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**Interview with Mr. Usman Majid, MLA.
Minister of State for Planning and Development, J&K State.**

RP: Hi, can you state your name for the audience.

UM: Hi, I am Usman Majid, Minister of State for Planning and Development, J&K State (Jammu and Kashmir), India.

RP And can you tell us, Mr. Majid, what your background is here in the state of J&K.

UM My background is I was a student, then I became a militant, just fight against Indians here, and then when I thought this is all nonsense what we are doing, we will get nothing out of it, we are just killing our people, death and destruction is taking all over the place, then we said bye-bye to it, and played the role of restoration of peace and democracy in the state. Then ultimately, I went to the people, in 1996, at that time I fought the elections, I was number 2. Then in 1998, I fought Parliamentary elections from Baramulla and Kupwara districts—I was number 3. And in 2002, October, I won the elections. Now I am an MLA and a Minister also.

RP Now Mr. Majid you were born in Kashmir, and your parents . . .

UM Yes, I am proud of it. I am born in Kashmir, and on top of it I am a villager.

RP And the religion you follow?

UM I am a devout and practicing Muslim.

RP Can you tell us a little bit about what started your interest in training in militancy.

UM Do you know there was a problem all the time in the state, what we have seen, what our elders have seen, that dirty politics was being played by our politicians. They never said the truth to the people that accession to India is final. For their cheers, for their good political positions in the state, whether as Chief Minister or as Minister, whenever they thought that our cheer is going, they started talking anti-India. And that has been the history of the state, here, and in fact that is the mistake of our government of India also. They tried, they did not ever ignore, that one who is Indian is premium, and one who is anti-Indian is not the premium, he is ordinary. And it pays to be an anti-Indian and they got their cheers. And without knowing that what effect it will have on the people, the common people, because literacy rate was not so high, people were not so educated. It has effect, because the valley as you know is surrounded by the hills, and people don't know much about the other parts of the world. And whatever the leaders used to interpret, they took that in other ways, and you know, the music which we are facing is because of that. And I also became a victim of that—dirty politics. And every party, it's

not just a single party, tried to do it. And ultimately I also became a victim of that. I joined militancy. I thought India is doing injustice to us. Without thinking more on it, that I should have in fact keenly observed everything, just emotional, nothing else, then I became a militant.

RP What year did you first develop your interest in pursuing militancy?

UM Me, pursuing militancy, I would say when we had seen the 1987 elections. They all were rigged. That was the last nail in that coffin. '87 elections—we thought it was all over, democracy is not flowering here, and now we must fight with India, by weapons, by guns, by Kalashnikovs. That was the last nail [in the coffin]. We joined this most unfortunate period of my life which I spent in militancy.

RP How old were you at that period of time?

UM I was in my 20s.

RP Can you tell me where you developed your training in militancy?

UM It's in Pakistan. We crossed from here to POK, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and from there we were sent to Peshawar [in Pakistan]. We got there training and then came back.

RP How long did you have your training there?

UM They did not provide what we call training. We were there for 8-9 days only, in the camp.

RP Were there other people that were either in Pakistan or other countries longer?

UM No, there were most of them, I think 99% of them, of Kashmiris, were in Pakistan only. They were trained there only. And out of those that were interested, they went to Afghanistan for their further training. They were also fighting in Afghanistan. They got there training for 2-3 months, and equally they fought there, and then came back to Kashmir.

RP And this was what time period? The late 80s?

UM No, no, it was 1990.

RP Which also was the time when militancy really took root in Kashmir.

UM Yes, it was '89 and '90. Every Kashmiri turned anti-Indian. And people who were more emotional became more emotional and they crossed the border to get all of their ammunitions.

RP So you were in Pakistan for 8-9 days receiving training?

UM No, I got training for 8-9 days, otherwise I was there for 2-3 months, approximately 3 months.

RP Can you share some of your stories or experiences in militancy training?

