

A Look Through the Mist

5th Working group report has in a way demonstrated that regional bias exists

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. Report of the Working Group headed by Retd Justice S Saghir Ahmad (constituted by Indian Prime Minister in May 2006) that was presented to JK Chief Minister Omar Abdullah at Jammu on 23 rd December last year demonstrated the confusions that Justice Saghir Ahmed carried. **Ofcourse the WG report does not have much useful text on the subjects that related to Centre State relations** . Kashmiri over ground separatists did not participate in any of the working group meeting as well as three Round Table Conferences chaired by Prime Minister. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah presented the report to Prime Minister on 30 December. Omar Abdullah has still suggested that Centre should hold dialogue with political parties on the issue of Autonomy and other issues. But the report has failed to even settle the questions being raised by mainstream groups like NC, PDP, BJP, JKNPP, BSP, etc. After having spent over two and half years the Chairman of the WG has in a way still asked the J&K Chief Minister to study the prime referral issues, work out road maps for the State Assembly and the Government of India for consideration where ever deemed fit or practicable. In case the Chief Minister Omar Abdullah had to do this, then , what was the Working Group doing. **This way the process of constituting committees and groups would go on till when, no one can tell this day.. 5th Working group report has in a way demonstrated that regional bias exists.**

The report is full of regional divides. A separate university has been recommended for Ladakh. A Dogri TV Channel on the lines of Kashir Channel in Kashmir Valley has been recommended for Jammu region. Upgradation of Government College of Engineering Jammu to the level of IIT has been recommended . Simultaneously upgradation of NIT Srinagar to the level of IIT has been recommended.

Have not regional considerations influenced Saghir Ahmed decisions concerning J&K? If so, then from Saghir Ahmed report atleast message should go to Delhi that J&K needs some architecture keeping in view distinct regional needs of J&K. Before 1947 also Maharaja had managed State on similar lines.

Any how the summary of the text of the report as was disclosed through sources did demonstrate the pressures the ruling coalition government in J&K is facing from the 3 regions of J&K in addition to the separatists.

The report has made just passing references to Greater Autonomy of NC, Autonomy Resolution 2000 of J&K Assembly, Self Rule of PDP and Article 370 .There is nothing new in the report about these subjects. Only thing that could emerge is that National Conference and PDP could use some passing references to keep the people of Kashmir Region in illusions as regards future of centre state relations .In view of the non serious approach of the GOI regarding the questions raised on the accession of J&K with India or the talks of some conditional accession, it has to be accepted that for a common man of J&K (particularly Kashmir valley) there is some thing still pending as regards deciding the relations between Indian and Kashmir (J&K State of Hari Singh). So, it was only the reference to Autonomy / Self Rule / Article 370 that did matter as regards Kashmir Valley to those in power seat. No objections have been made from the leaders from Kashmir Valley to the text of the

report concerning subjects like Autonomy / Self Rule / Article 370 . Just reference of these subjects for consideration has been satisfying for the Valley leaders including NC and PDP (even Congress leaders of Valley). Where as even non conclusive and half references have attracted objections from the leadership belonging to Jammu Region, Ladakh region and Kashmiri migrant Hindu. This shows that the affairs of J&K have regional orientations and Saghir Ahmed working group report too could not escape the divisive shades. Both NC and PDP well know that neither Self Rule nor greater autonomy would be endorsed by New Delhi . But to secure some footing against the separatists and anti 1947 Accession ideologists they have to keep accusing New Delhi for not being FAIR towards “THE KASHMIR”. Those who call J&K a matter of political dispute of extra territorial dimensions and hold separatist ideologies negating the 1947 accession of J&K had no interest in working group agenda and the report. The references on Autonomy / Self Rule / Article 370 have been totally rejected by the leaders from Jammu and Ladakh regions.

Most of the other issues that the Working Group Report has referred to (even beyond the scope of terms of reference) too have only regional implications . Rather the report as it pertains to some important issues has gone against all the aspirations and demands of two regions of J&K (Jammu and Ladakh regions). So it were the people from Jammu and Ladakh Regions who had some thing to react. It also appeared from the report that the local and economic issues demanding consideration in J&K pertained to areas that fell outside Kashmir Valley (Jammu and Ladakh Regions). For Kashmir Valley the Kashmiri leaders had to discuss only center state relations and nothing else.

Democratic uniformity subjects like modifying the term of *JK LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY from 6 years to 5 years*, (ii) *issue of REPRESENTATION/RESERVATION FOR ST*, (iii) *WOMEN IN ASSEMBLY*, (iv) increasing the number of seats in the Legislative *ASSEMBLY*, (iv) *conducting regular elections to democratic bodies including Panchayats and Municipalities where ever due immediately*, (v) *return of Kashmiri migrants/ the relief/ rehabilitation packages/facilitating admission of children of returning migrants in educational and training institutions in Kashmir Valley / providing security to such families*, (vi) payment of relief to **Migrants from the militancy affected areas of Jammu Region**, (vii) **relief/ rehabilitation / local employment of 1947 refugees from Pakistan who mostly settled in Jammu region** , (viii) **implementing the** Wadhwa Committee Report, (ix) registration of properties and payment of claims there of (along with compensation for the delay over 6 decades) of **POK DPs of 1947**, (xi) **compensation to border migrants displaced as a result of conflict at international border/LOC/ Kargil** , (xii) *alleged under representation in Legislature to Jammu Region and demand for a fresh Delimitation by amending* 29th Constitutional Amendment , (xiii) undoing the **unfair treatment meted to the backward and remote area people of J&K (Doda, Kishtwar, Ramban, Bhandarwah, Poonch, Rajouri, Kathua, Udhampur , Kupwara belts) who are unfairly represented in the Legislative Assembly in defiance to the Representation of the People Act 1957** that lays down the parameters for fair Delimitation of Assembly Seats, (xvi) providing reservation in services / education by State Government to the residents of areas adjoining international border like those near LOC, (xvii) references *to Gajendragadkar and Sikri Commissions and the like issues pertained to the people living in Jammu Region only. These questions have nearly got no favourable recommendations/ deliberations in the report and have caused irritation to the people more in the Jammu Region.* So one could say that the demands that were more of socio economic nature pertained more to Jammu Region and have not found acknowledging reference in the WG report. The demand for Union territory status from Ladakh has been out rightly negated in the report. Not even recommended for some more deliberations. Report says that the unity and integrity of the State of Jammu and Kashmir can not be compromised and the Union Territory Status for Ladakh is not recommended. **This was also a regional demand and has not found favours even for consideration where as Autonomy has found. Why did not Saghir Ahmed suggest same approach for examining the Ladakh Union Territory Demand , could be asked.**

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