

## Kashmir (Murtuza) MONO.mp3

**Host** [00:00:00] Hi, my name is Evando Thompson, senior journalism major here at Seton Hall, and I'm conducting the talks for the Institute of Communication and Religion on Kashmir, India. This is the second of the three experts that will help us learn about the events happening in Kashmir right now. Previously, Alissa Beltray interviewed Dr. A show called of Belarus Hindoo University for this talk. I'm here with Dr. Athar Murtuza from the Stillman School of Business here at Seton Hall. Thank you, Dr. Murtuza from come in and joining us. Dr. Murtuza could you please explain what's happening over there and just introduce yourself for us briefly?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:00:39] My name thing I've already been told by our good friend. I teach at Stillman's School of Business. Our normal course has to do with counting my connection, but Kashmir has to do with my being from Indian subcontinent. Came to us on the Pakistani passport in 1961. And I have been at Seton Hall since nineteen eighty nine. And I guess I'm a U.S. citizen as of 1973.

**Host** [00:01:17] These questions will sort of help us create a timeline since some of the events happened back in August of last year. And since the last time Melissa conducted her interview with our first expert last August, Eddie obviously stripped the Muslim majority region of Kashmir of its limited autonomy in the random Modi, the prime minister conducted it. What was your initial reaction to that happening?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:01:43] My initial reaction was Mr. Modi was behind in the election because all the promises he had made had not come through. So when the chance came for him to, you know, to impact the political electorate, election, forthcoming election in India, he decided with imposing or breaking the treaty that India had made with the people of Kashmir. Way back in the. So now for the independence from the British. So it was a shock because Gwentyth country goes back on its solemn obligation. It is something to worry about. And given that Indian army, there seems to be a very heavy number of Indian soldiers in Kashmir. So this abrogation was just a step in that, you know, adding another layer to that problem.

**Host** [00:02:58] See the allegation of Article D, 1735 A, where some of the biggest of controversy's of that time, how did some of the people outside of the region react to this decision? Did they support it or did they not support it?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:03:13] I think majority I would say most country. The cliff came out in support of Kashmir, but. I don't think really ranks as high in terms of other crises, so I don't think much was done. People seems to have kept quiet except for a house for Pakistan that keeps bringing up the shoe. But not much reaction has been under happen.

**Host** [00:03:45] Mr. Murtuza, what crises do you see that are higher than the ones in Kashmir? Since you mentioned Kashmir not being as high.

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:03:53] I think it basically comes down to the part. And one way to show that would be the person that India worship and the rest of the world respect as much as Mahatma Gandhi or the person who murdered him. Is now celebrated as the hero and they are actually building temple to honor. Not from God, sir. And that shows that India is changing. It's no longer a secular nation. We are trying to set them up. So our country where for Hindus only and this term to deprive Kashmiris of their treaty rights is a step in that direction. And it will go great to impact the Indian election.

**Host** [00:04:54] And Dr. Murtuza, you mentioned how the death of Mahatma Gandhi is sort of praised by the person who who killed him. What do you think about Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, the most influential leader of modern Kashmiri who enabled the region's constitutional rights back in 70 years ago? In December, the Indian government took away the states holiday that commemorated his birthday. Then, on January 26, celebrated as Republic Day, authorities in Kashmir announced a change in the language when speaking about chic, removing the words, quote, Scherrer, a Kashgar or lion of Kashmir from it. Sheikh Abdullah Abdullah's daughter, Shah, told the news outlet Al Jazeera that it was the Indian governing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party strategy to impose their own historical version or experience in Kashmir. How do you see the Indian government trying to influence the history of what's happening in Kashmir?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:05:57] You're basically trying to rewrite. The history of India is trying to assume that. Six hundred years that the Muslim have lived, actually a thousand years that the Muslims have been in India. Has that never happened and shape up the law? Admittedly, but the Shater Kashmir, meaning the line of Kashmir. And he had he wanted to join a secular country that was ruled in a Democratic nominee. Even though at that time, at the time of partition, the very name Pakistan. Was composed by making taking the letters from each region of Pakistan and coming out with their letter word Pakistan. So the K in Pakistan. Stood for kazimir. And it was normally assumed that casual reader will be part of what turned out to be Pakistan. And until 1970s, which is 20 years after partition. There was no direct highway or train going to Kashmir from India, so physically it crashed. Reid was not connected to what is now India. It was very much a region, no part of what is now Pakistan.