UM Oh yes, the first thing which stuck in my mind, that was when they were filling the forms, the registration forms in camps. They told me, 'What do you want? You want accession with Pakistan or independence?' I told them 'Independence. I don't want accession with Pakistan. Why, if we say that we fight against India, why should we accede to Pakistan then? We will make independence then?' They said, 'No! What is this nonsense? Don't talk like that. We'll see how you'll get it.' I said 'I don't know.' That was the first shock to me. And then, they probably, during the training, they used to talk about, that 'He's an Indian', burn institutions, and destroy the bridges, destroy buildings, and kill those people who are Indians, kill soldiers, kill Muqbir (Muqbir means informers), kill informers, those who were supporting security forces, and kill critical workers, plus the security forces. They told that thing. That was the shock when I got there, to kill people, innocents, that if they will talk Indian. And on top of that, to destroy the buildings, to destroy even hospitals have been damaged during the militancy, bridges destroyed, and even schools were burned, set ablaze by our militants. So that shocked me when they told me this is the story. And that I thought there only that this is something different.

RP So you received your training for about 2-3 months. If I understand correctly, you were discouraged by the type of training tactics they taught you, and also by the fact that they didn't give you any options of what you would, how you would want to decide your future, whether it should be independence, or with Pakistan, or some other option. Is that correct?

UM I will tell you, they were always of this opinion that we should fight for Pakistan. And number two, they always tried to convince us that America is at your back. Don't worry, we are there, Americans are at the back, we will get Kashmir, it will be liberated from Indians. And, plus I did not get the arms and ammunitions training for 3 months. I stayed in Pakistan, in POK, for 3 months, but the training period was only for 8 days.

RP Why did you stay for longer than the training period.

UM Because first we have to wait till the training, till the training camp, which our group which earlier which people who had gone there, they finished their training, will come back, then only we will get placed to get training there. Because there was a problem of accommodations there. And the rest, we had to wait again so we'll be launched back into Kashmir.

RP So, how many people were in your group?

UM We were there, more than 80 people.

RP And during that critical time period, from '89 to '90, would you have any idea of how many groups of this size were sent over to Pakistan for training.

UM There were so many organizations, 180 organizations. They tried to keep one behind one. That to, if any one, any kind of his interest will develop or he will think in terms of positive and come to his senses, another group is there. And they keep on launching different people, and different these militants on different names, to the valley.

RP So after approximately 3 months you returned to the Kashmir valley.

UM Yes, I came back in 1990. It was May. After 3 months I came back. I stayed here for some time.

RP So what did you do after that?

UM When I came, in July 1990, some famous people, including Yasin Malik [Chairman of the JKLF, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front], they all were arrested, that was the end to the game. And when I came to Kashmir, I saw that we are turning enemies to each other. Brother is becoming the enemy of father, father is becoming enemy of wife, and daughter is becoming enemy of mother. It was like that. People were killing here innocent people. Militants were killing innocent people.

RP Do you mean to say that sons or other people who went across the border for training were coming back and targeting their own families? How do you mean enemies?

UM It has happened, it has happened, because at that time when I came back to Kashmir I saw that various interests have developed. What we thought were the messiahs, the angels, they turned to become the worst enemies of each other. And it has happened, these roots had already taken their way when I came back. I saw that we are killing each other, we are destroying our[selves], instead of damaging security forces.

RP Did you engage in any anti-Indian or anti-government militant activity when you returned from Pakistan training?

UM I am really, really grateful to my almighty, whenever I came here I was given job of different things, publicity, writing to the newspapers, talking to the press, and that was in the public relations. Public relations was given to me. So I never have done anything, I was not involved [in violent acts]. That's why I am MLA [Minister of Legislative Assembly], otherwise how could people have accepted me as an MLA, a representative. Because something good I have done in these days. That's why today I am elected as representative of my people.

RP What were your public relations campaigns focusing on when you returned from Pakistan?

UM It was always in my mind, there is a very, very, very big, lengthy struggle. And we become emotional. And it is not possible, I have seen that Pakistanis are not clear about how to liberate Kashmir. They are not clear. So, what we are doing, we are killing our people, we are destroying Kashmir. That's the moment I landed here, it was in my mind. But I kept mum. I did not share these ideas, otherwise I would definitely have been killed. So I tried to follow that agenda.

