

Writers



KASHMIR



Columnists



Kashi Nath Pandita

Articles on Kashmir

SELECTED ARTICLES BY DR. KASHI NATH PANDITA

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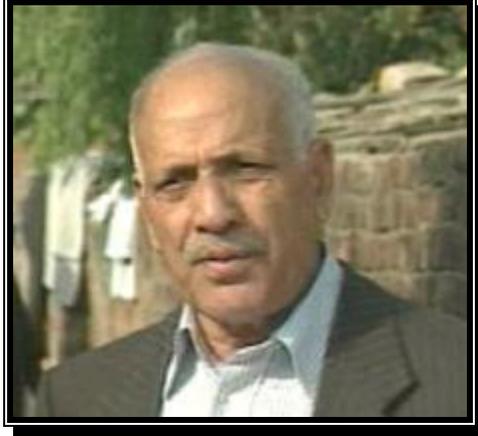
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1.0 PROF. KASHI NATH PANDITA



Prof. Kashi Nath Pandita

Born in Baramulla in 1927, he obtained his M.A. in Persian from the Panjab University and Ph.D. in Iranian from Teheran University. He served for a long time as professor in the Persian Department and the Centre of Central Asian Studies at the Jammu and Kashmir University. He has authored several books including *My Tajik Friends*, *Iran and Central Asia*, and *Baharistan-i-Shahi*.

2.0 ON KASHMIR NUCLEAR FLASH – POINT

The term 'flash point' is of American coinage like many other terms in the idiom of contemporary international politics. There is no 'flash point' on the globe unless one is created. And once created, it is invested with all the attributes that stimulate its relevance, essentially to regional and advisably to international security dimensions. Thus more articulate groups and subgroups in the region tend to exaggerate threat perceptions in order to pave the path for international concern and intervention, as the situation demands. Thus while Kashmir and Bosnia fall in the 'concern' category, Iraq falls in 'intervention' category. The Palestinian question is outside this syndrome for historical reasons. However, it is not a 'flash point' either for the Islamic world or the US although Israel and not Palestine has nuclear capability.

The term 'flash point' is now qualified by prefixing to it the 'nuclear' adjective. A text book definition of the term would mean a flash point which would trigger off a nuclear war leading to annihilation of the user and the used. Such a situation would demand positive pre-empting of holocaust by the big powers not for any real love of local humanity but for the perpetuation of their geo-political interests. That is precisely what the connotation of Kashmir as the nuclear flash point would be. Because India and Pakistan successfully conducted nuclear tests in May last, the inference is that the two arch enemies would embark on a nuclear holocaust and the trigger lies in Kashmir. As the attributes accumulate, the sole super power and her cohorts would be inclined to take a unilateral decision of addressing the essence of the issue. That would throw up the compulsion for India to agree to third party role.

For these elements, the 'flash point' theory has become their new political credo? In a recent seminar on Central and South Asia, organized by the Jammu University, one or two speakers seemed to be mechanically disposed to put forward this perception and legitimize it by recalling universal aversion to nuclear option. This indirectly meant reinforcing their strident demand for resolution of Kashmir conflict on the basis of doing away with the status quo syndrome.

The crucial question is what constitutes the approach to this perception. We are aware that 'flash point' dimension was inducted into entire Kashmir problem soon after Pakistan exploded nuclear device. Following her nuclear tests, Islamabad went on changing priorities of post nuclear Pakistan. The first pronouncement was that she had attained parity of nuclear muscle and restored the tilted balance of power in the South Asian region. Then the shift was on the nuclear explosion being forced upon her by India. And finally, appeared yet another shift and that was of linking Kashmir with the entire nuclear issue in the subcontinent. It was the Pakistani foreign minister who said in clear and rather undiplomatic way that the nuclear issue was inseparably connected with Kashmir dispute.

The ideas of parity and restored balance of power (virtually imaginary) being in their place, Islamabad was not in a position to convince Washington and other western capitals that her nuclear tests were dictated by the Indian factor. When under right extremist pressures Nawaz Sharif rejected Washington's offer of five billion dollar aid in addition to nuclear umbrella for desisting from conducting the nuclear test, Pakistan lost the opportunity as well as the effective lever placed in her hand by curious circumstances. What then was the alternative use of the nuclear adventure? Finding the escape route in 'nuclear flash point' theory, Islamabad bureaucracy and political leadership thought they had the saleable commodity in their warehouse, and that was of Kashmir as the nuclear flash point in the subcontinent.

Thereafter the main thrust of Pakistani diplomatic initiative was to put words in the mouth of such American officials as mattered in the State Department which could be interpreted in a way so as to identify Kashmir as the 'flash - point' of South Asia. May be some lower level functionaries in the State Department were bemused by the idea, but at responsible levels, there did not appear any extraordinarily aggressive reaction, notwithstanding their respective positions on CTBT.

However, Islamabad could generate some fervour among sections of Kashmir ' freedom ' sympathizers and organizations within the country and abroad (particularly among the pro-Pak POK Diaspora in UK) and the militant separatist in Kashmir. Its reverberations are also heard among the non committed secessionists within and outside the ruling cadres. In the eyes of these sections, the ' flash point " theory, when publicly articulated, would be interpreted as reassurance of none antagonistic posture vis-a-vis Kashmir militancy. At the same time, it would, to some extent, iron out the angularities in the traditional political party's behavioural pattern. But the crux of the matter is that of bailing out the beleaguered Kashmirian community from a scenario of protracted armed conflict gradually eating into the vitals of that society. This is a negative approach and bound to be ineffective.

The ' flash point ' theory cannot withstand the test of time. Three wars have been fought between the two countries in the past but all in absence of a nuclear flash point. If Pakistan's survival in economic terms has become debatable just by conducting the underground test, what would be her picture after she begins a nuclear holocaust with her neighbour who is also a nuclear power? The deterrence theory has rather encapsulated Kashmir from another clash, not endangered her. Islamabad regimes can survive only as long as it is able to stoke Kashmir embers. Those who are harping on 'flash point ' theory, want to bail her out in Kashmir where militancy is on the ebb. By not accepting the no-first nuclear strike offer of India, Pakistan seeks to obtain the lease of life. Her ' flash point ' theory sympathizers in Kashmir, and particularly among its ruling circles, indirectly want to ensure their own survival by holding on to the apron string of that theory. It has to be noted that these sections of ruling party cadres and bureaucracy, though vocal on ' flash -point' theory, are meticulously silent on Dr. Farooq Abdullah's perception of LOAC as the international boundary between the two countries. This also proves the existence of the non committed separatists in the cadres of traditional political party in the State. This speaks for Dr. Farooq's capability of accommodating divergent views yet not losing the direction.

3.0 TALIBANIZATION OF KASHMIR

Annexation of Kashmir through sponsored armed insurgency is not the final goal of Pakistan. The final goal is the transformation of Kashmir Muslim society from its somewhat liberal outlook and life style to an absolutely conservative and orthodox Muslim society.

The model of this type of society is of Taliban in Afghanistan. This model is being thrust on Kashmiri Muslims, and to an extent against their free will.

In the process, foreign Islamists called by Kashmiris as ' guest mujahids', and sponsored by Pakistan-based religious militia organizations, have two specific roles in Kashmir. Firstly, as the soldiers of Allah, they fight a jihad against the Indian infidels, a duty, they say, is enjoined upon every pure Musalman. Secondly, they carry on a well-organized indoctrination programme aiming at converting local Muslim youth from liberal to conservative ideology or from Kashmiriyat to pure faith.

Therefore what is happening in Kashmir is its Talibanization. It means reverting to Islam of the days of Caliphs Omar and Uthman. It aims at replacing coexistence by exclusivism, effacing all symbols of pre-Islamic culture, distorting history so as to sever established links between the ancient and the mediaeval and bringing about a sea-change in life style.

Madrassahs (Islamic schools) are the corner stone of propagation of orthodox Islamic ideology, and these have sprung in every town and village in Kashmir. Their curricula has changed from early crude anti-Hindu hatred to subtle distortion of the history of pre-Islamic times. From these institutions sprang a generation of closed- mind fanatics who are in the forefront of separatist struggle today. Though the National Conference governments in 1980s did visualise the consequences of the role of madrasahs, yet it had neither will nor skill to restrain them. Finally the NC compromised its position following the execution of Z.A. Bhutto in 1972.

After the NC assumed power in 1996, more than 1300 new madrasshs have been opened in the valley; many with boarding schools. These bastions of Sunni Wahhabi ideology are playing a crucial role in Talibanization of Kashmir. After all the Taliban had also sprung from the Pakistani madrassahs, which are the model for their Kashmiri counterparts.

In order to legitimise the madrassahs and their sectarian character, the State government has been deliberately criticising its own educational institutions as inefficient. Even the Chief Minister is on record having expressed adverse remarks on government schools. This was a ploy for indirectly conceding legitimacy of the parochial Jamaat-e-Islami institutions.

The support structure for Talibanization is to be found in mosques. The theory of separating religion from politics has never worked in Kashmir nor anywhere in the Islamic world. If the grapevine is to be trusted, the builder of a mosque gets 25 % of the total cost of building a new mosque. The money reportedly comes from the Wahhabi oriented Kashmiri Sunni Muslims Diaspore in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States, or directly from Saudi intelligence agencies through their Kashmiri conduits. The phenomenon of raising mosques throughout Kashmir valley is strikingly similar to the raising of mosques in Central Asian States after they became independent in 1991. In early 1980s, Allahwale, the All-India level missionaries of Sunni Wahhabi faith, surfaced in large numbers in the valley and got scattered throughout its length and breadth. They had withdrawn to their shell when militancy broke out in Kashmir. Today, the Allahwale have re-emerged in the valley and are carrying out their Islamization agenda -- of course an exclusivist agenda running contrary to the secular constitution of India.

Another dimension of Talibanization of Kashmir is the onslaught on its composite culture often labelled as Kashmiriyat. There is a massive campaign of distortion of place names, legends, traditions and history which has something definitely to do with the pre-Islamic period of Kashmirian history. More than three thousand place names have been changed and adorned with Islamic epithets. Pseudo-historians are trying

to rewrite the cultural and social history of Kashmir. A strong lobby has been created to sell the theory that Kashmiris race is not of Aryan but of Semitic origin and that its cultural manifestations are not its own and indigenous but largely or even fully borrowed from Central Asia. The symbols of Kashmir's spontaneous identity like Nund Rishi and Makhdum Sahib are being discarded as non-exclusivist and therefore unacceptable. Kashmir Shaivism is being projected as the sequel to the rising Sufi philosophy in Iran and Central Asia with impact on early Hindu spiritualists of Kashmir. Thus Kashmiri Muslim is taught to reject his past. The idea has been borrowed from the practice in Pakistan where history begins with the advent of Muhammad Bin Qasim in A.D. 712. Prior to that there is a big blank.

In life style, a drastic change has been effected. Young and old, grow beard and falling tresses, the style said to have been of the elders of Islamic faith. Kashmiris, old and young, all have adopted the Afghan/Taliban dress -- a baggy shalwar, longish shirt half coat, round outward turned headgear and a square piece of cloth folded triangularly and thrown round the neck. This again is in imitation of the Taliban who believe it to be style of the early Islamic conquerors and warriors from Arab lands.

Even in their address and public dealings, there are marked changes. The phraseology is that of the puritanical Muslims. For example, instead of traditional Khuda Hafiz (meaning farewell) now Allah Hafiz is said because the word Khuda is of non-Arab origin (Khotaay in Avestic means the Lord).

Any dispassionate observer will have no difficulty in endorsing these ground realities. There is nothing wrong in Talibanization or Islamization of Kashmir. What is unpalatable is the propagandist slogan of Kashmir's secularist traditions, Kashmiriyat and things like that. We need courage to speak honestly what we see on the ground. Kashmir has been thoroughly Talibanized. In doing so, Pakistan has realized its essential goal. The "liberation" of Kashmir, according to them, is a corollary to Talibanization. It has to be remembered that General Pervez Musharraf, the Chief Executive of Pakistan said it clearly that Kashmir's annexation could wait. What is of importance is making India weak internally.

4.0 PAKISTAN'S MILITARIZED RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

At the Muridke convention of Markaz-e-dawa wa'l-Ershad, more than 300,000 people, including delegates from Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Libya, Afghanistan, Chechnya, UAE etc. gathered together. The world media, and particularly the media in the US, paid scant attention to the event. Of course, the CNN did highlight it in parts.

The convention is known for fanatical ideology it propagates and hatred and animosity it incites against other religions like Hinduism and Judaism.

Mian Nawaz Sharif was removed by a military coup before he disallowed holding of the convention. After taking the reins of power in his hands, General Musharraf, announced continued support to Kashmir insurgency. He didn't disallow convention. In fact, he was invited to attend it though he could not.

A week before the actual convention began, leaders of various extremist Islamic organizations in Pakistan issued statements, which are a clear indication of the ideology they pursue. Most of these statements were given to the Urdu press of Pakistan because Urdu papers have enormous circulation in that country. We reproduce below only a few brief excerpts from their statements by way of specimen:

“ Mohammad Usman, Nazim-e-Ala, Hizbul Mujahideen, addressing a press conference in Kahuta on Oct 28 disclosed that about 15,000 militants of 15 militant outfits were fighting on the fronts of Srinagar, Ladakh, Kupwara and Jammu” (Nawa-e-Waqt 29.10. 99).

“ Addressing a gathering at Mirpur on Oct. 30, Maulana Mufti Mohammad Yunus, central Amir, all J&K Ahl-e-Sunnat said that to clash with the storms of the evil and power corridors of infidelity had been the basic mission of their leaders and ancestors. It was not far when India would also dismember like Russia and the flag of Islam would be hoisted not only in Srinagar but in Delhi as well.” (Nawa-e-Waqt 31.10.99)

“ Addressing a press conference at Isakhail on Oct 29, M. Hamza, Amir al-Badr said the militants had changed their war strategy to disintegrate India like Russia. Even the houses of Indian Army officers in India would not be safe.” (Ausaf 30. 10.99)

“According to a report, a contingent of Pak Army comprising 50 Commandos and 3 Army officers would look after the security arrangements of Markaz-e-Dawa convention under the command of a Captain. In an interview at Muridke on Oct 30, Prof. Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, Amir of the organization claimed that Kashmir would be liberated after ousting the last Hindu usurper from Muslim dominated areas. With the army takeover in Pakistan, Kashmir issue would be solved shortly and there were positive expectations from the military regimes. Special militant squads, in the name of Ibn-eTayyima had been formed to give tough resistance to Indian troops.” (Khabrain 31.10.99)

“Asif Anjum alias Hussain Muawia, a leader of Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen's Karwan-e-Khalil-bin-Walid said at Mirpur on Oct. 26 that liberation of Kashmir was not far away. He claimed that they could hoist the flag of Islam not only in Kashmir but also in Delhi, if the Muslim youth picked up the Kalashnikov unitedly. He said that Pakistan army and militants would work together for this cause. KKBW militants pledged to continue jihad till the liberation of Kashmir. They threatened to destroy the USA if it devised any unholy plan against Osama-bin-Laden.” (Jang 29.10.99)

These excerpts reveal the mindset of the fanatical groups in Pakistan, whose activities are not only tolerated but actually encouraged by the present military government. Any intensive study into the fuller statements will show that in Pakistan, the religious extremists have hijacked the government and it is they who rule the roost. The leaders of these organizations have no qualms of conscience in stating publicly that their armed terrorists are destabilising legally constituted governments in different parts of the world.

A close study of developments in Pakistan since August last is interesting. On August 28, 1999, the Security Council discussed in an open debate the Taliban offensive in Panjsher valley in Afghanistan. Security Council Chairman said, "Pakistani troops were fighting alongside the Taliban." Shortly before Security Council's remarks, Moscow had levelled charges against Pakistan that "Pakistanis were taking part in the Wahhabi war against Daghestan." Some Russian newspapers even named the Pakistani commander who was training Chechen Avar rebels in the Caucasian mountains.

Pakistani officials denied both the charges, first at the Security Council and then in Moscow. But hardly had a week gone by when a thousand Islamic guerrillas raised in Pakistan entered Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan and took four Japanese workers hostage. Their aim was to enter Uzbekistan to fight the government of President Islam Karimov who had refused to succumb to Wahhabi ideology. Simultaneous with the intrusion, the CIS conference against Islamic terrorism was being held in Bishkek, and China happened to be among the participants.

Soon after Pakistan's Kargil misadventure, India captured a North Korean ship carrying cases filled with Scud missile blueprints meant for Pakistan in return for Pakistan's bomb technology. Again, Islamabad denied involvement.

All these developments show that Pakistan has embarked on a grandiose design of raising the Islamic Caliphate extending over the length and breadth of the Asian Continent. Although she denies her hand in the export of terrorists and terrorism, yet she has a style of her own to say that she has a hand in all these perfidies. In regard to Kashmir, Pakistan denies official participation in the activities of the 'mujahideen' but she does not deny their training inside Pakistan. Likewise, Pakistan denies supporting Taliban but she does not and cannot deny training them in Pakistani seminaries, and helping them sneak into Afghanistan or Kashmir. Thus Pakistan officially denies the unofficial support she gives to foment terrorist organizations on her soil.

