

THE TARGET: JAISH

SIMPLY PUT QUESTION & ANSWER

Terror outfit once crushed in Kashmir, now in revival effort

Why Balakot is a watershed

The first time India has used airpower, and its first venture this deep inside Pakistan. The precedent also raises new challenges before the two countries in responding to each other

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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IN TUESDAY'S airstrike in Pakistan, India targeted a camp of Jaish-e-Mohammed, the terrorist group responsible for the attack that killed 40 CRPF men in Pulwama. The attack and the target underline the return to relevance of the outfit.

In recent years, Jaish chief Masood Azhar sent two of his nephews to Kashmir: Talha Rashid was killed in October 2017 and Usman Haider in 2018. On Tuesday, the government said the Jaish camp struck by the airstrike was headed by Maulana Yousuf Azhar alias Ustad Ghouri, Azhar's brother-in-law. Yousuf was one of seven Pakistani nationals who had organised the hijacking of flight IC-814 to Kandahar in 1999. In exchange for the hostages, Masood Azhar (arrested in 1994) and two others were released from jail.

Rise, fall, revival

Jaish is the newest terror group operating out of Pakistan; it was launched in 2000 with men from the Harkat-ul-Ansar which had already carried out major terror strikes in Kashmir. The first was the 1995 abduction of six western tourists through its front Al Faran, carried out with the aim of securing the release of Azhar and Harkat commander Sajad Afghani.

Jaish's first major strike, in 2000, was also the first suicide bombing in Kashmir and altered the trajectory of militancy. A young local recruit blew up a car at the entrance of the Army's 15 Corps in Srinagar. Later that year, Jaish sent another suicide bomber (a UK national) to the entrance of Army's 15 Corps with a explosives-laden car. In October 2001, Jaish attacked the J&K Assembly, so vicious that Pakistan was forced to condemn it. India managed to get Jaish listed as an international terrorist outfit by the UN that month.

On December 13, 2001, Jaish carried out the Parliament attack that pushed India and Pakistan into an eyeball-to-eyeball military situation. On December 26, 2001, Washington declared Jaish a foreign terrorist organisation. Then Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, under international pressure, launched a crackdown. Pakistan banned Jaish in 2002, but Azhar renamed Jaish as Khudam-ul-Islam and then as Al Rehmat Trust as a cover for terror activities.

Jaish split in 2002. This is when Azhar's family members became vital to its functioning. Pakistan sided with the US in Afghanistan and Azhar's group hatched plots to kill Musharraf, who survived two attempts in December 2003. This provoked a crackdown, with several Jaish men arrested and hanged by the Pakistani military. Azhar was put under house arrest. The killing of the entire Jaish top brass in Lolab in 2004, after Indian intelligence

sleuths lured them into a trap, routed the outfit in Kashmir. The group didn't emerge for the next 10 years.

Its revival began with a strike on a military camp in Kupwara in 2014, and the launch of 'Shaheed Afzal Guru fidayeen' squads. Major attacks include those in Pathankot and Uri in 2016.

The founder

Masood Azhar was born in Bahawalpur, Pakistan, on July 10, 1968, one of 12 children of schoolteacher Baksh Shabir; the family ran a dairy and poultry farm. In his book *The Virtues of Jihad*, Azhar writes that his father had Deobandi leanings. "One of my father's friends, Mufti Sayeed, was working as a teacher at the Jamia Islamia at the Binori Mosque in Karachi. He prevailed upon my father to admit me to Jamia," he wrote.

Azhar joined Binori madrasa and was later given a teaching job. Pass-outs from Binori madrasa played a vital role in formation of Taliban in Pakistan besides Harkat-ul-Ansar, later named Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, the predecessor of Jaish. Leaders of Harkat had great influence on the madrasa. "A leader of Harkat-ul-Ansar, commander Akhtar, had come to invite the principal of the madrasa to visit Afghanistan. The principal, Mufti Ahmadur Rahman, suggested that Azhar should participate in the training course of jihad," Azhar writes.