RP When did you then become involved with anti-militancy movement, and can you explain exactly what that is for our audience.

UM I was arrested in '91, by security forces. Without weapon, you know I never used to carry weapons and handle the weapons.

RP What was the reason for the arrest?

UM You know security forces were trying to catch us, they were always behind us. So I was caught in a hideout. When they arrested me, their behavior with me was quite good. They did not torture me. They interrogated me by arguments only. They saw that 'he's a different man', and they, I definitely saw their sympathy was with me, that this is nothing, this is just exploitation. They find me that 'he's a little bit educated guy'. And again my people, my organization kidnapped 2 or 3 people outside, they were government employees, highest government employees. And in exchange I was released. Again, it was my bad luck. When I was released I again got involved in it. That was '91. In '92, somehow I tried to save myself going round, right, left, sometimes to Srinagar, sometimes to some other place, to save myself.

RP Save yourself from whom?

UM From security forces as well as militants.

RP When you said you again got involved in it in '91, does that mean your public relations activities, or were you involved in actual violent acts.

UM No, no, only public relations. I was public relations chief.

RP And was this for any particular militant organization whose name you can share with us?

UM My organization, it was Students' Liberation Front. That was the name of my organization.

RP So after becoming involved in '91, and trying to escape being . . .

UM I will again come to the point, your question, what you told, anti-militancy. Then, when I thought it is nothing, it is nothing, we are just killing our people, I tried to keep

low profile. And I got a chance again in '93 to go to Pakistan. When I went Pakistan, everything was in my mind. I became the Vice-Chairman of United Jihad Movement. So I got the chance to meet all the higher ups, the higher ranks of the ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan's intelligence agency], politicians, and bureaucrats. I fully remember I, in '93, whether it was '94, I questioned Director of ISI, 'What is the policy of how you are going to liberate Kashmir?' He told me, 'Who the hell are you to ask this question? You have no right.' I told him, 'No, we are killing ourselves, we are there fighting. It's not Pakistan, it's not your kids who are fighting there.' Ultimately we came out of the room, for 2 ½ hours it was the argument between their people [and us], and 'Please come inside the room, again come to the meeting.' We said, 'No, no, no, our question is simple, he should answer it. So again, after 2-3 hours preservation, they took us back to the meeting hall. I again told him, 'What's the policy?' He told me, 'My policy is, if you want to know, prick and bleed.' I told him, 'What is this, prick and bleed?' [He said,] 'Yes, you should not prick so deep that India in retaliation will attack us.' So I told him, 'It is cobra. India is a cobra coming towards Pakistan. And you had given us a needle. Whenever it is coming towards Pakistan, we stop it with a needle—ooh. It turns it's head back. He stings sometimes 5, sometimes 10, sometimes 20 [people] in a day. We are not providing opportunity for him to go to Pakistan because he was given the needle. Every day we used to prick it. Is it like that?' I told him this is not acceptable to me. They don't have any policy. They are just trying to stop India to come to Pakistan.

RP And in the process, when you say the cobra would come back after being pricked and take 5, 10, 15, you mean that the Indian troops would kill the people that were trying to prick and bleed?

UM It is not Indian troops only. It is we people, militants as well. Whenever intifada takes place, you never know who is who, because we don't have any dress code there, we were like civilians. And when we fired on security forces, they ultimately have to fire back, and innocent people also got killed in these encounters. And we killed our own people. Whatever we're doing is like a cobra. The power was going toward Pakistan, and when they give us a needle, he turns his head and eats 10 a day, next day eats 20. I thought, 'No, they don't have any policy, they are not our sympathizers, they are eating our liver, heart, every part of the body. I don't know what animosity they have with the Kashmiri people.' And then, I had a very good association with Sardar Qayoom, at that time the prime minister of POK. We used to discuss things with him about Kashmir problem.