Pakistan learnt deniability from Afghan war. Her denying involvement in Afghan war was accepted by the world willy-nilly because she had received unequivocal support from the US with a role of her own in Afghan war. Once the jihad in Afghanistan was over, the armed brigands needed new operational field otherwise they would direct their guns on Pakistan. Islamabad opened the Kashmir front for them, and it is now the tenth year that Kashmir is bleeding.

Pakistan-based religious militia leaders have begun threatening governments of some foreign countries also as is evident from the excerpts given above. A time may come when they can threaten even the legally constituted governments within Pakistan. The factor of these extremists religious militias and organizations has already helped Pakistan military to oust a popular government. They welcomed the coup and are expecting the Pakistan Army to collaborate with them to take Kashmir, to hoist the Islamic flag in New Delhi, to destroy USA and to establish Islamic faith and rule all over the world.

To this purpose the present military regime supports them and will not impose curbs. It cannot because the things have gone beyond the stage of control. In fact after his return from his meeting with President Clinton in the context of Kargil, the deposed Prime Minister of Pakistan had begun to understand the gravity of situation created by the religious extremists and their military wings in Pakistan. He had come to know that they wanted the regulars in Pakistan to go permanently to their barracks and leave the field open for them to establish the Islamic Caliphate. He could not take a big step to curb them. All that he could do was to issue just a brief and moderate statement that Taliban were giving training to Pakistani extremists in camps based in Afghanistan. This one statement, as true as it could be, contributed to his doom.

The world community needs to anticipate the consequences of militarization of Pakistani society and its known objectives. After Nazism, this theo-fascism is the biggest threat to the civilized world. Pakistan is a nuclear state with nuclear weapons in the hands of her military that has ousted the democratic government. It is time that the international community under the aegis of the United Nations takes a

decisive step to eradicate the menace. President Yeltsin issued a tough statement in the background of the facts that speak for themselves. Other international actors cannot turn their face away from a harsh reality. In particular, the US must understand that Osama bin Laden & Co. are not her real enemy: the real enemy is the phenomenon that creates and sustains the ideology of people propounded by Osama and his cohorts. The US knows that the finger shall first point inwardly.

5.0 CHECHNYA: BOOMING GUNS IN THE CAUCASUS

In a recent statement, Pakistan foreign ministry expressed Islamabad's "deep concern over a situation of humanitarian catastrophe in Chechnya." In response, Moscow recalled the dismal record of human rights of Mohajirs, Shias, Ahmadis, and other groups of Muslims in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan where, for the fourth time in fifty years, namesake democracy has ended up in military rule.

Pakistan, the wishful patriarch of Muslim umma, nurtures Islamic radicals at home with the notion of re-playing early caliphs - Uthman and Omar - and carrying the banner of faith to the lands of infidelity. Her militarized religious organizations have created a worldwide network of volunteers for the implementation of their theocratic agenda. Running almost a parallel government, they identify countries and regions where their armed crusaders are to carry the sword of the faith, operate against local governments and destabilize their institutions.

The contours of this Islamic agenda manifested themselves in the deliberations of a three-day convention of Al Dawa wal Ershad -- the fundamentalists' umbrella organization -- held at Muridke near Lahore in the first week of November last. Its chief told reporters that Islamization of the entire world was their ultimate objective. Heads of more than a dozen extremist Islamic religious organizations world over, besides half a million delegates from Pakistan, participated in the convention.

Afghan war was the formative period for these organizations when American money and arms flowed in enormous quantities to back up the warring Islamic hordes. Pakistan, the main conduit, managed pilfering of nearly one half of the stuff to the pleasure and patronage of Uncle Sam.

With Soviet Union dismembered, with Islamic fundamentalist crescendo on the rise, and with Pakistani Don Quixote scouting the junkyard of the ummah, the Saudis seized a golden opportunity and floated the Wahhabi brand of Sunni Islam as against the Khumeinite brand of Shia Islam. Saudi monarchy opened its coffers on ar-Rabita, her second line international support structure after the munificent Americans. Pakistan fished in the war of sects. She brokered for lynch pin status in OIC: She undertook the global mission of carrying the banner of Islam aloft, and to boot, her ruling cliques responded to the tempting petrodollar booty waiting to be plundered in Riyadh in the name of faith. Thus the Shias of Pakistan became as oppressed a victim of her Islamism as the Kashmiri Pandits of Indian secularism.

But let us revert to Islamabad's "concern about Chechnyan humanitarian catastrophe."

The guerrillas invading the villages of Dagestan have been identified as Wahhabi international force with Chechnyan elements led by the Chechnyan Islamic warlord of 1994-96 war, Shamil Basayev. By August 12, 1999, more than 6,000 Dagestani inhabitants were forced to flee their villages as a result of invasion by nearly 1,200 Wahhabi Chechnyan warriors.

The Wahhabi militias funded by Saudis and deployed tactically by Pakistani ISI operatives, have two operational bases. One is in Ferghana Valley in the the Central Asian State of Uzbekistan. The other is in the Kunar province in Afghanistan where, during the Afghan war, the CIA and the Saudis had jointly set up training camps for the mujahideen.

In October last, about a thousand Pakistani Wahhabi theo-fascists entered into Kyrgyzstan via Tajikistan and took four Japanese their hostage. They had planned to enter Uzbekistan and foment Wahhabi uprising among the people. Tashkent recently accused the Wahhabi groups of trying to kill President Islam Karimov in the bombing of the secretariat because he refused to succumb to Wahhabi ideology.

During the Chechnyan war of 1994 - 96, fighters from Lahore - based Wahhabi seminary, generally recruited for Kashmir jihad, penetrated into Central Asia and headed towards North Caucasus. A Chechnyan minority has traditionally lived in Jordan, and a small Chechnyan population is studying in Pakistani Wahhabi and Deobandi seminaries. Incidentally, Basayev's lieutenant in Dagestan is said to be a Jordanian warrior.

In economic terms, Dagestan holds strategic position for Russia. Being a Caspian littoral republic, an old oil pipeline allows it to refine oil and produce petrochemicals. But its real strategic importance is that it is a highway junction linking Moscow with North Caucasian independent republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Chechnyan warrior Basayev's assault on Dagestan is a move to gain an outlet to sea for landlocked Chechnya. The Chechnyan Wahhabis seek merger of Dagestan with Chechnya to form an independent Islamic Chechnya-Dagestan republic. With most of the 1500 oil wells of Chechnya dried up, Basayev is desperately looking for alternate economic resources.

Chechnya's assault on Dagestan is also motivated by sectarian considerations. North Caucasians are mostly Sunnis of Naqshbandi order and revere the shrines of local Sufis as an alternative to distant Mecca. The Wahhabi Sunni warriors, on the other hand, are intensely opposed to shrine worship. The murder in Dagestan of her highest Sunni Naqshbandi cleric, Abu Bakrov, in 1998 indicated the dangerous intentions of the Chechnyan radicals against Dagestan.

Dagestan, one of the 21 autonomous republics of the Russian federation and one of the five of them located in North Caucasus, has an area of 20,000 square miles and a population of two million. There are no fewer than forty nationalities speaking 29 languages and 40 dialects. The Avars comprise only 30 per cent of population. The Volga Cossack concentration is pro-Russia and the non-Muslim nationalities also prefer to be with Russia. Dagestan has a complex mix of nationalities and a very small proportion can support the Wahhabi thrust. Some Chechnyan warriors had actually taken refuge in Dagestan's mountain villages during the 1994-96 war.

Landlocked Chechnya, with an area of 5,790 square miles and a population of less than a million, fought a secessionist war against Russia ending up in a truce pending final settlement by the year 2004. Interestingly, the OIC has not favoured Chechnya's secession from Russian federation but has recommended a broad measure of autonomy for the republic.

Obviously, religious militias originating in Pakistani seminaries are avowedly against peaceful coexistence among different nationalities in regions and lands where they had floated or shall be floating their theo-fascist ideology.

In this background in which Russia's vital interests and territorial integrity are threatened, and a peaceful people in the adjoining republic are made to submit to theocratic diktat gun point, there is no choice but to let the might of the state come into play. How unfortunate that while the US uses all means, from missiles to economic sanctions, to bring the culprit of African bomb blasts to book, she doles out lessons of morality and human rights for Moscow to adhere to in rebellious Chechnya. Pakistan has expressed her "concern for humanitarian catastrophe" in Chechnya. She may recollect that twice in five years did she send army into Sindh province for "clean up operation" though there were no rebels in Sindh with as comprehensive a war machine as the Chechnyas have. Only innocent and defenceless citizens were hounded and hunted. What then should be her immediate concern?

6.0 THREATS TO INDIA'S STABILITY

Externally, There are two sources of threat to India's stability, and both of them are gravely impinging on her internal law and order situation. We are caught up between two ideological trends arising to our east and to our west, both antagonistic to each other. The nature of relationship between China and Pakistan vis-a-vis India draws inspiration from the famous Maoist maxim that enemy's enemy is a friend.

Fundamental Difference

However, the fundamental difference in these two sources of threat to India needs to be understood. China, an authoritarian state, is in full control of her sovereign power in formulating her policy towards India. But the theo-fascist state of Pakistan, also a functional client-state of the US, has, for a long time in the past, surrendered her sovereignty of formulating her Indian Policy to her benefactor. Unlike China, State power in Pakistan is husbanded by three components of her polity, namely, the electorate, the olive-green chapter and the Punjabi feudal-bureaucratic combine. At the same time, Pakistani underworld comprising drug-traffickers, rabid fundamentalist organizations and exporters of terrorism and theo-fascism bring up the tail-end of the feudal military combine.

A power structure in which responsibilities can be shifted and accountability can be disowned, tends to proceed on reckless adventurism. India had to face this adventurism in the past. Despite fragmentation of Pakistan in 1974, this power structure could not be dismantled. In fact, it has now been reinforced through a clean chit obtained by Islamabad from Clinton administration calling her a 'moderate Islamic state'.

Threat to India's stability emanates from these two sources because the democratic-secular structure of Indian polity is perceived as a "menace, out to destroy authoritarian rule and a theocratic system in her two neighboring Asian states". After all, 900 million people in vast land mass occupying a strategically important region between the Stepes of Central Asia and the warm waters of Indian Ocean, bound together by millennia of common heritage, struggling for socio-economic advancement along an ideology of democracy and secularism, political pluralism and individual freedom, do envisage a strong reverberation of their aspirations in the hearts of millions of people in the adjoining countries.

Hegemonist State

Therefore, both China and Pakistan must perforce project India as a 'hegemonist' State with intentions of bossing over the smaller states in South East Asia and the region. This stance has two implications. One is to create a fear psychosis among the adjacent smaller states, and the other is to legitimise interference and even presence of the unipolar power in the region. With 5000 square kilometres of the illegally occupied Indian territory in J&K State gifted away by Pakistan to China, Islamabad boasts of having resolved all border disputes with China. And China has built the Karakoram Highway through illegally occupied Indian territory in J&K State. Yet Beijing portrays India as a hegemonist state and makes the Macmahon line a contentious issue to make incursions into Indian territory.

US-China Nexus

Chinese communist leadership and US State developed good understanding on arming Pakistan from early 1970s as regiona: deterrent to the developing Indian democratic-secular State in S.E. Asian region. An overall assessment of the US policy in the continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America shows her willingness to accord tacit support to dictatorships and authoritarian regimes out to curb democratic aspirations of their masses. India did not fit in her scheme of things and when Pokhran blast came about, the Americans embarked on double-pronged onslaught on India. Internally, pressures were mounted like financial and economic sanctions, NPT and Kashmir issue, and with that came the arming to the teeth of Pakistan. Amusingly, American press occasionally comes out with stories of how the US authorities just overlooked the clandestine acquisition of crucial nuclear components by Islamabad from some Western countries and agencies. Even today, the Americans are providing her all possible logistical support to

collect crucial material like enriched Uranium and Red Mercury from the economically truncated states of Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet power.

Crisis in Afghanistan

Following the crisis in Afghanistan, a new situation has developed in the region which has exacerbated threats to India's stability. This is the extensive proliferation of American provided sophisticated arms in the region and the US- sponsored Islamic radicalism initially meant to confront the communist ideology but now unleashed against the democratic and secular forces in India and elsewhere in the region like Tajikistan or the Philippines. Kashmir has been made the flash-point with the US Foreign Office declaring that the whole of J&K state was a disputed subject.

Today, the world's strongest democracy is the world's strongest supporter of theo-fascism. This is so because the unipolar power must maintain to hold on the vast oil resources of the Arab world. And the key to that resource is Saudi Arabia. The most retrograde autocratic regime that has opened its coffers on global theo-fascism. Theo- fascism exported by these agencies through an international network of armed activists parading religion as the endangered entity, is knocking at the door of every Muslim wherever he be. Only a few can resist the unrelenting harangue. Our countrymen need to understand it.

Post cold-war strategies, economic globalisation and reoriented roles of formidable military structures like the NATO should not mean abrupt or even gradual abandonment of pervading interests of big powers, US in particular. Central Asian vacuum on the one hand, and Pakistan's growing search for geopolitical depth westward and eastward on the other, have become strong incentives for the Americans in giving another tight embrace to their decades old ally viz, America finds enormous economic interests in the almost untouched vast mineral wealth of central Asia to which Pakistan holds the key for overland entry since Iran has turned a 'rouge' nation. America's quest for a foothold in Kashmir, an ambition which came to be nursed in early 1950s and was never suspended all these decades, aims at keeping a close watch on China. But that can be no relief to us since China has the capacity to hold back the intruding American influence and also keep India within her limits. It should be clear to all that the presence of the US in any form and in any manifestation in the region will be with a tacit understanding between Beijing and Islamabad. Beijing has the diplomatic skill to derive adequate mileage out of American posture. After all, both are fully aware of the potential of India to become an industrial and economic giant given at least two decades of internal peace and external security.

Two Sources

In this political landscape, we find that the two sources of threat to India's stability have come to the conclusion that an open military confrontation with her could become counter productive in view of the repressive regimes unwilling to move towards democratisation of their institutions. As such, they have resorted to both manifest and subtle subversion through proxy war, disinformation, international propaganda, trans- border arms infiltration, overt and covert support to dissident factions, fanning of communal and ethnic conflicts and the like activities. Such subversive measures succeed to a large extent in a soft and open state. Thus external forces begin to work in tandem with internal subversion which makes destabilisation process easy for them.

How can this challenge be met and repulsed? Certainly, a far-reaching structural change is to be looked for. Never before was free India forced to defensive strategies. We believe that India needs re-defining her interpretation of a nation-state. We also believe that subversion has to be eradicated with an iron hand. India will have to spell out in clear and loud terms her understanding of a secular state.

New Thinking

Militarily, new thinking is called for particularly in the structure of her land forces and conventional armament. Perhaps, raising of Frontier Commands, one far the North Western border, would precede re-

investment of Himalayan buffer diplomacy. The State authority must assert and this authority must reflect the will of the people.

And lastly, it should be said that the most formidable defence and offence on which our country can depend is the unity among her people. This is the hour of sinking all differences that might divide the people of India. The united people draw their inspiration from the great civilisation of this country. No power on earth, nor even the gods in the heaven, can down us if we remain united. And unity means sacrifice, dedication and will to exist as a vibrant nation.

[*Courtesy - The Sahayogi Times*]

7.0 AUTONOMY IN JAMMU & KASHMIR AND REGIONAL MINORITIES

The concept of sovereignty of states does not exclude decentralisation of authority on a territorial basis. The purposes of territorial subdivision can be several, not necessarily linked to efforts to accommodate different ethnic or linguistic groups, and very seldom intended to separate religious groups. It may, however, be a very useful device to facilitate the accommodation of different ethnic and linguistic groups which live compactly together in separate parts of the state. But it can also have its dangers, as evidenced by the Bosnian situation in recent times.

Autonomy, and sometimes 'greater autonomy', is the main plank of the National Conference's political agenda. The Assembly elections of September 1996 were fought and won by the party on that basis. Never before did it make autonomy an issue to be given any priority in successive election manifestoes in the past. Some differences, which had surfaced between the Congress and the National Conference in the past and had soured their relations temporarily, had nothing to do with the autonomy question. These differences were ironed out when Sheikh Abdullah-Indira Gandhi Accord came about in 1975 followed by Rajiv-Farooq Accord in 1984.

Autonomy Made A Condition

Dr. Farooq Abdullah resigned as Chief Minister in early 1990. The reason for his resignation was the appointment of Mr. Jagmohan as Governor for the second time. Autonomy was not the issue. But when, after seven years of insurgency, conditions were considered conducive for holding parliamentary and then assembly elections, the National Conference leadership made autonomy the condition for joining the democratic process.