Azhar is said to have failed to complete his 40-day military training at a Harkat camp in Afghanistan. He still joined the war against the Russians and was injured. Harkat appointed him head of the department of motivation, and he started editing Harkat publications.

Azhar's first terrorist act was against the Pakistan Army when he questioned the role of a contingent (which was on a UN mission) against a jihadi group in Somalia. Azhar also met Sajad Afghani who would become Harkat's Kashmir chief, later killed in India.

When Harkat decided to operate in Kashmir in 1994, a new group was created by merging Harkat-ul-Mujahideen with splinter group Harkat-e-Jihad-e-Islami. Soon Azhar became Harkat's general secretary, and its best orator. Harkat introduced foreign cadres, especially Afghan war veterans, into Kashmir.

In his mission of recruitment and fundraising, Azhar visited Zambia, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia and the UK. His meeting with Mufti Ismail of a Southall mosque was followed by visits to Mongolia and Albania. He also visited Nairobi and Kenya.

In 1994, Azhar flew into New Delhi from Dhaka as a Gujarat-born Portuguese national, Wali Adam Issa. He left for Deoband with two Harkat men from Kashmir. In Srinagar, he met Harkat commanders Sajad Afghani and Amjad Bilal. Azhar and Afghani went to Anantnag, where they were arrested on February 10.



In this photo released by the PMO, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairs a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security in New Delhi Tuesday, following the Indian Air Force's strike on a terror camp in Balakot. PTI

SUSHANT SINGH
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 26

In what ways is the Indian incursion a watershed event in India-Pakistan engagement?

First, Tuesday's airstrikes by the Indian Air Force establishes a new threshold between the two nuclear neighbours for an Indian response to a terror attack. So far, India has either chosen to put diplomatic pressure on Pakistan (after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack), mobilise its armed forces (after the 2001 Parliament attack) or conducted limited ground-based operations (after the 2016 Uri attack) but has never used the Air Force, that too inside Pakistan.

The use of airpower has been taboo between the two countries, especially after both became declared nuclear powers in 1998, because of the dangers of escalation. While Pakistan has threatened retaliatory action, the fact remains that a major red-line about use of airpower has been crossed by India now. Restrictions around the use of airpower are best illustrated by the Kargil War, when the Vajpayee government allowed the IAF to be used, but did not allow it to cross the LoC. As much as it was about respecting the LoC and highlighting Pakistani incursions, it was also about the escalatory dangers of using airpower.

A more important reason making it a watershed is the extent of incursion. Indian operations after the 1971 War have always been limited to the Line of Control and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, never venturing into mainland Pakistan. As India considers PoK to be Indian territory illegally occupied by Pakistan, and LoC is a militarily active border manned by the two armies, military action there has been considered somewhat acceptable.

This airstrike also sets a precedent for future action by India: use of airpower in mainland Pakistan against terror camps. If it is Balakot today, it could be Bahawalpur or Muridke tomorrow. This new template for Indian response is going to create a public clamour in India after every terror incident to punish Pakistan, another reason that makes



ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2016, India announced that the Army had carried out surgical strikes in the early hours of the day to destroy seven terrorist launch pads along the LoC. This was the first time that India officially acknowledged a military strike in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

THE ARMY said significant casualties had been inflicted on the terrorists and those providing support to them. The strikes came 10 days after the September 18, 2016 attack by Pakistani terrorists on a military base in Uri, which left 18 soldiers dead. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had vowed that the attack would not go unpunished.



Where Pakistan said there was firing

it a real watershed in the history of the bilateral relationship.

The Foreign Secretary has called it an "intelligence-led operation" and a "non-military preemptive action". What do



Pak Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi (right) heads an emergency meeting in Islamabad. Via AP

these expressions mean?

The Foreign Secretary was taking the care of asserting that the targets had been carefully selected, based on hard intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists in the camp. This intelligence would be from technical inputs (via satellites), or communication intercepts or human intelligence sources on the ground. By calling it an intelligence-led operation, the government was trying to send a message to the global audience that the airstrikes were not done at some arbitrarily chosen place but were part of a well-considered action.

