

KASHMIR: THE ISSUE AND CHALLENGES

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by Professor Khurshid Ahmad

The Holy Prophet (phuh) has described the hallmark of a Muslim (Believer) that he cannot be bitten twice from the same hole. But today the position of Ummah, and particularly that of the rulers of Pakistan, is such that they are bitten not twice but again and again because of lack of Faith and Muslim's characteristic wisdom. This does not end here. They make rounds of the same hole and show respect to it. This is not a mere parable. Consider the issue of Kashmir, that is a matter of life and death for Pakistan, and whom Quaid-e-Azam had declared the jugular vein of the country. Whether it is India or America, our leaderships do not keep from making rounds of the 'demonic place' despite being inflicted with loss time and again. From the cease-fire of 1948 to the Kargil debacle in 1999, no effort at learning a lesson has been made. Among the political heads of the country, the losses inflicted during the times of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif are like sores on the body of the state. But the present leadership has learned no lesson from them. The dangerous game that is being played mirrors the role of the incumbent rulers and those agencies that are in reality entrusted with protecting the state. Their duty is to ward off the danger facing the country, rather than getting involved in the game that is being played to weaken and enchain us.

In the obtaining situation, we have only one way and that is to waken up the masses of the country, make them aware of the facts, and to prepare them for facing the real challenges so that they can become a rock against these.

The bombshell of one-sided cease-fire by Hizbul Mujahideen on July 24, 2000 was not incidental. If the events that have taken place since the Washington Declaration of July 4, 1999 till today are analyzed, it becomes clear that a plan for the liquidation of the Kashmir issue and sabotaging the freedom movement is being acted out with a set pace with the collusion of America, India (and Israel). It is unfortunate that some of the Mujahideen leaders got caught in the trap that the global imperialism and Indian colonialism had woven for them. This was purely because of Allah's grace, timely and clear warning by the Islamic Movement, and the sanctity of devotion and blood of the innocent that Hizbul Mujahideen got out of the trap within two weeks, ended its cease-fire, and got active in Jihad once again. This whole episode once again exposed the real face and intentions of India before the entire world. Allah Almighty not only protected the great movement of Jihad from the mischief of this faux pas, the good that came out of it established the stand of the Islamic Movement and its commitment with Jihad, besides the repeated confession of the enemy that the resistance movement in Kashmir is purely a Kashmiri phenomenon and that the overwhelming majority of Hizbul Mujahideen, which is waging Jihad to get rid of Indian domination, comprises of Mujahideen from the Occupied Kashmir. The real hurdles to the solution of the problem are Indian colonial designs, state terrorism, violation of international agreements, and Machiavellian politics. The whole world saw this clearly once again during the two weeks.

“But it is possible that you dislike a thing that is good for you.” **(Al-Baqarah 2:216)**

The reverberations of Kashmir issue at the international level during the last few weeks and the facts that the intellectuals, writers, and media people are compelled to admit have put the Indian leadership on the defensive. It is unfortunate that ministries of foreign affairs and information are not availing this opportunity. World opinion could be elicited in favor of the resistance movement by making the world realize the nature of the problem through a diplomatic campaign throughout the globe, but there are no signs of it. Rather, a clique is trying, particularly in the English papers, to depict the Jihad as a ‘futile exercise’ and a ‘work of religious fundamentalists’, cites poor economic conditions as result of Jihad, and in the name of peace and harmony put the issue of Kashmir one again in the coffin wherefrom the Jihad movement had taken it out 12 years ago and made it a living reality.

After having failed in muffling of the resistance movement through brute force, India is acting upon a strategy that has six aspects:

1. To make Pakistan not only irrelevant in Kashmir issue, but also to present the resistance movement merely as Pakistan’s creation and to level allegations of extremism and terrorism against it with such persistence that Pakistan is put on the defensive and becomes isolated at the international level.
2. To try creating division in the resistance movement so that it is not only weakened but also entangled in internecine conflicts instead of targeting the enemy.
3. To create distance, distrust, and confrontation between the Jihad movement and political front, which is represented by the APHC (All Parties Hurriyat Conference). In this regard, Jihadi groups, parties and leaders of APHC all are being worked on so that different voices make the political atmosphere confused and ineffective.
4. To confuse the movement of freedom from the Indian yoke with autonomy and regional devolution, and to stage such a drama as was staged in 1950, 1952 and 1953 and whose result the people of Jammu & Kashmir have witnessed during the last 50 years.
5. In the background of all this is the real plan of Kashmir’s division and for achieving this end work is being done with quite cunningly and with dexterity. The aim is to divide the Occupied Jammu & Kashmir into three parts: (1) Muslim majority Kashmir Valley and Doda, (2) Poonch, Rajuri, and Kargil, (3) Hind / Dogra majority area of Jammu and Budh majority Leh. According to the outline, efforts are on to cause fighting between Muslims and non-Muslims, which was started in 1990 with action against Muslims in Laddakh and which includes action against Sikhs, Yattris, Hindu Pundits and expulsion of Muslims from border areas and settle Indian Hindus in their place. This is being done exactly on the pattern that was acted upon from 1944