RP When you say 'We', you mean the United Jihad Council.

UM Me and my chairman.

RP And can you explain what the United Jihad Council was? Was it a political organization? A militant organization?

UM It was the organization of 13 militant organizations. Of those who were operating here in J&K. And there it was called the Base Camp in POK, in Muzaffarabad. Their

heads, including me, floated that organization, where we used to discuss things about Kashmir, with the officers there, with politicians there in POK, with the Pakistani leadership. That's why it's called United Jihad Council. Then ultimately Sardar Qayoom told me, 'I thought you Kashmiris are the wisest people on the globe. But I can see you are the biggest fools.' I told him, 'Why, sir, what is the reason?' He told me, 'No. Look. You are dying, but you do not know for what you are dying.' I told him, 'Sir, what should I do.' He told me, 'Save yourself, and if you are able to save your people, do that also.' This struck me.

RP This seems like a pretty impressive statement for the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

UM Exactly, I have seen he never used to discuss these things with government people. But he used to discuss these things with us. And I got shocked, I told him that does it mean that I should go back and try to save my people. He told me, 'You can save your people. You'll get nothing.' So that was the biggest shock to me. I decided, it was '94 December, let me go back to the valley and fight the real war for the restoration of democracy and peace. I came here. We started at that time. And today you see where we are. It [militancy] is not indigenous now. And the people of state of Kashmir do not like militancy now. And we succeeded in that.

RP So what group did you form when you started here?

UM It was Ikhwan. It was headed by Mr. Kukka Parrey.

RP Can you give the full name?

UM Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen. That means 'Muslim Brotherhood'. Then we changed the name to Ikhwan only. Ikhwan means 'Brotherhood', not Muslims only, because some other people from other religions also joined this movement, anti-militancy movement. It was not only because of our handy efforts that we got success, it was the change in the minds of the people. People were fed up with the violence, lawlessness, with the death and destruction. That's why they gave us support, and restoration of peace and democracy was able. It was restored in 1996, when the first elections after 1990 took place.

RP And your party, Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen was represented in the elections?

UM Yes, we formed a political organization, that was Awami League. We got one seat, we got lot of votes. We were in almost seven places number 2, and were number 3 in five places, and in totality we got more than a lakh [100,000] votes. That was an achievement, because we never told people anti-Indian or pro-Pakistani emotional slogans. We talked straight.

RP So the Awami League was the political wing of Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen, now called Ikhwan. Can you describe the activities of Ikhwan.

UM Yes, Ikhwan was a military wing, and Awami League was the political group. And those who were interested in politics and those who were talented and having the conception of politics, they all joined political parties, including me. And others, they fought militarily with the security forces. They gave support to the military security forces, Indian troops. They gave information to them. And the information used to come from the public. 'He is my son, he wants to surrender.' And 'here's a militant, here's a Pakistani, he's hiding here, please get him.' And security forces always used to cordon the area, and it was up to that man whether he wants to surrender or he wants to get killed. That was the job of Ikhwan.

RP So Ikhwan was an anti-terrorist group, military group.

UM Yes, it was anti-terrorist group. There is no doubt in that. I must say they are the people who gifted this state back to the country. At that time people were saying that the valley was burning all over, state was burning all over, and God has sent angels in the shape of Ikhwan.

RP So just to clarify, Ikhwan was not a part of the Indian government, local Jammu and Kashmir government, or the army of India.

UM No, it was not what we call 'sponsored anti-terrorist movement'. It was out of the people, out of the people who were fed up, common people were fed up with the militancy, because we have seen that militants have done lot of injustice to the people. That's why it took place. And after some time, security forces, Indian government, state government came to know that there is a group who are working against militants. And then ultimately they got in touch, and, you have to after all follow the system. And they [Ikhwan] followed the system, then were working under the army. They were working under the security forces, under the police, the J&K police, properly following the law of the land.

RP How many years was Ikhwan operating as its own entity, as you mentioned, an uprising of discontent from the local Kashmiri people who were fed up with terrorism.

UM I think more than a year. More than a year Ikhwan was functioning independently.