**Host** [00:07:35] Talk more about that region, Kashmir's fear that the removal of the special status will likely open the door for democratic changes in a Muslim majority region. How do you think the removal will change the Himalayan region as different people will soon buy homes there now?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:07:51] I think that would allow. If comes back more to money. Because the main issue. Technically. Car's rear was seen to be very much a part of Pakistan. And to explain the situation is not a good turn. Perhaps good to remember that. India was. Rule only partly by the British. In the subcontinent, there was something like close to 600 princely states. The biggest of them were Kashmir and Hyderabad. And the two provide diametrically opposite example. In Hyderabad, the ruler, the bomb wanted to join neither India or Pakistan. He wanted to be independent. Because he felt with the large Hindu majority and our large mosque them. Part of the population, it was best to be independent. However, India didn't agree with it and a thing that the new farmwork going against the will of the people, they actually attacked the ravbar with a full fledged military operation. And how good a bug was conquered. In Kashmir, the ruler wanted. To join India. But the majority of people who were more of them wanted to join Pakistan. And here indie-rock claim. That the maharaja's vish was the law, even though it haddara God, they refused to accept that. But in Kashmir, they're using God as an excuse to justify their occupation of Kashmir.

**Host** [00:10:04] And in justification of their occupation there, what is this change on the religion in the culture of this region? Do you think? Different religious can be integrated. Do you think there will always be a sort of conflict?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:10:19] You know, for a good example, I think you could see it in typical Indian. As I it that, too. What had not? The two community, the Hindu, then more of them lived in peace. The state I come from has got a blog. The ruler built a temple in the one side of the building and the mosque on the other side. So the same building housed two places of worship. However, what's happening now, especially after Mr. Modi's rise to power? You have people running around the street and if they see a Muslim walking, that would make him shout Hindu slogans. And if he refuses to do. There have been dozens of cases when that individual was beaten to death. So the situation is fairly tragic because. You know, not that the prejudice was in there. It was, but they were also able to live as a family together. There were Hindus and more of them in the same family and they didn't seem to have any problem with that. But it has been used as the means for political power. But Mr. Modi, I think you have attack on more of them is the way to create division between people. And sadly, that's something that's happening not only in India, but other parts of the world as well.

**Host** [00:12:06] I know we talked briefly on the phone last week about the passing of your 95 year old cousin from the same region, Hyderabad. You know, if one is still independent states in India. Sorry about that. Unfortunately, you did mention that he studied at Michigan and he had several degrees, but struggled to get a job because of his faith, which was in Islam. What role has religion played in the lives of people around that region? What similarities and differences do you see in other countries, as he just talked about a little bit?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:12:39] A good example. A parallel might be Arabs and Israelis. Or Irish in Ireland. It could be Protestant and Catholic. And something similar Hindoo than modern. But I got mentioned earlier. The division between the two have not been there all the time. Most of the evidence that the extremist right wing Hindus are using was taken by the British, who were trying to justify their conquest of India by casting more of them who ruled India prior to them as demons and yet more of them were very different from the British when they came to India. They lived in India. And even the very language Urdu is the result of that exchange between the two. And even now, if you go to the shrines in India. For more of them thayne, you find that half of those people attending are actually Hindus. So these Moslem thayne are revered by Hindus as much as they are by Moslem. And so to say that the hatred between Hindus and more of them. If permanent is wrong, it has been exploited and a lot of people have used it to create friction and to gain economic and political power. To some extent, yes, but as you know, what goes up also goes down. Recently, something else that had happened in India got a constitutional amendment they passed, which gives automatic citizenship to. People coming to India from neighboring countries like Bangladesh or three long car or Afghanistan. But the law, the amendment specifically exclude the Muslims coming in. And that flies in the face of the Indian secular constitution. And it seems there is a lot of profit share that has built up in India. Again, that. And just a few days ago, the election in New Delhi proved that Mr. Modi's popularity may not be that permanent because Mr. Modi lost with the huge MOND. I think the the the people in opposition to his method and his philosophy and ideology gained power in the state of Delhi. New Delhi, the capital city.