to 1947 in the undivided India i.e. the division of Punjab and Bengal through bloody riots of Bihar, Bengal and Punjab.

6. The last part of this plan is about converting the Line of Control (LoC) into the international border with some minor changes, and thus burying the whole issue after Kashmir's division.

To avoid tripartite talks and seeking a solution within the framework of UN resolutions, to try a settlement in a two-party dialogue between India and Kashmiris, and then to get it approved by India and Pakistan as a *fait accompli*; all is part of the same plan. America is not coming into open, but the whole game is being played according to its directions and outline. Pakistan is being subjected to enormous economic and political pressure so that it is compelled to play the game. The whole action plan is like the Oslo Process, so that the movement in Kashmir may meet the end of the Palestine issue, which was liquidated and Palestinian leadership was left to grapple in the dark. Unfortunately, instead of learning a lesson from the whole process of destruction of Palestine, the new APHC chairman Abdul Ghani Butt has talked in an interview in a manner that amounts to inviting the enemy to kill Kashmiris just as it has been slaughtering Palestinians:

“We want to break into two and go to Islamabad and New Delhi and talk. And then, the group talking to leaders in Delhi should go to Islamabad and the group talking to the Islamabad's should go to Delhi and talk to the leaders there, so that the walls of mistrust collapse for once and for all. The artificial lines drawn disappear and we move forward in a purposeful way. Let us hope Yasser Arafat and Shimon Peres surface in the sub-continent join hands together and work for peace.”

(Interview, Shashi Kumar, Sri Nagar, August 17, 2000)

If this litany is because of ignorance, it is unfortunate; and if it is deliberate, it is shameful, regrettable and alarming.

It seems pertinent to present some confirmatory admissions on different parts of the plan we have given a summary of in above lines, so that the real face of politics of America and India becomes clear. The daily *Financial Times* of London writes in the editorial note:

“Since President Clinton's visit to the region in March, a road map has begun to emerge that leads towards *détente*. This involves initially the reduction of hostilities on the ground. Subsequent stages include: the introduction of some form of devolution for the disputed Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir; recognition by India and Pakistan that the so-called line of control that divides their respective parts of Kashmir is in effect a border; and a scaling down of military presence which would in turn reduce the risk of nuclear escalation... The process is more likely to succeed if it is tackled slowly, stage by stage, and without attempting to pre-empt the nation of any final agreement. The trend in Indian politics towards greater devolution may

help as this will make the idea of some kind of autonomy for Kashmiris seem less alien. Closer economic ties between India and Pakistan would also improve the climate for any ultimate settlement.”

(The Financial Times, Editorial "Kashmir's Hope", Aug 3, 2000)

Another important daily of London, *The Guardian*, describes this as:

“Under quiet American prompting the Indian Government recently approached Kashmir states secessionist Hurriyat Conference opposition coalition. It also released some prisoners. In response Kashmir’s Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, alarmed that he was being outflanked, produced new autonomy proposals, modeled on the system in place in Kashmir before 1953. Although this plan initially causes a storm in Delhi, with much posturing from chauvinist members of the Hindu-dominated government, it was not rejected outright. The last month, the leading Pakistan-linked Islamic group, the Hizbul Mujahideen, declared a cease-fire. Again, discreet US pressure on Gen. Pervez Musharraf appears to have played a role.”

(The Guardian, Editorial "Kashmir's Killing Fields", Aug 3, 2000)

There is much to be read in-between-the lines in what has been said in this editorial about the leadership of Pakistan:

“The extent to which General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan military leader, is able or willing to control militant indigenous and foreign-manned Islamic groups based in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir has a significant bearing not only on Kashmir’s future but also his own. Cast even more broadly, Kashmir potentially pits US-backed and US-armed India against Pakistan, which in its post-coup isolation increasingly turns to Russia and China for support. Kashmir does matter a lot.”

London’s daily *The Times* writes:

“The Americans, to their credit, are using their considerable influence subtly and effectively. It is now upto Delhi and Islamabad to ensure that even if this first step peters out, the path to peace remains illumined.”