The National Conference President, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, has reiterated Kashmir's accession with India as final and irrevocable. The militants in Kashmir have been orchestrating 'azaadi' - meaning freedom from Indian control. Their struggle - not considered reasonable by the nationalist sections of society - has taken a heavy toll of life and property in the Valley. The Government of India had to fight insurgency to fulfill its constitutional obligation of preserving India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the background of this political scenario, the demand of the National Conference for autonomy is an attempt to indirectly legitimise the movement and meet its demand half way. Therefore, there should be no doubt in anybody's mind about the ultimate destination of greater autonomy. It has to be remembered that there was neither any insurgency in the Jammu and Ladakh regions nor any demand for autonomy. The demand from these regions was decentralisation and removal of discriminatory treatment. What autonomy proposes is further centralisation of power in the hands of Kashmir's majority group.

Politically Motivated

I would not go into legal and juridical implications of autonomy to which legal luminaries may address. But it needs to be reminded that when Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah came to power for the second time in 1975, he appointed a committee headed by his lieutenant, Mirza Afzal Beg, the seniormost member and law minister in his cabinet, to examine the erosion of the State's autonomy after his ouster on August 9, 1953. The committee conducted the examination and when Mirza Beg died, another cabinet minister, Mr. Devi Das Thakur, assumed its chairmanship. The committee in its final report submitted that there was no erosion of constitutional and legal provisions governing the State's relations with the Centre. Does it not suggest that the present demand for autonomy is essentially politically motivated?

If the National Conference demanded that no further Central laws would be accepted for application to the State of Jammu and Kashmir hereafter, that would have carried a different meaning. But return to ambiguous cut-off line (pre- 1952, pre-1953, anywhere between 1953 and 1975, etc.) is reconfirmation of very unclear destination of the party's autonomy demand.

The support of absolute majority in the Legislative Assembly is a strong temptation for the ruling National Conference to introduce a bill for greater autonomy. The United Front government is already committed to granting it. Evidently, the government will shore it up with a plethora of arguments to legitimise the initiative. As such, we must consider the consequences that are likely to flow in the trail of the passing of the bill.

We do not know as yet the final contours and quantum of contemplated autonomy nor do we know the frame of regional autonomy which the Chief Minister has said a number of times he is prepared to concede to the three regions of the State. But we shall be justified in visualising what could be the fall-out of this measure on the minorities in the entire State.

Essence Of Autonomy

The essence of autonomy in theoretical terms is to find a mechanism of meeting the aspirations of the minorities in a given state and to help it develop its identity. This definition would have suited the State of Jammu and Kashmir without much debate if it was inhabited by a homogeneous national minority. That is not the case. Therefore, the concept of autonomy has to be dovetailed to suit the peculiar demographic distribution in the State. Essentially, we have to talk about religious minority/majority syndrome although the ethnic and linguistic aspect of demographic distribution in the State is of no little significance. The national minority in India becomes regional majority in Jammu and Kashmir and, conversely, the national majority in India becomes the local minority in Kashmir. In the case of the Jammu region, numerically there is only a narrow gap between the majority and the minority groups in comparison to the Kashmir valley. In the Ladakh region, there is also majority-minority situation. Again in the Jammu region, we have pockets with an overwhelming religio-linguistic majority with kinship extended to the Kashmir valley.

Avenues For New Aspiration

The question arising from this ground situation is this: Will the autonomy open avenues for the realisation of the aspirations of these minorities and will it tend to provide the wherewithal for the development of their respective identities? The ruling party will have to provide the answer.

It is generally believed that the demand of autonomy is raised essentially to meet the rising aspirations of the ruling Sunni elite of the Valley within whose circle political and economic power remained monopolised in the past. This elite wants not only to rule but also to reign. Autonomy being a power-sharing mechanism, what are the guarantees that the elite would share it, for example with the minuscule religious minority in the Valley. Not only that. What guarantee is there that it would share it with the ethnic and linguistic minority? The representation of the Shias, Pandits and Gujjars, who fall into minority groups in all the three regions of the state, have been abysmally negligible. In particular, in the straightjacketed bureaucracy of the State, the entry of these categories is an uphill task. In the light of the well-known axiom that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely, the minorities would, undoubtedly, receive a rough deal under autonomy dispensation.

Security Concerns

Then comes up the question of security concerns. Jammu and Kashmir is a border state sandwiched between two inimical neighbours, namely, Pakistan and China, with mutual nexus. Both have grabbed whatever territory they could of the original state of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan has bartered away 5,000 square miles of the occupied territory to China in return for the construction of Karakorum Highway. The highway has posed a serious threat to the security of India and of the State. An autonomous state sandwiched between these two uncanny enemies is highly vulnerable to their nefarious designs as in the past and to spying as in the case of Nepal. Pandit Nehru once said that he would offer Kashmir to Pakistan on a platter rather than opt for its independence. Everybody knows how the Anglo- American bloc has been responding to India's position in Kashmir. Only a massive presence of the Central authority in the State can be a guarantee against the designs of these enemies. Any other country placed in this

situation would have turned the State into a sensitive strategic border area and placed it under full military control at least for another 20 years.

India is a multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic country. Parliament represents most of these identities. Naturally, laws passed by Parliament have a true national character. The purpose is to carry our Indian masses from economic backwardness and social deprivations to multi-faceted development. Application of the laws passed by the Indian Parliament to the State selectively in the past was guided by the principle of multi-faceted development of its citizens. A benefit of these laws, among other things, was judicious integration of the people of India of multitudinous identities. Autonomists have the compulsion and commitment to look at these national and people-based perceptions from a myopic regional standpoint, losing the sight of a futurist Indian society struggling for gradual integration.

Muslim Majority Character

The demand of autonomy linked with accession and Muslim majority character is not administrative decentralisation. It has serious ramifications for the survival of secularism in India as a principle of Indian nation state. There has neither been armed insurgency in Jammu and Ladakh nor has there been any demand for autonomy. Of course, there have been strong protestations in both the regions against discrimination by the Kashmir ruling elite over the years. Ladakh has a leaning towards a Union Territory status and Jammu has been fluctuating from Vishal Duggar Desh to regional autonomy to trifurcation of the State. These demands are the manifest reaction to the dominance of the ruling elite of the Kashmir Valley. Autonomy, therefore, means further empowerment of that group and further alienation of Jammu and Ladakh regions from the mainstream, besides strangulation of the minorities.

Economic Autonomy

A certain section of thinkers in this country speaks forcefully in favour of regional and subnational identities. Without attempting to destroy these, effort has to be made for integrating them through positive and healthy interaction. Autonomy on the basis of subnational projections means blocking the process of integration. Integration means not only socio-political but most importantly financial. As we see, the world is heading towards economic globalisation. Countries are moving from a military alliance to an economic alliance. The European countries have integrated into the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Market. The introduction of a common European currency is on the cards. One can travel in all the five countries of Europe with a single visa. Contrary to it, what the National Conference is proposing for the State is a ghetto where the people's mind gets shut through the psychological fall-out of an autonomous status of their State. Will this not lead to dealienation or further alienation of the people of the State and especially those of the Valley ? In such a situation, only the minorities get a raw deal.

Agenda Of Islamisation

An integral part of armed insurgency and Islamisation agenda in Kashmir has been the extirpation of small Hindu community from its homeland. In no other Indian state has such a thing happened in post-independence period, leaving aside occasional communal riots with causes other than those governing the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. This has exploded the myth of communal harmony in Kashmir. If the Indian leaders wanted to sell to the world that Kashmir was a slap on the face of believers in two-nation theory, alas, they have miserably failed. They lived in a utopia of their own creation but at the cost of three lakh defenceless Kashmiri Hindus which we consider a crime against humanity. Rabid Islamic indoctrination of Kashmiri Muslim youth has been the primary instrument of conducting anti-India and anti-Hindu campaign in Kashmir during several decades in the past. This weapon of indoctrination has been more lethal than Kalashnikovs because indoctrination percolates through generations. The National Conference has vowed to eradicate the gun; a month's notice has been given to the militants to surrender weapons and those, who do, will be recruited into State police.

Fundamentalist Indoctrination

The nagging question is: What about this deadly weapon of fundamentalist indoctrination which has made the Kashmiri youth perverse? The government has not come out with any plan and programme of cleaning the slate and offering it for new impressions and symbols. Not only that, the real source of the grilling indoctrination campaign remains intact. Will the government impose a ban on Jamaat-e-Islami, the formidable machine generating communal hatred and violence? Will it close down the Jamaati schools mushroomed in the length and breadth of Kashmir and Doda? Will the government impose severe restraints on clerics not only from Kashmir but from U.P. and Bihar who continue with their hate-Hindu and hate-India tirades in the mosques? Will the government weed out communal elements in the administration and bureaucracy which have been the breeding grounds of anti-national activities and anti-minority measures? With a mentally diseased bureaucracy, with a sectarian dominated administration, with police units stuffed with surrendered militants (who have surrendered only their guns and not their ideology), with people still sadistically rejoicing the gutting of Hindu houses and property and with thousands of minority houses and shops either forcibly occupied or acquired through fake documents, is not autonomy going to put a seal on them?

In the final analysis, we think that given double constitutional safeguards, a functional democratic system and the experience of good-governance models, the State of Jammu and Kashmir should strive to come closer to the Indian Union in letter and in spirit, benefiting more from its progressive socio-political arrangement than running into the ghetto of autonomy. It should also be remembered that the real protection of a truly popular government is the support of the masses and not the prowess of the black cats. A government, which wants to retain the security forces in the state in a large number and then ask for their further increase, cannot instil a sense of security among the minorities. As such, it has little legitimacy to demand autonomy. These are two contradictory positions and the dichotomy runs vertically down. In the process, autonomy loses its substance and becomes a crude political gimmick, a blackmail of those who demand, those who give and those who receive.

Source - **Koshur Samachar**

8.0 NHRC'S VERDICT ON KASHMIRI PANDITS

After four years of prolonged discussions and hearings, arguments and counter arguments, NHRC of India has finally given its verdict on three hundred thousand internally displaced Kashmiri Pandits. It has dismissed both of their pleas, genocide and internal displacement. The actual text of the verdict is not with us and we have only seen its excerpts in national and local newspapers.

A cursory glance on the verdict reveals that the NHRC has very cleverly tried to play safe and avoid telling the bitter truth. It is a clear bid to please everybody and every party involved in the tragedy that overtook the Pandits. A close study of the verdict shows that political considerations have become a strong constraint for the Commission to call a spade by its name. The question is whether by trying to play safe, the Commission has really achieved its objective of being projected as impartial? Impartiality of a body that has been constituted on the premise that it will only take into account the human rights aspect of issues before it, stands eroded when it chooses to be friends to all, the oppressor and the aggrieved. Let us substantiate it.

By juxtaposing the numbers of people of two communities, Hindus and Muslims, killed in Kashmir, the Commission has tried to convey that the Muslims have suffered more than the Kashmiri Pandits have. The Pandits never made any plea that the number of the members of their community was more than that of the Muslims. The Pandits had made simply two cases (a) genocide was unleashed against them (b) they were internally displaced people, as they had not crossed the international border. Therefore, to bring in the number of the Muslims killed in Kashmir is an extraneous matter, which the NHRC has linked up with the case of the Kashmiri Pandits only to win the goodwill of the State government, the majority community of Kashmiri Muslims and their sympathizers like APHC.

The NHRC has made an allusion to the communal harmony among the two communities in Kashmir in the past and has made it synonymous with 'Kashmiriyat'. This assertion is certainly outside the legitimate jurisdiction of the NHRC. It is not the business of the NHRC to pronounce judgement on controversial issues of history, which even the recognized historians have not tried to adjudge to their finality. One would like to ask the NHRC which authentic works of Kashmir history did it consult by way of recorded evidence in support of their assertion? We would help the Honorable Commission to consult at least three histories authored by the Muslims and considered as the most dependable histories of mediaeval and modern Kashmir. These are (1) Baharitan-e-Shahi, AD 1622, written by an anonymous author (now identified as Sayyid Muhammad Mehdi by more recent researches), translated from original Persian MS into English with annotations by Dr KN Pandit and published by Mukhopadhiya, Calcutta 1991, (2) Tohfatu'l-Ahbab or the Biography of Shamsu'd-Din Araki, Persian MS written by Muhammad Ali Kashmiri in AD 1632 and translated and published by Muhammad Reza Akhund Zadeh, in Khaplu, Baltistan (Northern Areas of Pakistan) in 1998. (3) Tarikh-e-Kashmir by Prized Ghulam Hassan Khuihami in Persian in 1891 and published by JK Academy of Art, Language and Literature in Srinagar in 1971.

All the three histories are most important source material for Kashmir history of mediaeval (Sultanate) times. Had the Honorable Commission cared to go through this fund of source material compiled by the local Muslim historians, we are sure it would have never passed the verdict of prevalence of communal harmony among the two communities in Kashmir. Nor would they have landed in the totally misleading concept of 'Kashmiriyat'. After reading the above mentioned three sources of mediaeval Kashmir, the Honorable Commission would have no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that 'Kashmiriyat' is synonymous with 'Islamization' in Kashmiri parlance.

To be only brief, Tohfatu'l-Ahbab, for example, devotes one full chapter to the story of destruction of temples in the length and breadth of Kashmir valley by Mir Shamsu'd-Din Araki and his Kashmiri disciples. Had the Honorable Commission studied these works with patience and in detail, it would have certainly found a new dimension of genocide. Look at the superb cleverness of circumventing the core

issue. The Honorable Commission says what happened in Kashmir were genocide-like activities but not genocide.

Where is the dividing line between genocide-like activities and actual genocide? In regard to the question of numbers among the Hindus and the Muslims killed in Kashmir, we have to be very clear in what it means. Where the Muslims killed with the avowed objective of bringing about ethno-religious cleansing of the Muslims in the valley? No not at all. Most of it was personal vendetta, old feuds and rivalries, disputes over property and women etc. How can the motives of these killings be equated with the motives behind the killing of the Pandits or handing out threats to them from mosque tops and through paid ads in the print media? The militant leadership made repeated statements that the Pandits can come back but only on condition that they will join the movement against India and fight side by side with the insurgents. No such condition has even been imposed on Muslims of the Valley who leave the Valley and have bought property (houses and land) in different parts of the country.

The Honorable Commission should have taken note of the fact that no residential house of a Muslim migrant was either looted or set on fire or destroyed and vandalized. On the contrary, nearly 25 thousand houses of the Pandits were looted, vandalized and then set on fire. Not a single house or property of the migrated Muslim has been illegally or forcibly occupied in his absence. In comparison to this, all the Pandit houses have been forcibly and illegally occupied along with their property and immovable household effects. How sad that the Honorable NHRC should have surrendered to political expediency while it was expected to be impartial, just and forthright. What does it mean that the Pandits demand for an inquiry into the entire rise of militancy and the exodus of the community is understandable? Why this understatement?

The Honorable Commission, if convinced of violation of human rights of the Pandits, as it appears to be, should have issued instructions to the central and the state governments to constitute a commission of inquiry with clearly defined terms of reference and a time frame within which it should submit its report. By making a casual and half-hearted reference to the issue, the Honourable Commission has only tried to play safe with the government. The recommendation that living conditions of the internally displaced people be improved, is what every ordinary visitor to the refugee camps has been saying. That is what foreign pressmen or human rights organizations visiting the camps have very often told the government. The Honorable Commission has just completed the formality by writing down a soothing sentence in the verdict. The Honorable Commission, fully aware of the living conditions in this country and the state, should have specified the amount of relief, the specific improvements in living conditions like the specifications of the one-room tenement, sanitary requirements, protection against heat and rain, repairing of the hutment, healthcare facilities, education, environmental security etc. What is shocking is that the Honorable Commission has not even made the slightest reference to the enormous air pollution caused by the brick kilns which influential local businessmen have established within the refugee camps. It has failed to realize the health hazard. The Commission should have at least said a word about the supply of drinking water to the remote camp in Batar Bali in Udhampur where the refugees are thirsting for a mug of water from one morning to the next morning. Instead of taking up these serious issues of human beings, the Honorable Commission has sought to travel safe and secure along the political road indicator.

It is sad that a politically motivated report instead of one squarely based on human rights considerations has emanated from the NHRC of India. But the most unrealistic of all the assertions is the pious wish of the Honorable Commission that a day in God's eternal calendar will ultimately dawn when the Pandits will go back to their respective places and live in harmony with their Muslim neighbors who will manage flow of streams of milk and honey for them. Nothing can be more amusing. This clearly shows how superficially the Honorable Commission has been treating and understanding the entire Kashmir issue. It betrays its lack of vision that demands linking the return of Pandits to national security and the security of India's northern frontier.

It shows deliberate attempt of understating the massive Islamization of Kashmir brought about by the so-called secular as well as non-secular forces in Kashmir. This is an unadulterated wish of ransoming the three hundred thousand member of a religious minority to the diktat and arbitration of a majority whose loyalties do not at all synchronize with the ransomed group. Does the Honorable Commission want us to tell the world in plain words that the land of Kashmir may be with the Indians, her people are not' The Pandits salute the tricolor and sing the national anthem. In Valley the tricolors are set on fire and replaced by green star and crescent and takbir replaces national anthem. This is the scenario into which the Honorable Commission piously desires the Kashmiri Pandits to move into. The Honorable Commission has very subtly tried to circumvent the writing on the wall in Kashmir. That does not mean the Pandits can be blackmailed.