RP And this was 1996?

UM No, it was 1994 and 1995. Then after that people came to know, and security forces came to know, that people of Kashmir were doing the job. All of them were not militants, ex-militants, or surrendered militants. Sixty percent of them were common people who joined this anti-terrorism movement.

RP So moving onto your history, you joined the Awami League, which again was the political organization, and can you describe your process to achieving your current high

position in the government of J&K over the last part of the 1990s and the early part of the 2000s.

UM See, what we experienced and what we have seen during militancy, what was in the mind during the anti-Indian period, we have seen that now it is the right time to work for the benefit of the people. Because we'll get nothing out of it. It is just an emotional blackmail, and Pakistan is using us for their own design. And there are people who have vested interests that this part of the world should remain burning.

RP And who would those people be?

UM It is, most probably you have seen, the Hurriyat people who don't have following, they are the people.

RP The All Parties Hurriyat Conference [APHC]?

UM Yeah, all those who are talking Pakistan, independence, they are the vested interests. If you will go to the people and talk to them about . . .

RP I'm sorry, but what is their vested interest?

UM Interest is, number one, lot of money has been pumped from Pakistan to them. And they have made huge properties, without, this is fact, they don't have following of the people. And the vested interest—you know, they are earning easy money, and every facility is there, how will they leave it very easily?

RP And are you referring to Geelani's faction, Umer Farooq's faction of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, or the other factions, or just in general?

UM I'm talking of everyone. I'm talking of Geelani, I'm talking of Umer Farooq, I'm talking of Professor Ghani, I'm talking of every man who is in Hurriyat, who is with Geelani, or there are some more groups, there is a lot of vested interest which has developed in their ranks and file. And that's why easily they can't leave it. They might say that it should burn for 200 years, because they are earning, and earning, and earning, on the heads of the innocent people of the state. And that is the reason we thought that our own political parties also equally helped play a dirty role—that means those who are in the mainstream. They never told the truth, what earlier I told you, that accession to India is final. We thought that let's launch a political party, which will be based absolutely on an agenda that follows the truth, and which is purely in the interest of the state of the people. And we gave the name as Awami League. And I started that political movement. We went door-to-door, we have conferences, we have seminars, we have public processions, we have rallies, and we try to educate the people. That's why today I am here, because whatever truth we told in '94, '95, '96, it's all justified today. You can see everyone has reached to that point. We told at that time, 'Please stop this violence. Don't justify this violence. You will get nothing out of it. Come, share, if you have some grievances, let's talk to Delhi, let's talk to our people, and we can sort out our

grievances.’ And Pakistan is using us for what, for their own interests. I am a firm believer of this thing, they need the free flow of uninterrupted water from the three rivers of Kashmir. That is the ultimate interest Pakistanis have with the state.

RP Which rivers are those?

UM It is three rivers—there are 6 rivers which are flowing towards Pakistan. Three are in Punjab and that area, three are in Kashmir—they all go to the Baglihar dam. And you know the Baglihar dam, their economy sustains on that [river Chenab] only.

RP So you of course are in the Awami League party, and you contested elections most recently when, in which you became elected as a representative to the Constituent Assembly?

UM It is 2002. Those are known all over the world as ‘Free and Fair’ elections, and people gave the mandate. For the first time in the history of our country, after 1947, first time people have witnessed the free and fairest elections in the state—people came, and whosoever they voted, and the result was the same. And I got elected in October 2002.

RP And what district do you represent?

UM Baramulla district, and the name of my constituency is Bandipora.

RP And when did you become appointed as a Minister?

UM In 2004.

RP And this is a Minister in the state government, correct?

UM Yes, it is a very important ministry, Planning and Development. You know, everything is the planning of the state, or the country, for any country, a very, very important portfolio is planning and development.

RP How many seats does the Awami League currently hold in the Constituent Assembly?

UM Just me. The others lost.

RP Can you explain what your personal feelings are as well as your political organization, Awami League’s, feelings are concerning what the best outcome would be for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, in terms of where the state should be headed?