The phrasing of "non-military preemptive action" was important for two reasons. Given that use of airpower inside Pakistani mainland territory is bound to be considered an act of war, India by calling it non-military wanted to reassure everyone that it is not such an act. That India chose not to target the Pakistani military or civilians but a terror camp was an important part of the Indian argument for preventing any escalation by the Pakistani side.

The words "preemptive action" were to suggest that the airstrike was not an act of revenge or retribution but an act of self-defence to prevent a likely terror attack in the future. All these phrases point to an effort to couch the action in terms that have a de-escalatory tone, giving Pakistan the space it may need to de-escalate.

Pakistan has called India's action "grave aggression" and warned of an "appropriate reply". What form could

that take?

Any step that Pakistan takes from here on as an "appropriate reply" would be escalatory in nature, which could beget a further response from India. While Pakistan will try and make a diplomatic case against India, it is unlikely to carry any weight because of its track record in dealing with terrorist groups. Any military action outside the LoC will be an act of war, and hitting any non-military target is fraught and could make the situation even more difficult for Pakistan.

Having wrested the initiative, India would have placed its armed forces on the highest alert, which takes away any element of surprise that Pakistan would want in conventional warfare. It may intensify its shelling along the border.

Having taken this leap, what are the key challenges for India?

The real challenge is of an escalation matrix. Essentially, this means that the Indian armed forces will now have to be prepared for a full-spectrum of conflict.

Politically, India is heading into elections and the BJP has done well to tone down the rhetoric.

Diplomatically, it is the challenge of dealing with the US, China and Russia, which are interested in a settlement with Pakistan and would advise both the countries to exercise restraint. While that restraint is now being asked of Islamabad, in case of a Pakistani military misadventure against India, that restraint would also be sought of New Delhi.

The surgical strike after the Uri attack did not prevent the Pulwama attack. If there is yet another attack, what could India's response be?

The purpose of a military action after a terror strike is either compellence or deterrence. While compellence refers to India's demonstration of military and political will to compel Pakistan to change its ways of patronising terror, deterrence refers to a fear of punishment to stop Pakistan from supporting another terror attack in India. The air strike in Balakot is a strong signal that India can hold the threat of action as a coercive tool and use the diplomatic offensive to demand compliance from Pakistan.

THE THEATRE: BALAKOT

A 6-acre training camp for 600 terror recruits, run by Masood Azhar's kin

RITU SARIN & NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN
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THE EXPECTATION of the Pakistani establishment that the Jaish-e-Mohammed's headquarters in Bahawalpur would be the obvious target of the Indian retaliation for the Pulwama terrorist attack, led to a large number of Jaish cadre being "congregated" at the organisation's main training centre in Balakot, top security officials have told *The Indian Express*.

Balakot is in the Mansehra district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It is 63 km north of Abbottabad, (where United States special forces killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011), 200 km from Islamabad, and 40 km north-west of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

The Indian Air Force hit Jabha Top, a forested hilltop where the Jaish-e-Mohammed had its camp.

Indian intelligence agencies have over time compiled an impressive dossier on the activities of the jihadists who have been trained in the Balakot camp. There is a lot of information, including copious lists of Jaish cadres, and plenty of photographic evidence of militants moving around the complex, their exercise halls, ammunition dumps, firing range, and so on.

The training camp is described as being spread over six acres, with enough space to accommodate 600 cadres. The last "passing out" of militant recruits at Balakot, according to intelligence officials, was attended in April 1, 2018 by Mufti Abdul Rauf Asghar, the brother of Jaish founder Maulana Mazood Azhar.

In the complex distribution of portfolios and responsibilities among the members of his family following the creation of the Jaish, Azhar had assigned the task of overseeing the Balakot training centre to his brother-in-law Maulana Yousuf Azhar. This was mentioned by Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale in his media briefing on Tuesday,



Balakot in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. AP

The Indian dossier on the Jaish also contains photographs of Yousuf Azhar, and of the vehicle used by him for doing his daily rounds of the hilly training grounds and firing ranges at Balakot.