We politely suggest the Honorable Commission to withdraw its verdict immediately and treat the Kashmir Pandit case on the merits of human rights and not as a matter of political expediency. The Pandits should strongly protest against this politically oriented verdict and should also approach the UNHRC and the Supreme Court against summary dismissal of their case of genocide and internal displacement.

Source - [Kashmir Sentinel](#)

9.0 THE CREED OF THEO-FASCISM

Kargil aggression unfolded new dimension of Pakistan's designs in the region. Ambitious to be recognized as a regional power, it confirmed that even the possession of Kashmir, if that happens, was neither the only nor the final goal she has set for herself.

Emergence of theo-fascist forces in Pakistan, and their social and political reach, is the new phenomenon India has to reckon with. These forces have ideologically integrated with their counterfoils in the Islamic world and also with the strong Muslim Diaspora in the West.

Catalysts to theo-fascist ideology are twofold. One is the cumulative grouse of political and economic exploitation of the Muslims by the West after the dismemberment of Ottoman Empire in early 19th century. The rise of Kemal in Turkey and of Reza Shah in Iran in the beginning of the twentieth century is also considered as western conspiracy against Islam. Western democracy is an anathema to Islamic traditionalists.

The second catalyst is the belief of dominance of Islam over other faiths and the superiority of Islamic civilization over existing civilizations. The youth in Muslim seminaries all over the world are brought up along this scriptural guideline. The concept, they assert, must be translated into practice. Hence we find general mobilization of the faithful.

Religion and state are inseparable in Islamic thought: it is abundantly proved historically as well as theoretically. Late Ayatollah Khomeini refuted Shah Saud's contention of their separation by stressing that the Kaaba was the precise place where the Muslims coming from all over the world should discuss their political problems.

Pakistan has not only permitted but also encouraged setting up of thousands of Islamic seminaries called madrasas for disseminating theo-fascist teachings among the youth. The concepts mentioned above are taught, together with a fair sprinkling of the use of muscle power and the promised reward for martyrdom. This regularly replenishes the cadres of Islamic religious militias deployed for jihad in different parts of the world.

Pakistan is a vastly organized theo-fascist society wearing alternatively the mask of democracy, martial law administration or theocratic dispensation. She is a moderate Islamic democracy to the Americans, a staunch Sunni-Wahhabi pro-monarchy theocracy to the Saudis, a progressive, liberal and scientific Muslim state to the Central Asians, the only sympathetic fraternity to the Indian Muslims, and the milk and honey flowing cherished haven for the Kashmiri Muslims.

In theory and in practice, both democracy and secularism – by which India swears – are anathema to Pakistani rulers. Democracy, if real, means devolution of power to the people, and secularism, if real, means equality for all religions. The latter is the antithesis of two-nation theory or the very basis of Pakistan's creation: the former is to her vast landed aristocracy what a red rag is to the bull. Therefore, in the eyes of her ruling cadres, the greatest threat to Pakistan's existence, her integrity and sovereignty, emanates from a menacing source lying in her immediate neighbourhood – India, precisely in what India teaches and follows.

Evidently, Pakistan's priority lies in weakening and destabilising India, breaking her democratic and secular structure so as to insulate her against the contagion called secularism, pluralism and democracy. Kashmir, projected by India as its model, had to bear the brunt. The axe fell on the Pandits.

Removal of an elected government, imprisonment of elected Prime Minister, framing of cases against him – the latest being his so-called RAW connections – are all measures to supplant the fundamental perceptions described above. Kashmir is a minor screw in the big machine of Pak subversion.

In order to maintain anti - democracy and anti-pluralistic tempo, Pakistan is obliged to give long leash to the theo-fascists within and outside the country. The super intelligence outfit called the ISI is championing the campaign. Considering the fine sensitivity and importance of its mission, it is but natural that ISI becomes extraordinarily powerful, nay a state within a state. In order to exercise that power, it needs funds, which, however, flow uninterruptedly and massively from the state exchequer, no doubt at the cost of education, health and welfare of the masses of people.

Besides that, ISI, devised its own methods of generating funds by promoting narcotics and drug traffic in NWFP and the region bordering on Afghanistan. The presence of millions of Afghan refugees in that province helped institutionalising of drug trade, sucking in cadres of Pakistani army, sections of bureaucracy and civilian administrative apparatus and Mafiosi with international connections. Terrorist supremos like Ossama found an empire to sit at its top.

ISI's achievement in Kashmir is the ethnic cleansing of its religious minority and fundamentalising of her society. For disintegration of India, it has spread tentacles among the vulnerable sections of Indian Muslims.

The story of India's North Eastern states, where separatism and secessionism are brewing fast, is also linked to ISI machinations. In order to deepen her perfidy, ISI has created bases around India to coordinate subversion by her agents. Thus Dhaka and Katmandu in the east, Dubai, Sharja and Muscat in the west form the ring of these subversives.

In Kashmir, apart from the known pro-Pak militant outfits and the Hurriyat Conference, there is a committed section of state bureaucracy, political organizations including the ruling party, and moles within administrative structure fully empathizing with separatists, secessionists and militants. The Kashmiri Muslim Diaspora in Saudi Arabia, Emirates, UK, the US, Canada and Australia is zealously contributing its moral and monetary support to the cause. It has become easily vulnerable to Pakistani lobbying.

Having projected Kashmiri Muslims as the victimised people, the ISI is using them fatally for destabilisation of the Indian State. This is the reason why in ninety per cent cases of bomb blasts, shoot outs, RDX plantings, kidnappings, hijackings, ransom seeking etc. in different parts of India, only Kashmiri youth are involved. This is how on Pakistan's instigation, these young people are misled, got arrested or killed. The more that happens, the more do the Kashmiri Muslims get alienated from India. This amply serves the purpose of Pakistan.

International connections of theo-fascists are too well known to beggar any description. Islamists of various nationalities, Pakistanis, Afghans, Chechnyans, Sudanese, Lebanese, British Muslims and others have been fighting in Kashmir; some have been arrested. They believe firmly that they are fighting a jihad against the kafirs. The statements of the Jamaat-e-Islami chief in Pakistan instil in them the spirit of jihad and martyrdom because they are told that India (and also Russia and the US) is an enemy.

In the aftermath of Kargil incursion, Pakistan and its ISI have accelerated the intensity of militancy in Kashmir as also the subversion in other parts of India. The hijacking of IC 814 and the high drama at Kandahar, the headquarters of Taliban, the extremist wing of the contemporary Islamists, are clear indications of what the theo-fascists are up to.

It should not go unsaid that Pakistan is wielding strong influence in the OIC. She sponsored most of the anti-India resolutions on Kashmir passed by this organisation. After Islamabad's successful plan of destroying Afghanistan by thrusting on her a fratricidal war, in the process getting rid of a perpetual menace, she has established her political and military depth westward. After effecting ethno-religious cleansing in Kashmir, and making deep inroads into Kashmiri Muslim polity through subversion, bribes and Islamization agenda, Pakistan has also found political and military depth eastward. Her veiled threats of using the nuclear option against the "enemy" (meaning India) are in place -- the latest coming from the Chief Executive himself. Pakistan has been able to prejudice the world opinion on

Kashmir. Internationalising of Kashmir has ultimately been achieved whether through the eruption of Kargil fighting or as a result of conducting nuclear test and then focusing on Kashmir as the nuclear flash point in the subcontinent.

Against this, the Indian government has not come up to the mark. India is groping for an effective way of curbing the menace. She is bogged down with tiresome debates in the parliament and the assemblies. She is responding to the situation through a pedagogue's manual for democratic dispensation. Her handling of airliner hijacking case has aroused mixed response. She is dangerously trying to minimize the subversion inside Kashmir, and elsewhere in the country. Is it that their vision of a futuristic India is blurred by vote bank politics? Is there none among the political and intellectual stalwarts who can stand up and alert the masses of India to the impending danger of theo-fascism? Let us not forget that even in the country that has stolen a march over others in fomenting theo-fascist tendencies, there are millions of people who would like to live in peace with others. What are we doing to strengthen those elements? The current crisis cannot be mitigated just by verbatim recitation of the mantras of democracy and secularism. Practical aspects of these postulates cannot be left to coffeehouse theorizing.

10.0 CHECHNYA: IMPENDING NUCLEAR FLASH POINT

Russian troops continue pounding Chechnya separatist strongholds. Western press gleefully gives the news of considerable loss to Russian troops in terms of men and material. Their estimates speak of about three thousand Russian soldiers killed during the fresh assault, although Russian official sources place the losses at five hundred. In any case, the Russians have maintained pressure on the separatists and pinned them down to their mountain fastnesses.

The news has come in that the Taliban Islamic regime of Afghanistan has formally announced their recognition of independent Chechnya Republic. Though the headquarters of Taliban are in Peshawar, the capital of the NWFP of Pakistan, yet the announcement of recognition was made from Kandahar, the seat of Mulla Omar, the Taliban chief..

Though the details of the discussion on the issue in the Taliban shura (assembly) are not available, yet Taliban foreign minister, Mulla Ahmad Mutwakkil said in an interview that for quite some time their regime had been thinking of according formal recognition to Chechnya republic. This was, however, accelerated by the Russian attack on Chechnya.

Mutwakkil said that the first step after recognition of the Chechnya Republic would be that they could appoint their ambassador in Afghanistan. Thereafter, he disclosed, the Taliban would consider extending economic and military support to the Chechnya Republic to meet the threat from the Russians. This means re-enactment of mujahideen role on the borders of Russia.

This decision of the Taliban came on the heels of a significant development in Moscow. Only two days ago, Moscow announced that Russian Federation had formulated a new security doctrine that was an improvement on the one announced in 1996. The Acting President, Vladimir Putin approved the 21-page doctrine. Among other things, it says that Russia would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if the insurgents and other destabilizing forces out to work towards disintegration of Russia, threatened its integrity and sovereignty.

Some political analysts think that this step has been taken in the background of intensified fighting in Chechnya and the possibility of its escalation. But others think that for some time, Moscow has been uneasy with what it has called the steady encroachment of NATO in Russian sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.

As a matter of fact, Russian disapproval of NATO's role began with the latter's air attacks on Yugoslavia, once a strong East European ally of the erstwhile Soviet Union. That marked the determination of Russia not to allow the Western powers to sideline her in European and global strategies as a power and make her irrelevant.

In another development, the 41-member European community is sending its delegation to Moscow to discuss Chechnyan situation. The British representative, John Russell, heading the delegation, has made no bones of what the delegation intends to convey to Moscow. He said that the European community might consider expulsion of Russia from its membership if it does not halt what it calls violation of human rights in Chechnya by the Russian troops.

Nobody doubts the double standards employed by the European community and the US in regard to the violation of human rights. The imposition of economic sanctions on Iraq depriving millions of infants from milk and essential medicines are not considered violation of human rights by them. Likewise, the heavy bombardment of Yugoslavia destroying the vital infrastructure in that country and crippling civilian administration with disastrous consequences for the populace are not violation of human rights in their lexicon.

Chechnyan affair is much more complicated than what may appear at the surface. If it were just a separatist movement, perhaps its resolution could be envisioned in terms of negotiations. But Chechnya is

the hotbed of Islamic fundamentalist activities aimed at disintegration of Russian Federation by fanning religious frenzy among the local Muslim population. The Wahhabi ideology emanating from Saudi Arabia with strong and effective disseminating centres in Pakistan and Taliban Afghanistan, is entrenched in Chechnyan Muslim segment.

Apart from ideological subversion, the Chechn fighting men are provided with an inventory of latest automatic and other lethal weapons forming part of the supplies made earlier by the Americans to the Afghan mujahideen during the war with Soviet Union. Now the Chechn separatist cadres receive enormous arms, ammunition and funding directly from a number of Islamic organizations world over, and indirectly from some of the theocratic Islamic States with an agenda of boosting Wahhabi ideology in the Caucasus and Central Asian region.

The role of Osama Bin Laden, the wealthy Saudi Islamic warlord responsible for the bomb attacks on two American embassies in Africa in August 1998 resulting in the killing of several hundred innocent people, cannot be overlooked. Osama is reported to be hiding in Afghanistan and is protected by the Taliban. Talks between Taliban and American authorities for the extradition of Osama have not yielded any result, The Taliban proudly say that Afghans don't betray a guest.

But there is something more than that in the story. There are rumours that the 15-year old daughter of Osama Bin Laden is married to Mull Omar, the Taliban chief. Though some Taliban official sources have tried to contradict this rumour, yet it is getting rounds again. As such, extradition of Osama, as demanded by the Americans, may never materialize. This must have been one of the factors that made the Taliban decide to grant recognition to Chechn Republic.

The Afghan fighting force - Taliban - have, evidently, become the strong muscle for propagation and dissemination of Wahhabi ideology. This means that the Taliban and their cohorts among known extremist organizations would be taking on Russia even if the Chechn crisis is somehow resolved. This is the agenda of these organizations. Significantly, the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami chief has recently pronounced that they would not allow Pakistan's military regime to sign CTBT under the US pressure because the nuclear bomb produced by Pakistan belonged not only to Pakistan but also to the entire Muslim ummah. In other words, it means that in the context of Chechn crisis, it is not only the separatists, but the entire Islamic ummah that is pitted against the Russians. Pakistan (its extremist religious organizations or the regimes) would undoubtedly give a befitting response to Russia if the latter decides to use nuclear weapons in Chechn war. Do we have the real nuclear flash point in Kashmir or in the Caucasus?

11.0 SUBTLE POLEMICS OF INTERVENTION

Preliminaries of President Clinton's five-day visit to India beginning March 20 have entered a bizarre phase. While high ranking officials on both sides are working hard to iron out angularities, the visit is becoming more and more controversial.

Washington is obsessed with two contingencies of the visit. One, it wants to push its own prescription for reducing tension between India and Pakistan, and the other it also wants not to exclude Pakistan from President's visit.

Washington is not as much influenced by India's loud protestations against the President visiting Pakistan as by her own so-called commitment to democratic dispensation. Neither Kargil incursion, nor Pakistan sponsored hijacking of the Indian airliner would cut ice with the Americans. Their problem is how to face the world opinion if the President decides to visit a military man who deposed the elected government and struck at the roots of democracy.

Few in India are able to explain why New Delhi should be excited about the visit of an American President at a time when he is coming to the fag end of his two-year term of presidency. A lackluster visit can, at the best, be called an exciting excursion in stagnated diplomacy. It also shows how immature the ruling party in New Delhi can be.

The bizarre game began with the US President offering his personal services for reducing Indo-Pak tension to the new Pakistan ambassador Maleeha Lodhi when she presented her credentials at the White House. The Indian Prime Minister was quick to respond through a public speech in Jalandhar that India would not accept mediation by a third party.

Unable to swallow the bitter truth, the Defence Secretary Mr. Cohen indiscreetly threatened that the US had a right to intervene in situations that jeopardize international peace. He was specific in mentioning Kashmir as the flash - point. A statement immediately followed this from American Secretary of State endorsing the views expressed by the Defence Secretary Cohen. The duo wanted to impress upon New Delhi that Washington could, if she liked, even take unilateral decision of laying down some hard conditions for the two South Asian nuclear states.

Speculations are rife that Washington is preparing a blue print for Indo-Pak dentate in the context of breaking the ground for the two countries to sign CTBT. To this broad framework, the issue of Kashmir appears to be an adjunct. The premise is that inclusion of Kashmir would send a reassuring message to Pakistan, which, in turn, would exert its influence in restraining the Islamic fundamentalists including Osama now in the hands of Taliban in Afghanistan.

But more than Kashmir and restraining of fundamentalists, Islamabad is concerned about a move on the international forum of considering a seat for India in the Security Council. In order to dissuade Washington from conceding leverage to India, General Musharraf paid hurried visits to Saudi Arabia and Turkey, the two countries that carry weight with the State Department in framing major policy perceptions in the region.

Though out of tune, the Hurriyat leaders were euphoric to state that President Clinton was coming with a prescription to resolve Kashmir tangle. Recently Pakistan foreign office has also dropped hints that President's visit to South Asia has something to do with paving the way for Indo-Pak summit.

Layer after layer, these polemics are unfolding. The Indian foreign secretary, Lalit Man Singh said in Washington that there were no conditions whatever attached to the visit of the American President to India. He denied that neither CTBT, nor Kashmir nor Indo - Pak détente were on the agenda of the President. He reaffirmed that it was only a process of creating congenial atmosphere for a better understanding between the two countries.

Islamabad has been playing her cards very carefully. Its message to the State Department is that exclusion of Pakistan from the President's itinerary would mean indirect boosting of terrorism in Pakistan and the region. This is to convey as if Pakistan is victimized by the rising crescendo of terrorism. But Americans may not need to be educated on that issue because it has begun to touch their skin.

In these circumstances, when Washington has adopted an ambivalent posture, what is very clear is that Clinton cannot exclude Pakistan from his itinerary. Its announcement will come at the last moment even if it is just a touch down at Karachi airport and a hug to the military man. After all no civilian or military ruler can exist for a day in Pakistan if he has not the goodwill of the Americans.

