

A Look Through the Mist

The people of economically and educationally barren land could be easily exploited by Separatist elements Poonch/ Marwah/ Bhadarwah / Gool/ may not be producing even half the quantity of Rajmash that is sold in their name.

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Omar Abdullah has been so regularly expressing concern for the areas with poor road connectivity and those suffering of economic poverty. There is need to pump in extra resources where development has been over looked over last six decades. Programmes like National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, National Rural Health Mission, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, PMGSY, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, PMRP, JNNRUM. National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, National Rural Health Mission, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, PMGSY, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and Bharat Nirman Yojna could be more used to pump in extra funds. Ghulam Nabi Azad during his term as Chief Minister said that the areas where the development has been less would be given extra funds to make good the shortfall. Not much on ground has been there in this regard. Omar Abdullah has Dr. Farooq Abdullah and Ghulam Nabi Azad at Delhi to prop him, seniors like A. Rathar and Ali Mohd Sagar to carry along and youth like Tara Chand, Raman Bhalla, Sham Lal Sharma, Dr Manohar Lal to work with vision. Why not to apply corrections now through Prime Minister Reconstruction Programme. **People hopefully look for trueness in Omar Abdulla's vision.**

The lost pace of development in horticulture, agriculture and tourism of the areas of Kupwara, Baramulla, Doda, Rajouri, Poonch, Kishtwar, Ramban, Bhaderwah, Udhampur, Kathua, can be made good only in case special programmes are drawn out to pump in about Rs.15000 crores over next five years in these areas on projects other than power projects. No doubt Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh has been backing Omar Abdullah. But programmes have to be drafted by the local leadership / Government. No programme of value has so far been drawn out worth including in the Prime Minister's Reconstruction Programme to make good the loss in pace for development of Pulses, Kesar and tourism infrastructure in Jammu province { that would have more benefitted the rural, backward, farflung and poor areas}. Such priority issues must form the part of vision Document of youthful Omar Abdullah. J&K is an industrially backward state and employment avenues have to be looked for.

J&K Legislative Assembly was informed by *Mr. A.R Zargar on 11-03-2005 during question hour that Kashtwar Saffron sells in the market for over Rs.400/450 per tola as against Rs. 200 per tola for Kashmir Saffron for the reasons of superiority. But not many people out side J&K know that there is an area like Kishtwar in J&K that produces Saffron { Kesar}. Bhaderwah, the so called mini Kashmir has not been given even a miniature feature in the tourism promotion plans of J&K. There has been nothing more than a lip service to Bhaderwah.*

There has been a total neglect of Commercial Tourism in and around Chenab Valley as well as along the Pir Panjal ranges. The neglect could be gauged from the fact that even in two decades after 1989 the infrastructure at and around even Sanasar has not been developed. The KUD Mall road could not be completed by Patnitop Development Authority. Developing Bhaderwah as a potential tourist resort too has remained a distant dream. Some work for Bhaderwah has been done after 2006 but it was only since Ghulam Nabi Azad belonged to Bhaderwah. Still Bhaderwah is not commercially sold to the potential tour organizers out side J&K .

February 2005 snow storms had exposed the backwardness and poverty of the people of the Jammu Province. Many villages in Jammu Province could not be even reached till middle of March 2005 to know the damage there. It was due to the reasons of almost totally missing roads/ means of communication and the people living there belonging to very very low economic strata. *Had the economic level of the people there been better, voice would have been raised for fixing the responsibility for the otherwise avoidable damage. Had due attention been paid to the backward and poor areas after October 1947 conditions would have been different. Ghulam Nabi Azad after taking over as Chief Minister of J&K had drawn the attention of local leadership as well as the government of India towards a very very low level of communication net work in the Jammu Province.*

Those who allege that Kashmir Valley has been always given more funds must also agree that the people of Kashmir Valley have made regular / consistent / hard efforts { in the name of Kashmiriat} to draw the attention of New Delhi towards the miseries and economic problems of those living in the Kashmir Valley. They deserve all appreciations for the sincerity and caring attitude they have been demonstrating for their lands. Rather the local leadership on this side of tunnel should take leads from them.