Balakot has symbolic significance for Jaish. It is the burial place of the Bareilly revivalist leader Syed Ahmed Shaheed and his associate Shah Ismail Shaheed, who were killed in Balakot in May 1831 while fighting the subcontinent's first — albeit unsuccessful — jihad against the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Jaish training camp in Balakot is named after Syed Ahmed Shaheed.

By all accounts, the activities inside the Syed Ahmed Shaheed Training Camp became more organised, and the numbers of Jaish cadres getting training there swelled after two nephews of Masood Azhar were killed by security forces in the Kashmir valley within the span of a year.

The first was Talha Rasheed, son of Azhar's brother-in-law Abdul Rasheed, who was killed in an encounter in Pulwama in

November 2017, and the other was Usman Haider, the Maulana's other nephew who was killed in Tral in October 2018.

It is to be recalled that Usman Haider was the son of Ibrahim Azhar, one of the hijackers of IC-814, the hijacking that had led to the release of Masood Azhar himself from prison in India almost two decades ago.

Balakot, and indeed the entire Mansehra district, has been central to the Pakistani security establishment's jihadist project. The area has a very large number of mosques and madrassas, and this is where the first camps were set up to train jihadists for the Afghan war and later, for Kashmir.

Close to Balakot is Garhi Habibullah, where the Hizbul Mujahideen is reported to have a training camp. Back in 2005, the monthly Pakistani magazine Herald had published a report on the restarting of various jihadist training camps in Mansehra district after having been shut for a couple of years in the aftermath of 9/11.



The Indian EXPRESS

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

Decisive and restrained

IAF operation has established air strikes as an effective tool of deterrence in sub-conventional warfare



ARJUN SUBRAMANIAM

THE NEW RED LINE

India signals resolve to push the envelope on the deterrence imposed by nuclear parity to defend itself against terror

THE SUCCESSFUL STRIKE by Indian Air Force jets against a training camp for Jaish-e-Mohammad militants in Balakot in Pakistan has set a new metric, etched a new red line, in the fraught relations between the two neighbours. With this, India has signaled its willingness and ability to push the envelope on the deterrence imposed by nuclear parity in order to defend itself against terrorist groups waging a proxy war in Kashmir and elsewhere in its territory on behalf of the Pakistan Army. Unlike the surgical strike that followed the September 2016 Jaish attack in Uri, which was planned and conducted by India's Army across the Line of Control in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, this aerial strike targeted a camp atop a mountain in Balakot in Manshera district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, making it the first operation of its kind since 1971.

India's government had promised a response to the February 14 Jaish-e-Mohammad attack against a CRPF convoy in Kashmir that killed 40 jawans. By calling it a "non-military pre-emptive" strike against the Jaish which was planning more attacks across India, the government has underlined the message that this was a defensive act. That it was a strike on terrorism, not Pakistan. This is further reinforced by the fact that it was the country's top diplomat who made the formal announcement of the Indian action, and that he described it as an "intelligence-based" operation. The careful choice of words, meant to convey that the strike was nothing less than what India described, but nothing more than that either, showed a sobriety that this delicate moment demands of a responsible power.

It is now the time to build on this and reach out across the world to convey the unequivocal message that India continues to seek a resolution to its issues with Pakistan through diplomatic means. Pakistan may be unwilling, it may allow or even help the JeM to get back on its feet after this attack. But that only means that India's diplomatic work is not yet done. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj travels to Beijing this week to attend the Russia-India-China foreign ministers' meeting, and to Abu Dhabi later to represent India as the "guest of honour" at the Organisation of Islamic Conference foreign ministers' plenary. At both places, India must underline the important role that friends of Pakistan can and must play in dissuading it from using terrorists to achieve its strategic objectives. Pakistan must be cautioned about the diminishing returns of such a policy and of India's determination to ensure that the costs will only mount.

IN A CALIBRATED, decisive and yet restrained show of force, the Indian Air Force (IAF) converted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise of punitive action into reality as it pounded jihadi training camps in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) in a series of coordinated air strikes in the wee hours of Tuesday. Seen in isolation from a contemporary conflict scenario, air strikes in counter-terrorist operations are the preferred first option across the Western world for a few reasons.