It appears unlikely that India will sign the CTBT no matter if the question is linked to India's 'candidature for the membership of the Security Council. The BJP government would not like to take cudgels with its affiliates nor with the recalcitrant Congress, which has, very unfortunately, given up the politics of principles and major issues facing the country and resorted to personalizing of issues political or non-political. New Delhi would also wait till there is a new incumbent in the White House and would watch if there were any significant changes in the fundamental of parity-seeking politics of the US for the subcontinent.

12.0 FUNDAMENTALIST TERROR AND GLOBAL STRATEGYS

Islamic fundamentalist terror is fast spreading beyond the confines of sponsoring countries. Khumeinite Hizbollah is as active in Turkey as it is in Lebanon. Indonesian Christians are the latest victims to this phenomenon.

Khumeinite philosophy of export of Islamic revolution was soon hijacked by the more strident Sunni-Wahhabi radicals centered in Ar-Rabitau'l-Islami in Saudi Arabia. Other rabid Sunni organizations in some Islamic countries fine-tuned the new brand of theofascism. Fundamentalists - terrorists raised by specific organizations in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Burma etc. have found their way to Chechnya, Daghistan, North Caucasus, Tajikistan, Kashmir and as far away as Indonesia.

Muslim ummah theorists reject boundaries separating the territories of Islamic countries, nor do they find it obligatory for them to obtain a passport or a visa when travelling from one Islamic country to another. Thus a fundamentalist Islamic warrior in Kashmir considers it his Islamic right to be in Kashmir fully equipped with arms and ammunition. He is told that it is his Islamic mission to fight the infidel in his own land or outside it. This also explains why most of trans-border Islamic fundamentalists-terrorists generally carry fake passports and visas.

Fighting kufr, therefore, means performing the religious duty of destabilising legal local governments, extirpating non-Muslim populations, fighting and finishing the opponents to their creed and conscience, establishing nizam-e-mustafa (the Prophet's system) as against the atheistic political system brought by the west, and rejoicing in the Islamic Caliphate that will emerge as the single world order. Therefore, their ruthless opposition to democracy, secularism and pluralism becomes self-explanatory. That is why, for example, Pakistan must have a military regime against democracy.

India, Tajikistan, the Philippines, the US and lately Russia have tasted or continue to taste of Islamic fundamentalist terror. Clandestine crossing of international borders, smuggling of arms and ammunition to create disturbance, fomenting lawlessness in the targeted country, unleashing rabid communal propaganda, and galvanizing volunteers and activists for the conduct of criminal acts of murder, arson, subversion, kidnapping etc. in the name of religion, are the new dimensions of theofascism.

With the Khumeinite exporters of Islamic revolution partially sidelined by better-organized, strongly funded and ardently motivated Sunni-Wahhabi ideology, their operational field shifted to Pakistan and Afghanistan. The rise of Taliban provided territorial foothold to the theofascists because their regime knows no constitutional constraints or international commitments. For the first time, a lawless people in a lawless country had decided to wage a lawless war against humanity.

The first to bear the brunt of theofascists forays were Tajikistan in Central Asia and the Indian part of Kashmir. Tajikistan, the secular state and the gateway to Central Asia, and Kashmir the symbol of India's secularist dispensation, became the immediate targets. Iran a rival of Sunni-Wahhabi theofascism in Tajikistan played mediatory role and brought the secularists and the radicals to an understanding of sorts for the governance of that strife-torn land. But in Kashmir, Iran has little at stake and hence her pronounced anti-India tilts manifest occasionally as in the resolutions of OIC.

India's continued complaint to the US, the UN and the European Union against the expanded agenda of Pak-sponsored theofascists made little impression on them because of their larger political and economic interests. But then a few incidents took place that forced the West and the US to review their opinion about Islamic theofascism. The killing of the CIA agent by a Pakistani terrorist in front of CIA headquarters in the US, gunning down of two American Consulate officials in Karachi by the Pakistan-based terrorists, the blasting of Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad by the Islamic terrorists, rocketing of American Embassy in Islamabad, New York Trade Fair blasts and its linkage with Pakistani theofascists, the bombing of two American embassies in Africa on August 7, 1998, all made a big difference. Occasional anti-American utterances by Pakistani Jammata-e-Islami firebrands, Osama, the blind

American Muslim cleric Rahman, and many others made it clear to the Americans what the Islamists were up to.

Then followed other events in a sequence. Islamic theofascists intensified their anti-India activities in the aftermath of Kargil incursion in which Pakistani government was an accomplice. Then happened the Islamic war in Chechnya and Daghistan in Trans-Caspia, fundamentalist activities in Uzbekistan and an attempt on the life of Uzbek President Islam Karimov, bomb blasts in Moscow, underground activities of Islamists in the UK in regard to collection of funds for theofascists organizations operating in Kashmir, fanning of fundamentalist flames in Xinjiang - Eastern Turkestan province of China and death penalty by the Chinese authorities to the culprits of Pakistani nationality, and finally the hijacking of the Indian airliner in Kathmandu. All this laid bare the ambitious agenda of the theofascists in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The civilized world now awoke from its deep slumber.

Today, the civilized world is coming closer to discuss and adopt measures of containing the new threat. India and the United States have had several rounds of bilateral talks on the subject, and a Working Group on Counter-Terrorism has been formed. India and Russia have also begun serious bilateral talks on the subject and Russia and the US have recently decided to examine the question. Beijing and New Delhi, both have already given their full support to the Russian military action in Chechnya. Moscow was pressurized by the European Union to cease hostilities and find a negotiated settlement of Chechnya, of course keeping in mind the vast economic interests the Union countries have in the Muslim world. But Acting Russian President Putin put his foot down. He did succeed in warning the European Union that Russia was fighting the Islamic fundamentalism on the southern borders of Europe and that too single-handedly.

Washington has begun to concede that India has become the frontline state to bear the brunt face of this threat. She has asked the military ruler of Pakistan to contain the fundamentalist-terrorist operatives and organizations in his country and to restore democratic dispensation. Islamabad considers it a clear shift in Washington's policy in the subcontinent. This becomes more significant in view of Pakistan being excluded from President Clinton's visit to the subcontinent in March.

It may, therefore, be assumed that the US, the UK, Russia, China, India and some more countries in Europe have begun to take due notice of the serious implications of Islamic theofascism trying to spread its fangs deeper and wider. It is now in their own interests and in the interests of the peace-loving Muslims all over the world to formulate a joint strategy of how to eradicate this menace and let the strangled societies and groups breath an air of freedom. In particular, the progressive segments among vast Muslim populations forced to migrate to the US and to Europe, are reassured that their right to freedom of expression and conviction will not be denied so that they return to their native land and work for the freedom and emancipation of their strangled compatriots.

13.0 THE MISSION FOR SELF DESTRUCTION

It is an unpleasant job to pontificate, more so when a neighbour is the object. But when that neighbour refuses to observe established norms of goodwill and friendship and his behaviour crosses limits of, there arises the need to bring him round through gentle persuasion in the hope that sanity and reason might prevail.

We refer to Pakistan, a neighbouring country with which we have historical, cultural, linguistic and ethnic relations. It was once a part of India but its people decided to carve out another state. That is fine and a reality nobody can deny or challenge. If the people of Pakistan find it good for themselves to disown these relations, it is fine. We should have no problem with that because we do not want to thrust ourselves on anybody much less those who decided to live separately.

But certain developments are taking place in Pakistan, which, from our point of view, are not only harmful to our interests as a neighbouring nation but may eventually contribute to the destabilisation of that state and the resultant instability in the region.

A state founded on religious consideration is inherently an unstable state in the context of modern world where tendency is for secularist and pluralist approach. This is because of imperatives of modern society dependent on scientific and technological advancement.

However conceding that a state formed on the exclusive basis of religion need not entertain fears of instability, it remains to be said that allowing the state institutions rest exclusively on religious extremist ideology, is fraught with serious consequences.

Successive Pakistani regimes from the times of Ziaul-Haq down to present day, adopted the policy of encouraging religious extremism in Pakistan. As long as a people remain economically deprived and politically marginalised, they are more and more vulnerable to the haranguing of religious entrepreneurs. This has been the history of the people of the East.

The phenomenon becomes more insidious when landlords of medieval type continue to concentrate political power in their hands directly or indirectly. In this way, the ruling apparatus needs to create the phobia of threat to religion. All those systems and institutions that might undermine the authority of the landlords and the power structure created by them, are identified as 'the enemy'. People of a different faith whether within the territorial jurisdiction of that state or outside it, become the first among the unwanted.

But if the things were to stop at that point, perhaps the situation could have been retrieved. When the religious extremists find themselves overtly and covertly supported by the governing machinery, then there appears the arrogance of the majoritarian faith. In Pakistan, after the extirpation of nearly ten million Hindus at the time of partition, the extremists naturally looked for an enemy. Apart from the Ahmadis and the Shias as 'the enemy', the Barelavis and Deobandis within the Sunni sect became one another's sworn enemies. Sectarianism began eating like canker into the vitals of Pak society. Brutal inter-sect killings were made in villages, towns, market places, congregation grounds and finally in mosques while the faithful bent in prayers. Today, we find sectarian armies (lashkars) armed to the teeth and brandishing swords to destroy families and settlements. Where is this going to lead the Pakistan society? Of course today we have a lawless country with a lawless people devouring its own progeny and dismantling its own home.

The religious extremist organisations in Pakistan have almost sidelined the state authority and taken into their hand the course of events for the people of that land. When armed gangs of radicals threaten to destroy a government that does not fall in line with their ideological frame, the state ceases to be sovereign. In the Muridke convention of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, an extremist religious armed group, the slogan was raised that each faithful (momin) should contribute ten rupees, the cost of a bullet to kill an

Indian. The government of Pakistan not only overlooked it but also in fact had deputed its representative to endorse the views of the frenzied leaders. In such a state, if it becomes improbable to carry on fire and brimstone to the neighbouring land, is it inconceivable that they will not turn the guns on their own people and begin their annihilation for one reason or the other? Is it not happening today? Do we not find bomb blasts every other day in towns and cities? What is the condition in Karachi? Aren't there "no go" areas"?

When the rulers find these horrendous acts of terrorism taking place, they look for an escape valve, the 'foreign hand' and now the 'RAW' come handy. It is so because there has been stupendous indoctrination done to coerce unsuspecting people into believing.

In the name of Islam, Pakistan opened its floodgates for the receipt of American weaponry for onward transmission to the Afghan mujahideen. Nobody can say with certainty what percentage of this war material found its way into Afghanistan and how much was retained by Pakistan to militarise the fundamentalists. Where did the brave adventure of US - Pak combine take poor Afghanistan? Today, out of a total population of nearly two and a half crore people in that country, more than half are either dead, wounded or in exile. The fratricidal war, with no end in sight, is the gift of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Islamic brethren in Afghanistan. The day is not far off when those who lionise Pakistani radicals for a role in fundamentalising society in Afghanistan, will realize what they have brought upon their own people. The case of Kashmir is no different. And when that happens, as it should happen by simple logic of history, what will be the position of the feudal - military combine in Pakistan.? Are they not sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind?

Pakistan's essential problem is the loss of identity. She wants to detach herself from the ethos of the subcontinent and seeks to be identified with the Arab world. Both things are unrealistic and cannot happen. It is a wish which history repudiates and logic rejects. In a bid to see the former contingency fructify, she has floated venomous hatred campaign against India and the Indians (Muslims included). And to hope for the realization of the latter contingency, she has fundamentalised her society or rather Wahhabised it in a bid to please the Saudis. The albatross hangs by her neck.

Torn by the imperative of constructed identity, tormented by the fallacy of religion as cementing force among ethnic groups, plagued by the rising crescendo of overbearing religious militias, Pakistan has steadily created for herself conditions that may lead her to disintegration. She has not been able to decide whether she is happy with theocracy, basic democracy, outright democracy, martial law regime or Executive Chieftainship. In the words of one of her military rulers, she is "more allied than ally" with the USA. Today the same USA is keeping a close watch on her to declare her a terrorist state.

The solution of these frustrating problems rests with the people of Pakistan. They have to think for themselves. We can, at best, join our voice with political pundits in saying that by and large, a people get the government they deserve.

14.0 EXTERNAL THREAT AND INTERNAL SUBVERSION

Kargil aggression unfolded Pakistan's nefarious designs against our country. It envisages disintegration of India through subversion and territorial incursions.

The success of Taliban in capturing nine-tenth of Afghan land including the capital city of Kabul through the instrumentality of Pakistan army and ISI combine brought Pakistan military and political depth westward.

In Kashmir, she has been able to achieve the ethnic cleansing of the religious minority of Pandits, and radicalizing of Kashmiri Muslim polity. Yet one more significant achievement of ISI in Kashmir is of making deep inroads in a segment of the State bureaucracy, political groupings and administrative structure. Today in Kashmir, the land is with India but the people are not.

It is not correct to say that the core issue between India and Pakistan is Kashmir. That is too simplistic an interpretation. Pakistan's basis is her religion meaning Islamic identity. For two reasons, Islamists have brought about turmoil in many parts of the Muslim world as well as in many countries where Muslims are in sizeable numbers.

Two factors have contributed to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism towards the last three decades of the previous century. One is the cumulative impression that the West politically and economically exploited the Muslims after the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in West Asia and the Mughal Empire in the subcontinent.

The second is the belief that Muslim scriptures promise the worldwide dominance of the religion of the holy Prophet. It also guarantees the superiority of the Islamic civilization because the holy book prescribes Muslim society as the most perfect and an ideal society.

Yet more important than these two factors is the third one, viz. the contradiction within the Islamic society, which has pitted the progressive, reformist and liberal segments against the conservative, orthodox and retrograde segments. In this inter-group dichotomy, the non-Muslims, wherever in a minority in a given Islamic state, become the sitting ducks for the Islamic musclemen. No doubt, the moderates also become the victims of their fury. Thus we have the examples in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco etc. At the same time, we have also the examples where religion is exploited for political ends and regimes are sustained through support to fundamentalist ideology.

Pakistan has, per necessity, to be a Theo-fascist state. In order to justify her existence, Pakistan must reject democracy, secularism and pluralism. Accepting secular dispensation would negate the basic plea of carving the Islamic state on the subcontinent, and accepting of democracy or in other words devolution of power to the masses, means sealing the fate of the big landed aristocracy in Pakistan. Both of these dispensations are unacceptable to her.

This is why we say that Kashmir is only a small nut in the big anti-India machine. Islamabad is not as much afraid of India's military or economic might as of the political philosophy she has accepted to follow. This explains the imperative with Pakistan of destabilizing or disintegrating India, the arch enemy. We hope Indian ruling circles understand it very well.

After the Kargil aggression, Pakistan stepped up her sponsored terrorist activities in Kashmir. The army and paramilitary camps in the valley have been made the target of their attacks. Suicide squads have been launched to carry out the deadly assignments. This is to rejuvenate confidence among the local militant whose energy had begun to sag.

The ISI has spread its tentacles throughout our country particularly in places where there is a concentration of Muslim population (like 21 districts of Western U.P.) or where logistical support is easily available. She has also thrown a ring of her operational basis around India wherefrom subversive

activities of her agents inside India are coordinated. Thus we find Dhaka, Katmandu and Rangoon among such centres in the East and Afghanistan, Dubai, Sharja, Emirates and Qatar in the West.

Pakistan's overt and covert support to the religious extremist organizations on her soil has added a new dimension to Theo-fascism through which these fanatics want to establish the Islamic Caliphate of their dreams. These organizations based in Pakistan openly raise war cries of jihad against the Indian kafirs (infidels). The type of slogans raised during the Dawa wal Ershad congregation in Muridke near Lahore on November 3 – 4, 1999, explain the mega agenda set forth for themselves by the radical Islamists not only in Pakistan but all over the Muslim world. After all we cannot ignore the fact that delegates of more than two dozen foreign theocratic organizations participated in the Muridke conclave. India, Russia and the US are the declared countries against whom they are to wage a relentless jihad.

Their activities are linked to Osama Ben Laden and his organization Al Qaida. Funding for these fanatical religious organizations does not come only from Osama Ben Laden's source. The Saudi monarchy and its intelligence agencies have never let these organizations starve. In fact any organization publicly announcing its affiliation to the Sunni-Wahhabi source in Saudi Arabia, becomes the choice beneficiary of their largesse.

New Delhi is bogged down with desk-book formulae of running the government by a democratic dispensation. Meeting this serious threat should not preclude some extraordinary measures aimed at protecting territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Indian State. Evidently, the administrative machinery in the State of Jammu and Kashmir has failed to deliver the goods notwithstanding the mandate it got in 1996. The question is not only of meeting the external threat: internal subversion is proving more disastrous and damaging. The ruling parties in New Delhi should come out of the debilitating spell of vote bank politics and respond to the call of the nation. A radical and far-reaching structural change of J&K State, in which proven anti-national elements are sidelined while proven nationalist elements are empowered, is as urgent a requirement as that of upgrading the counter insurgency tactics.