**Host** [00:15:50] So do you see maybe successors or people that follow Modi since he did say that he's losing popularity. As the recent elections reflect. Do you think that there will be like a new wave of people who have these same ideologies and will will speak up more about, you know, promoting hate? Or do you think once he maybe leaves the office, it'll it'll be reduced?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:16:12] I think hopefully one could hope because the Indian tradition, Nehru and Martin mock Gandhi, the Constitution of India have all remoted and Rahmon where people of different faith can live together and one has only to look at Bollywood movies because the best part of Bollywood movie is really a synthesis between the Islamic and the Hindu traditions of India. So I think one hopes that the few years of power that Mr. Modi may have is not going to change that. And more important is Mr. Modi has not fulfilled any of the promises he made. The unemployment is worse. The economic conditions have gotten worse. It's more like a crony capitalism where the rich are getting filthy rich. And the ordinary Indians have nothing to eat. In a way, I think that the standard of living in India is fairly low. Even though it is improving, but the benefits are going to the the wealthy.

**Host** [00:17:33] When we talk specifically about. The Kashmir region, I think about the banning on communication that they had just as recently as last week, India restored the limited Internet access in Kashmir after closing it for six months, the longest in any democracy. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, you know, WhatsApp are still blocked for the most part. And connection speed only goes as high as 2G. Do you know anybody in that region of Kashmir? And how did it affect the way that they interact with you or you interact with them?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:18:06] Personally, I don't know any Kashmiris. And, you know, kind of ironic that when Seton Hall was organizing a panel on Kashmir, the closest person they could find who would talk about Kashmir. Both myself and my connection. I mentioned earlier more from a blog, which is almost the opposite of Kashmir thing. I got a blog that mentioned wanted to be independent. And even the one year brief freedom they had, they were already sending people for education over. You mentioned my cousin. He actually came to the U.S. on a scholarship from the state of Hyderabad. And after the occupation of Hyderabad, India continued the scholarship. But after three, he got two degrees, one from Michigan, one from University of North Dakota. And when back in 1950, in the hope that he will get some job after almost a year of trying, he couldn't get any job. And the reason strictly had to do with his being almost. And so at that time, he came back to us. And I guess what with India's loss was the gain for us, even though my cousin was really a professor in a fairly small teachers college in Oregon. When he retired, a U.S. senator showed up for his retirement party. And to me, that show he was making a contribution to the new country that he had to adopt. And with which he lived happily for. Tell her that a few days ago.

**Host** [00:20:13] Sorry to hear that. But do you think what's what's happening in that region of India, the Himalayan region over there? Do you think this trend kind of limits the socio economic mobility of the people that live there? Do you think this trend will stop certain people from being successful, certain people from pursuing different forms of education?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:20:38] Yes, very much so. You know, even now. In India, for example, you have. College institution, university institution that are as good as. And for their education and quality. The Indian Institute of Technology graduate are as good as any in the American Western University, but they represent only less than not even 1 percent of India the education. The bulk of it basically works in the vacuum with overworked teachers under paid staff. And those people, those colleges from turn even exist in name only because no actual teaching goes on. So that part is there. And India is not making sufficient progress when it comes to that. Even now, I think the priority seems to be incorrect. Mr. Modi has built a wall. To hide the slum of Ahmedabad, the capital of the state, Woodroffe, where Mr. Modi comes from. And this wall that's costing millions, if not

billions of dollars is being built. So Mr. Trump would not feed the slum hidden behind the wall. And thought that to me seems a very misuse of wealth. When you have majority of Indians who are living on less than one dollar a day, that's a lot to unpack there.

**Host** [00:22:34] I mean, our situation in America isn't necessarily as like that with the conceptualization of our wall. But can you just speak to what leads to, you know, these levels of discrimination? Do you think that there are people out there who may have hatred towards specific demographics or some subcategories of people? Or do you think that the governing official or the political leader of a country spurs these people on?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:23:07] True. In addition to the religious hatred, India have what's known as the caste system and the people of the lower caste. Even if their shadow falls on a podcast, Hindoo. Make that a podcast and do go home and take a shower. And these lower caste Hindus that the lead, as they're called are exploited, they have limited opportunities. They are discriminated in jobs. And you know, so there are other frictions that are common in India, and I think they have the next slide, the so-called Maoist. Who are conducting armed rebellion and so on. And a lot of that, again, is misuse of resources. They spend hundreds and thousands of dollars on the showcase things rather than building know dramatic changes. True. Mr. Modi has decided to build toilets in India. Because by one estimate, there are four million people in Mumbai alone who don't have access to a toilet. So these people go to the beach and in the evening have that writer. Right. Who wrote? Maximum city about Mumbai. I may be wrong in that name pointed out how the city become a sewer in the evening because of the fact that there are. Millions of people who have no toilet they can use. So it's a credit to Mr. Modi that he wants to build toilets in India. But it seems to me, again, those toilets are more in pork than in actual shape. It's more seems a public relations gimmick than actual changes that are taking place based on reliable reports.