First, they are safer than committing boots on the ground. Second, the seductive technological capability of precision allows for pinpoint targeting and the possibility of carrying out effective decapitation missions against terrorist cadres. And lastly, air strikes are no longer seen as escalatory mechanisms in a sub-conventional conflict. India's hesitation in the past to use airpower as an effective tool of deterrence in sub-conventional operations had its reasons and some of them may well have been justified. However, this writer has for long argued that while many of these reasons — responsibility, restraint and escalation — may hold true while conducting sub-conventional operations in the hinterland, different paradigms have existed in Jammu and Kashmir ever since Pakistan raised the tempo of its covert war by employing proxies like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).

Through the Nineties, the IAF argued that it had the capability to hit terrorist camps in PoK and that this ought to be a critical element of a clear punitive policy, which many Northern Army Commanders have suggested. Successive governments, however, failed to bite the bullet and continued with reactive response strategies that eschewed the use of air power because of a lack of understanding of what air power could and could not do. During the Kargil conflict, the IAF wanted to hit the logistics lines opposite the Kargil area that would choke supplies

but was held back with restrictions to not cross the LoC. Similarly, in 2002, the IAF conducted some strikes, albeit without crossing the LoC, during the closing stages of Operation Parakram when Pakistan made some effective incursions in the Neelam-Gurez sector. It is believed that the IAF had options ready after the 2008 attack, but the overarching need to be seen by the world as a "responsible and restrained" state saw India balk at the use of force.

Tuesday's action, when viewed through the prism of the issues discussed above, answers a few long-standing dilemmas and raises a few questions. The first is that there seems to be an emerging understanding within the strategic community and the political establishment that offensive air power can be employed as a credible tool of punitive or proactive deterrence, a policy that has been attributed to the more muscular national security posture of the Modi government. Does this constitute a crossing of the Rubicon or is it just a decisive operational response? The Rubicon, a point of no return, has always been in the mind of our strategic establishment and one only hopes that this enhances their understanding of the utility of air power as a kinetic tool of statecraft that can be employed with restraint. For the IAF, I am sure it was an opportunity to walk the talk and demonstrate what it has been training for years in the sub-conventional domain.

When PM Modi announced that he has given a free hand to the armed forces to act after the Pulwama attack, he was criticised for abdicating political responsibility for any military action — his critics failed to distinguish between reality and rhetoric. I will argue that what he meant was he would give full freedom to the armed forces to ideate and plan for multiple options without imposing any restrictions, but the final green signal would obviously come from the PM himself. The fact that the air attack plan is said to have been explained in detail by the

air chief to the raksha mantri, and that PM Modi monitored the attack in real time, reflects that there was good synergy between all stakeholders in the operation.

The IAF must be commended for not engaging in mission over-reach, considering that it does not regularly conduct such operations and unlike many reports in the popular media that the Pakistan air force goofed up its air defence response, I will argue that the surprise element and the timing may have caught the best air forces by surprise. It was a mission well-executed and from the first statement issued during an MEA briefing and subsequent statements from the NSA, it is assessed that significant damage was caused to the target systems chosen.

Whether there will be consequences is too early to say and depends on numerous variables — China will condemn the attacks, but is likely to advise restraint. They have too much at stake with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The West will be cautious in any criticism, but as always, focus on the nuclear dimension as a means of diffusing tension. The internal situation in Pakistan and its precarious economic condition may preclude the possibility of any escalated conventional response. What remains is continued subversion and prosecution of its time-tested covert war using proxies as a low-cost option, albeit with a changed flavour. An outside chance, of course, is a Eureka moment that brings home the realisation to the Pakistani deep state that war of any kind is a losing proposition for the country as its asymmetry vis-a-vis India grows. In the meantime, India cannot afford to let its guard down. War as we know it is not an option but full-spectrum and hardened deterrence is an absolute necessity. The radars must keep churning.