(Editorial "Cease-Fire in Kashmir", Aug 8, 2000)

India’s *The Hindu* Group’s important fortnightly has published a detailed essay "Kashmir Conundrum" that talks about India, Pakistan, America and the issue of autonomy. The writer says:

“The fact that the BJP-led government has no clear policy on Kashmir except a jingoistic one, combined with the fact that it must produce ‘dialogue’ and ‘solution’ to satisfy the Great Powers, means that the vacuum has been filled with either ad-

hoc moves or with policy perspectives based on American-inspired plans and domestically designed commercial projects.” **(Aug 14, 2000, p. 111)**

The same writer describes the India-America collusion in these words:

“India’s integration into the Western strategic design, including the military design, is now progressing apace, as indicated by its extensive joint exercises with the U.S. and France or the newly forged relationship with Israel. The recent visits of Advani and Jaswant Singh went beyond mere normalization of relations and are part of a design of regional strategic co-operation, high technology transfers, and direct co-operation in military and intelligence spheres. Contrast for example, the US response to Israel’s sale of technology to China where the US forced Israel to abrogate unilaterally an agreement it has signed jointly. Similarly in the ideological and political sphere, BJP-ruled India is fast emerging as America’s most ‘allied ally’. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) which is formally charged with intelligence gathering strictly within the US is scheduled to open an office in New Delhi.” **(Frontline, p.110)**

The following part of the report of Frontline’s correspondent in Sri Nagar Praveen Swami is worth pondering:

“One disturbing sign has come from the involvement of the United States, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in particular, in setting up the cease-fire.”

(Aug. 8, 2000)

According to this correspondent, Valley’s autonomy and separate treatment for Leh and Jammu has American consent. The proposal for dividing Jammu & Kashmir into three is being considered seriously. In the Laddakh area, Kargil is being separated from Leh, and Laddakh is being brought under the Leh Development Council. Jammu is being converted to Dogra majority state, and this is creating anxiety among Muslims there. The trifurcation (division into three) of state is also part of the American plan, as Reikha Chaudhry writes in "Autonomy Demand: Kashmir at Crossroads", in the famous Indian academic journal *Economic and Political Weekly*:

“A similar suggestion has been made by the Kashmir Study Group, headed by American-based Kashmiri billionaire Farooq Kathwari. It has recently come out with a report entitled "Kashmir - A Way Forward", which taking the clue from the Dixon Plan propounds the idea of reorganization of the State and its division on the basis of religious lines... The demand for a separate state for Jammu is raised by those who claim to represent Dogra Hindus.” **(July 22, 2000)**

While on the one hand, this 'solution' of the Kashmir issue is central to America's overt and covert diplomacy, on the other, it includes development of India's economic and military power, its permanent seat in the UN Security Council, and at last accept it as a nuclear power and exert pressure on Pakistan for accepting India as the dominating power of the region, reduce its military strength, keep silent on Kashmir, affix signatures to the CTBT, eliminate or reduce nuclear capability and focus all attention on economic revival and population control.

The question is whether this is acceptable to the Pakistani nation? We say without the fear of being refuted that Pakistani nation is not ready to accept this situation at any cost. We would rather say that those who try to play any role in it, the nation will not bear him for a moment. Whoever it may be!

The reason behind our clear and straightforward disowning is that the objective of the freedom struggle of Muslims of the subcontinent was the establishment and consolidation of such a Pakistan that would be a true model not only of Muslims' freedom but also of their Deen (creed and code of life), and culture and civilization, and through which the Muslims could regain their position in the comity of nations. This struggle was for the salvation from Indian domination, not for getting entrapped in it in its new form. Then, the Kashmir issue is neither a border dispute between two states, nor it is about occupying the source of water. This is unfinished agenda of India's Partition, and the issue of 15 million peoples' freedom and protection of their ideological identity. This is based on truth and principle and concerns the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu & Kashmir India has kept them deprived of till today. Today, Clinton and Vajpayee are saying that now borders cannot be changed with sword, though the fact is that not only the recent past but the whole 20th century is the century where maps were changed with the use of force.

India, itself, occupied Kashmir, Junagadh, Hyderabad, and Gwa through use of force. Nepal and Bhutan are independent countries but are in the political and economic grip of India. The bifurcation of Pakistan in 1971 came about only through use of force. Tamil uprising in Sri Lanka started with a backing from India. What happened in Afghanistan, East Europe, Central Asia, and what has happened only recently in Yugoslavia and Indonesia needs no elaboration.

