

Between past and present

Kashmir *In News*

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New realities on the regional and international political outlook have forced compelling changes, affecting the principle paradigms regardless of the fact that the same states had created them in the form of UN charter. However, it is wastage of time and energy for the time being to delve into arguing their conjectural status. In this relation, reassessment of the strategy for an effective policy direction is becoming critically important in the context of the Kashmir struggle.

At best there will be no denial that the introduction of militant variant into the freedom struggle stimulated the dormant feelings of the people of Kashmir in 1989. It brought hopes of the people for freedom close to reality. India was taken aback as it never expected Kashmiris to opt for this extreme step. But many factors — local, regional, and rapid global changes — were responsible for this. Way back in the early nineties, the world was shuffling beyond one's expectation — the Berlin Wall and Eastern Europe were experiencing freedom. All these radical transformations were causing an evocative effect on the mental geography of the younger generation. Owing to this reality, when in 1990 the late Rajeev Gandhi visited Srinagar, out of shock he said, "We have lost Kashmir".

But in the middle of it, because of our lack of policy direction we faltered and lost the way towards our objective. Many divergent schools of thought appeared on horizon — some real some too arrogant, intolerant, narrow in vision and far too idealistic to manage. The result was nothing but a chaotic scene and internal strife out of which came first public apathy, followed by infiltration of Indian agents into the rank and file of the militant cadre. It distanced public participation and from here India made gains in its policy of polarising and spoiling the political scene by floating conflicting political ideas under the pretext of peace and solution. The political leadership in APHC was groping to exert its personal influence with more prominence. It was plagued with personnel agendas and self-motivated concerns. Alas, the militants instead of shoring up their unity followed their ambitions.

Consequently, the spark of hope for freedom started losing ground and our adversary exploited every opportunity that came to her way. Due to it, the call for freedom dwindled public resonance. The commitment, vigour, social integration and sense of relationship with each other degenerated. The human cost for sustaining the riff-raff of militancy climbed up manifold. The sketchy militancy synthe-

sised with divergence in political system of APHC added further dismay.

As our political and militant leadership were swept by ever-increasing ambitions we lost the sense of understanding and purposeful distinction between the tactical uses of the militancy to full-scale use in the freedom movement. The tactical purpose of militancy was not to outfight an adversary but to out administer and out-legitimise him from the homeland.

We are placed at a very favourable position at this point in time. Our dialogue with India is under progress on all issues including Kashmir. Presumably, India will try to stick to its obdurate position of stopping cross-border terrorism and our position will stick to making progress towards settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The resumption of bus service is a wonderful option for now but this option bears serious questions and could jeopardise the entire process

India claims to be the largest democracy in the world; while according to its own reports it never held any fair elections in Kashmir. It preaches non-violence internationally while employing means of violence to stifle the voice for freedom in Kashmir. This contradiction should have been exposed before the world. The Indian government and its media networks continue to portray themselves as the victims of violence being sponsored by Pakistan. With the creation of this situation the cycle of Indian gross human rights abuse goes on unheard and unabated.

Against this backdrop, it is incumbent upon the leadership of Kashmir and Pakistan to take reappraisal of the situation. Pakistan has to bring this point home that its genuine strength in Kashmir is the deep political alienation of the people, rather than militancy. Militancy has provided a spark to the long volatile situation — now it has outlived its logic and legitimacy in held Kashmir. Factually, the Indian government is not able to induce any change in the

public perspective. That is why the pivotal point of Indian government policy leans on carrying out a silent genocide without invoking any grumble in the world. Fittingly, the State Human Rights Commission has revealed that highest number of human rights violations took place in 2003; also 52 houses only in two places of the same district (Dist Kapwara) have been set on fire in the first fifteen days of last month. In other words, the human rights violations have reached genocidal proportions.

Conversely the Indian strength in Kashmir is not the people but the state apparatus aided with 700,000 troops. Consequently, it is the fear that if people will take to the streets, their well-orchestrated propaganda of cross-border terrorism will go down the river. India will patently appear as an occupying force. Additionally, the slogan of Pakistan sponsoring terrorism will also have no worth. And very significantly, if public discontent comes in the open, they will find it extremely difficult to adhere to their genocide programme in Kashmir.

We are placed at a very favourable position at this point in time. Our dialogue with India is under progress on all issues including Kashmir. Presumably, India will try to stick to its obdurate position of stopping cross-border terrorism and our position will stick to making progress towards settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The resumption of bus service is a wonderful option for now but this option bears serious questions and could jeopardise the entire process. It is a significant question that how could a bus service remain operational in the face of threats of violence whether from India, militants or the renegade force. Any untoward incident could have a devastating effect on relations of India and Pakistan on the one hand and on the other it could impact negatively on the relationship of the two Kashmiris.

India and Pakistan should create a provision within the same framework of understanding that a specific place characterised as free zone area — as has been done in Nagaland — for militants to stay in most favourably near the ceasefire line, or whatever suits them strategically and the right to resort to fire is to be reserved, in case any party violates the agreement. Additionally, the freedom of expression and assembly will transform the very dynamics of the situation on ground and there would hardly be the need for resorting to violence. This process will provide a trigger to simplify many complexities. However, the question remains whether the two countries would agree to this form of peace or not.

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