The writer is a retired Air Vice Marshal from the Indian air force and a strategic commentator

AFTER BALAKOT

There is diplomatic work to be done abroad. The OIC is an apt forum to make a beginning

THE FIRST EVER invitation for Delhi to address a ministerial gathering of the Islamic nations is an important breakthrough in independent India's diplomacy. Delhi certainly appears to have outsmarted Pakistan, which has for decades sought to block or undercut India's outreach to the Islamic nations. The back story with Pakistan at the Organisation of Islamic Conference is nearly half a century old. India was invited to participate in the founding conference of the OIC at Rabat, Morocco in 1969, but Pakistan compelled the Conference to "disinvite" India. Rabat has been one of independent India's worst diplomatic humiliations. Since then, Pakistan has repeatedly used the forum to target India on Kashmir. The OIC, with its provocative pronouncements crafted in Pakistan, became a permanent headache for Indian diplomacy, becoming more intense in moments of crises with Pakistan of the kind that is playing out since the Pulwama attack.

That the Indian foreign minister can now walk into the OIC and address it as a guest of honour is an important inflection point in India's engagement with the Muslim world. The government of Pakistan could not even publicly protest against the invitation to Swaraj, for the initiative has come from one of Islamabad's closest partners — the United Arab Emirates. It has strong support from Pakistan's other long-standing allies like Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The invitation also reflects the altered perceptions of Pakistan and India in the Middle East and beyond. In the 1950s and 1960s, Pakistan was seen as one of the natural leaders of the Muslim world. Today it is seen as an economic supplicant looking for dole from oil rich nations. India, in contrast, is seen as a major economic partner by all the key Islamic countries.

For Swaraj, the OIC meeting provides a big opportunity to explain the origins of the current crisis with Pakistan, the rationale behind the preemptive attack on the Balakot terror camp, and Delhi's repeated efforts for peace and reconciliation with Pakistan. Beyond the immediate, Swaraj can build on the fact that most Muslim countries are threatened by violent religious extremism and are open to long-term security cooperation with India. Delhi must focus on converting this diplomatic breakthrough into sustained institutional engagement with the OIC, including a possible observer status in the organisation. India's formal engagement with the OIC, however, is unlikely to stop Pakistan from taking advantage of India's internal troubles. As Delhi begins to leverage the new goodwill in the Islamic world, it must also renew the process of healing in Kashmir.

WHISPER NO MORE

The Oscar to a documentary about menstruation is an important step towards the breaking of an unsanitary silence

A DOCUMENTARY ON a group of Indian women fighting patriarchy for the right to hygiene and dignity, has just won an Oscar and, rightfully, the nation is rejoicing. It is not often that women from the global south get a voice on as big a platform as the Academy Awards, especially if they hail from impoverished, rural backgrounds as do the protagonists of *Period. End of Sentence*. But this win is being celebrated in large part because it has thrust onto the global stage a conversation that was — and continues to be in large parts of South Asia — a whispered one.

Because that's what you have to contend with when you grow up female in South Asia: The belief that menstruation is not a normal biological function. It is a shameful secret, wrapped in a newspaper and slid discreetly across the counter by the chemist. It is an abomination that offends the gods and pollutes the kitchen, and it makes women weak and inferior to men. This is the belief that has denied women, especially in rural India, access to sanitary products, forcing them to make do with cloth rags, sand and sawdust, imperilling their health and damaging their dignity.

The Oscar win couldn't come at a better time. In the last year alone, the conversation about menstruation has become louder and more public. There was the film *Pad Man* which sought to normalise period discourse. The Sabarimala controversy, too, centred squarely on the rights of menstruating women, has made clearer than ever before how many women — and men — find menstrual taboos restrictive, discriminatory and plain tedious. With *Period...* now grabbing the baton, the race towards the end of such beliefs and practices can only get quicker. There must be no more whispering — only loud, impassioned arguing for equal rights to health and dignity.



SHALINI LANGER

MEMORIES STIRRED BY PULWAMA

Where childhood ends and fear begins

THE SAW MILL at the start of the lane. In my growing-up years, the beginning and end of my summer holidays were marked by this mill, a few metres from my grandparents' house in Jammu. It was never much, just an open shed with a tin roof. But in the dusty, sweaty summers, it carried a hint of the hills.