UM I don’t know. Sometimes even our own people are justifying nonsense ideas. I am of this opinion, and it’s the fact: can an inch of Pakistan we take? Can an inch of India’s territory Pakistan take? When it is not like that—both are nuclear powers—then what is the fate of this problem. How do you define it? How do you satisfy the people? When it

is not like that, why should we waste our time? Why should we waste our energy? In the present world, I don't see that geographical boundaries are the consideration? It is the economic boundaries which are the consideration. And the problem for both the countries—can Pakistan leave POK? Is it possible? Never. Is it possible for our country to leave Kashmir? Never.

RP You're referring to India?

UM I'm referring to both India and Pakistan. They are the occupants of Kashmir also. If they say that we should decide, is it that we should decide about this Kashmir only? Our Kashmir is based on 3 regions—Jammu, Ladakh, and Kashmir. In Jammu, you have Dogra population. Here you have Muslim majority.

RP Here being the Valley of Kashmir?

UM Yes, I'm talking of valley, 'here' means Kashmir. And in Ladakh region there are two types of population—in Leh, there are Buddhists, and in Kargil, there are Sunni Muslims. That means what consensus will you make? It means that you can't think of only Kashmiris. There is also a difference of opinion. If you have the realistic approach, then you have to talk about all the regions of the state, then only you decide. Ultimately it is our interest. What I see—the people I'm seeing at the ground [level]—people of Kashmir want to remain with India. The majority of them. Except for a few people who have vested interests—and they may be in any country in the world. They may be in America, they may be in U.K., they may be in Australia, they may be in Pakistan, for no reason they are the enemies of their country, same is the case here. Whatever peace process has taken, I welcome it, I appreciate it, that India and Pakistan should become friends, because we are now like enemies. Because this is the 21st century, our consideration should be some other things, like trade, friendship, cultural exchange, and so many things. People from that state should come to our country, and our people should go there. There needs to be trade of goods, exchange of goods, exchange of culture, and different routes should be open, around the LOC [Line of Control], on the international border. Why can't we live like friends. We have seen after 9/11, it's unfortunate that people of European Union and America, they did not understand what terrorism is. When they saw what terrorism is, then the world changed. I am very sorry what has happened in America, very sad, very sad innocent people were killed there. Here also innocent people were killed. If precautions would have been taken much earlier, that situation would never have taken place. But what has happened, very bad, but it is all eye opener for all of us, what terrorism and what militancy is. And our target is that we should not provide any opportunity in the world, even if it is India and Pakistan, where terrorism will get a boost. We should curb it with strong hand. Here the world should have one voice. One voice—curb the militancy and fix the militancy. And same as far as 9/11 is concerned, it has changed both India and Pakistan.

My interest in the Kashmiri Muslim is with my country, with India. Because there are so many Muslims, why do we want to part ways? Why should we live to say that India is not in our interest. It is such a democracy, the largest democracy in the world. Here you

have every right of speech, you have right to express your ideas, it is not in Pakistan, we have seen Pakistan, we have seen what they are doing. And we like it if we become friends, if India and Pakistan become friends, and sort out there problems, whatever problems they have. That will have a positive impact on J&K, because we are presently suffering, militants are coming across from that side, from Pakistan. Militancy is still there, infiltration is still taking place. They have not stopped it. And if it will be stopped, what else would we want. See, the day peace is restored, you will see the change here, people will never think of this [militancy], they will be busy in the development. I have seen, I am going all over the state. People want peace, prosperity, and progress. Nothing else. They want the independence of development, they want the independence of prosperity, they want the independence of progress. That is what I want as a common Kashmiri, because I came from the ground, I am the man from the ground. I did not get birth from Nehru's family. I did not get birth from Sheikh's family, or Mufti's family. I came from the ground, and I know what ground realities are, what my people want, what is their interest, what is better in their interest. No one else except me knows the ground realities. I have seen everything, I have seen both sides, both ways. And I sometimes feel very ashamed when people are talking again in this 21st century this nonsense, nonsense, nonsense. For God's sake, they should stop it now, they should stop it now, this is not the right time now, they are exposed, they must know that the time is coming when people will not believe them. They will take their just in their hand, and they will teach them a lesson. Enough is enough with the people of the state. And people are ready to take their classes. So if it is like that, everyone must understand now, India and Pakistan, as far as this problem is concerned, we Kashmiri people don't have role in it. It is India and Pakistan. Tomorrow, Pakistan stops sending foreign mercenaries to the valley, state, militants to the state, arms and ammunitions to the state, problem is solved.

