

TRAILS OF TURBULENCES IN VALLEY ARE LINKED TO DESTROYED YOUTHS

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From 2008 onwards every summer has been ridden with prolonged street protests where youths willingly/unwillingly have been in the forefront. Patron Saints of anti India and pro Pak tirades trigger an incident/an issue which willy-nilly manages to put youths on the path of self destruction. The innocent youths get carried away by the dictates of such Patron Saints. In 2008 the trigger was Amarnath land row which was one of its kind because it was more of a counter offensive to Jammu agitation. In 2009 it was a red-herring of alleged rape and drowning of two young women of Shopian by local police officials. Now it is Sopore. Kashmir spends yet another summer in blood bathed hopelessness. The agitating youths are from the generation born during late 80s and early 90s when the militancy was at its peak. This generation is virtually born, fed and brought up on bloodshed. During their youth, they have seen terrorism, blasts, bandhs, agitations, corruption, misgovernance, false hopes, broken promises, death and destruction. This generation is a deprived generation which is very angry and frustrated. The anger and frustration is more prominent amongst poor, middle and upper middle class segment of the society. They did not have the opportunities of schooling, good education, , play, fun and frolic of youthfulness. With the inherited gloomy past; the present full of desperation, they don't have bright future either. Their childhood was destroyed at the time of their birth. In the present agitation it is this angry younger generation in their late teens or early twenties which is pivotal to the call for Azaadi and provides manpower for street protests and violation of curfew. While fighting the curfew they fight the security forces in which some fall victims to tear gas shells, rubber as well as live bullets when they close in to target security forces personnel and their habitat.

"We want Azaadi" is the war cry of street protests. Frustrated youths fight for their Azaadi with the stones unlike militants who fight for Azaadi with AK47. An imaginative tactics because stone throwing is neither an act of militancy nor of terrorism. Hence new method of protest is directed against political leadership, bureaucracy security forces and India. The trails of present turbulences are linked to past of the youths and a stark reminder of consequences of 2 decades of strife full of violence, bloodshed and deprivations unleashed from within and across the borders. *Who is responsible for this generational tragedy and who is responsible for the present stand off?* Is it Srinagar, Delhi or Rawalpindi or all of them? This is what is to be debated by this generation itself for chartering their own course of destinies rather than leaving the decisions to the foreign handlers and agent provocateurs. Kashmiri leadership has an important role in determining the future of Kashmir and the deprived generation. History will judge them by the role they play in restoring normalcy in the valley and in securing a bright future for the unemployed youths. Youths will also be judged by their contributions in minimizing sufferings of poor and innocent masses. There are many ways of protest. Let them know that ex servicemen of Jammu carried out a silent protest march in 2007 from Rajinder Chowk to Mubarak Mandi under the leadership of Maj Gen GS Jamwal and presented a memorandum to the Divisional Commissioner. Most of their demands were met by a single silent protest march. Should they emulate the ex servicemen, being Kashmiris they will be heard more.

During the run up to 2008 election, autonomy, self rule and employment were the main declarations of political parties. Whereas main agenda of the masses was restoration of peace and normalcy in the state after decades of turmoil. Disillusioned with both militancy and Pakistan people craved for peace and liberally turned up for voting. Now, nearly 2 years down

the line, not to mention peace/normalcy, what we have is insurrection of worst kind because politicians lost the focus, ignored the aspirations of the people thus allowing the disillusioned youth, who is a voter as well, to come to the fore front. The state govt seems to have miserably failed in its obligations to the public and hence let the gains of security situation and goodwill of masses fritter away. By allowing initial euphoria to evaporate in the thin air it brought the situation to such an impasse that the youths violate curfew, challenge the writ of the govt, forcing it to requisition army. Views of Army Chief were reminder of neglect of masses by govt; the reality not digestible to Dr. Farooq Sahib. Govt cannot escape the responsibility for the recent agitation and consequential deaths as well as human rights violations and must face the public anger. Internal factors such as separatists, unemployment, cash for stone throwing and external factors such as hawala money and Pak handlers can only be called catalysts. More over Delhi's policy towards J&K is influenced by Pak factor which has its roots in partition on religious lines. Religious factor, ethnic division, regional tensions and the local insurrection handicap center's involvement/interference in the political issues. Moreover Kashmiris hate any form of central intervention and that is why they seek autonomy/self rule. Unless the politics of kind of run up to elections takes centre stage and engages people intimately in the process of governance; as suggested by Mr. Chidambaram, any significant change in the mind set of agitators and improvement in law and order is unlikely. The trend of addressing large public gatherings from a distant elevated dais, surrounded by security staff and sycophants and a quick escape after speeches will have to be abandoned. Small public gatherings like road shows can only give an opportunity to the public, particularly youths to interact with leaders. When the main opposition party as well as the separatist leaders spearheading the agitation is unwilling to talk/listen and there are no elected local self govt reps, direct talks with youth appear to be the only solution and must be given a chance. Unless the politicians reform themselves, become part of solution to the problem and stop playing petty politics, they will continue facing the wrath of angry and agitated youths. Time may not be far when the angry youth may tread on the path of Naxalism to set the things rights in their own way. If that happens none other than the Kashmiri leadership will be responsible.

The strategy of Pak Army and ISI to keep agitation and sectarian violence alive need to be tactfully handled by political leadership from Delhi. Kashmir problem should be left exclusively to the discretion of Kashmiris. In Kashmir, issues of politics are more pronounced than bread and butter; that is why financial and economic packages are just not working. The current crisis of credibility can only be overcome by the combined effort of (i) the politicians (ii) the bureaucracy, (iii) administration and (iv) the security forces working together in harmony for the welfare of public. Whatever is left of the discredited govt can still be retrieved. Redressal of grievances of youths and assuring them a brighter future with respect and dignity is need of the hour. A new genuine, transparent, honest and pro youth approach may instill some hope in them. Though their youth remains destroyed, their future must be protected. Luckily there is youthful Chief Minister to do the needful and he is expected to rise to the occasion rather than be captive of insecurity of his job. He is privileged of vast opportunities in his youth. He is morally obliged to afford similar opportunities to other youths particularly to those, whose youth has been destroyed by no fault of theirs.

A great man is the one who gives greatest happiness to the largest number of people. Public sentiment is everything. With it nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed.