

The background of the image is a dark blue and purple night sky filled with numerous white stars of varying sizes. In the foreground, there is a dark silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees. The overall aesthetic is serene and nocturnal.

# TOPIC OF THE WEEK

## AUGUST'19 (08 to 14 Aug)

## **Is Kashmir, the valley of new hope for India?**

This week, a flurry of developments in Kashmir had triggered panic among all the nations. The government took the Rajya Sabha by surprise on Monday when Shah moved the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill, 2019, and resolutions on turning the state into two Union territories, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Only the J&K Reservation (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019, was listed for the day's business.

Kashmir is a Himalayan region that both India and Pakistan say is fully theirs. The area was once a princely state called Jammu and Kashmir, but it joined India in 1947 when the sub-continent was divided up at the end of British rule. India and Pakistan subsequently went to war over it and each came to control different parts of the territory with a ceasefire line agreed. There has been violence in the Indian-administered side - the state of Jammu and Kashmir - for 30 years due to a separatist insurgency against Indian rule. Subsequently, Kashmir was divided between Indian and Pakistani rule but the Kashmiri leadership on both sides of the division line managed to keep their distinct Kashmiri identity with their own flags and autonomy. The above flag is now

used in what officially is called ‘Jammu and Kashmir’ and is controlled by India.

Article 370 of the Indian constitution carved out a special status to the state of J&K. It also limited the Indian parliament’s power to make laws for the state. In effect, the special status, which was described as “temporary” allows the state of Jammu & Kashmir to have its own constitution, its own flag and take decisions except for any matter that was related to defense and foreign affairs. The temporary provision was included in the constitution on 17 October, 1949. This special status dated back to the end of British rule in India in 1947 when Maharaja Hari Singh of the then colonized state of Jammu & Kashmir signed a Treaty of Accession for the state of J&K to join the Indian side. Meanwhile, Article 35a, which was added to the constitution in 1954 under Article 370 gave the state of Jammu & Kashmir the right to decide who its permanent residents are. The clause further gave special rights to residents in government jobs, when buying property in the state and for educational scholarships among others. The state defines its permanent residents as those that were “born or settled within the state before 1911 or after having lawfully acquired immovable property and resident in the

state for not less than 10 years before that date.” The law banned non-permanent residents from settling in the state, buying land, and taking government jobs or scholarships. All these years, no political party had ever touched Article 370, fearing to lose their vote bank. If we ponder upon what special benefits this Article had given to the J&K people, we won’t be able to find much. Literacy rate of the state is 67.16%. Economic growth hasn’t been up to the mark, and poverty prevails in many areas. Every other day, we hear about attacks by terrorists in the state. People live in fear. It is also said that unemployment in J& K has promoted militancy. A poor youth after completing education with limited resources, after sitting idle for long, gets easily lured by the people who push them into anti-national activities by giving few thousands of rupees.

Day after the Parliament decided to scrap Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and bifurcate the state into two Union Territories (Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh) after the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre introduced a resolution in both Houses of Parliament, Kashmir remains in the grip of shock. On Sunday night, the authorities snapped internet, mobile connectivity and local cable television networks, putting Valley into a total

information blackout. At midnight, the citizens witnessed massive troop mobilization – thousands of paramilitary forces and police personnel across the Valley with barbed wires and barricades sealed the roads. Well - none. J&K citizens can now proudly call themselves Indians with all Constitutional rights, Right to Education. Freedom, Laws and Taxes as applicable will be applicable to them. It's time for us all to embrace Kashmiris as an indistinguishable part of our national community.

But BJP must be aware that the onerous task of integrating Kashmiris has just begun. The first challenge will be on maintaining security. While many political parties have backed the government's decision, the second challenge is misgivings about unilateralism, irrespective of the pros and cons of the decision. Even if majority of Indians support the decision, it is one that will have long-standing consequences and it should not give the feeling of having been done in haste. Even otherwise, if a common man from the society, who is neither a political figure nor an intellectual or academician, is told that Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of India like any other state but Article 370 provides for separate flag and separate Constitution, his reaction would be –why it was

not abrogated during all these years after its incorporation for a temporary period?

**For reference:-**

- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Jammu-and-Kashmir/Government-and-society>
- <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/what-is-article-370-and-why-is-it-politically-significant-1564986075413.html>
- <https://www.livemint.com/>
- <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2014/08/abrogati-on-article-370-step-towards-development-j-k/>

**Additional Readings:-**

- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/05/the-guardian-view-on-the-china-us-trade-wars-the-global-economy-is-at-risk>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/02/the-guardian-view-on-non-stop-sports-just-not-cricket>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/logged-out/article28775712.ece>