RP You've traveled throughout the state of Jammu and Kashmir, not just in your constituency, so would you say that your feelings about the will of the people being with India, as a generalization, would you say that would apply to all of the valley?

UM Yes, I'm telling you people want India now. They have seen that India is only in our interest, and nothing else. There is a percentage who used to say, who used to talk that 'Kashmiris are not with this', 'Kashmiris are with Pakistan', 'Kashmiris want independence'—this is wrong, absolutely wrong. I have traveled all over the state. Every day I am meeting common people, they are not with anything else, except with India.

RP How many ministers are there in the J&K government?

UM There are 37 ministers.

RP And do you expect in the next round of elections, the Awami League will gain greater representation in the constituent assembly?

UM Exactly, I have laid the foundations for that. Wherever I go, I am telling the truth. Nobody comes out and says that you are wrong. They appreciate, they are clapping. Come and see the videos of my public meetings. See what I am talking to the people. I

am educating them. I am telling them the truth. I am telling the practical things. And I am sure people are following our agenda. And they are following, they are coming forward, and we are sure we will get, I am hopeful that we will add 12 seats.

RP Just turning the question to the presences of the Indian forces in the valley of Kashmir—do they represent a threat to truly ascertaining the common will of the people, in other words, are they engaging in activities that are suppressing the will of the people, as some may have suggested, or would you say their presence is more to counteract the effects of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan.

UM There I will tell you one thing. Why Indian army is out from the barracks, there is a reason for that. Because when there is lawlessness, when militants are around, does that mean they should sit inside and eat and enjoy? After all, they have to fight militancy, that's why they are out in the field. Tomorrow if there is no militancy, what's the reason for them to remain outside? It will not take them 2 minutes to go inside the barracks. It's because you stop militancy, next day you will see troops are withdrawn. You go around, I will just request you if you are in Kashmir, please go around and see what relationship security forces have with the common people. I am proud of my Indian army. Because they are not the peacekeepers here. It's their part, they have to defend it, they have to defend the borders. They have to provide safety to the people, to their citizens. And they are among us—they are not from Sri Lanka, or Bangladesh, or Pakistan. And it is foreigners who are here, they have to fight them. I know this thing—sometimes, somewhere an incident takes place. And in a huge organization, you can't rule out that a soldier can't do any nonsense, this is possible. But that doesn't mean the whole organization is doing injustice to the people? Indian Army has rich traditions, and I am proud of it. I don't want to become the party without any argument to anybody. What I am talking, this is based on fact. And time again I showed you what is the fact. And those that claim the Indian Army is doing human rights violations, ultimately they have to 'eat the crow' when things get investigated. Somewhere it has taken, but action has been taken up against these, if people from the Indian Army were involved in human rights violations. They are absolutely fighting the war for the survival of their people. They are the sympathizers of the Kashmiri people, there is no doubt about it.

RP Touching back upon one person's name you mentioned, Kukka Parrey, as the head of the military group Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen that was opposed to the militant activities in the mid-1990s—can you briefly describe who he was and what his role was in the organization.

UM He was a singer, a Kashmiri folk singer. He was disturbed very much by militants. They used to disturb him. Ultimately he had some affiliation with the militant group, our Students' Liberation Front. He was from my party. He was a very dear friend of mine during insurgency time. And then he was also the peace-loving singer you know. How can you expect that a singer can become a militant and kill the people. It was in his mind, he got the time, he thought 'Let's fight this anti-militancy war, let's restore peace in it', because we were very close friends.

