



## **A Mission in Kashmir: How the Kashmir Conflict Started**

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**Venue: India Habitat Centre**

**Release of Andrew Whitehead's book titled 'A Mission in Kashmir: How the Kashmir Conflict Started'**

In October 1947, several thousand fighters, mainly Pathan tribesmen, invaded Kashmir in the name of Islam and Pakistan. The lashkar initially advanced rapidly. On reaching Baramulla, the tribal fighters looted widely, abducted women and killed non-Muslims. A Catholic mission hospital and convent was ransacked and non-combatants were killed. Although by no means the most brutal episode in this first eruption of the Kashmir conflict, the desecration of the mission was certainly the most notorious.

The attack on the Baramulla mission came on the same day as the Indian government's acceptance of the Maharaja of Kashmir's accession, and of the airlift of the first ever Indian troops into the Kashmir valley. Exploring events in Baramulla through oral history, contemporary journalism and clerical and other archives, Whitehead offers a new perspective on long controversial questions: who were the invaders?; how were they organised?; what help did they get from Pakistan?; what was the attitude of local Kashmiris towards them?; and why, given their numerical superiority, did they fail to capture the valley?

A focus on the attack on Baramulla also provide a human perspective on the origins of what has so often been seen as a dispute over territory, where historical narrative has been obscured by the clamour of competing nationalisms.

Andrew Whitehead is an experienced journalist and broadcaster, and has spent five years as the BBC's South Asia correspondent based in Delhi. More recently, he has been India Country Director of the BBC World Service Trust, the BBC's development communications charity. He has won two international awards for radio documentaries about aspects of India's modern history. Andrew studied history at Oxford and Warwick Universities, and is an editor of the History Workshop Journal which is published by Oxford University Press and places emphasis on "history from below" rather than the histories of elites and establishments.