15.0 PRIME MINISTER SPEAKS IT OUT

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee deserves to be congratulated for having spoken something in very plain words in his public speech at Jalandhar. This is what the nation had been looking for many years. It indicates that now there is clear and precise understanding of Kashmir issue at the centre.

What is the justification for the PM's contention that we shall not rest till we have regained that part of Kashmir, which is under Pakistan's illegal occupation? We are more than justified. The entire State of J&K acceded to the Indian Union in 1947. Pakistan conducted an aggression against us and illegally retained a part of the State territory. We have every right to throw her out physically. On December 31, 1948 only a cease-fire agreement was signed between India and Pakistan. It was not an agreement by virtue of which Pakistan got the right to retain her possession of PoK for all times to come. By the UNCIP resolution of 1948 and 1949, Pakistan was supposed to withdraw its troops and fighting men from the part of Kashmir it had occupied illegally. This would have paved the way for a plebiscite for deciding the future of the State. India could not wait indefinitely.

Pakistan did not only not withdraw the fighting men on her side, but integrated two-third of the occupied territory (now called Northern Areas) into Pakistan. It was done without seeking the consent of the people to whom the land and its resources belonged. It was done in secretive manner in Karachi. What is more, some of the signatories to the Karachi accord today deny having signed the accord. This has given rise to a big controversy on the validity of incorporation of Northern Areas into Pak territory.

Furthermore, Pakistan ceded more than five thousand kilometers of Kashmir territory to China in Aksaichin in order to facilitate China to build the Karakorum Highway providing overland link between Beijing and Karachi. This highway passes through Kashmir territory and has been constructed illegally without the permission of India. The Government of India reserves the right to strike at this strategic road link and destroy it because it poses security threat to India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. China and Pakistan are reported to have installed missile bases along this highway.

For last couple of years Islamabad has been trying to bring about a drastic change in the demographic complexion of Northern Areas. People from NWFP are brought to Gilgit and Baltistan for permanent settlement. They are generally recruited in the police cadres and constabularies and are provided many facilities to get themselves settled down in the area. Thousands of families are reported to have already settled down. This formula is being extended to the remaining part of PoK as well. The idea is to increase the numerical strength of the settlers who would suppress the locals and their aspirations. Tension and clashes between the settlers and indigenous people have been reported in Pakistani media.

There are no fewer than six political organizations in the Northern Areas and an equal number in PoK who have been vociferously demanding freedom from Pakistan's occupation. They claim and rightly so that Gilgit and Baltistan are the integral part of the territory of the State of Jammu & Kashmir as under the Maharaja of Srinagar. As such, they are the masters of the land and not Pakistanis.

One important grouse of the people of PoK including those of Northern Areas is that their natural resources are being looted by Pakistani investors and entrepreneurs without adequate compensation and share for the locals. Take for instance the use of water resource. A number of major rivers in the area originate and flow through Northern Areas. The people of these areas are entitled to the royalty for production of hydroelectric power or for utilizing the water for irrigation purposes. The same is the case with Mangla Dam.

Apart from this ground reality that reveals the measure of discontent among the local population in PoK, India has every right to strike with full force and take back the entire territory that belonged to the original State. The main reason is the establishment of dozens of terrorist training camps throughout the PoK and even close to the cease fire line. Here in these camps, Islamic fundamentalists are trained and indoctrinated and the pushed into Indian Territory to foment troubles and carry out subversive activities.

A grand conspiracy of destabilizing India is undertaken in these camps. India has every right to strike at these camps, destroy them, take them into her possession and establish her sway over the entire PoK.

What Indian military planners should do is to capture Chitral, which has been part of the protectorate of the State of J&K under the rule of the Maharaja, and establish her Northern Frontier Command with all the possible military strength. This is needed to break once for all the colonial and imperial concept of creating buffers along the Himalayas. This will also be the most effective and result-oriented tactics of securing northern frontiers of India.

What India must take into account is the need to deny the lawless people of the frontier areas the usual opportunity of making armed forays into her territories, subject her citizens to loot, plunder, arson and strife. The backbone of this uncivilized and barbaric monster needs to be broken. Eventually, when Indian troops take possession of these territories and govern them as part of the Indian Union with a secularist, pluralistic and democratic dispensation, the local populace that has been tied down to religious fanaticism, economic backwardness and myopic visions will find an opening. They will become the rulers of their land in letter and in spirit by ensuring devolution of power.

Indian military and civilian planners must join heads to devise a blueprint for retaking PoK in a blitzkrieg. Doing so will have tremendously rewarding results. It will eradicate once for all the menace of forging intrigues and conspiracies in the area; it will bring an era of new thinking and new life for the people of the area; it will reinforce and cement the communal harmony among people of different faiths, cultures and ethnicities. It will change the map of Central Asian strategies which, unfortunately, has become too exposed to the inroads of the Islamists on the one hand and the exploitative capitalists on the other.

In global strategy, India taking back PoK will cut China to her size. Beijing's clandestine hobnobbing with Islamabad in the matter of containing India will be dealt a serious blow. It will also enhance bilateral relations between India and the Central Asian States. May be it provides an overland link between India and Central Asia. It will give India a vantage position in the Central Asian political strategies.

Apart from all this, a step in this direction will resolve Kashmir question for all times to come. It is a natural and logical resolution of the ethno-religious cleansing of minorities in Kashmir. It is also a solution to ambivalent Kashmiri leadership and its blackmailing of the Indian State. It will establish India as the leading power in the region and China will think twice before embarking on any adventure in future. About Pakistan, it is a foregone conclusion that that state, having arrived at the stage of lawlessness and theofascists dispensation, is very close to her dismemberment. One major thrust by India into PoK will shatter her to pieces and the world powers who passionately want to get rid of the menace that Pakistan is, would never interfere. The time is ripe for India to strike hard and quick

But some analysts might be disposed to call the conclusions too sweeping and removed from reality. After all this means a full-fledged war with Pakistan, and perhaps a nuclear war as well. It also means incurring the wrath of western powers and the OIC. The world press will cry at the top of its voice that India having called for peace all these years is now embarking on a massive war with unforeseen consequences.

Well, we cannot ignore these realities. A war has to follow Indian action in PoK, and Pakistan will respond using her nuclear option. One would have liked Islamabad to follow suit when India declared self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing. The second difficulty is that the area is lawless from times immemorial. Would India be doing a good thing by inviting confrontational policy with the local warring groups?

The fact of the matter is that Pakistan deliberately kept these areas backward and dependent. Her political interests lie in that policy. On the other hand India, a progressive and democratic state, would provide them the self-governing mechanism so that they do not fall into the hands of the forces inimical to their interests.

In final analysis, great nations do take certain big decisions in order to ensure the security and perpetuation of a system of governance people have given unto themselves. India has to move towards a definitive northern frontier policy not only in the context of Pakistan but also in the context of China and the western powers inching towards carving a strong foothold in Central Asia.

16.0 ISLAMIC WARRIORS IN TURKESTAN

Turkestan had experienced the worst type of tyranny and oppression under autocratic Khanates of mid – 19th century. It was despite the rulers and the ruled professing the same faith. Before the communist ideology swept Central Asians with the beginning of second decade of the 20th century, Central Asia was simmering with political discontent.

Soviet system pulled Turkestan out of political, social and economic stagnation and ushered in the culture of modern industrialised society. Anybody desiring to know this saga of this metamorphosis would do well to read the illuminating volume titled Dawn over Samarkand.

Religion in general and Islam in particular remained an important factor in the social history of Turkestan. Bukhara, now in Uzbekistan, was once called the second Madina. All the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence surfaced in the lands of Turkestan.

It is an irony that today some Sunni-Wahhabi theocratic regimes are dreaming of exporting Islam to Turkestan. Curiously enough, they want to achieve this objective by fanning the flames of fundamentalist terror. It is somewhat difficult to convince these regimes that Turkestan has been the home of three major civilizations known to man viz. Buddhism, Zoroastrians and Islam. Despite this, the Islamic fundamentalist-terrorist operatives in a sinister fashion have targeted Turkestan.

Afghan, Pakistani and Arab militants are reported to have participated in the August 1999 campaign led by the Farghana-based Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) to capture more than 20 villages in southern Kkyrgyzstan. Earlier, in July, these militants joined the Chechen contingents that stormed some parts of the tiny Caucasian republic of Dagestan, sparking off the second TechNet war.

IMU together with the Chechen guerrillas poses the most potent threat to stability in the region. They have been involved in terrorist bombings and dashes with security forces within Uzbekistan. Two separate attacks by its members in February and November 1999 resulted in more than 40 deaths.

Islam Karimov, the President of Uzbekistan. escaped a bid on his life by the IMU activists. He says that some of the militants were trained in Chechnya while others, including one of the top IMU leaders, Tahir Yuldashev, have taken refuge in Afghanistan. In June, the Taliban rejected a request of the Uzbek government to extradite Yuldashev.

As militants find ever-safer sanctuaries in the region, their sphere of operation expands to areas as far north as the Russian Federation, which has been the target of terrorist attacks in recent months.

The Uighur Islamists inspired riots in the Baren township near Kashghar in 1990, and again in Yining town near the Kazakh border in 1997 resulting in what observers believe “considerable” though hitherto unspecified number of casualties. Periodic rioting has been taking place almost regularly. According to an estimate 45 uprisings took place in Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan – now part of China) during April and May 1996 alone in which 65f, 000 people participated and over 1,000 were killed. The Chinese conceded that the region has become “unstable”.

Chinese authorities are cautious in identifying the elements responsible for these acts, putting the blame generally on “reactionary forces in the west, separatists and religious extremists.” A German expert on Eastern Turkestan, Dr. Fudrun Wacker, while quoting Chinese officials, told a seminar in Peshawar some time ago that “there are reports that the american CIA officials in Xinjiang in June 1997. Soon afterwards, the Uighur Chairman of the province revealed the existence of what he called the Party of Allah (Hizbollah), a fundamentalist Muslim party fighting for independence with about 1,600 active members.

Chinese officials believe these militants are being trained in Afghanistan and use Afghan heroin to fund their activities. These officials are grappling with the mounting influx of heroin from Afghanistan which targets more than one million heroin addicts in China, most of them in Xinjiang.

In the first week of February 1999, a Chinese delegation led by the head of the Asia desk at the foreign office in Beijing quietly visited Afghanistan to seek deportation of a number of Uighur militants wanted by the Chinese authorities in cases of terrorism and drugs. The Taliban told them. However, that no Uighur citizens were present in Afghanistan.

17.0 CREATING ATMOSPHERE CONDUCTIVE FOR DIALOGUE TOWARDS PEACE

This proposition has two aspects: ‘creating conducive atmosphere’ and ‘dialogue’. Creating conducive atmosphere suggests that we don’t have one at present. The question is why?

An important reason is the interplay of external armed intrusion and internal subversion. External intrusion is combated but not fully uprooted because of the gregariousness of the Indian State. We did not strike back when we should have. To hide our criminal inaction, we seek an alibi in Pakistan’s explicit ‘operations’ against us. Where do we find an enemy showering flowers and rose petals not bullets and hand grenades on its adversary?

As for internal subversion, the question is subversion by whom? Identify them. In my opinion, we have (a) committed secessionists and separatists (b) uncommitted secessionists and their sympathisers (c) sections of ambivalent political and administrative cadres. (d) sections of partisan and biased media, and (e) some self-styled human rights activists and their organisations.

The committed secessionists and separatists have taken to arms on the sponsorship of their Pakistani mentors. Misplaced religious fervour provides grist to their war mill. They never indicated a desire to give up arms and talk of peace. That is a decision, which not they but their sponsors alone can make.

Uncommitted secessionists and their sympathisers are standing on the fence. They vacillate with the turn of tide. This section could be vulnerable to promptings for peace and dialogue because their stakes are not high.

Of the sections of political and administrative cadres indulging in internal subversion, the political lot is divisible into two classes: those in power and those out of power. The first category is the last one to share power in larger interests of the State. Therefore, it must hunt with the hound and run with the hare. The second category is eyeing for political power, and must liaison with and publicly speak the language of all such elements as can stand up to the ruling party. They are the frontline group demanding unconditional dialogue with the insurgents. Theirs is not a conviction but sheer political expediency. Their self-aggrandisement speaks more loudly than their pro-militant empathy.

As for ambivalent sections of administrative cadres, they are not essentially committed to the development and progress of the State. A fear of accountability or reprisal of sorts does not deter them. In other words, either they take undue advantage of a humane and democratic political dispensation or consider it their right to subvert as components of the Muslim ruling elite of the valley reclining against a philistine support - structure from within. Moral turpitude of general political community in the country and the state has considerably influenced the shaping of their mindset. A corrupt ruling political leadership should not expect puritanical and pious behaviour from the state functionaries. The ambivalent administrative and bureaucratic lot can be tamed first by an exemplary roll model set by the political leadership, and second by strict enforcement of answerability and accountability as set forth by law and practice.

As for the section of partisan and biased media, the question is whether it is sincere in what it reflects? This is what the people of Kashmir in general and the dissident groups in particular should want to know. We cannot ignore that many eyebrows are raised on the impartiality of press in this country.

Then is the role of self-styled human rights activists. These organizations have mushroomed in the country after the armed insurgency surfaced in Kashmir. They talk of rights not of duties. They talk of the UN Human Rights Charter but ignore the national and state constitution enshrining the will of the people of this land. They take the victimised civilian population as their trust but treat the national security forces as an adversary: to them the might of the state means its total surrender to armed insurgents or unarmed

subversives. Yet, of all the people, it is they who know the desk book formula of armed conflicts viz. when gun comes in, human rights depart..

This class has to be tirelessly dragged into procrastinated debates on vital issues like parameters of civil liberty, obligations of the state, constitutional prerogatives, international law, human rights and the code of conduct, trans-border and trans-national terrorism, strength and weaknesses of a pluralistic society etc. This exercise will help create an atmosphere conducive for talks once we are able to eschew bias.

Now we come to the second aspect of the proposition, namely 'dialogue'. The question is this: dialogue with whom and for what? Let us try to disentangle the mesh into which the entire issue is intertwined.

Talks have to be held with the dissidents. They are (a) externally supported and abetted armed insurgents (b) dissident political leadership oriented along secession from Indian Union, and (c) political opponents to the ruling party. Now law and order falls within the State List. Dialogue should essentially be held between the ruling political party meaning the state government and the agitating groups.

As far as armed insurgents are concerned, they are not acting on their own. Somebody else outside the country decides for them. Offer of talks to them cannot be meaningful.

As far as dissident and secessionist groups are concerned, these have formed into APHC. Essentially, this group is a conglomerate of contradictory ideologies viz. pro-Pakistan, pro-independence, Islamic theocrats, Wahhabis, Osamavis, Azharis and pseudo-secularists of Kashmiriyat brand. Can there be a fruitful talk with this assorted group? And if there is, will that have validity?

Now if any segment of APHC musters courage to come forward for talks, what will be the reaction of their external mentors? Confusing and contradictory statements are emanating from this leadership in regard to talks. The latest is the demand for tripartite talks. This shows lack of self-confidence.

Unfortunately, the APHC does not look beyond its narrow confines. If it could, it would find a compulsion for introspection. History tells us that whenever in the past, Islamic society began to buckle under the imperative of socio-political change, the orthodoxy reacted sharply. Thus the emancipated and liberal thinking in Islam up to the times of Ibn Sina and Ibn Roshd (11th century A.D.) was countered and brought down by the orthodoxy supported by feudal barons and local satraps. When, in the second half of the 20th century after World War II, scientific and technological advancement greatly impacted societies, Islamic orthodoxy came to be activated. We should try to understand the position of Kashmir, a predominantly Muslim region, in this historical background.

Apart from this factor, there is also a psychological phenomenon that creates hurdles in our way for a dialogue. It is the buffer psychosis. The entire mountain belt starting from western Burma and extending eastward all over the Himalayas, and then on to the Karakorum, the Hindu Kush, the Badakhshan, the Alborz, and across the Caucasus to the Trans-Caspia, has remained a buffer between the northern and the southern Asiatic plains. From the vast plains lying on the either side of this great watershed, powerful empires and potentates rose and fell in the course of history. In a scenario of long spells of political and economic rivalry between the contending empires and satraps, the people of these mountain slopes and valleys always suffered economic, social and psychological compression. This created the buffer psychosis rendering their self-confidence and personality always shaky and tenuous. Fragile economy and political uncertainty made them a victim of insecurity. Be it the Bhutanese, the Nepalese, the Tibetans, the Kashmiris, the tribals of NWFP, the Afghans, the Azeris, the Georgians, the Daghistanis or the Armenians, the common denominator of vacillating mood runs all along their history. In Kashmir, Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad once explained it in his sledgehammer hyperbole.

