Jammu-Kashmir People Can Play A Crucial & Effective Role In Sorting Out A Realistic & Just Negotiated Solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem

I

Human Community the world-over has heaved a sigh of relief that both New Delhi and Islamabad have read the writing on the wall. That is, in a nuclear encounter, there are no winners, only losers. It does not matter if the weaker side has only a few nuclear weapons. This is because an ordinary nuclear bomb can result in lakhs of bio-deaths (like Hiroshima), accompanied by all-round devastation lasting thousands of years. Expert studies show that even a single normal nuclear bomb is liable to kill about 8 lakh people in big cities, like Delhi or Lahore, and poison vast swathes of land, water and vegetation, with over 200 radioactive toxins. The half life of Plutonium-239 radioactive poisons is 24,000 years, while those of Uranium-235 are 710 million years.

New Delhi's de-escalatory steps in restoring civilian overflight facilities to Pakistan, nomination of a High Commissioner to Pakistan and the withdrawal of warships from combat positions in the North Arabian Sea are welcome moves. These measures—though not enough to end the 6-month old lndo-Pak stand-off—have definitely led to the lowering of the level of the jingoist rhetoric of lndo-Pak hostility by a few decibels. Islamabad has yet to officially respond. However, there are reasons to believe that it will positively reciprocate. In brief, one can say that, while the ice has started melting, the crisis is not yet over, or that, while the bitterness has come down, confrontationist posturing still continues.

Now, it can be logically hoped that, in the days ahead, there will be not only the restoration of snapped Indo-Pak diplomatic ties and the de-escalation on their borders and the LOC, but also the start of a meaningful dialogue between the 2 countries on all their mutual irritants in general and the principal tension-point (i.e., Jammu-Kashmir) in particular.

The US Deputy Secretary of State, R. Armitage, has indicated in an interview with the BBC that the next move might usefully be aircraft moving back from a forward deployed area. He also added that Pakistan had to have similar de-escalatory measures as well.

These welcome developments naturally raise the question as to what lies behind them. By all counts, they did not come from the self-realisation on the part of India or Pakistan. Obviously, it was the pressure of the world public opinion in general and of big powers, including the US, in particular.

II

Taking up the issue of de-escalation, it is expected that the recently begun process of relaxation is likely to proceed forward and not stop half way. The rationale of this expectation is that today social peace and reconciliation has become the first essential demand of the human community. This is because the newly-emerged social phenomenon of globalisation (or the inter-dependence of nations) cannot proceed ahead in the wake of social violence, conflict or war in any part of the world. Social violence, conflict or war interrupt the normal movement of human necessities—i.e., trade, capital, technology, labour, conservation of environmental resources (water, land, forests, bio-diversity, etc.), escalation of human troubles (poverty, unemployment, inequality, crime, natural disasters, diseases, etc.)—and thus disrupt the working of existing social system.

Further, the process of relaxation is supplemented by two other factors. One is that the US, who requires the support of both India and Pakistan in its ongoing "global war against terror", wants some sort of Indo-Pak reconciliation at this juncture. The other is that the people of both India and Pakistan are against the war and that neither of the two concerned economies can sustain a war—short or long.

The US Defence Secretary Rumsfeld's recent contradictory statements concerning Al-Qaeda at Delhi and lslamabad have created a bit of confusion, but they, essentially, reflect the disorderly thinking and behaviour of the US administration, having no impact on the de-escalation process.

The general public perception today is that the two countries will, within a period of 2-3 months, bring back their basic armed forces to their original peacetime destinations, while the border security guards will, as usual, stay on the borders. Here, our suggestion is that, as regards the LOC, the two countries should mutually decide to withdraw their respective forces one kilometre behind the LOC and, in the disengaged area, a joint patrolling by the forces of the two countries, as suggested by the Prime Minister of India, be conducted according to the mutually settled schedule. This will be an appropriate mechanism to check and verify the level of infiltration in Jammu-Kashmir and generate an atmosphere of goodwill and friendship between the armed forces and the people of the two countries.

III

Turning to the question of a meaningful dialogue between India and Pakistan on their mutual irritants in general and the principal tension-point (i.e., Jammu-Kashmir) in particular, we hold that once Jammu-Kashmir issue, the core-point of Indo-Pak hostility, is satisfactorily resolved, everything will get into place.

The 53-year long experience of Indo-Pak confrontation demonstrates that there can be no military or unilateral solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem. Only a compromising formula can be a realistic answer. Such an option requires the fulfilment of four basic parameters. First, it will bring no change in the existing human social units and territorial limits of India, Pakistan and Jammu-Kashmir (as it existed in the pre-August 1947 period). Second, it will meet the main aspirations and interests of each of the three parties concerned to the maximum possible extent. And third, it will keep in mind the vast similarities in their past and present and the unfolding reality of a common future. Lastly, but above all, it will adopt a humanistic approach in viewing all problems.

The below-noted three-point proposal fully accords with the above-stated parameters:

(A) The respective national aspirations and interests of India and Pakistan be balanced by jointly entrusting to them Jammu-Kashmir's sovereignty in the constitutional form of Indo-Pak condominium in regard to Jammu-Kashmir's defence and foreign affairs.

(B) The regional aspirations and interests of Jammu-Kashmir people, especially the Kashmiris, be met by constitutionally accepting Jammu-Kashmir as an independent state, enjoying sovereign powers in all matters except defence and foreign affairs.The ethnic aspirations and interests of Jammu-Kashmir's different ethno-regional communities be accommodated by giving maximum possible constitutional autonomy to each of them. Jammu-Kashmir state level matters may include, the Head of State, High Court, Election commission, Human Development Commission, Environment Commission, Planning Commission, etc.

Such a solution will benefit the people of the world and South Asia (including India, Pakistan and Jammu-Kashmir).

IV

To facilitate and stabilise the process of resolving Jammu-Kashmir problem on a negotiated basis, Jammu-Kashmir people on both sides of the LOC can play a crucial and effective role. They are ideally suited and socially highly appropriate for such a task in space and time. Such a function demands from us strenuous and sustained work for creating a general consensus on a negotiated Jammu-Kashmir solution among various ethno-regional, social and political groups in the state. This requires the fulfilment of a 3-sided basic task and a 7-sided immediate task.

The basic task includes: (a) To awaken, mobilise and organise Jammu-Kashmir people on the basis of Front's declaration and other concerned documents; (b) To try to evolve a general consensus on a realistic, just and trilateral solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem; and (c) To develop the social consciousness, a value-based style and a democratic organisational structure of the Front.

The immediate task comprises: (a) To immediately establish cordial and friendly relations with all humanistic, peace-loving and democratic forces on the other side

of the LOC and discuss with them the issue of sorting out a realistic and just negotiated settlement of Jammu-Kashmir problem in order to arrive at a common understanding; (b) To hold district-level conferences in the Jammu Division; (c) To launch a signature campaign in favour of Front's 3-point formula for the resolution of Jammu-Kashmir problem; (d) To organise public discussions on Front's agenda at places unattended by the Front so far; (e) To carry further on inter-ethnic and inter-party dialogue for evolving a consensus-based, rational, just and trilateral solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem; (f) To arrange communal harmony conferences at various sensitive places; (g) To mobilise the sympathy and support of all peace-loving and rational people in India, Pakistan and the world in favour of an appropriate trilateral solution to Jammu-Kashmir problem.