

No doubt Kashmir is the most fascinating piece in the scenic mosaic of South Asia, its vales, lakes and lofty mountains covered with lush forests, are a perennial attraction for the tourists but unfortunately this Eden on earth remained under unabated oppression through out its history. Kashmir remained under the imperialist rule of Sikhs and Dogras in its history.

After partition, a big chunk of Kashmir came under the yoke of the Indian Union. When British army in Punjab subdued Sikhs, Kashmir was sold to Hindu Dogras for a ridiculous price by British imperialists in 1846 and for more than a century the Kashmiris lived under the dark regime of Dogras.

Muslims were not permitted to slaughter cow and there was limited permission for performing their religious rituals in public places. Muslims farmers were levied with heavy taxes and their social status deteriorated due to draconian laws of Dogras. Properties of Muslims were mortgaged by Hindu usurers and they were pushed into abject poverty.

In 1931 Muslims of Kashmir waged organized resistance against Dogra oppression. Some sacrilegious events increased the momentum of this resistance; in Riasi a Mosque was demolished by Hindus with the approval

# A tribute to Kashmiris

BY MUMTAZ KHAN

**Kashmir has remained under unabated oppression through out its history.**

of the Maharaja's Government, in another place in Jammu, Muslims were prevented from saying prayers and the Imam of the mosque was stopped by Dogra authorities from giving sermon before Friday prayer.

The essential point common to all these events was that in early June 1931 the Maharaja's Government or the agents of Maharaja had, reportedly, caused Muslim worship to be disrupted and the Holy Quran to be defiled. When the news of these sacrileges reached Srinagar it stirred great resentment among the Muslims. There was vociferous denunciation from the pulpits of mosques, processions and public meetings.

On 25 June 1931 at one such meeting a religious scholar, Abdul Qadeer delivered a passionate speech advocating insurgence against Dogra oppression and consequently government immediately arrested him. Abdul Qadeer was put on trial at the session court, Srinagar on 6 July 1931; but so great was the assembly of Muslims, which gathered outside the buildings that the proceedings had to be moved to the safe premises of the

Srinagar Central jail.

It was outside the jail on 13 July 1931, when the trial of Abdul Qadeer was reopened, that a crowd gathered only to be met with police baton charge. During the time of prayer a Muslim protestor started voicing *azan* loudly to congregate the worshipers. He was targeted and killed by police. A second Muslim immediately stood on same place and started completing the interrupted *azan* but he was also martyred and in the process of completing *azan* 20 Muslims offered their lives. It is a unique example of martyrdom and 13 July is celebrated till today as the Martyrs Day to pay homage to the martyrs of this day through out Kashmir and Pakistan.

Woes of Kashmiris were not over

even after independence of the Subcontinent. They are still languishing under the imperialism of India, which seems worse than Dogra Raj. An estimated 80,000 people have been killed in Occupied Kashmir since 1989 and thousands more have simply disappeared.

According to the records of the Association of Parents of Disappeared People (APDP) in Kashmir more than 3,000 people have been reported missing in 2003. Since the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed government came into power in Oct 2002 in Occupied Kashmir (on the promise of bringing a healing touch), the APDP says there have been 54 custodial deaths. It is pertinent to mention here that APDP is working in Occupied Kashmir and its compiled report of Indian atrocities are published in India and quoted by renowned author Arundhati Roy who is doggedly exposing Indian atrocities internationally through her write-ups. Even people living in Azad Kashmir are not spared from the atrocities of Indian forces.

More than five thousands Kashmiris

have been killed, maimed and injured in Nelum Valley due to Indian artillery shelling. History of Kashmir is replete with stories of heroism and martyrdom and India should realize that logical outcome of these sacrifices is none other than complete freedom of Kashmir.

Presently when India and Pakistan are taking CBMs to resolve their chronic disputes, Pakistan government still feels that Kashmir is the core issue and lasting peace in South Asia is contingent on the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Recently Indian foreign minister Natwar Singh stated that Kashmir is an integral part of secular India in spite of its majority Muslim population but this statement may harm the process of peace. President Musharraf gave the green signal for resumption of bus service between Sri Nagar and Muzaffar Abad while meeting with leaders of the Indian Held Kashmir, which shows sincerity of Pakistan for peace in Kashmir.

He also reiterates his stance on Kashmir as a disputed territory on which India and Pakistan have fought three wars. Pakistan cannot even not think of betraying the 80,000 Kashmiri martyrs who offered their lives for liberty of Kashmir, upheld the name of Islam, and opted for eternal life in heaven after martyrdom.

Kashmir  
Nelum  
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# Kashmir through Track II *Kashmir*

By Kuldip Nayar *Dawn 19/3/05*

THERE are many signs to indicate that Kashmir presents a better picture today than before. The border is quiet. The infiltration is low. An abandoned 50-year-old road between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad is about to thread the two sides of Kashmir.

