

Force in Kashmir

BY MOHAMMAD FAISAL KHALIL

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Like some supremely beautiful woman, whose beauty is almost impersonal and above human desire, such was Kashmir in all its feminine beauty of river and valley and lake and graceful trees. And then another aspect of its magic beauty would come into view, a masculine one, of hard mountains and precipices, and snow-capped peaks and glaciers, and cruel and fierce torrents rushing down to the valleys below. It had a hundred faces and innumerable aspects, ever-changing, sometimes smiling, sometimes sad and full of sorrow ... It was like the face of the beloved that one sees in a dream and that fades away on awakening. These are the evocative words of Jawaharlal Nehru, who despite expressions of transcendent attachment to Kashmir, never admitted to or permitted the nullity of her possession. India's possession of Kashmir under Nehru, and after him, left her "hundred faces and innumerable aspects" to wither and fade away, in mortal sorrow.

After 57 years of occupation, India primarily functions under self-serving assumptions, and consequent assertions, that have created false representations of Kashmir's captivity. Recent propaganda emanating from India, therefore, has reiterated this version of reality and now it has come out with a modified assertion that constantly excludes Kashmir from the definition of an international dispute and more importantly, from the definition of a bilateral dispute. This strictly classifies Kashmir as an internal dispute, confined from the pressures of international and domestic scrutiny, and available to unrestrained action of the Indian army and paramilitary forces.

This modified assertion emerges from the greater body of a strategy employed by the Indian government. This strategy has been described as the 'wear-down strategy'. The origins of this strategy lie in the counterinsurgency operations that the government conducted in India's northeastern region during the 1960s and the 1970s. In the northeast, Indian army and paramilitary forces sought to wear down the fighting capacity of insurgents over an extended period of time by wielding an extensive and indiscriminate use of force. This strategy exhausted and eventually, collapsed the insurgency efforts. This



effect, however, should not be interpreted as an absolute removal of disagreement and resistance. The northeast remains ruptured by violence and dissent. Many of the leaders of the foregoing insurgency are prominent politicians now. What the

ther violence or new forms of 'authenticity' like fundamentalist religion. In any event, the tension produces a frightening consolidation of patriotism, assertions of cultural superiority, mechanisms of control, whose power and ineluctability reinforce what I have been describing as the logic of identity."

Therefore, the attainment of one identity by one culture or state (in this case the 'Hindu' culture and the Indian state, respectively) invariably leads to the denial, or the suppression of equal identity for other groups, states, or cultures (in this specific case, Kashmir). The Kashmir dispute will remain as long as any attempt to exist beyond the dictated confinements and configurations of identity in India is contested. That is, as long as the Indian state and Kashmir coexist. As Kashmir remains confined in the strictures laid down by the Indian state, identity preservation and formation will be frustrated, allowing the emergence of a possible 'negative identity': "an identity perversely based on all those identifications and roles which [were manifest] at critical stages of development and yet also as most real." The only real experience of Kashmir within the Indian state has been of oppression and violence. Therefore, Kashmir too will breed oppression and violence against the Indian dominion, in the already familiar violent separatist language.

Furthermore, and more importantly, the escalating identity demands of the Indian state reveal a disturbing conclusion: the authority in India is principally based upon the organization of coercive power and not upon national consent or any preexistent harmony; any independent processes of identification are deemed as driven by disorderly energies. A "daring mytho-poetical" archaeology offered by Vico in *The New Science* depicted this private character of modern state order and monopoly: "Authority was at first divine; the authority by which divinity appropriated itself the few giants [Vico's first human beings] we have spoken of, by properly casting

ing them into the depths and recesses of caves under the mountains. This is the iron ring by which the giants, dispersed upon the mountains, were kept chained to the earth by fear of the sky and by Jove, wherever they happened to be when the sky first thundered. Such were Tityus and Prometheus, chained to a high rock with their hearts being devoured by an eagle; that is by the religion of Jove's auspices... Hence it was that the giants gave up the bes-

Indian government accomplished was only a conversion in the form of expression, from violent to political; what was being expressed remains.