It was also an odd entity in that neighbourhood. Passing by, we could see what seemed like giant machines whirring and hear the wood being shaved, sliced and hauled. The whiff of the fresh shavings, the irritation in the throat if you swallowed one by mistake, the sharp edges of some spilling onto the road, and the horses lugging the wood in carts, leaving a trail of dung.

When we were grown up enough, we heard another story about that mill. How my aunt's eldest child, on her way to college, had come under the wheels of a cart there. She didn't survive. My aunt never talked about her "most beautiful one". Unlike our angry times, I heard no one blame the mill, whose Kashmiri owners remained respected neighbours.

Years passed, the cousins got jobs and moved out, the grandparents' house became larger and yet smaller, its grounds holding more cars than grass, our days got somehow shorter, while the mill disappeared. Overtaken by grass, its machines left to rot in a bolting city that it was too slow for.

I have struggled to hold on to its memory, as to the memory of the Jammu of my childhood, a Jammu untainted, for me, by hatred. A Jammu where my mother and

aunts spent hours agonising over the thinness and softness of each other's exorbitant Kashmiri shawls, and proclaiming expertise over the embroidery. A Jammu that would be tied for me with the kangri carried by my grandfather under his clothes (an art lost with that generation) and the kahwa slurped over gossip — the only time we were allowed "tea" by a mother guarding our "fair" looks. The kahwa would help wash down the yakhni, whose fragrance still filled the room, while the mothers swapped recipes of Kashmiri haak saag.

Years later, owning more shawls than she remembers, my mother never passes by a Kashmiri shawl shop — always the most crowded in any market — without picking one up, and demanding a discount. "Hum bhi wahin ke hain," she says. The shopkeeper smiles back. I ran into one such shopkeeper in Old Jerusalem, of all places, and no, the story didn't play out any differently.

What is Jammu about me, and what is Kashmir? Where does one end, and the other begin? Could one enter a tunnel (Jawahar) an Indian and leave it an anti-national? Did something change in the air at Banihal, marking this 'border', where a cousin once treated me to a sumptuous lunch, in quarters he shared with families from all over India, there to build a railway line to Kashmir? Maybe I was shielded from it, or maybe I was just blind to the Jammu that has now emerged, picking what it wants from its partner.

FEBRUARY 27, 1979, FORTY YEARS AGO



NEW FACE FOR JANATA
THE JANATA PARTY treasurer, C B Gupta, bowed out of the leadership contest on "technical grounds", naming the erstwhile Congress For Democracy (CFD) leader, Raj Mangal Pandey, as the pro changers' candidate for the chief ministership of Uttar Pradesh. Pandey now faces the ministerialists' nominee, Banarasi Das. The meeting of the Uttar Pradesh Janata Legislature Party is slated to be held tomorrow to elect a new leader to succeed Ram Naresh Yadav as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh. Yadav had resigned after having lost the vote of confidence in the party by nine votes on February 15.

TARAPUR SNAG
A FRESH ATTEMPT will be made during the talks the US Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, will have in Delhi to break the deadlock between India and the United States over the question of supply of nuclear fuel for the Tarapur atomic plant. Two shipments — of 16.8 tonnes and 19.8 tonnes — of nuclear fuel are long overdue from the US. The application for 16.8 tonnes of fuel has been blocked in the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which has been putting off a decision for one reason or the other. The application for 19.8 tonnes of nuclear fuel is pending with the US State Department and is yet to be sent to the NRC.

VIETNAM'S STRENGTH
THE CHINESE DEPUTY vice-prime minister, Deng Xiaoping said the war with Vietnam would end in about 10 days, *Kyodo* reported. He said the Vietnamese had expected help from "those who pulled the string behind them". In an apparent reference to the Soviet Union, he was reported to have added, "If we are afraid of that, other people would think we are soft. When we made up our mind (to fight), we kind of thought let's see ourselves if the Chinese had a nervous breakdown". Answering a question, Deng said the war with Vietnam would end sooner than it had with India in 1962 because, according to him, "Vietnam is stronger than India".

