

# Solution to Kashmir dispute

Altat Qadri

**T**he real moment of trial on progress between Pakistan and India is approaching a stage where it is being questioned as to whether they are honest in burying the hatchet or just burning with a low blue flame. To such effect, the process of CBMs, detente and the solution of Kashmir dispute is edging towards a crucial stage. What is important in all this is to create a win-win situation on Kashmir.

The state of J&K is divided between India and Pakistan of which India holds the major territory. The three major regions i.e. the valley of Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh are under Indian occupation. Pakistan controls the two regions of Northern Areas and Azad Kashmir. However, the valley of Kashmir is at a critical juncture at the moment. To be more precise, the valley of Kashmir, which is the Muslim dominated region and where the Indian army is carrying out a relentless suppression, is under serious fire. The recent poll too has yet again upheld the same view where 5 to 6 percent vote casting was registered.

In the entire state, the valley of Kashmir has invariably assumed a political significance and consequently suffered a great deal of discrimination, injustice, and currently untold volume of human rights abuses. Its people have over the long period been treated like serfs in their own country. Noticeably, the valley has constantly remained a soul and hotbed of Kashmiri nationalism, Kashmiri aspirations with almost harmonious and secular traditions. Nevertheless, significantly their religious practices deeply vary in expression besides in cultural and ethnic context from the Azad Kashmir although both are Muslim dominated regions. Strangely enough, the Jammu region dominating by 60 percent Hindu Dogras varies from the practices of Kashmiri pundits while both are fundamentally Hindus. Yet another facet that comes into play is that the Kashmiri pundits have maintained a strict sense of distinction from Hindu "Dogras" of Jammu.

Similarly, the people of Ladakh represent an utterly different set of values than the valley and have seldom shown any commitment towards Kashmiris of the valley or even Jammu. But Kargil which is a Muslim dominating area has tacitly and in a subtle manner has shown allegiance for the people of valley. The communal tension with Ladakh has been a salient factor of their allegiance. Otherwise, their cultural, social and linguistic correspondence is akin with the Skardu. The northern people form no equation whatsoever with the people living in Azad Kashmir. On the contrary, they harbour deep-rooted grievances with the leadership of Azad Kashmir. In effect, one realises that the valley has been incontestably a real region under con-

tention and constitutes a real seat of Kashmiri nationalism. Therefore, the valley is a distinctive component of the overall state which needs to be addressed along these lines. There had been a few sterile attempts by India to transform the objective reality of "Azadi" by luring the people by extending the charade of "greater autonomy". But proved nothing more than a dead leaf.

During the current phase of freedom struggle, we have observed that this struggle could not take root in Azad Kashmir or even Jammu except for a few Muslim areas with varying degree. Presumably, the reason for this is that the people of Azad Kashmir are content with the present status within Pakistan and the people of Jammu with India, or else the prevailing political and governing apparatus seems to be excellent in addressing the concerns of the people and leadership of Azad Kashmir and people of Jammu. To keep the record straight, there are people in significant numbers from AJK and Jammu yearning for living together with the valley as a reintegrated nation. But that seems to be akin to opening a can of worms at the moment. Its fallout if pressed hard could seriously jeopardise the freedom of the people of valley.

Against this backdrop, these regions are dominated with multiple interests and political preferences and priorities. Broadly speaking, Jammu and Ladakh in my view have little or nothing to share with the people of Kashmir and accordingly may be well placed to stay with India. In addition, this region has a very deep, strategic significance for India as China falls next to its borders. Similarly, the people of Gilgit are more concerned in ascertaining an enhanced and proper political space within the state of Pakistan and share no affiliation whatsoever with Azad Kashmir.

Notwithstanding, there exist some reasonable fears that with the passage of time people particularly from Jammu may lose sense of their origin. In comparison, this fear has a very thin chance in Azad Kashmir. But one cannot be oblivious of the probability. Therefore, any solution must accommodate and reflect upon these issues with considerable focus of thought.

Given the historical background, the settlement process must seek an agreement between India and Pakistan to the physical unity of the state with multiple sovereignties. However, the valley which is asserting a leaning, with all available means, for a greater emancipation, ought to be given independent and sovereign status with comprehensive international representation in the UN. Following this step, the two countries, in cooperation with the Kashmiri leadership, must keep the multiple sovereignties in position and remove the Line of Control, remove border patrols, make trade free between India, Pakistan and Kashmir. This position can be

supported by ensuring a system of joint security and may even include China which has been expressing some reservations about the independent status of Kashmir.

To expand the area of cooperation, one may suggest to both the countries that these divided regions with multiple sovereignties could pave the way for creating a system to control these areas with maximum, loosely distributed powers. And hold these regions together on administrative, municipal and educational levels which will enable them to maintain their one-time shared historical relationships. Even education is an area of mutual and interdependent interest. The principle upon which the powers of central government may rest could be those affairs which are of common concern as a whole and which require uniformity of rules and regulation under the control of central government, while all other matters not of much common concern to the centre may be left at the discretion of the local government.

To summarise, there should be one government for national affairs and another government for local affairs with a strictly adhered sense of nationality. These local affairs could also figure out to the extent of interchanging the administrative officials in respect to gain knowledge capacity, working experience, and professional character of their administrative personnel from each other. Since, I have lived in both the countries there are number of issues which are managed both better and worst in India and Pakistan. Relatively, to improve the functioning in required fields this system could become a precedence to the advantage of the both the countries. However, it may not be applied in every area. But this experience has a potential likelihood to stifle the neck of corruption on either side of the divide.

The effects of the settlement on these principles have greater capacity and depth of understanding to facilitate a sustained relationship on diverse levels with both the sides. The people in the valley of Kashmir will also be benefited with complete and free excess to the united state. Their tourism and other economic related industries will flourish. Renowned intellectuals of both India and Pakistan have produced many times an idea of constructing a central secretariat of SAARC in Srinagar.

Solution along these lines will provide an adequate face saving to India that finally Kashmir was not sliced away by using the religious instrument against it. Given the emotional attachment of the people of Pakistan they too will feel that finally an honourable settlement was sought and Kashmiris will also realise that in the end, the sacrifices of their dear ones did not go in vain.

The writer is a freelance columnist  
altatqadri@hotmail.com