

Kulu Situation.

Kulu has a population of more than 1½ laacs of Hindus and about 1500 of Muslims. The entire population of Muslims held Muslim League ideology. They received regular instructions and training from the League headquarters. They had been fully impressed that the entire Province of the Punjab would fall in Pakistan area. Even after the decision of Government for dividing the Punjab, but before the Boundary Commission award, the Muslims of Kulu thought Kulu would fall in Western zone. With this conviction in mind they were secretly preparing to adopt the same tactics as were done in the Muslim-majority provinces or districts. The Muslims of Kulu had had a dream to finish with the Hindus of Kulu and thereby making Kulu a purely Muslim country. To achieve this end they on one hand exhorted every Muslim to arm himself with one arm or the other, on the other hand imported lethal weapons and bombs and on the third made a very strong ^{secret} organization which used to hold secret meetings sometimes in Lower Kulu and some-times in Upper Kulu. They aroused the Muslim feeling. In short they were fully prepared for the assault of Hindus and were only looking for a chance.

Unfortunately in a local fair (Dangal) a Muslim Gujar lost his life in the Beas while swimming across. This was purely individual but, the local Muslims in order to seize a chance gave it a communal colour. Very fortunately the timely arrival of Mr. Harcourt hushed up all communal feelings.

In the meantime refugees, mostly Sikhs of rich families from the West Punjab began pouring in Kulu. As they had a natural bent of retaliation the communal tension grew more and more. At first it was confined to the Urban area i.e. Kulu town. The refugees gave more daring recruits to the Sangh community. In due course a young man namely, P. Sita Ram, who at first posed himself to be a Congressite and later a Hindu Sabhite, rose. It was most probably in his individual capacity. He went village to village and openly preached communal hatred. So far known he went on unchecked. This spread the tension in the rural area too.

Later incidents in Bengal and West Punjab after the Boundary Commission Award fanned the situation with the result that an organized group of Urban area, whether Sangh or a mixed group of Sangh and Non-Sangh, first set on fire 2 shops of Muslims in the

Kulu town. The same group the 2nd or 3rd night at Katrain, Manali and so on. As is learnt, the Assistant Commissioner, Kulu requisitioned special force of Police or Military. None arrived at the proper time. Nothing was done by the Authorities on the spot. Upto the 29th August there was little or no loss of Muslims or Hindus. The Muslim population of Upper Kulu and Kulu town shifted in a block to a Serai just near the Tensil and Thana buildings. None can say ~~whether~~ whether or not that Muslim group was considered as refugees' camp. There was a strong rumour afloat on the 29th Aug: that these Muslims would be annihilated on the same night. On the morning of the 30th August it was known that a mob from the Lag valley specially organized by the same Sita Ram and his colleagues managed to attack the Muslims in the Serai but lost their own 5 or 6 persons while only one Muslim was shot dead. The firing on the Hindu mob was not from Police or from Muslims but said to be from a retired Anglo-Indian official namely Mr. Macdonald. This incident of the 29th night infuriated the Kulu town people. They at once assembled, organized themselves and sent a deputation to the Assistant Commissioner, Kulu with an ultimatum that if the Muslims from the Serai were not taken out of Kulu within 2 hours they would be attacked. XX

A simultaneous challenge was also received by the Hindus of the Kulu town from the Muslim camp that the latter would start offensive and loot and burn the bazaar at 2.30 p.m. The Muslims seemed encouraged by the killing of 5 or 6 Hindus the previous night. It is also known that these Muslims sent 4 or 5 volunteers to Shamsi and Bhuntar Muslims who had organized themselves in 3 very strong groups viz. at Shamsi, Bhuntar and Bajaura. It was conveyed to them that the Muslims at Kulu were victorious and that they should remain firm and resolute. It is believed that several Muslims had also slipped away overnight from the Serai (the so-called refugee camp). There was absolutely no control or guard over the Muslims' camp at Kulu.

As soon as the Kulu towns people received the Muslim challenge they took possession of all lorries and trucks and petrol, and most probably, with the knowledge of the local Authorities sent volunteers to the rural area in Upper Kulu and the adjoining kotnis to invite young men for their help. Before any people from Upper Kulu arrived the Kulu towns people had started offensive on the

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Muslims. The Muslims repulsed their attack twice. This attack was started after 3 p.m. In the meantime when Muslims desperately were to break upon the Hindus lorries loaded with rural people arrived on the scene of occurrence. They were followed by the Sikhs' car and a lorry all with rifles and ammunition. Every thing ended within 2 hours then. No accurate figures of dead and absconded can be given or ascertained. It is believed no action or steps whatsoever was taken by the Police or the Executive Authorities, and they rather encouraged the action over the Muslims. The local rumour goes even so far that some rifles were lent by the Police to the responsible mobbers.

The same day i.e. on the 30th August similar incident, though on a very small scale, also took place at Bhuntar. With a few loss of lives all Muslims fled away either to Mandi Border or to jungles on the Mandi border. The Muslim groups at Bajaura and Shamshi suffered no loss of life. Shamshi group was the largest and the best equipped but, since they got very bad reports they lost their morale and instead of waging an attack on the Hindus on the 31st August as was pre-arranged by the Muslim community they fled away bag and baggage. Loot and arson was the 2nd course that naturally followed every where. The biggest lot was taken by a large members family of Hafizabad who are said to have made good along with lorries of looted property. Police and the other Authorities concerned did not touch them at all.

