Kashmir has become both a symbol and battlefield of competing ideologies. Pakistan’s desperate bid to destroy Kashmiriyat (‘Kashmiri-ness’) was a way of imposing Islamic fundamentalism on a community known for its communal harmony, secularism and liberal ethos. Fundamentalism Islam from across the border tried to distort India’s secular image by blurring the eclectic and syncretic aspects of Kashmiriyat. Sanjeeb Mohanty examines how Pakistan’s attempts to erode Kashmiriyat were designed to short-circuit the ideological and emotional distance between Kashmir Muslims and their Pakistani brethren.

Sanjeeb Kumar Mohanty

Eroding Kashmiriyat

In 1947, the newly born Pakistan was supposed to be a haven for Muslims who were struggling to achieve a separate homeland. Struggling to achieve a separate homeland, the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir moved to Pakistan from India. However, after the partition of British India into two parts, the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir also wanted to move to Pakistan. The Kashmiri Muslims, however, were not satisfied with the promises of Pakistan’s leaders. They continued to fight for their rights and independence. The conflict in Kashmir continued for many years and has led to the establishment of Pakistan’s military presence in the region.

In the late 1970s, Islamic fundamentalism started to gain ground in Pakistan. The Islamic parties in Pakistan started to gain power and influence. The Islamic parties were against the secular government of Pakistan and wanted to establish an Islamic state. They believed that Pakistan was an impure importation into Islam and that it was necessary to bring Islamic laws and customs to the country. The Islamic parties also believed that Pakistan was under the influence of Western powers and that it was necessary to free Pakistan from Western influence.

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