

Reflections On Kashmir Problem

M.Kaul

When we look at Kashmir problem we are appalled by the enormousness of the devastation to its physical, economic, cultural, political, and its peoples psychological infrastructure. Its famed beauty lies in shambles and its noted tranquil and intelligent people have been transformed into fanatic, destructive tyrants.

What has wrought this havoc, who has planted these demons?

The problem of Kashmir emanates from the crisis of soul of its Muslim inhabitants. Muslims round the world are in a psychological turmoil. The conflict between the pristine and secure world of Islam and the scientific humanism with the accent on unvarnished realism of modern life has made them enemies of science, democracy and common pleasures of life. The worldwide Islamic fundamentalist revolution was not expected to miss Kashmir, even though its geopolitical situation seemed to lull some people in thinking so. Furthermore, Kashmiri Muslims' special burden of non-identification with India added to the chemistry of trauma. If Pakistan would have not been so eager to exploit India's weak leadership at the time, Kashmir would have continued to remain a seething but secure bomb. The Pakistani intrigue lifted Kashmiri Muslims' vague but restrained unhappiness by psychological exploitation, death threat, and massive infusion of arms and money to a level of civil war.

Pakistan has longed and hungered for Kashmir since its creation. Some of its political leaders and artists dreamed of attaching the hauntingly beautiful Eden as the prime jewel to the hard won.

Islamic crown-Pakistan. More than the figment of imagination, Kashmir has proved to be an indispensable political tool used by politicians ever since Pakistan's inception to divert the attention of its people from the urgent problems of hunger and chaos. In a non-secular state the danger to the religious survival, in this case a fictitious one created in the form of Kashmir's relationship with India, is paramount. So Pakistan can not let go of Kashmir, as long as the present political climate continues. For an expenditure of just a few crores of rupees a year it is able to provide political glue to its fractious population and destabilize its arch-enemy- India.

Since independent nation of Kashmir is a geopolitical impossibility, its merger

with Pakistan is the best Kashmiri Muslims can hope for in their quest for an Islamic state. But the Pakistani citizenship will only be of second class. Furthermore, the economic and political crises of Pakistan will significantly downgrade Kashmir's lifestyle. This material and psychological suicide by Kashmiri Muslims is a manifestation of the crisis of soul they are undergoing. To the traumatized, the concerned, and the curious people with different involvements with the Kashmir problem, Government Of India's Kashmir strategy is a puzzle. Why would it let the turmoil stretch so long when the militant's military power is insignificant compared to its own. By various estimates there are no more than 6000 militants in Kashmir at this time. Any other government in place of the Indian government, having the military superiority and the favorable sovereignty status it has, would have crushed the rebels a long time ago - particularly when their sponsor, a neighbor country, has already tried to destabilize it in another region. But we know India's problems are that of guilt, incompetence, and weak leadership. It is unthinkable that a Nehru or a Gandhi (Indira) would have let the situation mess up so much.

Government Of India, with the pride of having solved problems similar to Kashmir earlier in Nagaland and Punjab under its chest, believes four years of turmoil is still too little struggle with its enemies to process into success. It has chosen low-level armed confrontation with militants and a protective relationship with its sympathizers as against full military engagement and carrot and stick approach. The chosen strategy has been perfected in Nagaland and Punjab and gives the semblance of an inter-group estrangement being brought under control by 'police forces rather than letting the situation be exposed by the use of full military forces as a civil war with international dimensions that it is. This slow processing of the problem toward the ultimate goal of the rehabilitation of law and order and political life is Government's bedrock strategy. That is why it gives monthly dole of support to boatmen, taxi drivers, shopkeepers, and sells the fruit of orchid owners outside Kashmir. The 'big brother' thinks that when the 'family feud' is over the 'little brother' will realize the former's vision, temperance, and benevolence. So time in the Kashmir problem solution is of little priority to the Government.

The brutality of the Government forces in Kashmir is the reflection of the misdirection and the inaptitude of its operations and not New Delhi's strategy. Guerilla wars are very difficult to fight to begin with and if to that is added India's legendary incompetence, the bizarreness of the outcome in the Kashmir confrontation is not a surprise. We are reminded of the mess the U.S. troops created in Vietnam. At any rate, the needless deaths are uncondonable.

This strategy is inhuman and absurd. By letting the daily doses of death , devastation, and chaos go on, the Govt. is indirectly torturing and tormenting innocent people who want nothing more than normal services of medical care and street security, and ambiance of peaceful existence.

Kashmir problem can only be resolved by the use of full Indian military power. No international mediation will work. Nor will Pakistan ever agree to division of Kashmir. There is no other significant compromise it can make. Already deluded and brainwashed, Kashmiri Muslims will be further alienated the more the present standoff is stretched.

The proposal of the rising Kashmiri Pundit organization, Panun Kashmir, to carve a piece of land out of the present boundaries of Kashrnir for the Pundits is impractical. It only has a propaganda value at the cost of the seriousness of the organization to solve the Kashmir problem. There is no other way but for Hindus and Muslims to live together peacefully in Kashmir as they have done for centuries. But this obvious thing has been lost to the famed Kashmiri survival instinct at this time in their history. They say when misfortune strikes a man the biggest causality is his mind.

Should India give away Kashmir to its Muslim inhabitants (which in practical terms means giving it to Pakistan) just because they want to live in an Islamic state - even though it means their living in a politically and economically impoverished state. In this day and age to change a secular state to a religious one would be a breach of principle, a step backward in darkness. We are already burdened with the existing religious states about which we can do nothing.