because of the legal consideration [that Kashmir has legally acceded to India].

Claude: You have taken over as Governor of Jammu & Kashmir in 2003. How do you assess the situation today, 49 years after the airlift that you organized.

Lt. Gen. Sinha: It is unfortunate that the State which had the most liberal tradition in the past more liberal than any part of the Indian subcontinent has become a pray to Islamic fundamentalism. This is the root of the insurgency or militancy or terrorism, whatever way you call it, which has happened after 1989.

Of course, I must add that both Delhi and Srinagar are responsible because they failed to provide good governance. People had complaints like anywhere else in India, but [the problem] here is that these complaints are linked with Islamic fundamentalism supported by Pakistan. When militancy erupted in 1989-90, the Kashmir Valley was on fire. They expected in a matter of days that it would become part of Pakistan. They also resorted to ethnic cleansing. The 300,000 Kashmiri Pandits were hounded out of the Valley. During the next 10-12 years we have actively combated the militancy. We have been able to bring violence under control in a reasonable manner. Statistically, when I came in 2003, there were 10 people killed everyday. That was an average. Today it is 3 a day. It is a sharp decline, but violence still continues. A very good indicator of normalcy returning is when last year there was an increase in tourist traffic. From a mere 28,000 in 2002, it rose to 1,90,000 in 2003 and in 3,70,000 in 2004.

Claude: Indians or foreigners?

Lt. Gen. Sinha: All Indians. In 2005, it crossed the 6,00,000. In 2006, during the first half, tourism was doing very well, but at the end of June, early July, the militants started targeting tourists; they have not been doing this earlier. They inflicted a lot of casualties on tourists from Gujarat and West Bengal, the two States from which the maximum tourists came. Our daily arrival of tourists was 4,000 or 5,000, later it dropped to 400 or 500 a day. Till today, a little over 4,00,000 have come to the Valley (during 10 months of 2006). By the end of the year, it should be around 4,50,000. This is the situation as far as the militancy is concerned.

Claude: It seems that these selective killings, whether it is of the Pandits or the tourists, in killing a few, the terrorists scare lakhs.

Lt. Gen. Sinha: Yes, they have succeeded.

Claude: My question is how to stop 'selective' killings?

Lt. Gen. Sinha: It is difficult to stop. When lakhs of people are coming you can not provide a security escort to everyone all the time. But overall we have been dominating the situation and we have tried to reduce it. But it affects the economy of the State of Kashmir, the hotel keepers, the shikarawallas, the houseboats people or the transport people, who are all the beneficiaries of tourism stand to lose. The terrorists do such selective killings of civilians that these people do not dare to openly protest. If they were not terrorized, they could have taken the matter to the streets.

The other unfortunate thing is that in spite of this, there is some sympathy for the terrorists amongst quite a few people on account of religious consideration. The moment they say "Islam is in danger", logic is given a go by. This is the ground situation. But things are not politically too bad; my own feeling is that this anti-India feeling in the Valley is not as high as it gets projected in the media and by some politicians for their own ends.

Claude: Do you think that there is a change in perception after 9/11. Do people and foreign governments see today the 'militancy' as pure terrorism?

Lt. Gen. Sinha: Even after 9/11, the religious appeal fueled by Pakistan and the terrorists in Kashmir continue to be there. Our aim is to reduce this but how do we do it?

I am trying in my own way. To begin with, let us look at the demographic pattern in Kashmir. We have 40% Kashmiri Muslims, 20% non-Kashmiri Muslims who do not speak the language, who live in the mountains, like the Gujjars, the Paharis, etc... a small percentage of Shias near Kargil-Dras. The rest 40% are Hindus, Buddhists or Sikhs. As far as Hindus, Buddhists or Sikhs are concerned, there is no question for them of having pro-Pakistan feelings or wanting to break away from India. In the remaining 60%, 20% are living in the mountains, they have not been affected by religious fundamentalism to the same extent. They are economically very poor, backward and by and large quite friendly towards India. I had a project of 1000 micro-hydel systems for the mountains. A turbine and watermill producing 4 or 5 kilowatts of electricity and providing 30 or 40 light points in each village which had not seen a bulb before. By day time, the power is used to run looms or such a things. It is a mini-economic revolution for the people of the mountains. We have now completed the project. When I went to inaugurate the last plant near Uri, I went by helicopter and for the last 20 km I used the roads in the mountains. It was an unbelievable sight. Every village en route, was flying the Indian national flag. The villagers had laid the road for me with Indian flags. At the site of this last micro-hydel power, there was a couple of thousand people with a lot of enthusiasm and pro-India feelings. This can not be stage-managed. In the Valley, the attitude of the Kashmiri Muslims is different, what we are trying to do in the Valley is to win them over by Kashmiriyat.

Claude: This was my next question! Can you explain what is Kashmiriyat?

Lt Gen Sinha: I will give you the background. Historically Kashmir had a different tradition from the rest of the country. Islam came to Kashmir in a peaceful manner, there was no coercion. The tradition goes that the Pandits were the educated class, they studied Persian, Arabic, etc. Kashmiri Muslims were more or less illiterate, but the feelings between the two were so cordial that the Pandits taught the Koran to the Muslims.

My previous Deputy Chief Minister, Musaraf Ali Baig told me that he had learned the Koran from a Pandit who was his teacher. This did not happen anywhere else in the world, not even elsewhere in India or Pakistan.

The other interesting thing is the participation of people in each others functions. It was happening more in Kashmir than anywhere else, though it happened elsewhere in India too; here it went a step further. Even today, you go to Pahalgam, there is a Hindu temple which is 300 or 400 years old. The priest of this temple is a Muslim, he distributes *prasad* and looks after the place; this is accepted by people. If you go to Jhangar, on a hill there is a Muslim shrine (ziarat), as there is no Muslim population, Hindus are looking after the shrine. This is an old tradition in Kashmir.

Even in names, there are not only common surnames for Hindus and Muslims, but you have names which are exclusively Hindu used by Muslims and vice-versa. In the rest of India, it does not happen. For example, you have a Bhat or a Dhar, he can be a Muslim or he can be a Hindu. There are also some exclusive names, some Muslims are called Bhagwan, which is usually exclusively Hindu. I had here Abdul

Rehman Bhagwan coming to see me. You have Mohamed Shaffi Pandit or Mullah, a Muslim name, you have Amarnath Mulla, a Hindu. This is tradition in Kashmir.

Historically, it was Sufi Islam which came to the Valley from Central Asia. Sufi Islam was different in its outlook, more liberal, not like Wahabi Islam. When they came to Kashmir, they adopted the Rishi cult which is something completely Hindu.

Some of them became vegetarian, they fasted like Hindus and played Hindu music during various functions. There were two figures: one was a lady, Lalleshwari and [the other] Sheikh Noor-ud-din [known as] Nund Rishi; they form part of a history which can not be found anywhere else.

On the ground, it is what struck me when I came here on October 27, 1947. The Army had been given three tasks: one to stop the raiders who had reached Baramulla, two, to protect the airfield which was the lifeline and three, to assist the civil administration to maintain the law and order in Srinagar. The Maharaja had fled to Jammu with his Administration. It was complete chaos when we reached Srinagar. From the airport, I went to the town to check the situation and I found no communal tension, no violence. People were shouting a slogan *Hamlawar Khabardar, Hum Kashmiri, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Hai Tayaar*. This was music to my ears; we did not need to deploy the Army in Srinagar (in any case our resources were so limited that we could not have spared anybody). But it was so different from what I had seen in Delhi and Lahore for the past so many months. At that time, Mahatma Gandhi had said: "I see some hope in Kashmir". For me it was Kashmiriyat in action. When I came as a Governor, the best thing that I can do is to use 'Kashmiriyat' to win away the Kashmiri Muslims from fundamentalism and terrorism.

Since then, I have been propagating Kashmiriyat in different ways. For example, I am the Chairman of the Amarnath Shrine Board. When I organized the pilgrimage, I have a Sufi music extravaganza, then I go to the Holy Cave perform some pujas and then fly to Chamar-el-Shariff and put a chaddar on the grave [of the sufi saint].