Despite this fundamental flaw, the wear-down strategy is being employed in Kashmir. Furthermore, and more importantly, Kashmir is not compatible with this strategy. Unlike the other disputes superficially yielding to this strategy, Kashmir is a non-national dispute; occupation, rather than counterinsurgency has been applied; non-indigenous support and identification exist; the interplay between the grievances and the collective corpus is total; avenues for voice and exit are no longer available. India has tried to transform Kashmir into a dispute compatible with this strategy, in rhetoric and action, but the nature of the dispute remains inexorable. There are other aspects contributing to the pessimistic estimates of this strategy. For example, despite its political feasibility, the strategy is militarily and materially infeasible.

Despite these self-defeating indications, India retains its belief in the possibility of a victory, even if only a Pyrrhic victory. The primary informant to this belief is the considerable staying power of the Indian state. Advocate observers in India predict that widening strategic and economic gaps between herself and Pakistan will be the defining regional trends in South Asia, rendering any life support to the Kashmir dispute terminated. This has prompted Indian leaders to take more aggressive preemptive and retaliatory actions in Kashmir, despite the possibility of retributive violence. But the Indian's is a parochial estimate of the future and the Kashmir dispute, and has fundamental weaknesses, too many and too palpable for discussion here.

Owing to its sheer ethnic and religious diversity, India is a pure example of a multi-communal society, comprising a variety of cohesive and self-conscious communities, each seeking to preserve its own identity. However, India's experience of identification as a modern state has opposed this condition of preservation. India has undergone a process of identity where a central and triumphalist identity is being created and consolidated and all other preexisting identities are being endangered and therefore, alienated. In an article published in *New Left Review* in 1988, Edward Said described this abstract interplay of identity and marginalization:

"In the contemporary contest between stable identity as it is rendered by such affirmative agencies as nationality, education, tradition, language, and religion, on the one hand, and all sorts of marginal, alienated, or, in Immanuel Wallerstein's phrase, antisystemic forces on the other, there remains an incipient and unresolved tension. One side gathers more dominance and centrality, the other is pushed further from the centre, towards ei-

tial custom of wandering through the great forest of the earth and habituated themselves to the quite contrary custom of remaining settled and hidden for a long period in their caves." Tityus and Prometheus were individuals who wandered beyond the confines of Jove. But they were visibly punished for their transgressive wanderlust, permanently fixed in place, their hearts eaten out. Kashmir is the vanquished titan of this Indian earth, that refused to hide and settle in its caves. What is important to note is the behaviour of the Indian state is symptomatic of "a grave systemic crisis", as David Potter indicated in his general exposition *Democratization in*

Asia: "[T]he state ... became more brutal in its handling of communal (religious, caste, ethnic) conflicts and political opposition; tougher repressive legislation has been passed and implemented by the central and state governments to suppress or silence permanently political dissidents, labour leaders, civil rights activists and other opponents of the regime, especially in Punjab, Assam and Kashmir.... The danger for democracy is that the Indian state nationally and locally is gradually losing its autonomy in relation to dominant classes while becoming too impervious to democratic demands from increasingly restless political movements grounded in subordinate classes."

It is curious to note that this systemic crisis is part of the secondary causality mechanizing the violent separatism in occupied Kashmir.

'Since its birth, the constituent communities of the Indian state have been undergoing a disturbing development, an existential realization, as V.S. Naipaul witnessed during his sojourn in India: "India was now full of this rage. There had been a general awakening. But everyone awakened first to his group or community; every group thought itself unique in its awakening; and every group sought to separate its rage from the rage of other groups."

The rage and sense of otherness that Naipaul observes is suggestive of what Edward Said described, in his afore-quoted passage, as the marginalized's motion towards "new forms of 'authenticity'"

Kashmir, under Indian occupation, has behaved as a community of a higher order: unlike other communities within India, its survival has necessitated its deliverance from the Indian state. India, however, remains possessive of it. Kashmir, therefore, remains an object of force and violence. After more than half a century of occupation, life with all its beauty is no longer revealed in Kashmir. She has become a land perpetually conquered, a land perpetually to be conquered. However, the use of force alone is but temporary.... A land is not governed which is perpetually to be conquered.

The writer is studying Politics & History at the London School of Economic & Political Science