RP Did he start out as a militant himself?

UM He was not a militant, he has not crossed [the border to Pakistan], he was here, he was here. He was my friend during militancy. In fact he remained with our organization, but because some organizations from militant organizations created a lot of problems for him, a lot of problems for his family, then he had affiliation with my organization Students' Liberation Front. And then we ultimately appointed him as Divisional Commander of Students' Liberation Front, or Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen. He was a brave man.

RP Can you clarify, the Students' Liberation Front was a militant group?

UM Yes, it was a militant group. Then we changed the name of Students' Liberation Front to Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen, because at that time we got disassociated with Amanullah Khan, who was heading JKLF.

RP 'JKLF' standing for Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front.

UM Yes, our organization was Students' Liberation Front, then we disassociated ourselves from their JKLF, and formed in 1992 Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen. Then Kukka Parrey told 'Let's fight this war now. We can die, or we can do some justice to the people.' And he started this anti-militancy drive as an Ikhwani commander.

RP So he was militarily involved in anti-militant activities.

UM Of course, yes, he was, he's the man, he was the angel, I saluted him, he became the MLA also in '96.

RP Can you define MLA?

UM MLA means Member of Legislative Assembly. He became the representative, he was elected by the people, he was voted by the people and became the MLA, Member of Legislative Assembly, from '96 to 2002.

RP Just as you are now?

UM Yes, yes, and next election he lost by narrow margin, in 2002 elections.

RP What then happened to him?

UM He was killed by enemies of the peace, enemies of the people of the J&K, people of the state, people of the country, known as militants, terrorists, whatever name you want to give them.

RP And what was the reason for him being targeted?

UM Because he had fought the war of restoration of peace and democracy in the state.

RP Since you were associated with that group, at least in the political aspect with the Awami League, and you currently obviously are, does that mean that you are also at risk?

UM Yes, they are also behind our lives, because the role which we have played is something big, that has spoiled the designs of Pakistan. And the moment we turned to this side, the designs of Pakistan were all over. They're always behind us. You know a lot of security is around me, the government has provided me security for what—because I am number one on their hit list.

RP On whose hit list?

UM On the militants' hit list. They are always making policies to eliminate me. Thank God I'm still living. Let's see. And I will keep on playing my role, for the welfare of my people, and for the humanity.

RP You, as an elected MLA, as a member of the Ministry here in the state of J&K, who has not engaged in violent activities of his own, are being targeted by the militants.

UM Yes, there is no doubt, they are behind my life. Every man who is an Indian and who is a sympathizer of the people of the state of J&K, they are their targets. And I don't know, every man has the right to speak about whether he opposes or agrees, and those who oppose their design, the militants get them killed. My elder brother, he was like my father, a social worker, he was killed by militants in 2003.

RP And why was he killed?

UM Because I am his brother, he was my brother, I became MLA, I am playing my role in restoration of peace. That's why, he was the softest target for them, and they killed him. He was without security, he was living in his home, they killed him.

RP Do you see an end to violence in Kashmir in the near future?

UM Yes, we all have to, I mean, especially United States has to play a role in it. They have to play a very big role, because they have seen what terrorism is.

RP How can they play a role in this?

UM Because they have to convey straight to Pakistan that 'Stop militancy in J&K and solve your problems through dialogue.' That's the only way. And that will have impact on other terrorist problems all over the world. If it is discouraged here, I'm sure it will benefit us all over the world. So they have to play a role in it. I request the President, I request the people of America, please play a positive role in it. Terrorism is the enemy of all of us. You have lost innocent lives, and we have lost innocent lives. Let's save this world. It is our turn to save the world, play the role in this world. And if Pakistan will

stop militancy, it will have positive impact all over the world. Because every time you see the connection of Al Qaeda, other things, it comes from Pakistan.

RP Thank you very much, Mr. Usman Majid.

Rahul Pandit, M.D.

IAKF: Indo-American Kashmir Forum

FACT: Foundation Against Continuing Terrorism