Incidence of militancy is down. Cross-border terrorism is lessening day by day. At one time the number of Kashmiri militants was anywhere near 50,000. Today our army puts them around 1,200. Even the foreign jihadis are reportedly fewer.

Tourism in the valley has been lurching to better days. Municipal elections held after nearly three decades have involved more than 70 per cent of voters at many places. Even a hardliner like Syed Shah Gellani has said more than once that the Kashmiris want their pandit brethren back in their midst. Violations of human rights have come down to some extent and action against the guilty has been generally prompt. Srinagar is still full of rhetoric but New Delhi is thinking of going beyond the economic package Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has promised the state.

According to Yasin Malik, the first militant who has turned Gandhian and vegetarian, thousands of Kashmiris are turning their back on violence which has been stalking the land for about two decades. He says that the 5,000 villages he has visited on foot in the last two years are awakening people to the efficacy of non-violence. The exhibition that he has held in New Delhi says all this through the photo of confident faces from far-flung places. Thousands of them have also signed a pledge to support peace. All this prom-

before. Until the insurgency began in the valley in 1988, New Delhi's problem was Islamabad, not the Kashmiris who continued to have faith in the sanctity of the ballot box despite bogus elections. Only after losing hope of its credibility did they cross over to the border to get training and weapons.

On the other hand, we have repeatedly told Pakistan that "a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir" is yet to take place. These are the words used in the Shimla agreement signed nearly 33 years ago. Therefore, Islamabad will have to be kept in the picture.

After disagreement over the Baglihar dam in Kashmir, the problem has assumed more ramifications. It is not so much the territory as is water. Pakistan's many rivers rise in Kashmir and its fears, however exaggerated, have to be allayed for any settlement. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who signed the Indus Water treaty in 1961, was anxious to build a foundation on which the two countries could build a durable structure of amity. Unfortunately, that has not happened. Once again, the same opportunity seems to be coming our way. Manmohan Singh hit it off well with President Pervez Musharraf as Atal Behari Vajpayee did with the general.

Pakistan has recently made two statements that help the situation. One is to go away from the plebiscite which, in any case, is not possible without disturbing the pluralistic equanimity in India. The experience of the NWFP is there. Soon after independence, a plebiscite was held there to determine whether the state would like to join India or Pakistan. Instead, the plebiscite got reduced to the choice between Hindu and Muslim, the Gita and the Quran. The other announcement coming from the

them have also signed a pledge to support peace. All this promises a movement towards a hopeful future.

Yet, we will delude ourselves if we believe that the Kashmir problem can be solved without recognizing the true kernel of the matter: political aspect. Trappings of normality should not be mistaken for actual normality. True, the atmosphere is better than before. But this should not make us infer that we have found a solution to the Kashmir problem.

I find strange smugness creeping in at the various government-blessed conclaves held in New Delhi and elsewhere. Experts who provide advice are also creating the impression that the separatists have been "cornered" and the critics "vanquished." This is not true. If this were so, the alienation in the valley would have largely disappeared. The army would have withdrawn its forces in a larger proportion. The Hurriyat leaders would have responded to New Delhi's invitation for a meeting. Instead, they are sitting pretty.

This, in fact, is the time when we should consider the solution of the Kashmir problem in right earnest. We can stop the Kashmiri youth from going the Yasin Malik and Shabir Shah way. They took to the gun at the age of 18 or 19. What does New Delhi do to retrieve the youth is a challenge before it. Thousands have lost their dear ones in the last two decades. Thousands have lost their home and hearth. Thousands have also lost their vocation. Their eyes reflect more sadness than estrangement. Their loss seems irreparable. How do we give them a hope of new Kashmir?

What will mollify them or, more aptly, what will justify their hopes and aspirations is the question to which we have to seek an answer. Solutions can be different. They may have something to do with the delineation of their political rights, their status or their identity. We have lost their trust over the years. How do we win it back? Not only that, we need to get them into the mainstream. This problem is not all that simple.

Then there is Pakistan. Without having any understanding with it, the problem will

announcement coming from the

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military leadership is more significant: Kashmir cannot become part of Pakistan. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said more or less the same thing at Jeddah: Kashmir has gone away from Pakistan. In any case, in the light of Manmohan Singh's statement that no territorial adjustment was possible, the question of redrawing borders does not arise.

In fact, people-to-people contact has instilled the spirit of give-and-take. Cricket matches have helped and so have the different groups of various professions. The two long-lost sides are beginning to strike some equation. The usual hawkish attitude even in the bureaucracy has lessened. New Delhi has developed enough of confidence in Islamabad so as to accept the once-unthinkable proposal to haul gas from Iran through the pipeline laid in Pakistan.

Indeed, this is the most opportune time to settle Kashmir. What I suggest is a two-pronged talks — on the one side with the Kashmiris and the on the other with Pakistan. At some stage, the two can converge but not at the very start in order to avoid confusion. And the best way is Track II. All the three parties want to be helped to evolve a solution. They do not want to take any position in public because it gets tagged. The sooner we start the process, the better it will be. Otherwise, we face the danger of going back to square one.