But at this juncture, the role of our intellectual luminaries should supervene. It is of paramount importance that the masses of Kashmir are educated intensively about the drastically changed world situation while Kashmir remains a part of the Indian Union. It is not just the accession of one territorial unit to a larger territorial unit called the Indian Union. Accession is the historic decision that facilitated

the Kashmiris step out of age-old buffer psychosis, which is responsible for their endemic backwardness. It is their first ever effort of living with an unassailable political, economic, social and cultural personality and identity. The mission for mass education along this line should have been undertaken as early as 1947. The example of beacon lights like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad should have become the guiding spirit. It is here that our political chapters failed us and it is here that our intellectuals and luminaries must play their role even though belated on. I say this keeping in mind the casual treatment given by some political analysts to the essence of accession. Therefore, when somebody advises the Home Minister Advani to accept a settlement of Kashmir "even if it is outside the Constitution of India," then all right thinking Kashmiris should stand up and ask whether the makers of proposals like that are their sincere well-wisher?

Things have changed drastically. The changed situation provides democracy and pluralism for the entire Indian nation. No State Government, much less the Central Government, ever tried to launch a massive pro-national orientation programme for the people of Kashmir in the wake of new and unprecedented political and social arrangement. They should have been prompted by the harsh realities looking into their eyes. The realities are (a) Kashmir is predominantly a Muslim region. (b) The Kashmiris are bogged down with the buffer psychosis as historical legacy. (c) Literacy level in Kashmir is very low. (d) Kashmir is being projected quite unnecessarily as the symbol of Indian pluralism. (e) By drumming up Kashmiriyat, the negative factor of isolationist psyche has been reinforced, and (e) Kashmir is a landlocked region with only a fair-weather road connecting it with the plains of India. This impinges on her rapid economic development and social transformation.

India's decision of adopting the path of democracy, secularism and pluralism is not an ordinary or insignificant decision. It is a stupendous effort to harmonise religious, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and other identities in a bid to cast them into a tolerant and humanistic social frame. This is not something easy to achieve. It asks for sacrifices not escapement. Let us cast a glance at the entire Asian and African continent. Do we find the example anywhere? Many Muslim societies in these continents are locked in a grim struggle for realising these goals but so far without much success. Sincere friends of the Kashmiris have to explain to them whether, in ultimate analysis, a theocratic, feudalistic, militaristic and a cramped conservative social order can help them establish their identity and pull them out from the economic morass?

Sustained and serious thinking along this line may help create an atmosphere conducive for a dialogue for peace. But I will not mince words. Unfortunately, for last half a century an ordinary Kashmiri has been fed on blackmail, on exclusionist notion of religion, on feigned sympathy and on many a tantrum of sorts. What is called alienation in general parlance is, in fact, the dilemma in which they have been cleverly placed. If our politicians, policy planners, mediapersons, human rights activists, social figures and intellectuals embark on a massive objective and pragmatic programme of educating the people in the basics of the philosophy and application of democracy, secularism and pluralism, we can get out of the vicious circle we are caught in. This particular awareness will force our political leadership to harmonise and dovetail their policies and programmes for larger and futuristic national interests. The vote bank canker eating into the vitals of our society needs a scalpel therapy. Proper and intensive political education and economic redress must go hand in hand to remove the dilemma and restore Kashmiris to rational and logical perceptions and inferences.

Americans exude satisfaction and happiness over a prospect of dialogue in Kashmir. It was Pakistan, the Hurriyat and their sympathisers who had been asking for a long time for intervention by the Americans. Now that the American intervention is more than palpable, why does the Hurriyat play a truant?

Before concluding my observations, I must emphasise the importance of return, rehabilitation and restitution of the minority community of Kashmir Pandits in creating an atmosphere conducive for peace in Kashmir. How long will Kashmiri and Indian polity carry on its body the festering wound of an act of ethnic cleansing of a minuscule but indigenous religious minority? I must warn that by politicizing or

circumventing or diluting the issue of displaced persons from Kashmir, a peaceful solution of Kashmir problem will remain elusive. If the Pandits are to remain outside Kashmir, then Kashmir cannot be an integral or non-integral part of India. This is what precisely our enemy wants to see. Safe return and concentrated rehabilitation with sufficient constitutional safeguards of cantonal/oblast arrangement for internally displaced persons have been endorsed by the UN Human Rights Commission and other relevant UN bodies on the basis of resolutions passed by the Security Council. Apart from that, big powers and their parliaments have also endorsed these resolutions. The State and the Central Governments must come out of an obsolete mindset and tackle the problem by talking to their genuine representatives and ideologues. While the good-will of a given majority community is the ideal guarantee for the safety of a minority, yet, at the same time, the majority community can show an extra measure of tolerance and accommodation, which are also crucial to their own progress and development. The world opinion is totally against xenophobia. Left alone, the non-elite Kashmiri majority community does not lack the vision to recall their extirpated compatriots and jointly rebuild a tolerant and compassionate Kashmir.

This paper was presented in the seminar organized by Kashmir Foundation for Peace and Development Studies (KFPDS) at Broadway Hotel, Srinagar on 3-4 June 2000.

18.0 HELPING THOSE WHO DON'T HELP THEMSELVES

Sharif family sources say that Mian Muhammad Sharif has sent a clandestine letter to the military ruler of Pakistan appealing for early release of his two sons, Mian Nawaz Sharif and Mian Shahbaz Sharif.

This letter was delivered to the CE by Siranjam Khan, Central Secretary General of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) and a former Lt. General of Pakistan army. He was also a member of the defunct upper house of the parliament.

Does the delivering of a letter from the Sharif patriarch mean nothing beyond the element of courier service, particularly when Lt. Gen. Siranjam Khan is also among close friends of General Musharraf? Army circles have, however, denied having received any such letter.

One source said that an appeal for release is normally considered by a Head of the State (in this case the Chief Executive) only when a case against somebody goes through legal process and the sentence is pronounced. In the case of Mian Nawaz, he has just been brought to the court of law. He faces the charges of treason and murder under Article 6 of the Constitution. But this is practically invoking a Constitution that has been blatantly violated by the invoking party itself. Never has the general will been profaned more than in this case.

Mian Nawaz's younger son, Hasan Nawaz also addressed a letter to the US President Bill Clinton and members of the US House of Representatives' International Relations Sub-Committee on Asia and the Pacific. The letter states, "I write this to urge you, as elected officials in a democratic system, to ask the coup leaders in Pakistan to release my father Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and other family members from illegal detention since October 12th when a democratically elected government was toppled in Pakistan."

The letter has been addressed to the president of a country that is policing the whole world whether democracy has gone amiss anywhere. But apart from that, Nawaz Sharif's son has another strong reason to ask President Clinton to intervene. Mian Nawaz had ordered withdrawal of Pakistani regulars from Kargil heights on his assurance. In the Blair House meeting, President Clinton had allayed his fears of a coup, likely to be engineered by the Generals following the withdrawal decision.

Beyond a faint lip service, the self-appointed gendarme of democracy has nothing to say about the massacre of democracy in Pakistan. This is a lesson for other politicians and rulers in South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular; Pakistan because she, according to one of her Martial Law administrators, was "more aligned than an ally", and Pakistan because her political leadership, in the government or in opposition, has been vociferously asking for US mediation in Kashmir. The world knows that the US has seldom denied support to Generals and dictators in Asian and African continent if and when they overthrew popular governments and assumed power themselves.

Nevertheless, democracy means power of the people. If the deposed Prime Minister enjoyed the trust of his party - PML (N) - what has been its role after his unconstitutional deposition? Not a dog barked. Did he really enjoy the majority support or was he a liability to be dumped willy-nilly?

Recently top PML leaders held a meeting at the Islamabad residence of former interior minister, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. Interestingly only 30 leaders attended the meeting. Second line party leadership refused to launch an agitation campaign against the military regime's sacking of a democratically elected government.

They expressed opposition to the army intervention but at the same time they declared that they had no plans to confront the armed forces "because it would be dangerous for the country." What is surprising, the meeting failed to take any decision on whether or not to challenge the dismissal before the Supreme Court.

Of course there have been some unannounced moves on the political chessboard in Pakistan. Efforts are on to broker some sort of working relationship between the Pakistan Muslim League and the military regime. If the PML government was despised for its acts of omission and commission, the military regime is faced with tremendous external pressures. A former federal minister in Sharif's government, Lt. Gen. (retd) Abdul Majeed Malik, is reported to have approached some close associates of General Musharraf for a patch-up.

"We are just trying to communicate to the regime that the weakening of the PML is neither in the interest of the country nor the army," said Ejazul Ha suspended MNA and senior vice president of the party.

In this bizarre background, the amusing development is Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's threadbare support to the deposed Prime Minister of Pakistan and rejection of the military rule. Mr. Vajpayee is reported to have adopted an outright anti-military rule stance in Durban Commonwealth meet.

When the people of Pakistan are not interested in launching agitation against unconstitutional dismissal of a government they had voted to power, when the party line is loath to launch a nation-wide agitation against the coup, when the world powers in general and the US in particular are soft-pedaling on military incumbency in Pakistan, why should India try to be more loyal than the king?

New Delhi must remember that the General in Pakistan is going to be there in the seat of power for at least a decade if not more. New Delhi must remember that the General has a strong support structure in the US Congress and above all he has the pro-sectarian groups in Pakistan and in Afghanistan to lend him a helping hand. He has already convinced Saudis and the UAE of the validity of his coup. They are not going to let down Pakistan's economy as in the past. Therefore, like it or not, New Delhi has to have business with him and his country. New Delhi should not brush aside his offers for talks on bilateral issues.

Mr. Vajpayee is a seasoned leader. Under the pretext of search for regional peace, he should not allow interference by India in the internal affairs of a sensitive neighbouring country. Pakistanis are not aliens to military regimes. India should try to understand what the axiom "God helps those who help themselves" means. Let us not try to replace God and become unsolicited helpers of those who do not want to help themselves.

19.0 THE LABYRINTH OF KASHMIR INSURGENCY

"Please don't let me go back to India. Keep me anywhere you like in your Northern Areas or locate me in Sinkiang and let me call upon the Kashmiris from there to give you their full support," said Sheikh Abdullah to Ayub Awan, Pakistan's Director of Intelligence Bureau in Mecca in 1965. The source of this piece of information is a Pakistani journalist, Altaf Gowhar who wrote on 'Operation Gibraltar' in the Nation of 19 September and 3 October 1999.

The Sheikh had told Awan, "If I call upon them (the Kashmiris) to rise in support of the plan, their response could be overwhelming." To Awan's surprise, Ayub Khan showed no interests in what the Sheikh had conveyed. Z.A. Bhutto was opposed to accepting the Sheikh's help because in the words of Altaf Gowhar, "if the plan (Operation Gibraltar) succeeded, all the credit would go to Sheikh Abdullah". Bhutto didn't liked that.

Pakistani military machine took the low key operation of Indian troops in Rann of Kutch in 1965 as a sign of government's lack of determination. The Pak GHQ, emboldened by Nehru's death and goaded into hawkish stance by Z.A. Bhutto - Aziz Ahmad (foreign secretary) combine, put before Ayub Khan the sand table of 'Operation Gibraltar' of General Akhtar Malik, GOC-in-C, 12 Division. Putting his finger on Akhnoor, Ayub Khan said, "Why don't you go for the jugular?" Neither the Corps Commanders nor the Air and Naval Chiefs were kept in know of the plan. In Mecca, where he had made a detour round London in 1965, the Sheikh gave a surprise to his scheduled visitor Ayub Awan about his knowledge of Pakistan's 'Operation Gibraltar.'

The Sheikh conveyed to Awan that if the 'Operation Gibraltar' was based on the assumption that the people in the valley would welcome Pakistani soldiers, it was utterly false. "If I call upon them to rise in support of the plan their response could be overwhelming," he added.

The Hazratbal holy relic conspiracy preceded 'Operation Gibraltar' by some months. Why was it unfolded prematurely and not simultaneously with that plan remains shrouded in mystery. When late G. Q. Ganderbali, DIG, Kashmir indicted a top business magnate and social patriarch of Srinagar, who enjoyed closest connections with the highest rung of Kashmir political leadership, and was about to unravel the entire conspiracy, he was removed from his post. The other accomplice in the conspiracy is now virtually the most powerful figure in leading regional political party. The conspiracy had two objectives; to destabilize Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad's government, and to sensitize people to anti-India mood on the basis of religion. Perhaps that was the beginning of theocratisation of Kashmirian society. It was late Maulana Masoodi, the truest well-wisher of Kashmiris who tried to stem the tide. This explains why he was gunned down by the militants at the ripe age of 90.

The holy relic episode took place soon after the failure of Swarn Singh - Bhutto talks in 1963. It indicated that the Plebiscite Front would be activated and alternatives would be explored for separation of Kashmir from India.

When the Sheikh was set free during Sadiq's government, he became a frequent visitor to one of the two elite pro-Pakistani Shia families in the locality of Maisuma, Srinagar. Knowledgeable persons said that close contacts of this family with the Pak intelligence sources served the catalyst for the Sheikh to become privy to the Pakistani plan of 'Operation Gibraltar'. Obviously the channel must have been the Pakistani military intelligence. This surmise is borne by the fact that the unnamed Maisuma resource person had drawn a comprehensive plan of Srinagar contacts for use once Operation Gibraltar attained the desired goal.

It would be interesting to go a couple of years earlier to the Operation Gibraltar. In 1963, an organization by the name of Youth League was floated. Its members and activists had decided to wage an armed struggle against Indian presence in Kashmir. In 1965, their plan (of course having been drawn in tandem with the Pakistani intelligence agency) was to attack the Indian army from the rear once it got entangled

in an armed conflict with Pakistani infiltrators. Of the three more mercurial leaders of Youth League, one was later on inducted as MLA, the second was given a plum government post and the third continues with his secessionist ideology today. At this time Maulavi Iftikhar Ansari, the Shia leader, also emerged on the scene with close connections with the Muslim Conference.

Looking back into the individual roles of the leadership in Kashmir during the Operation Gibraltar, we find that two outstanding persons, namely late Maulana Masudi and late Mohiu'd-Din Kara worked to foil the entire gameplan of Pakistan.

On learning of Nehru's demise in May 1964, the Sheikh cut short his visit to Pakistan and PoK and returned post-haste to New Delhi. Later that year, he went to Algiers where he met Ahmad ben Bella, the renowned Algerian freedom fighter and President. It was in Algiers that the Sheikh met with the Chinese Premier Chou En Lai. Undoubtedly this was an arranged meeting. What transpired between them is not known but at least it came in the papers that Ahmad Ben Bella had asked the Sheikh about the physical sacrifices made for the "liberation of Kashmir" and took him on a round of the graveyard where nearly 60 of his close relatives lay buried. This indicates that the subject matter was "liberation of Kashmir" from Indian control " and of "sacrifices".

From Algiers, the Shiekh dashed to the Mecca under the rubric of performing the Umra. Here he met with Awan Ayub, the Pakistan super sleuth in a pre-arranged meeting to talk further on the subject of Operation Gibraltar and his own role in it..

The failure of Pakistani infiltrators to make any substantial gains under Operation Gibraltar in Kashmir turned a damp squib for the pro-Pak chapters whether in political arena or in the field of operation. In 1967, Afzal Beg launched Al-Fath operation in Kashmir on behalf of Plebiscite Front. The defence counsel in the case of the detainees of Al-Fath insurgency was the then General Secretary of National Conference.

The humiliating defeat of Pakistan in 1971 leading to her fragmentation came as a rude shock to the Sheikh and those who towed his line. He ruminated deeply on how he had voluntarily struck at his own credibility. There was now no way out but to seek rapprochement with the Government of India. He had to succumb to the terms of Indira - Shiekh Accord of 1974 which catapulted him once again into the seat of power. Mir Qasim never forgave Indira Gandhi for what proved to be a disastrous turn in contemporary Kashmir history.

20.0 THE PARIAH CALLED PANUN KASHMIR

For political parties in Kashmir, without an exception, Panun Kashmir is a pariah. Most of them become hysterical on hearing its name. A grin is flashed across when its mention occurs directly or indirectly in an odd seminar or symposium. An impression is created that talking of Panun Kashmir is talking about the wildest of crimes and calumnies.

The Government of India is prepared to talk to the separatists and secessionists in Kashmir and without pre-conditions. She will not talk to Panun Kashmir. And who are the separatists and secessionists? Yasin Malik, the JKLF supremo has the murder case of six airforce personnel pending against him. Bitta Karate said in a televised interview that he could remember 22 killings of Kashmiri Pandits after which he lost the count. Jamaat-e-Islami, a component of APHC declares waging of jihad meaning armed uprising, its birthright to bring freedom to the Kashmir. To these people and their leaders and supporters, the State and the Central government will talk but not to the Panun Kashmir.

The reason for this calculated discrimination is simple. Panun Kashmir represents the three lakhs of internally displaced persons of Hindu religious minority in Kashmir. It is not a vote bank for any political party. It has launched a non-violent struggle for homeland and it does not play the game of this or that political party. Therefore it is a pariah and must be dealt accordingly.

