

Quit Kashmir call given in 1946 was more with Kashmir valley in view and not whole of J&K State

By Daya Sagar

In mid 1940s the division of India was expected on the religion basis, (i) Kashmir Valley had majority Muslim population (JK on the whole too had majority Muslim population) , (ii) Kashmir Province of JK had borders with China, Russia, Afghanistan and would be Pakistan. So, it could be inferred from the happenings in 1940s that Sheikh Abdullah did see some strategic importance for his self and Kashmir Valley (to start with not J&K as a whole). He mainly eyed at acquiring reins of power of the Kashmir Valley after independence. Therefore, he had given the quit Kashmir call in 1946 raising the issue of 1846 Amritsar treaty under which Kashmir Valley was endorsed to Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu (Jammu and Ladakh) by the British Company Raj (State of Jammu and Kashmir was formed).

Sheikh also had his eye on the views of the Congress leadership that considered that opinion of the people should have prevail regarding future of Princely States after the British retreat. Whereas the Government of India Act 1934 had proposed in favour a decision by the Ruling Prince. He was hopeful that with the influence of Nehru the power in Kashmir Valley can come in the hands of National Conference. He did succeed in his venture in side lining Hari Singh to great extent after the instrument of accession was signed. The approach Nehru had adopted towards Sheikh Abdullah too was a reason (one of the reasons in view of the circumstances) for the delayed decision by Hari Singh on accession. It was later on that Sheikh's ambitions too grew for taking control over whole of the State of JK since the Congress leadership would not have allowed Nehru to cut Kashmir Valley as a separate State for Sheikh Abdullah. So it could be said that it is for this reason that Sheikh Abdullah, National Conference, Valley based Kashmiri leaders and other political groups refer to disturbances/ disputes / troubles as Kashmir dispute/ Kashmir affairs / Kashmiri culture / Kashmiri identity (and do not literary name J&K or Jammu as the issue)

It is now another 20 years after 1989 turmoil in Valley / migration of the Kashmiri Hindu .Still one would not find any notable leader (even from the Muslim community) belonging to Jammu Province or Ladakh Region amongst the front line separatist leadership or so called mainstream party leadership advocating for (i) rights of Kashmiries, neglect of Kashmiries,(ii) Kashmir dispute, (iii) solving Kashmir affairs with the participation of Pakistan / other world countries , (iv) separatist ideology, (v) plebiscite, (vi) right of self-determination and (vii) even advocating for honoring of Kashmiries resting more in provisions like Greater Autonomy or "Self Rule" . Similarly any individuals sitting outside India and talking of Kashmir as a dispute needing political settlement too are mostly having their origin in Kashmir Valley. They too refer the dispute, if any, as only Kashmir dispute. So, in simple terms the issues that emerged in 1940s from within or outside were with Kashmir valley in view and not whole of J&K State. The dialogue process that has been initiated by Delhi at occasions too has been aimed at discussions mainly with the leaders

belonging to Kashmir valley .The invitation given by P. Chidambaram (HM) and Man Mohan Singh (PM) in Oct 2009 too does not appear to have no one other than Kashmir Valley based leadership in view. Therefore, the JK problem / issue that if at all needs some settlement has its nerve center in Kashmir Valley and not in the whole State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Ladakh Region and Jammu Province of the princely State of J&K of Hari Singh had very distinct identity of their own.

It has also been alleged by many people that in October / November 1947 the Sheikh Mohd Abdullah (who headed the local democratic State government appointed by Maharaja/ Monarch of J&K) and Bakshi Ghulam Mohd (Chief Emergency Officer) did not show much interest to get the parts of Poonch , Mirpur, Bhimber, Kotli, Muzaffarabad, vacated of the invaders from Pakistan . It cannot be over looked that the Indian forces that had got Baramulla / Uri cleared by 8th November 1947 could have easily got these non-Kashmiri speaking areas (Dogra /Punjabi areas) also liberated. Of course the areas presently under Pakistan occupation did not have that much cultural / linguistic and ethnic similarity with Kashmir valley. Majority of the area lost was non Kashmiri speaking.

So may be the solution could be easily found in isolating the problem solving efforts with in Kashmir Valley. Rather it would be wise to discuss the so called disputed Kashmir affairs with the Kashmir Valley leaders only. Nearly all the individuals / leaders , may it be Ali Sahah Geelani, Yasin Malik, Omar Farooq, Shabir Shah, Prof Gani Bhat, Sajaad Ahd Lone , Mufti Mohd Sayeed, Omar Abdullah who either (i) negate 1947 accession (ii) talk of plebiscite (iii) talk of Kashmir as a dispute between India and Pakistan / with people of Kashmir (iv) talk of accession with Pakistan OR (i) those who name the accession of J&K with India as conditional (ii) to be conserved in maximum to defence, foreign affairs, communication and some ancillary issues or (i) those who talk less of liberation of areas occupied by Pakistan (ii) who talk more of joint control of India and Pakistan over some affairs of J&K and (iii) like disputing terms belong to only Kashmir Valley. The manner in which the Working Group on Centre State Relations headed by Saghir Ahmed has drafted its report to depicts clear distinct regional aspirations of the people of J&K. Most of the leaders / groups from Jammu and Ladakh regions who had any grievance did participate in the working group meetings. Whereas all the separatist leaders did not participate. All the economic and administrative issues were raised by people from Jammu Region. Whereas only the issues like Autonomy and Self Rule were raised by the leaders of main stream political parties from Kashmir Valley. The report too shows that the issues that matter to Kashmir Valley leaders concern more to the accession of princely state of J&K with India. Justice Saghir report too has shown more concern for questions raised from Valley. PDP did not come forward with a document but still the report has recommended that New Delhi must consider the Self Rule proposals / documents as and when submitted by PDP.

To me it appears that the main stream Kashmir Valley leaders do not appear much interested in immediate settlement of the local issues. But it will neither be in the interest of common man of any of the three regions of J&K or in the interest of New Delhi to let the issues linger. Some hard and specific decision will have to be taken. It would be better to start with the easiest question and approach step by step. This way some doors would be closed and specifics would be limited in smaller fields. The protests could be better settled if localized.

One of the approaches could be to seriously see the possibilities for isolating governance of the Jammu Province of Princely State of J&K as well as the Ladakh Region from Kashmir Valley. One of the approaches could be something like trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir State and settle the valley turmoil locally... Those who fear that in case valley is isolated from other regions of J&K India will lose Kashmir province to Pakistan may prove wrong. Similarly it has to be kept in mind that Dogra rulers had extended their boundaries to Ladakh and even into Tibet while Kashmir Valley was with the Sikh Empire. So Indian borders along China / Afganistan/ Russia could still be secure. And above all Sheikh Mohd Abdullah was never for two nation theory. Nor was he for a theocratic Islamic state. So those who fear Kashmir leadership falling in the lap of Pakistan too would not prove right.

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