For the Sufi music festival, I get artists from all over to perform. This year, I got some artists from Pakistan; we had a five days festival and artists performed in Srinagar, Pahalgam and Barumulla; all this is to promote Kashmiriyat.

I have opened a Department of Kashmir Studies in Kashmir University and organized two international Seminars in the last two months. One was on "Central Asia in prospect and retrospect" and lot of people in Kashmir, in particular the separatists, tried to put across that we have more in common with Central Asia than the rest of India: "We have a separate identity, we are a separate nation".

To counter this in my own way, I invited to this Seminar Ambassadors of the Central Asian Republics, scholars, academicians and our own people. We also invited people from Pakistan. We tried to put across how Kashmir exported Buddhism, a religion of peace in the ancient period and how in the medieval period, Central Asia exported Sufism, also devoted to peace and harmony to the Valley. The flowering of Kashmiriyat in the Valley influenced by the three religions or variations of these three religions, Islam in its Sufi liberal form, Buddhism in its Mahayana form where the emphasis is on the salvation of the society instead of the individual and Hinduism in its Kashmiri shivaism form, which is more monotheistic than other forms. The three interacting together led to the flowering of Kashmiriyat. At the Seminar we tried to project that these Central Asian countries were all Muslim countries, yet they were secular, opposed to terrorism and more friendly toward

India than to Pakistan. I have signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the Kashmir University and a University in Kazakhstan and I am promoting exchanges of students and academics so that people in the Valley get exposed to a liberal and modern Islam which prevails in Central Asia.

The other Seminar was on Kashmiriyat. I invited a Professor from Pakistan who came and I was quite amused to find out that the Lahore University has a Department of Kashmiriyat. We said that both Departments should interact. All this helps to promote Kashmiriyat. It is my belief that the older generation still has a longing for the old heritage of Kashmir and would like to see it through. The younger generation needs to be educated. If we succeed in this, we can bring about a change in the minds of the people.

Claude: Could you tell us a few words on the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits?

Lt Gen Sinha: When I took over as a Governor, I had a Chief Minister with different views. Unfortunately, there were clashes of personalities between him and me. One of the first things I did was to visit the migrant camps in Jammu, Udhampur, and in Delhi. It was not appreciated. I was the constitutional head only and I was not supposed to take a proactive role in this. [Personally] I thought that as the Head of State, it was my moral responsibility to go around and see these things.

When I visited the migrant camps in Delhi, they [the Pandits] were all in tears; they had been there for 13 years and nobody in the Kashmir government had ever visited them. The argument was that the Delhi Administration was supposed to look after them, "why should Kashmir

get involved", they said. I felt that it is my moral responsibility, they are Kashmiris [after all]. I had a good friend and a responsible person as the Governor of Delhi, Mr Vijay Kapoor, I took up with him their little problems such as medical facilities, admission in schools, living conditions, water coolers. We were able to do something. They got DDA flats on concessionary terms. But here in the State, the Chief Minister, who is the Chief Executive had a strange view. I told him: "They are living like animals, one room for a family of 5 or 6 or 7 people and the ceiling is only tin sheets, Jammu is so hot in summer, they bake in those rooms. We should do something about them". He argued with me: "If you make them too comfortable, they will not return to the Valley." I said: "Give them the minimum living conditions, I am not asking for the moon to make it so attractive that they don't want to go back to Kashmir".

There was a difference in approach [between us], but as a matter of policy, I could not advise him. Later, I thought about the President of India, I should take him to the camps. Dr Kalam came with me and Mufti [Mohamed Sayed] also was there. [President] Kalam said the same thing as me: "You should give them living conditions" and Mufti used the same argument: "One should not make them too comfortable and I have built for them 'clusters' in the Valley."