As far as Kashmir is concerned, the issue is not of changing the political map with force. Instead, it is about getting rid through peoples' power from those who have forcefully occupied Kashmir. It is India that is resorting to brute use of force; it has deployed an army of 700,000 there. Through sheer force it wants to compel the people to live under slavery against their will. These are the facts that those Indian intellectuals are now admitting who feel the pangs of conscience. In this regard, a write-up by Gantam Navlakha in the *Economic and Political Weekly* of July 29, 2000 appears to be an eye-opener and is worth studying for Pakistani leadership and those intellectuals and writers who are talking in subdued voice for leaving Kashmir to the disposal of India. The write-up is entitled "Kashmir: It's never too Late to do the Right Thing" and opens as:

“It would be churlish not to welcome the offer by the Government of India to hold unconditional talks with the militant leadership, but a blunder to accept at face value the government’s sincerity. Just 24 hours before the offer was formally announced the prime minister had inserted that talk could only be held within the ‘constitutional framework’. If this is read with the history of backtracking, violation of accords and the fact that the ‘initiative’ is a result of US ‘facilitation’, then it strengthens doubts. But perhaps the biggest reason of all is its obsession with territorial integrity.”

The writer admits again and again that Kashmir is occupied by the army, that there is rule of force, that Pakistan government should not show weakness and if the struggle is continued with Faith and courage at this decisive moment then India would be compelled for the solution of the issue within the framework of the UN resolutions, tripartite talks and according to the will of the people. The writer analyses the military situation and says without hesitation that the war is becoming costlier for India with the passage of time and the balance is going against it.

In Kashmir the word ‘azadi’ subsumes their experience, of humiliation, abuse, indignity and the callous indifference exhibited by the ‘good’ people of India for 11 years. The process of alienation which was located in the political economy of ‘parasitic capitalism’ with its over-dependence on state, limited prospects of progress, lack of investments, and frustration fuelled by unemployment, rampant corruption...went through a cataclysmic change in the last 11 years of relentless violence where opting out of India became a rallying cry. This coincided with a period in recent history of India when communal-fascism was gaining ground. The riotous campaign for Babri masjid, its demolition, and series of anti-Muslim pogroms, followed by non-prosecution of the criminals undermined faith in Indian democracy. The anger against government forces is widespread. The figure of those killed put out by Gol are not believed even by the state government. While the union home ministry claims ‘more than 20,000’ deaths the state government has given out the death toll to be 70,000 in the 11 year-old ‘internal war’. There is independent corroboration for higher death count and culpability of government forces in this. A study prepared by Bashir Ahmad Dahla of University of Kashmir for ‘Save the Children Fund’ shows that until 1999, 60,000 people had died in Kashmir and there were 20,000 orphans and 16,000 widows. Now most governments tend to downplay civilian casualties by their own forces and blame the militants. The same study based on random sample of the cases shows that 80 per cent of the deaths were due to crossfire, killings by security forces, or in custody, and by the renegades. Records of Government Mental Hospital, Srinagar show that in 60 out of the 70 case histories, patients were either victims or were witness to atrocities committed by the security forces on someone close to them. Senior state officials admit that custodial killings have shown an alarming rise; 21 in the past three months (according to APHC it is as high as 58 during the same period). State administration has no control over the forces and can only privately express its disgust or helplessness.

In any case in 11 years no Kashmiri household has been spared and every family has a story to narrate. (*Economic and Political Weekly, July 29, 2000*)

This analysis of circumstances presents the latest situation, and it is by the pen of a renowned Indian intellectual, is based on ground realities, and confirmed by other independent sources.

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar writes in *Times of India*:

“I am deeply unhappy with the impasse in Kashmir. For five decades, I have been optimistic enough to believe that we are conducting a worthwhile nation-building venture there, based on secularism and liberal values. But now, after a decade of insurrection that shows no signing of dying down, estimates of 30,000 to 70,000 killed, and no light at the end of the tunnel, the venture looks less and less like the pursuit of liberal nation-building values, and more and more like colonialism. I am appalled at the unending killing. I fear that what began as a liberal venture has, unwittingly, evolved into the imposition of death, torture and destruction. As Madhu Kishwar has recently written, our security forces in Kashmir are viewed as butchers rather than protectors, who are constantly accused of fleecing, rape, torture and the killing of innocents. May be such accusations are exaggerated, but even if a quarter of them are true, it represents a moral cesspool. Their ham-handed tactics daily create new terrorists – relatives of those tortured or killed by security forces take to militancy themselves. It is idle for the government to claim that militancy is created entirely by Islamic mercenaries and Pakistan. It is created, above all, by the repressive behavior of our own security forces. Despite all efforts, their behavior has not improved, and so the alienation of Kashmiris seems to deepen. This is not a nation-building exercise, even if it started with such intention. What Kashmiris want must surely be decided by Kashmiris themselves, not by journalists and politicians speaking on their behalf. A plebiscite will reveal the truth. Let the people of the state be asked whether they wish to join Pakistan or remain with India. Let both India and Pakistan put their case to the people. My friends tell me that this is naive idealism that a plebiscite will lead to communal riots and slaughter. Yes indeed, that is a grave danger. But this happens to be very reason given by Churchill and other British imperialists to deny Indian freedom. They warned that ending colonial rule would spark terrible communal slaughter. Yet that was not a maintainable reason for continuing with British colonialism. Some friends say the analogy is false, that India was a colony of Britain whereas Kashmir is an integral part of India. This legalism will not wash. France claimed that Algeria was an integral part of France, and that legalism did not prevent Algeria from splitting away. I wish to steer clear of the legalisms of Article 370 of the Constitution, UN resolutions or the Shimla Agreement. Ultimately what matters is what people feel,

not scraps of paper. I am getting sick at heart with the endless killings in Kashmir. I think 30,000 is enough? We have spent over 50 years trying to build a nation based on liberal values. Let us remain faithful to those values rather than legalisms like accession treaties. Let us have a plebiscite.” **(Times of India, July 16, 2000)**

In such circumstances, the responsibility of Pakistan government, its army and the nation is huge. A lapse at this critical juncture of time in history can nullify what has been done so far, the sacrifices in 52 years, not 12 years. It is the verdict of history that wars are won or lost in heart and mind prior to their being fought out at the battlefield. The ground situation is in favor of Mujahideen and the resistance movement, but to maintain this position and take it to its logical conclusion is not possible without facing the political and economic pressure courageously. It is the duty of General Musharraf and the military leadership to take a firm stand on the rightful case of the Pakistani nation, and not to show weakness at any level. Economic front can be consolidated, and only such an effort can be useful and effective which seeks peoples' participation for the solution of problems, and not the one of confronting people. But the most important is: not to falter on the principled position of the Kashmir issue and to extend sincere and courageous support to the Muslims of Kashmir by taking the nation into confidence.

Mujahideen are ready to offer sacrifice. If they are sure that Pakistan is with them and that it would not show weakness, we are certain that they would fight the enemy with greater courage and valor and would emerge victorious, Insha Allah. The question is not of time, it is of determination and vision. China patiently waited for 100 year for Hong Kong, and regained Macao after four and a half centuries only now. In the case of Formosa, it is not ready to compromise or show weakness, it has taken a firm stand. In the case of Kashmir, the entire Kashmiri nation has risen up against India and all analysts are admitting the fact that it is now impossible to subjugate the Muslims of Jammu & Kashmir under Indian yoke. Pakistan's weakness under American pressure in the obtaining circumstances may disappoint them from Pakistan, but cannot compel them to accept Indian slavery. America is playing its own game, and we should understand this very well. India has its own designs, but it cannot fulfill them now. The tricks of India and plans of 'autonomy' and division present no solution to the issue. There is only one solution to the Kashmir issue and that is the achievement of the right to self-determination according to the UN resolutions. Pakistan, India, and Kashmiri people are party to the issue and India has no alternative but to be ready for the implementation of UN resolution through the tripartite talks. However great time it may take, the attention should remain focused on this single point. Political struggle, diplomatic efforts, and Jihadi activities all are different aspects of the same movement and reinforce and strengthen each other. This calls for standing external pressure and getting rid of those in our ranks who show weakness. This is the real challenge, without facing this courageously and effectively, the solution of the Kashmir imbroglio is not possible. The success of political struggle and talks depends on the strength of Jihadi forces and their activities. Any solution that is sought away of it may result in frustrating a successful struggle and waste of sacrifices of a whole

generation. Dignity and victory cannot be achieved by begging for talks or showing any impatience or weakness for agreement. Upholding the principled position and progress in every field can lead us to the real destination. The following verse of the Holy Qur'an provides guidance for us:

“Be not weary and faint-hearted, crying for peace, you would be uppermost: for Allah is with you, and will never put you in loss for your (good) deeds.”

(Muhammad 47:35)

It is Allah's promise that success would be ours if we fulfil the requirements of Faith:

“So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: for you must gain mastery if you are true in Faith.”

(Al-e-Imran 3:139)

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