



A MISSION IN KASHMIR







A Mission in Kashmir

ANDREW WHITEHEAD



VIKING





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Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd, 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi 110 017, India

Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA

Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario, M4P 2Y3, Canada (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)

Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd)

Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd)

Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, North Shore 0632,

New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd)

Penguin Group (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

First published in Viking by Penguin Books India 2007

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Typeset in Sabon MT by Eleven Arts, New Delhi

Printed at [Printer's Name]

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For my parents, Margaret and Arthur Whitehead







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Preface

Of all the missions in Kashmir that have left their mark on this book, my greatest debt is to those associated with St Joseph's mission in Baramulla. The convent and hospital there was the scene of one of the most violent and notorious events during the initial stages of the Kashmir conflict in 1947, and it was where my personal quest into the origins of the Kashmir dispute began. I am not a Catholic, nor indeed a believer, but I have been humbled by the kindness and generosity of the nuns of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and the Mill Hill missionary priests. Sister Emilia, Dr Melanie, Sister Lucy, Sister Rosy and Sister Elaine took the time and trouble to welcome me at St Joseph's, to answer my queries and share their memories. Father Jim Borst in Srinagar sought out documents, and encouraged my interest in the attack on Baramulla. At Mill Hill in north London, the order's archivists, Father Tom O'Brien and more recently Father Hans Boerakker, have scoured their holdings on my behalf, photocopied documents and given permission for inclusion of extracts from their archives in this book. They have been unfailingly helpful. Maureen Corboy, the last surviving sibling of Monsignor Shanks, not only sent me all her mementoes of her much loved brother, but also gave me permission to make whatever use I wished of them.

I have been helped enormously by some of those who lived through the attack on St Joseph's and by the relatives of those killed. Doug and Tom Dykes have assisted and encouraged, provided documents and photographs, as I have intruded into the most difficult of memories of their parents' death. Tery Barreto in Nagpur put me in touch with his relative Angela Aranha, a survivor of the attack on the Baramulla mission. She has been a generous support in my research. Another survivor Francis Rath, who spent most of his life a short walk from St Joseph's, not only told me his story but sought out photos from that time. Leela Thompson (nee Pasricha) and her son and daughter-in-law Inder and Jane Cheema made me wonderfully welcome during a fall weekend in Maine, retelling





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memories of getting out of Baramulla just ahead of the tribesmen's arrival. Frank Leeson shared with me not only memories of evacuating the mission, but his personal photographic archive from 1947.

The remarkable letter from the maharaja about Kashmir's accession to India was made available by Sudeep Budhiraja, whose great-grandfather was the initial recipient. Pran Nath Jalali showed me his cache of documents relating to the National Conference militia. Peta Adeè entrusted me with outsize albums of newspaper cuttings that her father Sydney Smith had compiled of his own articles. Alexandra Haight Furr sent me copies of extracts from the scrapbook of her father Russell Haight. And to all those in Srinagar, Baramulla, and Muzaffarabad, in Jammu, Delhi and Islamabad and elsewhere who have welcomed me into their homes, offered hospitality and shared memories of Kashmir in 1947—thank you.

In *A Mission in Kashmir* I have combined the two disciplines which I have some claim to practise, journalism and history. But it is much more a work of history than of reportage. At its heart are the stories of those caught up in the first Kashmir conflagration—recorded on cassette or disc half a century or more later, or in some cases retrieved from the bylined articles of reporters who were on the scene or disinterred from the archives. There are profound issues about making use of memory—shared and recited memory at that—to establish a narrative of what happened many decades earlier. The tenacity of the Kashmir dispute makes that concern more acute. Yet similar problems about authority, accuracy and inherent bias surround published memoirs, official archives and other more conventional source material for historians.

By retrieving and making use of personal accounts of Kashmir in 1947—from all perspectives and vantage points—I have tried to reflect the complexity of the Kashmir issue and to break away from established narratives devised in support of one or other particular interest group. I have also sought to give a human dimension to an acute geopolitical fault line. I have taken trouble when referring to material gathered from personal interviews not to paraphrase. On occasion, I have edited out digressions and repetition, but all the words that appear within quotation marks were spoken. I have sought a standardized spelling based on current usage, but I have not amended spellings and capitalization in quotes and extracts from other works. The heartland of Kashmir and its culture and the area at the core of the continuing dispute is the Kashmir Valley, and my focus has been on the Valley more than other areas of the former princely state.



I have sought to immerse myself in the vast secondary literature about the Kashmir dispute. The library at the University of Michigan, its assiduous staff, and its policy of allowing researchers access to every nook and cranny of its immense holdings of books and journals, gave me the chance to consult every published item on Kashmir I requested and alerted me to many of which I had been unaware. The library also tracked down on my behalf microfilm archives of Indian, American and British newspapers. I spent a semester in Michigan in 2003 as a BBC-sponsored journalism fellow, much of which I devoted to the study of Kashmir in 1947. My thanks go to Charles Eisendrath at Wallace House, who presides sagely over both the Knight-Wallace fellowship programme and his fellows. Among the many excellent South Asia specialists at Ann Arbor, Ashu Varshney offered friendship, a fizzing intellect and lots of encouragement.

