**Lasting peace requires engagement**

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News about India-Pakistan secret talks has surfaced either on its own or has been let to surface, to test the general mood of people in Pakistan and more so the mood in Kashmiri circles. The main Kashmiri circles are the people in the Valley, Azad Kashmir, 2.5 million Kashmiri refugees living in the four provinces of Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and the Diaspora. Kashmiris have been left to depleted resources and forced to temporarily lose a political and a militant battle waged against the Indian rule.

In addition to the killing of a generation in Indian occupied Kashmir Indian security force has turned on Kashmiri children and Kashmiri youth as British Major Hudson turned on the two sons and a grandson of Bahadur Shah Zafar on 21 September 1857, the next day of his capture. The visuals emerging from the Valley are unbearable.

We need peace between India and Pakistan and its proportionate dividends in Kashmir. The engagement has to be in the interests of peace for all and Kashmir should not be rendered for a quid pro quo. It would be unlawful, immoral and short lived to the extent it disadvantages the people of Kashmir. Pakistan’s constituency would get an irreversible heart attack.

Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai has rightly said that “Third party engagement or facilitation is needed as it yielded results in persuading India and Pakistan to reach a ceasefire agreement on February 25, 2021 after a lapse of 18 years.” Dr. Fai has said that “President Biden should know that in Kashmir too more than 100,000 people are dead and ‘Genocide Watch’ has issued a Genocide Alert for Kashmir”. We sincerely trust that UAE does not want to use its facilitation to validate the Indian claim made on 5 March 2020 in Dubai Conference that 5 August 2019 Indian action was a “significant and internal matter” for India.

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The present situation in Pakistan may have encouraged India to bring a pressure on Pakistan through a Muslim country. Pakistan has not played well since after the General Assembly address of Prime Minister and we need to assure Pakistan, that there is a tomorrow and for the people of Jammu and Kashmir there are many tomorrows. We do not want a war with India but we do not want Indian Government to walk away from our right to self-determination and from paying reparation and compensation to the habitat and people, it has wronged. Kashmiris would not like to be colonised and remain fractured and divided for generations. Our five generations have endured the pains of division and separation.

Although Hurriyat constitutional discipline sets out to pursue the UN template on Kashmir, it is an irrefutable fact that neither Government of Azad Kashmir nor the Government of Pakistan have ever considered to unroll the UN mechanism and close all exits for India. Azad Kashmir Government has managed to walk over its responsibility towards self-determination for the last 51 years since the introduction of Act 1970 and Government of Pakistan added to this neglect by deciding to sit silent on Kashmir at the UN Security Council for 32 years from November 1965 to September 1996.

The opposition (Government in the waiting) represents an important chunk of public opinion and it would not necessarily mean that the situation in the Indian occupied Kashmir remains their genuine priority and not a political tactic to nudge into the ribs of the Government which has only a UN General Assembly speech to its credit. The opposition leaders have gone to the extent of blaming the Government of a ‘sell out’ on Kashmir. The present Government of Pakistan has to realise that if the allegations of a “sell out” on Kashmir start coming from Kashmiri circles, it would be a disaster. Government of India would like to see a mistrust emerge between the Government of Pakistan and the Kashmiris who advocate the cause of Kashmir and regard the Pakistan’s claim of a ‘political, moral and diplomatic’ support as genuine. In the latter event the Kashmiris and the likes retained by the Government of Pakistan as “auxiliaries” would be of no use.

It would not be a helpful at this point in time to examine the merits of militancy and Hurriyat, except that the two leaderships have accrued a criminal and civil liability for the loss of life and for creating a space for Indian repression and action of 5 August 2019. Indian Government and Indian army remained contained in all manner and form until January 1990.

There is merit in deferring a debate on the good and bad of militancy and Hurriyat. However, there are many other areas which deserve our immediate attention. It is obvious that Government of AJK and Government of Pakistan have not worked to squeeze Indian influence by pushing the UN template on Kashmir. It is nothing more than passing the buck, when we are told that 4 out of 5 members of UN SC are trading with India. So what. It does not seal the fate of our argument, if we ever try to make one. There are 194 member nations of the United Nations.

Government of Azad Kashmir and Government of Pakistan have to revert to their defined constitutional duties and agreements in order to enlarge the constituency of Self-Determination at home and abroad. We see that we have yet to challenge the Indian action of 5 August 2019 within the framework of UNCIP Resolutions and UN Security Council Resolutions on Kashmir. We find that both Governments are hesitant to take the bull by the horns. On the contrary India succeeded to have its place at the UN Security Council for 2 years from January 2021 and a year after her action of 5 August 2019, India has asked for the removal of Kashmir from UN Security Council agenda.

It was Indian pressure that we did not touch Kashmir for 32 years at the UN SC from 1965-1996 and we have India again at the UN Security Council for two years. India would not let go the two years in vain as we did when we had the seat and the Presidency of the Security Council. Indian call for permanently removing the issue of Jammu and Kashmir under the “outdated agenda item” of the “India-Pakistan question” from the Security Council’s agenda, point to sinister Indian intentions.

Pakistani diplomats at the United Nations brushed it aside as “outlandish”. The foreign office of Pakistan has said that “India-Pakistan Question” is one of the oldest items on UNSC agenda. The Question remains on the agenda since India has never implemented UNSC Resolutions on J&K dispute. India continues to deny Kashmiris inalienable right to self-determination enshrined in UNSC Resolutions”. It may not be enough.

We have a UN template on Kashmir. The right has been recently reiterated in the June 2018 and July 2019 reports of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. India would be sitting in the Security Council for two years and her diplomats have begun a diplomatic offensive. There are dangers ahead.

India has always caught Pakistan unprepared on Kashmir. Although Pakistan Mission in New York in its letter dated 2 January 2020 has notified the UN Security Council that “Pakistan would like to see “The India-Pakistan question” and “The Hyderabad question” retained on the list of matters of which the Security Council is seized”, yet we should not hesitate to accept that unless we see the Indian action of 5 August 2019 as unlawful and a violation of UN Security Council, all other efforts would remain extraneous and spurious.

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