All has happened. The majority of Kulu Muslims has fled away and some killed. Many a Muslims who were in jungles as Gujars and others re-appeared. None of them were assaulted. Those who wanted to go to Pakistan have since left and those who desired conversion have become Hindus. In spite of all this there is ^{hardly} ~~little~~ peace. The official axe which helped termination of Muslims from Kulu first has chosen now to trample down the poor rural area people. Naturally, the lords of Law and Order who held high in British regime could not easily give up their old mentality. They have entirely forgotten their job and duties. Instead of arresting or taking to task the real miscreants and goondas they have resorted to harrassing the poor people of the rural area. They catch hold of persons, who can afford bribing, extract and let them free. It is strongly rumoured that they have already extracted

a very big sum from the Kulu town representative and some from the Manali bazaar. This is clear from the fact that the police are not touching the real originators of troubles in the urban area. Not a single real goonda was arrested upto the 24th Sept. P. Sita Ram the real culprit is ~~xxxxxxx~~ freely moving. Arrests have been made and many may follow yet but only a few arrests are justified. If the present tactics of the Police and the Executive continue it seems the extremity of oppression might invite another bloody disturbance.

No body with certainty can say whether the Assistant Commissioner, Kulu who is incharge of the Sub-Division is also corrupt. But, it goes without saying that he is either the weakest official and dancing at the fingers of the Tehsildar and the Sub-Inspector, Police, Kulu, or he expects share.

In order to make hay while the sun shines they will not rest with the advantages gained by them through Hindu-Muslim riot. They indirectly through their Urban agency are frightening the backward people with a Sikh versus Hindu menace. This does not seem far. Kulu at present has an over-majority of Sikh top-ranking officials with the Sikh S.I. Police at the helm. They are contemplating to convert all scheduled caste population of Kulu Sub-Division into Sikh fold. Peace in these circumstances seems yet a dream.

Inquiry against the corruption by the present officials may be made later on. The first thing that needs immediate attention of Government is to restore peace by establishing Law and Order in the valley. A.C. Kulu, Tehsildar Kulu and the S.I. Police Kulu should be transferred forthwith. The rural population for which the Congress and its rank sacrificed so much is still at the mercy of the British regime Police and Executives and claims protection.

Summary.

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- (i) There was little communal feeling in the real population of this Sub-Division. The first cause was migration of refugees from the West Punjab. Sangh's organization with the direct help of Kulu towns people was the second great cause. Official help with the clear idea of exterminating of Muslims was the third factor. Entry of Rural area people through the Urban people and with the knowledge of officials was the fourth cause. But, every body believes that all the above factors worked on the basis of hatred created by the Muslims of Kulu themselves.
- (ii) Sita Ram of Nirmand acted as the first here by preaching in the whole Sub-Division the communal hatred. Lal Chand of Naggar though first posing a peace-maker led the mob both on the 29th and 30th August, 1947. Sikhs lent rifles and ammunition.

(iii) Officials incharge of Law and Order slept over all the affairs when they could control the whole situation quite easily. They are taking undue advantage of lawlessness and have run corrupt.

(iv) Inquiry into all matters by a high tribunal is necessary.

Hindu-Muslim riot started in Kulu from the 3rd week of August. ~~There was~~ It took the most serious turn between the 25th and the 31st August. 30th August was the worst. The following factors contributed to this lawlessness:-

(i) Cent per cent Muslims of this Sub-division, hardly a total population of about 2000, were Muslim Leaguers. Nearly all of them were illiterate but, were strongly organized and received regular instructions from their Distt: and Provincial organizations, and were led by Muslim local Govt. servants. They were led to the conviction that Kulu Sub-Division will ~~surely~~ all in the Pakistan. They had a dream of either doing away with the Hindu population in toto or expelling them, thus to make room for other Muslim population. It is reliably learnt that they did import lethal weapons from the plains and were only waiting for a proper chance. This gave rise to hatred between Hindus and Muslims probably first time in the history of Kulu, otherwise all were living like brothers.

(ii) Rape of Rawalpindi and extermination of Hindus in the West Punjab aggravated the feelings still more. It grew further when the refugees from the West Punjab arrived in Kulu. It added fuel to the fire. The local Sangh Committee which was too weak otherwise to do anything received strong recruitment from these refugees.

Note. Even at this stage there was little fear of any real disturbances as, the then Assistant Commissioner, Kulu, ~~was~~ was very strong and competent.

(iii) A young and ambitious Brahman namely, Sita Ram of Narmand in Tehsil Seraj of the Kangra District, who was and is still ^{after} banking/leadership arose. He made intensive and extensive tours in the villages of Kulu and openly preached hatred in the rural area. He was not checked at all. People think he had indirect concurrence of the officials. It was he who set the ~~ball~~ ball in motion.

(iv) As soon as the general public opinion was won the urban population not only collected funds but also formed a very strong secret organization. Their representative was one L. Ram Dass Sud B.A. of Akhara bazar of Kulu Proper.

(v) Then came on the scene one Pandit Lal Chand Prarthi,