**Host** [00:25:32] And it seems likely that the public will want to combat this as they feel like their needs are being met as something as simple as maintaining hygiene. So two weeks ago, separatists called for a strike to mark the anniversary of the execution of a Kashmiri man who was convicted for an attack on the Indian parliament with the banning of different forms of communication. As you mentioned before, the cell phones just be coming restored again, although at limited access. How do you think that affects the Kashmiri people to organize a protest or anybody in India, for that matter?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:26:06] You know, I mentioned earlier the number of soldiers in India. India, has in Kashmir. A huge amount. Most of their army is in Kashmir. The ratio of maybe that probably at least two or three soldiers to every 10 Kashmiri. And, you know, that's a huge expense. On the part of Indian defense needs budgets. And yet the point is there have been suppressed, the Kashmiri, it seems. Then you have millions of people trying to occupy them by force. Is a losing proposition in the long run. It's costing India a lot more. To keep in Kashmir as this region than what they are gaining from it. And one hopes. That would, and in the meantime, there are millions of Kashmiris who are being denied the basic rights of communication, job, freedom to speak. Maintaining their religion. All things that are guaranteed by Indian constitution, but that really are not allowed to have that.

**Host** [00:27:30] And to combat the amount of military forces that are out there, separatists have also called for another strike just as recently as last week to mark the day in 1984 when pro-independence leader Mohammed Maqbool but was hanged in the same New Delhi jail after being convicted of killing an intelligence officer. The government has

recently summoned journalists to report about the strike last Sunday. Do you see something similar happening when they reported on this strike?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:28:02] Probably half. Because even the people who are reporting have faced harassment. They are restricted as to where they can travel and so on. So I'm afraid the response of the occupying regime. It's going to be more occupation, which you know, and that just breeds more problems. Gandhi's said Martha Mongan, that if you have an eye for an eye. Pretty soon there won't be anybody left without. I thought with I thought so. Instead of going for an eye, for an eye, why not just sit down and treat others as the human being? And the situation has in the past, even with Pakistan, there have been instances when the two countries have come fairly close. But again, those things were sabotaged, or torpedoed by the extremists who felt the continuation of the conflict, makes them richer literally and in a figurative way. So there are vested interests who would rather keep India and Pakistan fighting different faith, fighting and have occupation of not only Kashmiris but people in other parts of India like Nagata Landform in Haryana. I think one of the things that most people don't know is in the southern part of India, there are Tamils, for example, who much rather have their own independent. So in creating an occupied Kashmir, they may be lighting a fuse that may lead to separation of southern India from India. But that's a possibility. One can't totally rule out.

**Host** [00:30:15] And just to close out our talk there's something I want to mention in an interview with Alissa Veltray last semester, our first expert show called said something on the overall mindset of people in that region. Karl said, quote, If you ask any Kashmiri what they want, they will not be able to answer it, end quote. What do you think has caused such an uncertainty among Kashmiri people?

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:30:41] I'm not sure if it's that. I think if you ask any Kashmiris, I would say all they want is the chance to bring up their kids, have a chance to make a living. You know, almost the same kind of thing that a Mexican or a Latin American who's trying to come to Europe. What they want. If physical safety, they don't want to be killed by violence in their own neighborhood and they want a chance to make a living or live happily. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness seems to be what got me read the. So if you ask Kashmiris what they want I'm sure they would say it would like nothing better than life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

**Host** [00:31:33] Once again, my name is Evando Thompson, and this has been on the behalf of the Institute of Communication and Religion. Thanks for joining us, Dr. Murtuza. And next will be our third expert that teaches abroad in Sweden. Thank you, doctor.

**Dr. Murtuza** [00:31:47] Thank you again. Thanks for listening. And may there be peace in the world. Thank you.