I have also delved into files held at the British National Archives at Kew and the India Office Records at the British Library, and benefited from the kindness and expertise of their staff. In all my researches, only one door has been barred to me. In Delhi, I sought the permission of the director general of archives to consult the original of the instrument of accession which joined Kashmir to India. He referred my request to the ministry of home affairs which, I was told—nice to think that the play on words was intentional—‘has not acceded your request’.

Ravi Singh at Penguin India embraced this book with wonderful relish and enthusiasm, and Manjula Lal has saved me from errors grievous and otherwise. Urvashi Butalia, Maggie Hanbury, Lara Heimert and V.K. Karthika helped *A Mission in Kashmir* on its way to finding a publisher. Urvashi also commented on several draft chapters. Her own work, retrieving and giving value to personal experiences of Partition, has been a beacon of inspiration. Alexander Evans has a comprehensive knowledge of and deep affection for Kashmir, matched only by his generosity towards those who seek to emulate his scholarship. I have gained greatly from his friendship and guidance. Owen Bennett Jones, Brian Cloughley, Parvez Dewan, my good friend and colleague Sam Miller and Mridu Rai have also read parts of this book at various stages of its development and I am grateful for their encouragement and generously given advice. Bill Reid and Chris Snedden, both scholars of Kashmir in Australia, provided advice, articles and introductions. Ashima Kaul helped me track down veterans of the National Conference militia, while Omar Khan alerted me to and sent copies of newsreel coverage of the Indian army airlift to Kashmir. I am also grateful to Ronald Pont and to other members of the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia who



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responded to my pleas for information about Kashmir in 1947 with many valuable recollections and suggestions.

My colleague Haroon Rashid in Peshawar managed to find and interview a veteran of the 1947 lashkar and cast an eye over draft chapters relating to the Frontier Province. Charles Haviland and Bhavna Kumar also conducted interviews on my behalf. Mallika Menon zealously combed through the patchy holdings of the Muslim League newspaper *Dawn*, now one of Pakistan's leading dailies, in Delhi's Nehru Memorial Library. Many Indian army veterans helped me on my way, and I am particularly grateful to Patric Emerson of the Indian Army Association, to Ben Suter of the Sikh Regiment veterans' association and to Stanley Menezes. Colonel Anil Bhat helped me gain access to the photographic archive of the ministry of defence in Delhi. News cameraman Phil Goodwin took the photograph of me that adorns the dust jacket. I also want to thank my fellow editors of *History Workshop Journal*—being of their number gave me the confidence to persist with this book.

At the British Library, Penny Brook went to exceptional trouble to secure permission from the heirs of Sir George Cunningham to quote from his diary. Toby White gave me permission to include extracts from the writings of Margaret Bourke-White and Dr Karan Singh has kindly allowed me to include brief passages from his autobiographical writings. The *Daily Express*, *The Times*, the *Times of India* and the *New York Times* have all given consent for the inclusion of excerpts from these titles and I am happy to acknowledge their kindness. I am also grateful to many others who have given copyright permission and my apologies in those cases where we have tried but failed to locate those who own copyright.

This is not in any sense a BBC book, yet without the BBC it would never have happened. It was as a BBC News correspondent that I first visited Kashmir in 1993 and my work for the BBC as correspondent, programme maker, presenter and latterly (as India country director of the BBC World Service Trust) a protagonist of development communications has repeatedly taken me back to Kashmir. In all my years in South Asia, I have made more visits to Kashmir and spent more time there than anywhere else outside my adopted home city of Delhi. I have seen the line of control from both sides, met separatist leaders based in Pakistan and interviewed Indian generals at their Badami Bagh base in Srinagar. I have been careful to avoid taking sides in my reporting on Kashmir and I have sought the same impartiality in writing this book. Nothing in its pages should be construed in any way as reflecting the opinion of the BBC.



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I have benefited from the wisdom and friendship of the BBC correspondent in Srinagar Altaf Hussain and earlier of his predecessor Yusuf Jameel. Altaf has twice accompanied me to Baramulla and also advised on various draft chapters. Through them, I have had the pleasure and privilege of meeting many Kashmiris and seeing much of their Valley. In as much as I understand Kashmir, it is down to them. What I have failed to understand is my own fault.

Writing a book puts a strain on any household. My family has been enormously generous and indulgent. Samira and Rohan spurred me on more than they have realized by their innocent enquiries along the lines of: 'How many chapters have you written this weekend, Dad?' My wife Anuradha Awasthi has supported, shielded, cajoled and criticised; she has knocked my ideas into shape and knocked some of my more wacky ideas out of court; she has read this book more times than anyone ever should. And my parents nurtured in me an inquisitiveness, a desire to know and to understand, which has been at the heart of my career as a news journalist and which has also found expression in this study. My mother has not lived to see this volume in print, but both she and my father have helped give birth to this book, and to them it is dedicated.



ANDREW WHITEHEAD

NEW DELHI
JUNE 2007

