

Opinion

End of the Cease-fire: Victory for Vested-Interests, Defeat for Kashmiris

An analysis of the present day world opinion reveals that, it is not only Kashmiris who yearn for peace, but also the great powers of the world have realized the urgency of securing peace in Kashmir. It is an encouraging development. But, the fact that the group with vested interests will try to sabotage any peace process cannot be overlooked. It is a well known axiom that constructive (creative) activity demands a lot of patience, but destruction is too easy.

Hope was short-lived

The declaration of unilateral cease-fire by the militant organization, Hizbul Mujahideen on 24th July, was so sudden and unexpected for Kashmiris, that the people refused to believe it. When the chief commander, from across the border, confirmed it, the people (of Kashmir) felt as if a gust of fresh air had blown in the scorching heat of the desert; and realized that this rejuvenating hope of peace was neither a daydream nor an illusion. They felt that the long night of massacres, violence and gloom was coming to an end; and the new dawn was the precursor of a happy morning. For the first time, after 12 years of violence and turbulence, the features of a real smile could be seen on the face of the people. As if the people hoped they would be freed from the stifling and suffocating silence. The people felt that the decision (of cease-fire) was not a local one, but had the blessings of people from Clinton to Musharraf. This belief got further strengthened by the manner in which New Delhi welcome it. As an observer remarked, the joy was there not because Kashmir was getting freedom or going into the lap of Pakistan or that the Indian occupation would come to an end. Not even an illiterate native of the state had such illusions. The joy was there because there was hope that there would be end to the 'war', that was being fought in the streets and lanes of Kashmir, instead of the border, the war that was being fought in the courtyards and porches of the homes, that had destroyed the sanctity of home, that had almost decimated a generation of Kashmiris, sending them to graves, prisons lunatic asylums and hospitals, and that had made the surviving people victims of neurotic and psychiatric diseases. With that there was a faint hope that a solution to the conflict would be found on the negotiating table. But this joy turned into gloom and dismay, when the supreme commander of the Hizb announced the calling off, of his cease-fire on 8th August, from Islamabad. With that started charges and counter charges regarding the responsibility for this fiasco.

Vested interests sabotaged the process

However, impartial observers say that the vested interests in both the camps (New Delhi and the militants) did everything to torpedo this effort (for peace) and were successful in their designs. It is not secret that there is a powerful group within the official don, from New Delhi to Srinagar, for whom the present situation is a 'gift', a blessing in disguise. Outside the government, there is no dearth of 'people' who have been 'enjoying' themselves in the name of 'freedom movement' and wielding powers of a 'parallel administration'. Apparently, these two groups are antagonistic to

each other, bitter rivals. But, in the present circumstances, there has been a tacit understanding between the two, from the very beginning.

Vajpayee' good intentions, without support

It is being said that the Prime Minister, Vajpayee has a strong desire to accomplish two tasks, to make India economically strong and stable, and to find the final, but durable solution to Kashmir conflict. There is urgency in this, keeping in view his failing health (as per reports). But his tragedy is that there are few people within his party who are prepared to deviate from the party stand, and give him support on this issue i.e. Kashmir. On the other side, i.e., across the border, there are dozens of political or non-political groups, besides Jamait-I-Islamic, who 'trade' in Kashmir. The way the Amir of Pak. Jamait-I-Islamic, Qazi Hussain, gave vent to his anger and condemned the Hizb 'move' is a sufficient indicator of Pak leadership's attitude towards Kashmir. The announcement was made in Srinagar, but its ratification as well as cancellation, came from across the border.

The Hizb under pressure

The pertinent question asked by the people is – if the Hizb arrived at the decision after studying the situation i.e. the ground reality, and understanding the feelings and the wishes of the people, what happened (during the two weeks) that compelled Hizb to withdraw the offer of cease-fire? What was the purpose of putting the condition of Pak's participation in the talks, before the talks had actually begun? What was the objective of the ultimatum, and why was three months duration cut down to fifteen days? India's refusal to include Pak in talks was already known. If this condition was so important, why was this announcement of cease-fire made? Why was not the condition put on the very first day? What should have been the strategy of the group or leadership that claims to be the sympathizers of the people? After a few days of the cease-fire, the tone and attitude adopted by the Hizb, whatever the compulsions, were definitely not indicative of a desire for peace.

Hurriyat's role disappointing

Delhi and Islamabad have their own interests and their separate agendas. But, do not the people of Kashmir have their own agenda? Observers say that the initial decision reflected the 'voice of conscience' of Abdul Majid Dar and Salahuddin. But, what happened afterwards, was not a question of conscience, but a consequence of their compulsions, even helplessness. The truth is Salahuddin could not resist the pressure. Musharraf may have been with him in the initial stages, but afterwards he also distanced himself. If one wants to have a general feel of the helplessness, hopelessness, and desperate condition of the Kashmiri people, one has to look into the 'role' played by leadership in this 'drama'. Ironically, the Hurriyat claims to be the sole representative of the Kashmir people, but the attitude adopted by this leadership during this 'drama', negates the claim. During 15 days, it changed its stand at least five times, and every statement contradicted the preceding one. From 'hasty decision', to 'an opening for peace' to a 'faltering' step, all these reactions were there.

Time to seek explanations from leaders:

It may be mentioned that Hurriyat had said that the talks could be held between Delhi and Kashmiris, and Pakistan could join later. But, when the Hizb was in the field, they did not say anything like this. The only conclusion, one can draw is that when a nation/community lacks leadership, it becomes a victim of exploitation by the self-styled and selfish 'leaders' and these exploiters will not leave it alone, unless and until the last drop of blood has been sucked, like the swarm of locusts, Kashmiris know whatever they (Hurriyat) have been telling them against India. But now, perhaps, the time has come when the people will question the 'leaders'.

Talks failed, but the change is there

Once again the peace process has been stalled, and people are dismayed. But, some changes, with far-reaching consequences, have taken place. Violence has increased in intensity, but the people's attitude has changed. The people express their anger against every kind of violence, from whichever quarter it may have arisen. In one day, in different events, more than a hundred people were killed. No militant outfit owned these 'massacres'. Similarly, the car bomb blast on Residency Road, on 10th August, though owned by the command council of the Hizb in Muzaffarabad, the local unit (of Hizb) was silent. Ironically, Pak government condemned this blast. This is for the first time in the history of militancy (in Kashmir) that one outfit claimed the responsibility for the blast, whereas Pak government condemned it. No coincidence or chance is involved in all these events. It only shows that the world, the powers that be want peace in Kashmir.

[Translated Extracts from a Political Report that appeared in the Urdu weekly *Chattan* (14/8-20/8), published from Kashmir.]