

Comments On The Article The Poplar And The Chinar

Reference: "The Poplar And The Chinar: Kashmir In A Historical Outline" By Subhash Kak

The author has used the grandiose expression "historical outline" in the article title to lure the readers into what is a personal exposition of the causes of the ongoing civil war in Kashmir. The article is a pastiche of some fleeting glimpses on Kashmir literature, recent politics, philosophy, and history, which does not add up to an analysis of the causes of the upheaval in the Vale Of Kashmir. What the author's Trojan horse of "Historical Outline" delivers is a catalog of advice on how to run Kashmir in future, avoiding carefully the prescription of the chaos present now. The allure of the poplar and the chinar trees has been invoked by their use in the title, and for Kashmiris, additionally, their nostalgia to entice readers to a walk into the many quartered house of author's intellectual interests.

One of the major axes of the Islamic psychology is gyrating too eccentrically. Muslims are unable to adjust to modern life because of the rise of individualism over group identity; because of the loss of religious underpinnings of life to the yet new and, therefore, insecure order of scientific humanism; because of the preferred enlightened skepticism to unexplained certainty; because of the loss of the hallowed mystery of life to the programmed unraveling of it by the scientific method; because of the fast approaching equality of women with men. Overall, by the ascendancy of scientific thinking and freedom over religious outlook and tradition.

Muslims slept too long in the curtained security of Islam while the world, particularly the western part of it, developed rapidly in scientific, technological, economic, and social order. Today, Muslims can not cope with democracy, women's equality, and non-religious humanism. This group is suffering massive

identity crises. Because of the long seclusion from philosophical inquiries, they are right now in the early stage psycho-environmental development.

A Kashmiri Muslim is in double deficit because besides his Islamic unpreparedness to face modern life he bears the burden of the alienation from India. He has never identified with it.

A bomb is a mixture of particular chemicals in prescribed quantities, triggered when subjected to an internal or external ignition process. Consider the Kashmiri Muslim population, afflicted with a disturbing identity problem, living in a country with which they feel strongly alienated. This seething mixture is manipulated by an external ignition device in form of the Pakistan Government trained and financed insurgents.

Large human groups can become violent if they have lived long under economic, political, social, and religious tyranny. The identity crisis of Islam is a tyranny from the within. Other groups in India, given the right explosive mixture and the ignition trigger, can also explode.

The blazing fire destroying Kashmir today, apparently starting suddenly, has been in preparation for many generations. Cultural backwardness has made significant contribution to the madness gripping the people of the famous valley. If they had been matured they would seek their identity without much bloodshed and destruction. The condition of Kashmiris is like that of an individual who has passed into insanity because he could not resolve his problems. Central to this condition, for Kashmiris, is their lack of vision, values, and education.

Even in modern times Kashmiris, both Hindus and Muslims, have lived a secluded life, away from character and vision building processes of national struggle for freedom, nation or state development, cultural, artistic, or spiritual resurgence. In the idyllic state of Kashmiri existence, they have remained underdeveloped in pride, purposeful living, creativity, and ambition. Generations of Kashmiris have

lived lives of critics, cynics, laggards, and low-achievers.

The present implosion of Kashmiris is the culmination of a long history of empty lives. Living at the mercy of other people, Kashmiris have developed into hypocrites, supported mainly by vacuous vanities. Kashmiriat, as described in M.J.Akbar's book *Behind The Vale*, is a fantasy up on the horizon in the minds of romantics and ignorant outsiders. It is so much off the point as ocean depths are from Himalayas.

The crisis we see now in Kashmiris is not merely due to political crosscurrents, but much more than that, it is the crisis of the soul of a people.