

KASHMIR ISSUE

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the United Nations and to the world community at large. It is this Indian colonial intransigence that lies at the root of the Kashmir problem.

The people of Kashmir on the other hand have never accepted Indian hegemony as legitimate and de jure. They had never lost any opportunity to articulate their feelings, despite the terror-machine under which they have languished throughout these forty-six years. They even refused to accept the Indian standard time as a symbol of their solidarity with Pakistan.

There is enough evidence to show that there was a collusion between the British and the Indians on the eve of Partition. Official papers of Radcliffe Award, now open to inspection, conclusively show that it was a political decision to provide India access to Kashmir for playing a role vis-a-vis China and Russia. Alastair Lamb in one of his recent papers says that Indian forces had reached Kashmir not on Oct 27, 1947 but on Oct 26, the day the maharajah wrote his initial letter. It was a day before the alleged instrument of accession was accepted.

India is making effort for total political integration of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into Indian system and holding it in that position by force through central rule. Whenever there has been possibility of a major dissent there was direct intervention from Delhi.

There also has been an economic subjugation creating dependence of the Valley on India in such a manner that the Kashmiris could never move towards self-reliance. Their traditional sources of income or economic strength of resources were tailored in a way that they became rooted in Indian interest.

A conscious effort is made for bringing about a demographic change in the Valley; it is not merely a BJP plan. In 1942, the Muslim population was 80 per cent. In 1971, it was reduced to 67 per cent. The 1981 census reported it at 63 per cent.

Furthermore, here has been a cultural invasion of Kashmir through Hindu mythology in education, art, literature, entertainment and in cultural life. A systematic plan has been in operation for the de-Islamisation of the population.

Presently, there are two major dimensions to the Kashmir problem which deserve to be considered. First, is the massive and wanton violations of the human rights by the Indian occu-

pation forces. Kashmir today is one of the bleeding sores on the face of the human race. While the agony and sufferings of the Kashmiri people are now being increasingly acknowledged, the world opinion has failed to exert enough pressure on India to stop the heinous violations of human rights its forces are committing on a mass scale, spread over such a long period. This is the first and the most pressing aspect and it is time all countries of the world particularly the Muslim world use their diplomatic and economic pressure on India to bring to an immediate end the reign of state terror and restore civil and political liberties of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

While this aspect is urgent, this cannot in itself lead to the final resolution of the dispute. The heart of the problem is Kashmiri peoples' right to self-determination. There cannot be a substitute to that. The legal, moral and political basis of their struggle is the unfinished agenda of Partition. The only peaceful solution to this problem lies through holding a free and fair plebiscite under international auspices, giving to the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir an opportunity to decide their future in accordance with the UN resolutions.

There is now an increasing realisation that India has lost Kashmir. A leading Indian intellectual, Khushwant Singh, writing in an Indian newspaper as recently as the last week of November 1993 admits:

"Our part of Kashmir has had many elections and many chief ministers. None of the elections were as free and fair as we know in our other states. Consequently, none of the chief ministers could be described as popular rulers. They were chosen in Delhi and when found inconvenient, summarily dismissed and the state put under governor's ruled. People who have visited beauty spots in the Valley of the Jhelum or have Kashmir Muslim friends will bear me out that right from the beginning they were reluctant to admit they were Indians. Though they carried Indian passports, they referred to us as "you Indians" and to themselves as we Kashmiris"... Though undoubtedly exaggerated it cannot be denied that human rights have been increasingly violated. Not many people put faith in the Human Rights Commission recently set up by our government.... Face the facts squarely. One fact is that we have totally forfeited the sympathies of Kashmiri Muslims, the other is that we have no moral right to impose ourselves by physical force on a people who do not want us."

The fact is that Kashmir, as the London weekly Economist has recently observed is on longer ruled by India, even though 'it is still controlled by it'. This state of affairs cannot continue for long. Facts have to be faced and faced squarely. And the sooner they are faced the better. India will have to come to the negotiating table to resolve the issue and no solution of the Kashmir dispute is possible which is outside the framework of the UN resolutions and which does not give to the people the right to decide their future freely. A meaningful and constructive Pakistan-India dialogue is possible only when:

—India stops forthwith its atrocities in occupied territories and the Indian troops withdraw to the barracks first, and eventually withdraw from the valley;

—The real Kashmiri political leadership is set free and participates in the talks;

—The talks find a way for giving the people of Jammu and Kashmir an opportunity to decide their political future through a free plebiscite according to the United Nations resolutions; and

—The talks focus on UN resolutions and are not mixed up with Siachen or other bilateral issues.

This is the way to peace in Jammu and Kashmir and peace and prosperity for the subcontinent.

The writer, a Senator, is Chairman, Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad. This article is based on his various presentations on the Kashmir issue.