All those who are concerned for poverty and educational backwardness of masses of Doda, Rajouri, Udhampur, Ramban, Kishtwar, Kathua, Poonch and the kandies of District Jammu should catch on Ghulam Nabi Azad's Dogriat . Surely additional funds will have to be provided to "Dogriat" to match pace. Ghulam Nabi is once again at Delhi, let him make good what he could not do earlier with the assistance of Dr. Farooq Abdullah.

The economic backwardness has indirect adverse effect on the law and order, security and administrative efficiency. Developmental funds that are allocated are not used effectively and execution costs are high. Scope for keeping a check on the corruption too is less in remote areas. **And if at all the senior officers and ministers happen to tour such areas the travel and boarding arrangements specially made for them do not allow them to have the feel of the local scarcities.**

*The people of these economically and educationally barren land could be easily exploited. Separatist elements (elements challenging 1947 accession of J&K to Dominion of India) have started sowing the seeds outside Kashmir Valley as well . Those who look for long term solutions only in operations like Sadhbhawana and "Bharat Darshan " are rather extra ambitious. The programmes with sponsored "facelift" have not paid much. There is much left on ground for the anti accession forces to woo the innocent people of J&K doubt fair Indian intentions. **Government of India must look closely towards remote {with poor communication links } and economically backward areas .***

Tourism could do a lot of good to backward areas. With the flow of tourist traffic to a particular area the demand for services and materials also flows in. **When the visitors / tourists are attracted from one State to another State or from one country to another country, the local economy on the net basis grows substantially worth making a count.** Development of infrastructure for attracting the tourist has to be nearly started from Zero level. The programmes so far made are not worth attracting potential spending tourist even to Baderwah and Sanasar. *To make good the short fall it would require to put in lot of additional money as well as priorities. It is here that the Pilgrim Tourism if promoted would accelerate the process.* Jammu Province many places of pilgrimage are located near to places that have potential for development as tourist resorts. The places of pilgrimage in Doda/Poonch/Rajouri/ Udhampur sub regions could be used to promote { **Pilgrimages/ shrines make visitors to rush in even hard conditions**} the potential spots even while communication and other infrastructure is being laid.

The Horticulture industry in Jammu Province is lagging behind. Rather the temperate fruits of Jammu region have remained unattended. **No one outside knows that high quality peach, apple, cherry (even Kathua District), nashpati, plum , walnut could be grown commercially in Jammu Province.** The *Kambal* (blanket) and *Loee* industry has almost sunk in deep seas, shawls of Basoli are not sold with honour even in Jammu bazaars. I doubt Poonch/ Marwah/ Bhadarwah / Gool/ and like areas are presently producing even half the quantity of Rajmash that is sold in Jammu. May be Rajmash of other origin are sold in disguise. No organized programme has been taken in Jammu province to promote commercial production of local varieties of Rajmash and the paddy (local fine *Basmati Rice*). There is near **total economic / educational/ administrative backwardness where as a lot of scope exists for development of local pulses, crafts, industries , agriculture and tourism/ health resorts.** The damage the militancy has done to the life and economy of the poor and backward people would have been much less had these areas been well linked and exposed to knowledge & information.

Not much on ground has been done in the field of tourism although Mr. Ghulam Hassan Mir, Mr. Jugal Kishore , Mr. Mohd. Shrief Niaz and Mufti Mohd Sayeed had initiated for development of decorated commercial tourism in Jammu Province. Tourism Development authorities like Kishtwar, Bhadarwah, Poonch, Rajouri, Bani, Basoli ,Mansar have very low value projects in hand. **Mansar Saruinsar Development Authority has been operating from Vikram Chowk Jammu is enough to demonstrate the status over the years. Neither SKUAST nor Agriculture Department have any high value targeted programme on Kishtwar Kesar and pulses like Rajmash .** Government could start with the Pilgrim tourism to open the channels and simultaneously raise the communication and other infrastructure.