Nothing happened. Then the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh came. I briefed him and took him around. At dinner the previous night, Mufti used the same argument. I did not say anything at that time, but later I briefed the PM. The next morning, the PM, Mufti and I visited the camps and to the embarrassment of Mufti, during the meeting at the camp, the PM said he will give 50 crore rupees for 2-room apartments for the Pandits. The project is under execution, more than half of it has been completed. I have not gone there recently, but some people have

already been moved in. It is double-storey buildings, each family has 2 bed rooms, dining and seating room and bathroom. The idea is that everyone should be provided with this type of accommodation. We want ultimately to get them back to Valley and I have organized a few things. One is to take the Kashmiri Pandit children who are between 10 and 14 years old to the Valley. They live in these camps and have not seen their native places. I got the police to take a group of 50-60 children to Srinagar. They saw the Valley for the first time; I invited them for a cup of tea at Raj Bhavan. I want that this sort of contact should be kept alive, so that at a later stage when the conditions improve, they can get back. Of course, I do not approve the ghettoisation of Kashmir Pandits in clusters.

Claude: You do not favour a homeland within the State (Panun Kashmir)

Lt Gen Sinha: No, they should go back to their respective places where favorable security conditions should be created and [positive] feeling amongst the Kashmiri Muslims. Many of them say that Kashmiriyat is not complete without the Pandits. This is my future aim.

Abha: Yesterday some complained about lack of medical facilities, etc...

Lt Gen Sinha: These are small problems. Of course, I admit that medical facilities could be better, but look at the common man in Kashmir or in Jammu, we can not create something special for a small section only. Their other problem is employment. It is a problem; the Pandits say: "We used to have 60% or 80% of government jobs before". In those days they were the only educated people and were

recruited [by the Government]. Kashmiri Muslims were not educated then. Today they are and they get government jobs. How can we restore the old ratio? Then some of the Pandits say: "We have been in these camps for 14 or 15 years, allow a special provision whereby people over 30 or 40 years of age can also be recruited. How can we have a system whereby you recruit people at the age of 25 and for Kashmiri Pandits at the age of 40? This is not practical.

Their other demand is to have a land of their own, whether it is Panun or whatever you want to call it. This again is not a feasible proposition. Today, economics is more important than politics. European Union has shown the way. In the 16th or 17th centuries, the world had kingdoms or empires, the modern concept of a Nation State did not exist. Europe pioneered that. And the last Nation States to emerge in Europe were Italy and Germany in the 19th century. Today, the European Common Market has shown another way. We are living in a world which becomes increasingly globalized. You have multinationals which work across international borders. So, a solution to the Kashmir problem could be an economic union of this type.

Musharraf has been talking of LOC being made irrelevant, but it is in a different context, if LOC is [made] irrelevant and there is more movement of people on either side, he can pump more terrorists and give a boost to militancy in Kashmir.

We also have been talking of LOC becoming irrelevant; [this way] there is a certain common ground, but our concept is that the LOC should be made a line of peace and prosperity. Now to redraw borders, which have more or less solidified in the last 60 years is no longer a proposition.

Take Pakistan itself, in the North West Frontier, you have the Pashtoons who live in Afghanistan and Pakistan because the British

drew the Durant Line, an arbitrary line. It is difficult to undo it now. Tomorrow, there will be the same problem in Baluchistan with Baluchs living in Iran and Pakistan. One can not redraw the lines on basis of ethnic population. Similarly here in Kashmir, you have Kashmiri Muslims on both side of the LOC. You can not redraw boundaries, let us live as friends and unitedly. Let us fight the common enemy of hunger, diseases and poverty. This is my approach.

Claude: What about the demilitarization asked by President Musharraf?

Lt Gen SK Sinha: This is non sense. How can you have a demilitarization? Would Musharraf accept demilitarization of Baluchistan and North West Frontiers? The point is a country has the sovereign right to defend its frontiers. Kashmir is a border State which has been attacked 4 times by Pakistan and one time by China. We have also trans-border terrorism in Kashmir. How can we demilitarize? Demilitarization is not the same as troops returning to barracks from internal security duty. Once the violence level drops down and becomes normal, we will only be too happy to ask the troops to disengage from internal security duty and concentrate on border defense only. But this can not be called 'demilitarization'.

Claude: Thank you, Your Excellency