Panun Kashmir came into being as early as 1990 when exodus was forced on the entire Kashmiri Pandit community. In Margdarshan resolution of 1990, it demanded homeland for the community in South Kashmir with the option to place it under central administration, something short of union territory, till the situation became conducive for the Pandits to move about freely. For this demand, Panun Kashmir came to be labelled as communal, anti-national, separatist, CIA-inspired, KGB-funded, Mossad-initiated and MI-5 supported.

Farooq Abdullah, speaking in R.S. Pora last year said that homeland for the displaced Pandits would be possible only on his dead body. However, he has no inhibitions to confer autonomy to sub-regions on religious basis, a process in which he fully aware the Pandits remain sidelined as territory-less community.

The APHC came into being many years after Panun Kashmir was formed. Its leaders are in regular contact with the ISI, Pakistani embassy in New Delhi, and other capitals of Islamic countries particularly Riyadh, which fund them. It demands secession from India and justifies the use of gun by its activists. It gives frequent calls for strikes crippling Kashmir economy. Despite all this, the APHC is recognised as a reality and is offered unconditional talks.

Contrarily, Panun Kashmir is treated an outcast because it opposes secession, rejects the gun, does not succumb to blackmail, has not links with any organisation local or foreign, and does not go to the doorsteps of foreign missions in New Delhi. Therefore, sincerely nationalistic as it is, the Panun Kashmir is a pariah.

New Delhi is battling for talks separatists for restoring peace in the strife torn state. The sky has been fixed as the limit. But for Panun Kashmir it would not rise an inch not to speak of sky limit. For the three hundred thousand persons hounded out of their age-old places of origin, the only prescription with the Centre and the State is to coerce them into returning to uncertain and insecure environs in Kashmir where repeated massacres of minority community members takes places. Authorities feel no need to talk to them.

When the prestigious International Commission of Jurists (ICJK), a UN accredited NGO with the UNHRC asked the Government of India to submit its observations, the official document mentioned about ethnic-religious cleansing of 350,000 Kashmiri Pandit religious minority in Kashmir by armed fundamentalists. It did mention about the pitiable conditions of their refugee camps in Jammu. But when,

in connection with the petition filed by the Pandits before the National Human Rights Commission, the Honourable Commission asked the Government of India to submit its report on the exodus of the Pandits, it said that they had left of their free will and nobody forced them to leave Kashmir. This double speak is a classical example of politicising a human issue.

Panun Kashmir is as good a political group in the State as APHC or any other group is. Its credentials are more agreeable than those of APHC or any other organisation. No talks for restoration of peace in Kashmir will meet success unless the issue of the Pandits is resolved according to their wishes.

The UN bodies have recognised the essential principle that the internally displaced persons have to be rehabilitated in their land in a concentrated manner with constitutional and legal guarantees for security, safety and perpetuity. Their representation in various organs of the State has also been accepted as relevant to the enjoyment of human, civil and political rights. The US Congress has also kept itself informed of the rights and privileges of the internally displaced persons, including the Kashmiri Pandits, and has, in fact, written to the Indian Prime Minister.

The European Parliament has also opined in favour of safe and concentrated rehabilitation of the internally displaced persons.

Today, we hear from all sides the shrill notes of Government's intentions/plans of taking back the Pandit displaced persons to their respective places in the valley. There are various proposals prepared by the state bureaucrats. Even a senior minister had an exchange of views with a large gathering of Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu. This was followed by statements and press releases from Panun Kashmir organisation's headquarters in Jammu that the community had rejected the proposal of taking back the Pandits without taking cognizance of ground realities..

The Pandits ask for their homeland in South Kashmir with the option of inviting the Union Government to administer it in the long run. The Hurriyat asks for rejection of Indian Constitution by the people of Kashmir, rescinding of accession, which it considers fake and illegal, and determining the will of the people to join one of the two countries or even to remain independent. The Hurriyat's demands do not make it a pariah, but PK's demand for homeland does make it a pariah. The Hurriyat says that its men have suffered oppression and repression by the Indian security forces and their sacrifices cannot go unrewarded. But the killing of nearly two thousand innocent, harmless and unarmed Kashmiri Pandits by the gun-wielding fundamentalists is not considered a sacrifice. The decade- long continuing privations suffered by the Pandits in refugee camps in Jammu and elsewhere are not considered a sacrifice. The status of territory-lessness of the Pandits is not considered a sacrifice. Their properties vandalised by the locals in Kashmir, or the distress sale of properties inflicted on them is not considered a sacrifice. The endless psychological and physical trauma suffered by the old, the weak, the women and the deprived Pandits in exile are no sacrifices. Criminal policy of destroying the educational career of brilliant Pandit student community is not accepted a sacrifice. Still India claims to be secular and pluralistic state and 'Kashmiriyat' the symbol of communal harmony in Kashmir.

The NC government has its own compulsions to coerce the Pandits into returning to the valley. It is debating the autonomy bill in the Legislative Assembly beginning on 19th of June. The bill is already before the Union Cabinet. Passing the bill with the Pandits continuing to remain the territory-less state subjects is an anathema. The NC wants to overcome it by moving a few thousand Pandits to their respective places and then declare to the world that normalcy is restored.

The Government would be first probing the rural sections of Pandit displaced persons because according to its own calculation, the villagers in the valley would not be that hostile to the Pandits. This is a wrong hypothesis. The people in rural Kashmir are not what they were ten years ago. Secondly, the neighbour of the Pandit in his village eyeing his property, land, orchard etc. will, in ultimate analysis, prove more threatening to the Pandit than the actual gun-wielding separatist.

The second compulsion for the government is that having taken a few thousand Pandits to their places of origin, it would break the Panun Kashmir's demand for homeland. Thirdly, Dr. Farooq Abdullah wants to take the credit to be another Bud Shah of Kashmir who brought the Pandits back. He forgets his own statement that he had sent three hundred of NC youth across the border to receive training in arms because " he feared Jagmohan". He is not bothered in what conditions he would be sending them back because he knows in the eyes of New Delhi the Pandits are expendable. This would also give legitimacy to his demand for enormous funds from the centre in the name of rehabilitation of Pandits. Where the major chunk of those funds would ultimately go, is a part of history.

Panun Kashmir is a reality and its demand for Pandit homeland in South Kashmir is the reality of all realities. The Pandits were entitled to it way back in 1949 when Article 370 was incorporated into the Indian Constitution on the basis of Muslim majority character of the State. But Pandits kept the demand in abeyance in the hope that the State and the Central Governments would realise their moral duty of empowering the Pandits in accordance with the international norms of empowering minorities in a democratic set up. That did not happen. What happened was their total extirpation in which many actors now shedding crocodile's tears played their role, rulers in Srinagar and New Delhi included. No settlement of Kashmir issue will be lasting unless the Pandits are provided with their homeland. If the Indian Union thinks of writing off the Pandits from Kashmir, it will be signing its own death warrant. Then it has no moral right to be in Kashmir because its edifice of secularism and pluralism will be dashed to ground. Its credibility in the comity of nations will fall to nadir. And with that the tantrum of Kashmiriyat will be exposed. The Panun Kashmir homeland is as real on the map of the subcontinent as the Kashmir of Hurriyat's conception is.

21.0 MENDING THE FENCE WITH IRAN

In the wake of Taliban occupation of northern Afghan town of Mazar-e-Sharif in summer 1998, relations between Iran and Pakistan had further deteriorated.

In the course of their attack on and capture Mazar-e-Sharif, more than eight thousand Afghans of Uzbek ethnicity and Shia faith were put to sword by the Taliban. The treatment of the Shias of western Afghanistan during the capture of Herat, another important north - western town, by the Taliban evoked deep resentment of the Iranians. Iran - Taliban relations came under severe strain so much so that Iran had to mobilise its army along Iran-Afghan border. UN Secretary General appealed to both to maintain restraint.

Iran has more than once protested to Islamabad for meddling in Afghan affairs in a way that its implications affect the foreign policy of regional powers.

Pakistan's military ruler had many compulsions to visit Teheran on 8-9 December 1999 and assure Iranian authorities that his government would not like further deterioration in its relations with Teheran. He met with the President Mr. Khatami although the latter had cancelled all his appointments owing to his indisposition.

By and large, the visit of the Pakistani military ruler and his meeting with Khatami did not receive the coverage in Iranian press the way it should have. Its opinion at the best remained cautious and at worst anti-Pakistan.

Pakistani press quoted the Foreign Minister, Abdus Sattar saying that the two leaders agreed on the imperative of setting up a "broad-based, representative and multi-ethnic government" in Afghanistan. This indirectly meant accepting the Iranian viewpoint. But the crucial question is whether this type of arrangement for the governance in Kabul is acceptable to the Taliban? We know that the Taliban have already rejected any suggestion of sharing power with the Northern Alliance leadership. They have made it clear to the UN representative Lakhdar Brahimi. How does, then, General Musharraf's plan fit in the overall political chemistry of the region and of Afghanistan?

Obviously, Islamabad will pursue a policy in Afghanistan that suits its interests notwithstanding what would be the fallout on Pak-Iran relations. Iran-Pakistan rivalry in the region goes beyond Afghanistan. Its epicentre is actually Central Asia where Pakistan subtly confronts Iran in a number of areas, trade and commerce, strategic planning, regional diplomacy, socio-cultural thrust and military strategy.

Islamabad has a more pressing compulsion to seek the friendly hand of Iran. In the post Soviet political scenario in the region, India, Russia and Iran seem to be coming closer in framing response to strategic imperatives in the region. Each country has its interests and areas have been identified on which these interests could converge. Central Asian republics are fighting with their back to the wall to disallow the growth and spread of Islamic fundamentalism in its crudest form. This is also the perception of India and Russia. The rise of Taliban has compelled Teheran to dovetail its political posturing in a way that it neither becomes an outcast of sorts among the OIC members nor endorses Islamabad's overt and covert support to Taliban. All that General Musharraf tried to do in Teheran was to wean away Iran from this posturing.

One of the irritants that lately cropped up in Iran's otherwise cordial relations with Pakistan was the latter's denial of permitting Iran to lay the gas and oil pipeline to India via Pakistan. Saner elements in Pakistan have not approved General Musharraf's statement that he would not allow the Central Asian gas and pipeline to reach India via Pakistan and the he would see it is terminated in Pakistan only.

This runs counter to the plans of the Americans. The American giant Oil Company Unocal has already invested in Turkmen gas field of Daulatabad. Its assumption was that once entire Afghanistan including

the Panjsheer valley of General Masud fell to the Taliban, it would pave the way for the oil cartel to bring the pipeline to India and perhaps further east.

Since Iran's relations with the US are not cordial for known historical reasons, Islamabad would like to forestall the Unocal plan by mending the fence with Iran and thwarting the American interests. Persuading Teheran to accept Islamabad's suggestion of terminating Iranian oil and gas pipeline in Pakistan and not further eastward could do this. At least this arrangement could be made till the Taliban overrun northern areas of Panjsheer valley.

It is also clear that Islamabad would move to ensure termination of Iran's aid to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. According to available reports, Russia, Iran and India are the three countries that provide assistance to the Northern Alliance regime. General Musharraf also tried to soften Iran in this particular matter.

With all said and done, the crucial question is whether authorities in Islamabad have begun to understand the impact of the backlash of their Afghan policy. Drug smuggling on a large scale, exacerbation of sectarian violence, mushroom growth of fundamentalist seminaries openly imparting training in arms and subversion in the name of jihad, disruption of law and order to the extent that Pakistan is called a state without a law, and the ouster of democratic dispensation by military rule, are to name only some of the stark realities looking into the eyes of Pakistani General. Never in the history of nations has any military regime ever been able to surmount problems of this magnitude.

22.0 THE GENERAL'S VISIT TO IRAN

The first foreign visit of the military ruler alias Chief Executive of Pakistan, General Musharraf, was to Saudi Arabia and the Emirates. Then followed Turkey and the latest is Iran. Pakistan has a long history of relationship with these three countries beginning with the Baghdad Pact through CENTO and RCD etc. Apart from being the camp followers in the US strategies in the region, these four countries also developed bilateral and multilateral relations among themselves. Whenever their leaders meet formally or informally, they exude gestures of goodwill and patent rhetoric to confuse if not to mislead the unsuspecting observers. The deep fissures that exist in these relations are wrapped in superficial cordialities.

Iran's President Khatami's meeting with the visiting Pakistani General had been cancelled owing to his illness. But at the last moment, Khatami agreed to meet with him in Sa'dabad Palace, the palace where once Iran's royal house of Pahlavis sat in stately grandeur.

While the Pakistani Chief Executive was talking to the Iranian counterpart on Afghanistan, the region, and Kashmir, leading Teheran newspapers brought out write-ups and editorials saying that Iran-Pakistan friendship was fine but Iran would be happy only with the return of civilian rule in Pakistan.

General Musharraf told newsmen on return that he talked about Afghanistan, the region, bilateral issues and Kashmir. But he carefully avoided saying what the Iranian press had to comment on Pakistan situation.

Obviously, what the press in Iran said did not suit General Musharraf. But more than that what General Musharraf did with the elected government of Nawaz Sharif do not either suit Iranians. If Iran is to support the takeover by the military in Pakistan, isn't it inviting the same fate for itself? Military takeover is not unknown to Iranians. Did not Reza Shah Pahlavi, the commander of the Cossack Brigade and the founder of the Pahlavi ruling house, grab power through a coup?

The internal situation Iran is hardly normal or peaceful though on the surface, there may appear a lull. A fierce struggle for power is going on between the radicals and the liberals within the ecclesiastical establishment of that country. The Shia pontiff and supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenei and the supreme council of religious leaders on the one hand and the elected President on the other are locked in a grim battle for power and authority. Though the President has been carrying on his policies with caution, often sliding from moderation to forced extremism and back, yet he has not enough political and institutional strength to enforce his progressive agenda.

For more than a year, the student community in Teheran has been behaving defiantly. Even clashes between the students and the police or the students and the guards have taken place with one or two deaths and injuries to several of them. They have been protesting essentially against undue control on civil liberties. Even there have been voices demanding restoration of normal relations with the United States of America.

The recent controversy has arisen from the verdict passed by the religious court in Teheran against Sayyid Abdullah Noori, a member of the Iranian parliament and the "right-hand man" of President Khatami. He has been given five years imprisonment. Behind this prosecution is the political vendetta because Abdullah Noori enjoys the support of the more liberal youth forming a strong segment of Iranian society. The clerics are afraid that Noori might carry the nation with him and thus their position and power would be jeopardized.

Iran and Pakistan have never really enjoyed good relations after the Islamic revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini succeeded in Iran and the monarchy was deposed. The late religious leader and his close associates knew that the military rulers of Pakistan, like the monarchs of Iran, were the props and pillars of American strategies in the Gulf and the region.

Apart from this, the Sunni-Shia sectarian divide in Pakistan has been a thorn in the side of Iran. She has been occasionally protesting against the planned killing of Shias in different towns of Pakistan including those in Gilgit and Baltistan of Northern Areas by the fanatics of Sunni organizations like Sipah-e-Sahabah. Yet other larger interests overshadowed these protests. Pakistan being a very active member of OIC, Iran has to reckon with Islamabad lest she gets isolated in the Sunni dominated OIC. After all late Ayatollah Khomeini had opened the confrontation with the Saudi monarchy for the leadership of the Muslim world. He wanted Iran to wrest this leadership but the Saudis reacted with much greater strength and international reach. They floated the Ar-Rabita, the Wahhabi Sunni organization with international branches and chapters, flooded them with petro-dollar booty, intelligence expertise, sophisticated telecom systems and proper coordination. As a result, Iranian overtures in Central Asia got squeezed to Tajikistan only though even that too is highly debatable.

Saudis used Pakistan for a counter operation. Thus today we find the most powerful Wahhabi religious groups with adequate military muscle provided by Pakistan. This became a new base for relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. When Saudis drew the blueprint for Taliban, Pakistan had to play the key role. With the rise of Taliban, Afghanistan – Pakistan political landscape presented a new outlook. Pakistan encouraged the Wahhabi chapter and Iran could do nothing to forestall isolation and sidelining of the Shia groups in northwestern Afghanistan. And when the day of open confrontation came, the Shias were routed and the Taliban established their sway over Herat and Mazar-e-Sharif. In Mazar-e Sharif seven Iranian diplomats were done to death by Taliban crusaders. Iran protested, threatened, moved her armoured columns close to Afghanistan's western border and fumed and fretted. Taliban retaliated saying they would strike at all big towns of Iran if Iran dared open armed confrontation. Teheran ate the humble pie, withdrew and reconsidered the option of resolving Afghan dispute through negotiations.

Obviously, the General told the Iranians that he was not going to change the status quo in Afghanistan though he would not encourage the Sunni extremists in Pakistan to attack the Shias. The rhetoric of a government of ethnic alliance is nothing new. But he wanted Iran to understand that the military rule was going to stay in Pakistan and Iran had no option but to talk to him. Indirectly, he conveyed a threat to the Iranians that if they resiled on Kashmir and tilted in favour of India because Indo-Iran relations had been improving in regional strategy, Pakistan would not accept it and would not ensure protection of the Shia population either in Afghanistan or in Pakistan or in the Northern Areas. Iran has no choice but to sulk in anger and indignity.